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UNDERSTANDING SOUTH KOREA'S POOR NATION BRAND IMAGE: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TWO LEADING GERMAN PRINT NEWS MEDIA, 1948–2013

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ABSTRACT

Despite the spectacular rise of South Korea's economy, the West continues to perceive it as an underdeveloped nation. To ferret out the macrohistorical causes of this perception, we perform a content analysis of Korea-related articles since 1948 in two leading German news weeklies. We find that South Korea's image has somewhat improved, transformed from that of the backward "Land of the Morning Calm" to that of a nation ranking among the most technologically advanced. However, certain images, such as "unstable," "unsafe" and "corrupt" persist, despite the fact that economic and political conditions have dramatically improved. Our research tentatively suggests that a systematic, long-term bias against South Korea in German print media accounts in part for its negative image there. However, the fact that this bias has recently abated suggests that those media will eventually produce a credible portrait of this far-away country.

Keywords: News analysis, national image, nation branding, South Korea, German news media

INTRODUCTION

When, in 1948, the Republic of Korea (hereafter: South Korea) became independent, it was one of the poorest countries in the world. Now, 65 years later, it is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and has scored well on the Human Development Index (HDI)—evidence of its development into an important global as well as regional power. South Koreans have reason to be proud of their country's

process of democratisation, as well; while not always peaceful or painless, it was achieved without outside intervention. South Korea hosted the Summer Olympics in 1988 and the FIFA World Cup in 2002; it will host the Winter Olympics in 2018. Sports events aside, it hosted the World Expo twice, in 1993 and 2012, and in 2010 the G20 summit—the first non-G8 nation to do so. South Korea is often cited as evidence that, despite the odds, a poor and backward nation can achieve a self-empowered transformation from poverty to prosperity, from authoritarian rule to democracy, and from the reliance on simple manufactured goods to high-end technology products. Finally, South Korea has also successfully reinvented itself into a leading exporter not only of those cultural products that compose the so-called "Korean Wave," or *Hallyu*—chiefly Korean pop music (K-Pop), Korean movies and TV dramas—but also of traditional Korean culture, from the culinary and literary to the martial art of Taekwondo.

Nevertheless, South Korea has an image problem. When, in a 2005 survey, U.S. opinion leaders were asked to state what the word "Korea" evoked, 61 percent replied, "the Korean War" (Corea Image Communication Institute, CICI 2012). Toward the end of 2011, when asked to name the most representative Korean figure, eight of 11 Western journalists based in South Korea named Kim Jong-il (Lee 2012: 82). Between 2007 and 2011 its ranking in the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brand Index (NBI) of 50 nations was never higher than 27th; in 2008 it was ranked as low as 33rd, only one place ahead of a Third World country, Thailand (Schwekendiek 2010).

It is this discrepancy between a deep-rooted reputation and a rapidly evolving reality that prompts this examination of South Korea's national image: more precisely, to borrow Boulding's terminology, "the total cognitive, affective, and evaluative structure of the behaviour unit, or its internal view of itself and its universe" (Boulding 1959: 120 ff.). Research on nation images as a reliable predictor of the behaviour of a given state (Jervis 1970) has led to what is known as "nation branding": the use of positive imagery as a marketing tool, and a "soft power" weapon (Anholt 2007 and 2010; Dinnie 2008). In times such as these, when globalisation blurs cultural boundaries, the development of images based on distinctive national features answers a new need for the unfamiliar. A sustained campaign of nation branding is urgently needed by South Korea, since its image is drastically far behind its economic success and its political reforms. In our examination of the hows and whys of South Korea's evolving image we will consider the impact of current initiatives, such as the Presidential Council on Nation Branding (PCNB); the best way to gauge them is by means of a content analysis of foreign print media, permitting comparison of the most recent depictions of South Korea with earlier ones.

We have chosen to examine the Korea-related articles appearing in the print media in Germany. The "Korean Wave" of positive imagery has never made it beyond Asia, nor has much of Korean history and culture generally (Anholt 2008: 268). A benefit of this ignorance could be that Westerners are relatively receptive to new images. On the other hand, their dependence on mass media for information on South Korea will be comparatively strong.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Nation Branding

Nation branding can be defined as "the unique, multidimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences" (Dinnie 2008: 15): in other words, it is a new way of thinking about, and making strategic use of, a nation's assets. Its identity-shaping function is of great interest to those states that used to constitute the Soviet Union and now want to jettison a lot of historical baggage and redefine themselves in 21st century terms. This aspect of nation branding often features a slogan or catch phrase; nations that have attempted it include e.g., Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan (Marat 2009).

