

Global Eclectic Treatment of COVID-19: Global, Regional, and National Perspectives on Common Enemy

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Abstract

After being called the UN's, COVID-19 has become a global common enemy today. The escalation of the pandemic has been responded to nationally, regionally, as well as globally. However, the efforts of the United Nations as the most significant international organization are interpreted differently at the regional and national levels. That way, there will be a gap in understanding between the handling of COVID-19 at the global, regional, and national levels. Therefore, this paper discusses further how the COVID-19 as a common global enemy is reflected in regional and national actions against this pandemic? The global eclectic theory is explored to explain how global concepts relate to more specific concepts. Comparing the COVID-19 handling policies in ASEAN, SAARC, and the EU is needed to deeply explain the differences in handling the outbreak in each region. The result shows that common enemies do not automatically reflect joint regional action. National interest is still challenging to consolidate at the regional, furthermore global level. Moreover, cultural differences between countries cannot be reduced quickly in global matters.

Keywords: Common Enemy, COVID-19, Eclectic Global Theory, Regionalism.

Abstrak

Setelah disebut sebagai cobaan berat PBB, COVID-19 telah menjadi musuh bersama global saat ini. Eskalasi pandemi telah ditanggapi secara nasional, regional, maupun global. Namun, upaya PBB sebagai organisasi internasional yang paling signifikan diinterpretasikan secara berbeda di tingkat regional dan nasional. Dengan begitu, akan terjadi kesenjangan pemahaman antara penanganan COVID-19 di tingkat global, regional, dan nasional. Oleh karena itu, tulisan ini membahas lebih jauh bagaimana COVID-19 sebagai musuh global bersama yang tercermin dalam aksi regional dan nasional melawan pandemi ini? Teori eklektik global dieksplorasi untuk menjelaskan bagaimana konsep global berhubungan dengan konsep yang lebih spesifik. Membandingkan kebijakan penanganan COVID-19 di ASEAN, SAARC, dan UE diperlukan untuk menjelaskan secara mendalam perbedaan penanganan wabah di masing-masing kawasan. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa musuh bersama tidak secara otomatis mencerminkan aksi regional bersama. Kepentingan nasional masih sulit untuk dikonsolidasikan di tingkat regional, apalagi global. Apalagi, perbedaan budaya antar negara tidak dapat dikurangi dengan cepat dalam masalah global.

Kata kunci: Musuh Bersama, COVID-19, Teori Global Eklektik, Regionalism.

INTRODUCTION

Since United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, António Guterres, said that COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease of 2019) is the most challenging ordeal that the UN has faced since the UN's formation, COVID-19 has been known as a global common enemy today. More than a hundred million people have been infected worldwide, and at least five million people died because of the outbreak (Worldometers, 2021). At the beginning of lockdowns, micro and macro limitations and restrictions, and embargoes have been done to prevent the wider spread of this disease. Every country controls its population to stay inside and away from crowds. Hygiene culture of washing hands and wearing face masks promoted as health protocols.

As Aristotle stated that common danger should be uniting the actors even if they are enemies (Aristotle, 1885/1999, p. 115), COVID-19 still cannot join the conflict of interest between actors in the international environment. The necessity to overcome this pandemic globally did not necessarily lead to integrating actors to create a joint action. It is illustrated by the lack of coordination between states in several regions such Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

(SAARC), and European Union (EU), which are discussed later. Therefore, it is indispensable to explore how depicting COVID-19 as a global common enemy may reflect regional actions towards the pandemic. The eclectic global theory is explored to perform tensions between 'the whole' and 'the particular' in global matters. Comparing ASEAN, SAARC, and EU in regionalism is necessary to explain the handling of the outbreak. Although this virus has been a common global enemy, it does not eventually reflect joint regional actions. Cultural restrictions, limited applications, and uncommon anxiety are focal reasons.

METHOD AND THEORY

By using the qualitative method, certain concepts and written data are analyzed to answer the question in this paper. Online and offline scripts are used to explain correlations between COVID-19 as the global common enemy, regionalism ideas on the pandemic, and global, regional, and national matters on this outbreak. Online and offline scripts are derived from books and journals to understand shown matters. The data analysis includes obtaining sources, reading sources carefully, comparing with other issues, quoting into paper, and writing down references lists.

Besides, this paper would like to underline the eclectic approach as its method. This kind of approach covers various perspectives to indicate the complexity of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the world. Framing research puzzles, attaining