Initially, however, the main interest of nation branding was economic: a favourable national image could increase the appeal of export products (Papadopoulos and Heslop 2002) or entice international tourists (Caldwell and Freire 2004). Nation branding is a strategy far more complex than that of conventional advertising in that it uses a competitive advantage in one economic sector to sell something unrelated in another: it is national in scope. By means of symbolic moves, it can therefore have as great an impact on a nation's status on the world stage as do less ephemeral-seeming events, such as political speeches and military interventions (Anholt 2010: 13).

South Korea's attempts at nation branding can be traced back to the hosting of the 1988 Summer Olympics, which, even though it was not part of a broader strategy, gave the nation a chance to show the world that it was capable of mastering the logistics of such a large-scale, international event. Moreover, it meant the introduction of the specifically Korean martial art of Taekwondo as an Olympic sport, which boosted its popularity not only at home but also abroad. With Kim Young-sam's accession to the presidency, in 1993, South Korea's nation-branding tactics were shaped by its "globalism" policy. The tourist industry benefited from the hosting of the

1993 World Expo, followed by the Visit Korea Year, in 1994. At the same time, efforts were made on the education and cultural-exchange fronts. However, it was still believed that South Korea "remains far from being or becoming an attractive, advanced, and globalised world-class country that people all over the world would want to come to, invest in, and live in" (Kim 2000: 273).

The turning point came in 2008, with the Lee Myung-bak government's establishing of the PCNB. In his inauguration speech Lee Myung-bak had already pointed out several existing problems of South Korea's image such as the fact that the "value of Korea's national brand only accounts for approximately 30 percent of the nation's economic power" or that in spite of Korea's lead position in some technologies, "the very first images that come to foreigners' minds are labour-management disputes and street rallies" (Lee 2008). The PCNB's 2009 10-point action plan called for educational, civic and cultural exchanges, the promotion of the Korean language, and the use of the positive image of certain Korean companies and products to enhance the image of the nation.

Mass Media and National Images

In 1922, Walter Lippmann observed that our opinions are "pieced together out of what others have reported and what we can imagine" (Lippmann 1997: 53). Despite globalisation, travel restrictions—whether economic, political or social—persist; as a result, most people's acquaintance with foreign cultures continues to be based on others' reports, not on their personal experience. Galtung and Ruge underlined the power of the news media to shape such perceptions, going so far as to predict, back in 1964, that "the regularity, ubiquity, and perseverance of the news media will in any case make them first-rate competitors for the number-one position as international image-former" (Galtung and Ruge 1964: 64).

As early as 1972, emphasis was put on the correlation between mass media's focus, i.e., salience of a topic, and its influence on the public agenda (McCombs and Shaw 1972). Further evidence that the mass media's agenda-setting functions influence national images was supported by several other researchers (McNelly and Izcaray 1986; Perry 1987; Zhang and Meadows 2012). Perry (1987) showed that people often entirely rely on information presented by mass media. His experiment revealed that people can easily be misled by unbalanced news stories. In a similar vein, McNelly and Izcaray argued that mass media could affect people's "knowledge of basic geographic and socioeconomic attributes of countries" (McNelly and Izcaray 1986: 552) and that they have a positive effect on the audience's

feelings about the country as well as their perception of its capacities for success. A correlation between a foreign country's presence in the news media and the public's perception of its importance, especially in the case of negative coverage and negative perceptions, came to light as well (Zhang and Meadows 2012). Thus Germany's mass media have a tremendous influence on Germans' opinions of South Korea, for instance, since personal exchanges between Germans and South Koreans are limited to a tiny portion of the population.

Previous studies of South Korea's depiction in German print media focused almost exclusively on coverage by one weekly news magazine or one daily newspaper as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) (Oh 1999; An 2006; Chang 2007; Roh et al. 2012).

METHODOLOGY

Data Sampling

Our choice of *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit* was based on the fact that thanks to their political weight they dominate the German media landscape and, on a more practical level, that both of them are weeklies, making for comparability. The fact that both are of a liberal bent means that our results are probably representative of that sector of the German news media. Moreover, no German magazine or newspaper with a conservative bent has anything like the same weight as *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit*, so our choice was largely imposed by the absence of an alternative.

Since the purpose of this paper is to examine South Korea's development throughout its entire history as well as the impact of its recent nation-branding efforts, the end dates for our research are that of the establishing of South Korea on 15 August 1948, and that of the end of the Lee Myung-bak administration, 24 February 2013.

The first step in our research process was to access the websites of *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit*, both of which permit the (fee-free) retrieval of the full text of any and all articles they have published since their founding. Our choice of three keywords, "Korea" (Korea), "Südkorea" (South Korea) and "Nordkorea" (North Korea), resulted in 6,562 and 4,248 hits for *Die Zeit* and *Der Spiegel*, respectively.

The second step was to perform a triage of the articles; sports results, book reviews and online-only stories were eliminated; of the remaining hits, only those of a certain, minimal length and with a direct focus on North or South Korea were retained for content analysis (Table 1).

Table 1: Selection of data.

	Total no. of articles	No. of relevant articles	Relevant articles on South Korea	Relevant articles on North Korea
<i>Die Zeit</i>	6562	439	342	97
<i>Der Spiegel</i>	4284	436	272	164

Content Analysis

Content analysis, defined as "any technique for making inferences by objectively, and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (Holsti 1969: 14), reveals the process by which images are constructed and shaped. Though content analysis is frequently regarded as a purely quantitative research method (Neuendorf 2002)—that is, as "a research technique that is based on measuring the amount of something [...] in a representative sampling of some mass-mediated popular art form" (Berger 1998: 18), it is often defined as a fusion of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Like Holsti, Krippendorff defines it as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff 2004: 18) and deliberately refrains from emphasising its quantitative characteristics.

Since research units such as words, phrases, topics and themes etc., must be defined in advance, content analysis treats meaning in terms of context and thus fulfils the criteria of qualitative content analysis. Simple quantitative content analysis is more readily comprehensible, but it is deficient, in that meaning is rarely if ever merely quantitative. Words acquire meaning from their context; connotations are at least as important as denotations. For instance, the fact that the word "good" appears a given number of times (quantity) is of little interest, since its meaning depends upon its context (quality). If one wants to analyse topics, themes or motives as presented in a narrative text, the quantitative approach is inadequate. However, qualitative content analysis is as rigorous as any other variety: it must be objective, it must be systematic, and it must be undertaken with some larger purpose in view (Holsti 1969: 3–5).

Coding Structure

The coding schema for the articles consists of a total of 27 variables, out of which the main variables will be explained in the following in more detail.

"Country focus" refers to one of seven possible countries or sets of countries with which the article is chiefly concerned: South Korea; South and North Korea; South Korea and the United States; South Korea and Germany; the Korean Diaspora; South Korea, North Korea and the United States; and South Korea and other nations. Articles exclusively about North Korea were not examined in detail, but their occurrence was recorded. "Topic (specific categorisation)" encompasses politics, the economy, society, culture, sports events, military actions and purely negative issues such as natural disasters.

The categories of "article tone" and "news character" were coded and the results converted into the values -1 for a negative coding, $+1$ for a positive coding, and $+0$ for a neutral coding by following Shin (2010). "Article tone" refers to the author's evaluation of the subject matter, which is in turn a matter of the presentation and interpretation of information about the people and events involved: for example, the use of rhetorical questions, words and phrases. An article was coded positive (negative) if at least half of all its paragraphs had been coded positive (negative).

In contrast, "news character" refers to the content of the article. News of a positive character includes reports of economic progress, democratisation and stability, as opposed to recession, undemocratic tendencies and instability. For the "news character," the headline alone is often sufficient. It is therefore far more difficult to pin down an article's tone than to categorise the news reported in it (even if the "news character" is neutral) as positive or negative. The classification according to article tone and news character and evaluation by paragraphs were roughly adapted from Shin (2010: 42f). Galtung and Ruge indicate that German-press news of South Korea is likely to be negative because the unwritten rule for a nation's news getting mentioned at all in the Western news media is that the smaller the nation "the more negative will the news from that nation have to be" (Galtung and Ruge 1964: 83). Finally, we perform eight thematic analyses, composed of positive and negative evaluations of a given topic.

1. We categorise evaluations of Korea's *power* according to the use of terms such as *weak* and *strong*.
2. Terms associated with Korea's *economic development* are e.g. *rich*, *prosperous* and *growth*, on the one hand, and *poor*, *decline*, and *recession* on the other.
3. Korea's *democracy* was evaluated by keywords which include *democracy* and (*fair and free*) *elections*, on the one hand, and *autocratic rule/authoritarian government* and *election fraud* on the other. Previous research has indicated that South Korea's development

- from a military dictatorship into a modern democracy is viewed positively by Western news media (Lee 2010: 172ff.).
4. *Social stability* is the opposite of the image of chaos conjured up by *uprisings, riots* and *demonstrations*. Political instability during the 1980s may account not only for much of the negative coverage of this issue at the time but also for a tendency among Western media to exaggerate the seriousness of any incident hinting at a recurrence of such instability (Lee 2007: 44ff.). Keywords are e.g., *stable* and *harmony* versus *unstable* and *riots/chaos/uprising*.
 5. *Security* is a theme crucial to South Korea's international status, and thus appears frequently in the Western news media (Lee 2010: 172ff.). Keywords include *secure* and *peace* versus *war, threat* and *danger/(international) terrorism*.
 6. The keywords for *cultural attractiveness* include *interesting, admirable, friendly, valuable* and *exquisite*, versus *strange, odd, unfriendly, worthless* and *dull*.
 7. Is South Korea a model nation or a corrupt one, devoid of the *rule of law*? Keywords include *lawful, justice* and *morally clean* on the one hand and *illegal, unjust* and *corruption* on the other.
 8. *Trade* serves to gauge the evolution South Korea's image from an exporter of cheap consumer goods who infringes international trade laws to a law-abiding exporter of high-quality high-tech goods (Lee 2007: 43ff.). Keywords include *high-tech* or *high-quality products* versus *cheap products, low quality* and *trade infringements*.

A single evaluation, positive or negative, in a given article sufficed for it to be evaluated. As with the other two evaluative variables (article tone and news character), the results were equalised, with -1 for a negative, +1 for a positive, and +0 for a neutral assessment.

Only a survey of the historical development of *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit* since 1948, roughly 65 years ago, can reveal the evolution of the stereotypes as well as of the general national image that have determined South Korea's picture in Germany's news media. The issue of this evolution can be broken down into three research questions.

First, have descriptions of South Korea in *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit* kept pace with South Korea's evolving character, particularly during the recent period of its nation-branding efforts? Second, how has South Korea's national image changed over time? Third and last, which kinds of stereotypes are measurable, and how do they develop over time?

RESULTS

Frequency

With regards to salience, the trend from the 1940s/1950s to the 2000s/2010s at both *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit* was upward: from three articles per year to five in *Der Spiegel* and to nearly seven in *Die Zeit*. Coverage spiked during the 1980s on account of in-depth coverage of the democratisation process and then the 1988 Olympic Games. More specifically, coverage peaked in 1987, with 18 articles in *Der Spiegel* and 17 in *Die Zeit*; placing second and third were 1997 and 1967 for *Der Spiegel* and 1988 and 1980 for *Die Zeit*. The average dropped to about five articles per year during the 1990s, but was followed by another increase over the next two decades. Thus salience was directly correlated with the democratisation phase (1980, 1987, 1988) and with crises of international significance (South Korea's 1967 extradition of South Koreans working in Germany, the 1997 IMF crisis). To summarise, times of socioeconomic and sociopolitical turbulence, whether positive (democratisation, the Olympics) or negative (the extradition crisis, the IMF crisis), are directly correlated with news coverage on the part of our chosen two representatives of the Western news media. But precisely what sort of coverage did this turbulence receive?

Article Tone and News Character

Article tone is somewhat less negative overall than news character, on account of a preponderance of neutral-tone articles (Table 2). The exception is the period of the 1970s and 1980s, when *Die Zeit* was sharply critical of Park Chung-hee's extremely repressive 1972 Yushin Constitution. *Der Spiegel* reserved its criticism for the violence and chaos associated with mass protests during the 1980s democratisation process.

Table 2: General article tone and news character.

	Article tone			News character		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Positive
<i>Die Zeit</i>	17.84%	80.70%	3.22%	44.15%	28.95%	27.19%
<i>Der Spiegel</i>	13.97%	83.82%	2.21%	59.93%	16.91%	23.16%

Note: As discussed in the text, "article tone" refers to our evaluation of the presentation and interpretation of information about the people and events involved in an article; "news character" refers to the factual content of an article (i.e., if the article per se represents bad, neutral or good news).

While there is little difference in article tone at *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit*, when it comes to news character, *Der Spiegel* scores significantly higher than *Die Zeit* in the "negative" category and much lower in the "neutral" and "positive" ones (Table 2).

To explain this news character discrepancy (Figure 1), we need to look at changes over time and topic focus. *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit* articles were similar in tone except during the 1980s, when coverage at *Die Zeit* became increasingly upbeat, whereas at *Der Spiegel* South Korea lost ground on the news character front. The discrepancy can be traced to their divergent evaluations not only of the 1988 Olympic Games but also of the 1987/1988 democratisation process. During those two years *Der Spiegel* published 24 South Korea articles out of which 17 dealt with the Olympic Games or made references to the democratisation process (five positive, three neutral, nine negative).

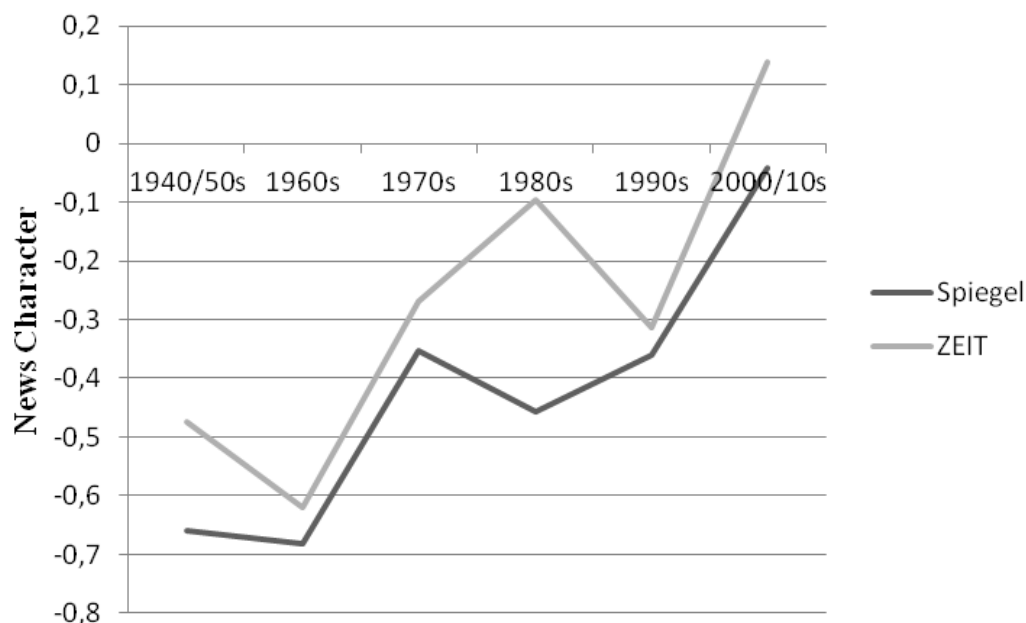


Figure 1: Development of news character over time (as discussed in the text, possible values for "news character" range from -1.0 to $+1.0$. Negative values indicate unfavourable news while positive values indicate favourable news).

As for *Die Zeit*, 14 of its 32 South Korea articles dealt exclusively with the Olympic Games or included references to the democratisation process (seven positive, four neutral, three negative). Thus *Der Spiegel* covered these two issues much more negative compared to the depiction of these events at *Die Zeit*. The parallel coverage by *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit* during the 1990s indicates that the divergence was short-lived, lasting as it did for only a decade, and exceptional. In fact, the trends at both *Der Spiegel* and

Die Zeit have continued in the same, positive direction. South Korea has been a democracy since the late 1980s; the lag between objectively verifiable improvements in this nation's character and the evolution of its image in the Western press has been considerable.

Topic Focus

Over the course of the seven-decade span under study, the topic focus of South Korea-related articles shifted from military and political topics during the first four decades to economic topics (Table 3). *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit* are remarkably similar in this regard: in fact, their first main topics were congruent throughout the entire period. There was divergence in regard to their second main topics during the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 2000/10s, which indicates a difference in orientation on sociocultural and political issues, but they both shifted their coverage from political to economic topics.

Table 3: The two most frequently cited topics over time.

	<i>Die Zeit</i>		<i>Der Spiegel</i>	
	First main topic	Second main topic	First main topic	Second main topic
1940s/50s	Military	Politics	Military	Politics
1960s	Politics	Society	Politics	None
1970s	Politics	Society	Politics	None
1980s	Politics	Economy	Politics	Sports
1990s	Economy	Politics	Economy	Politics
2000/10s	Economy	Culture	Economy	None

At the same time, coverage of South Korea gained in depth and breadth. As early as the 1960s, economic and cultural topics composed a full 40 percent of *Die Zeit's* coverage, and *Der Spiegel* followed suit in the 1970s, expanding this sector of its coverage to 25 percent. Thanks to this shift in focus to topics that lend themselves to a positive slant, South Korea's image began to improve: a development reflected in the sharp and steady improvement in "news character" (Figure 1).

At *Die Zeit* the most frequent topics were democratisation and elections, relations between South and North Korea, and protests and riots. At *Der Spiegel* the general categories were similar, even if the most frequent topics were different: political figures and leaders, the Korean War, and anti-Communism in Korea and the Korean CIA. In fact, the valence of the three most frequent topics is remarkable: the news character of 75 percent of *Der*

Spiegel's articles were negative; that only six percent was positive; article tone was mostly neutral (79 percent), and that of the remaining 21 percent negative. At *Die Zeit*, the news character was more balanced: 41 percent negative, 33 percent positive, and 26 percent neutral, but the trend in article tone there was similar to that of *Der Spiegel*: 77 percent neutral, and only six percent positive. It is somewhat surprising, considering Germany's own recent history, how little attention either *Der Spiegel* or *Die Zeit* paid to the issue of reunification.

Country Focus

During the 1940s/50s, the main country focus at both *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit* was South Korea and the U.S. (as well as North Korea in the case of *Die Zeit*), and also South Korea and other nations. These yielded to North Korea as well as South Korea and Germany during the 1960s, South and North Korea during the 1970s, and South Korea and other nations during the 1980s. During the 1990s and 2000/2010s *Der Spiegel* diverges from *Die Zeit* in that it focuses for the first time on North Korea; the coverage balance at *Die Zeit* shifts northward, too, but to a lesser degree (Table 4).

Table 4: Country focus.

	<i>Die Zeit</i>		<i>Der Spiegel</i>	
	Main country 1	Main country 2	Main country 1	Main country 2
1940s/50s	South Korea - North Korea - United States	South Korea - other nations	South Korea - United States	South Korea - other nations
1960s	South Korea	South Korea - North Korea / South Korea- Germany	South Korea- Germany	North Korea
1970s	South Korea	South Korea - North Korea	South Korea	North Korea
1980s	South Korea	South Korea - other nations	South Korea	South Korea - other nations
1990s	South Korea	North Korea	North Korea	South Korea
2000/10s	South Korea	North Korea	North Korea	South Korea

Stereotypical Themes

The four stereotypical themes of rule of law, democracy, stability and security are very negative, whereas power, economy, culture and trade are only slightly negative or even somewhat positive (Table 5). The top four issues at both *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit* are law, democracy, economy and stability, but *Der Spiegel* also pays considerable attention to security, a fact in line with a pattern previously observed: the tone of *Der Spiegel* articles is either similar to or more negative than that of *Die Zeit* articles.

Table 5: Stereotypical themes.

	<i>Die Zeit</i>		<i>Der Spiegel</i>	
	Saliency	Valence	Saliency	Valence
Power	2.63%	-0.01	5.15%	-0.01
Economy	15.79%	-0.02	20.59%	0
Democracy	18.13%	-0.12	21.32%	-0.17
Stability	13.74%	-0.12	14.34%	-0.14
Security	3.80%	-0.04	12.87%	-0.10
Culture	2.34%	0.02	8.09%	-0.02
Rule of law	21.35%	-0.20	29.41%	-0.29
Trade	4.39%	0.02	6.25%	0

Note: As discussed in the text, "saliency" refers to the percentage of all articles (relative quantity) that contain allusions to a given stereotype while "valence" refers to the quality of these allusions. Possible values for "valence" range from -1.0 to +1.0 with negative values indicating unfavourable stereotypes and positive values favourable stereotypes.

Termining South Korea

When the prolific American author and traveller William Elliot Griffis titled his 1882 book "Corea: The Hermit Nation," the idea was already well established. Today the negative epithet of "closed nation" is reserved for North Korea, South Korea having always been open to the West, to the point of welcoming the stationing of U.S. troops on its soil.

Instead, the most common name for premodern South Korea (1392–1910) is "Chosun," usually translated into German as "Land der Morgenstille" ("Land of the Morning Calm"). Being a term that spans a long period of isolation, its periods of peace punctuated by several instances of Manchurian as well as Japanese military aggression, from the era of the last kingdom to the period of Japan's brutal occupation, it is somewhat associated with underdevelopment and poverty; seven percent of *Der Spiegel's* articles (1970s and 1980s) and 10 percent of *Die Zeit's* articles

(1980s only) made use of the epithet. However, there is an interesting discrepancy in regard to end dates: *Die Zeit* referred to South Korea as "Land der Morgenstille" as late as 2010 (having used it in six percent of its South Korea articles since 2000), whereas *Der Spiegel* banished it in 1995.

By the early 2000s *Der Spiegel* had come up with a new epithet for South Korea: "high-tech nation." 10 years later it began to appear in *Die Zeit* too, and with the same frequency: five percent. Meanwhile, another epithet, equally positive in its own way, emerged, reaching a peak of popularity in the 1980s and 1990s: "Tiger" or "Tigerstaat" (literally, "Tiger nation"). *Die Zeit* had used the term as early as 1963, and continued to do so into the 2000s/2010s. *Der Spiegel*, with its focus on economic issues, used it more frequently than did *Die Zeit*: during the 1990s it appeared in 38 percent of *Der Spiegel's* South Korea articles: no coincidence, since it was during the 1980s and 1990s that South Korea's economic development took off.

DISCUSSION

Interest in South Korea

Interest in South Korea (salience) has increased over time: a development in line with South Korea's emergence in the 1980s as an important global player and a democratic nation as well. Article tone and news character evolved in the same direction, from a very negative starting point (the Korean War, poverty, low development, corruption and authoritarian rule) to a nearly (*Der Spiegel*) or slightly (*Die Zeit*) positive coverage. However, the turning point was not the 1980s: not only was *Der Spiegel* more focused than ever on negative aspects of the democratisation process, and there were few positive articles, even during the latest, positive-news-filled, era. When one considers that South Korea's economy was among the leading high-tech ones and ranked tenth worldwide by the mid 2000s, it is surprising that there were so few articles about South Korea, and thus even fewer positive ones. It takes a long time for a nation to shed its notoriety, so there is reason to expect positive coverage to increase steadily, if slowly, provided that no new crisis takes place.

The results of the ongoing nation-branding campaign launched five years ago by the Lee Myung-bak administration are mixed. On the one hand, both *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit* shifted their coverage from political and strictly economic issues to sociocultural ones. On the other hand, the salience of South Korea declined and the article tone was less positive overall; only recently has *Die Zeit* published positive stories, and *Der*

Spiegel's are more negative than they were during the preceding, Roh Moo-hyun, administration. As usual, this is a matter of editorial orientation: *Die Zeit* tends to be positive on sociocultural issues, such as the democratisation process, whereas *Der Spiegel* is most upbeat when dealing with economic issues. With the shift away from economic topics, the magazine's depiction of South Korea lost some of its glow.

Image and Focus: A Shift Over Time

Each of the seven decades that compose the period under study was dominated by one issue or another. The focus shifts from military issues (the Korean War) in the 1940/50s to politics in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s and to economic issues thereafter: evidence of South Korea's increasing international importance. The variety of the coverage increases dramatically; by the 2000s/2010s cultural, social, economic and political topics make up more than 10 percent of the coverage at both *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit*. These results confirm former previous research on Western news-media coverage of South Korea (Lee 2010; Roh et al. 2012).

As for broad topics such as democratisation and elections, political figures and the Korean War, their evolution is most accurately reflected in combination with the country focus (Table 6). The Korean War dominated coverage during the 1940s and 1950s (which therefore peaked during the war years, 1950–1953); thus most of these articles focused on South Korea's relationship with the U.S. During the 1960s, on account of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency's forcible extradition of Korean citizens from Germany, the focus shifted to relations between the two countries. During the 1970s attention shifted to Park Chung-hee and the notorious Yushin constitution, and in the 1980s to the Olympic Games and the democratisation process. Until the end of the 20th century coverage was almost entirely of negative issues; even the democratisation process was treated thus by *Der Spiegel*, where emphasis was placed on the social chaos it engendered. With the arrival of the 21st century the main interest in Korea itself shifted to North Korea, thereby undercutting South Korea's efforts to improve its own image abroad. Nevertheless, South Korea is nowadays recognised for its economic success, and especially for its growing strength in the technological sector.

Table 6: Country focus and main topics in coverage.

Period	Country focus 1	Country focus 2	Topic	Incidents
1940s/ 1950s	South Korea -North Korea - United States	South Korea other nations	Korean War / military issues	Korean War, 1950–1953
1960s	South Korea	South Korea- Germany	Korean CIA	Extradition of Korean citizens from Germany, 1967–1969
1970s	South Korea	South Korea- North Korea	Political figures, law	Park Chung-hee, Yushin 1972
1980s	South Korea	South Korea- other nations	Sports, democratisation	Olympic Games 1988, democratisation 1987–1988
1990s	South Korea	North Korea	Finance	IMF crisis 1997
2000s/10s	South Korea	North Korea	Science and technology, movies	Continuous economic growth

Note: "Country focus 1" relates to the combined results of "main country 1" for *Die Zeit* and *Der Spiegel* (see Table 4) while "country focus 2" consists of the combined results of "main country 2."

Stereotypes

Some negative stereotypes diminished over time; some were replaced by their positive opposites. For instance, during the 1940s/1950s South Korea was perceived as weak, account of the Korean War, but that perception faded during the next two decades; there are several instances in which its power is described in positive terms. *Die Zeit* was a decade ahead of *Der Spiegel* in reversing its negative assessment of South Korea's economic development during the 1970s, but the 1997 IMF crisis undid this improvement. With the new millennium South Korea's economic development gets a positive reevaluation and *Die Zeit* gives it high marks, but there is a significant lag between reality and evaluation, largely on account of lingering bad memories of the mass violence that accompanied the democratisation demonstrations.

South Korea's security, too, received a negative evaluation throughout the period under study, on account of the ever-present threat posed by North Korea, whereas the existence of its culture was rarely recognised at all. The most persistent stereotype is that of a lack of rule of law; the massacre of peaceful demonstrators, the torture of political prisoners during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s as well as a series of corruption scandals are historical facts that have yet to be buried by upbeat updates of South Korea's current high-tech successes.

Finally, the negative trade stereotype, dating from the 1980s, provoked by evidence that South Korea was engaged in dumping, and also by the poor quality of the products dumped, subsequently performed a U-turn, thanks to the international success of South Korea's best-known conglomerates.

As for labelling, South Korea was handicapped by the fact that the news media mold public opinion; that they tend to run stories with a negative slant; and that they are slow to change course. Negative issues have punctuated South Korea's history: military weakness during the 1940s/1950s, economic weakness during the 1990s, virtual dictatorship until the 1980s, trade infringements during the 1980s and 1990s, and the absence of the rule of law (or the existence of corruption) throughout the entire period, whereas South Korea's working democracy, its military strength, its cultural assets receive scant attention: the tags "economic miracle" and "high-tech nation" indicate the reasons for improvements in South Korea's image. Although *Der Spiegel* gives greater weight to economic issues than does *Die Zeit*, *Der Spiegel's* is less positive about South Korea: in spite of the Lee Myung-bak administrations' campaign to improve South Korea's cultural image. Apparently only *Die Zeit*, because of its fondness for cultural issues, has noticed the progress made on this front to a certain degree.

It must be admitted, however, that this time lag is quite surprising. In 2012 exports of K-Pop amounted to 250 million dollars (Park 2013) and more than 11 million foreign tourists parted with 14.1 billion dollars before heading back home (Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism 2012). Despite the fact that his success was worldwide, K-Pop star Psy went virtually unremarked by both *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit*.

Three facts emerge from these results. First, negative issues have a limited shelf life; a stereotype's days are numbered once reality catches up with it. Second, a single, outstanding crisis tends to have an outsize negative effect; for instance, the IMF crisis generated more negative economic references than did all economic events during the entire preceding 48 years. Third, positive developments are overlooked when they are of no personal interest to the reader; thus coverage of Korea's expanding cultural sector

does not serve as an intercultural bridge, opening Germans' eyes, for instance, to the charms of South Korea's video-game sector, but is scanty in quantity and hostile in tone.

CONCLUSION

Our systematic, historical content analysis of all major Korea-related articles appearing from 1948 to 2013 in one of Germany's leading weekly news magazine, *Der Spiegel*, and one of its leading weekly newspapers, *Die Zeit*, reveals that over the course of this period South Korea's image changed from that of the "Land of the Morning Calm," a somewhat backward and isolated nation, out of step with the modern, democratic Western world, to that of a "high-tech nation," its economy powered by forward-thinking entrepreneurs. However, there was a regrettable time lag, some but not all of the negative stereotypes getting discarded only long after they had parted ways with reality. Moreover, positive stereotypes of equal quantity and force did not replace the negative ones; instead, the "economic miracle" of this "high-tech nation" dominates news coverage, and its many cultural charms remain little known in the West.

Our research tentatively suggests that a persistent, long-term bias in the German print news media accounts in part for the West's generally negative image of South Korea. However, the recent trend has been positive, so there is good reason to believe that the lag between perception and reality will steadily diminish and eventually disappear.

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NOTES

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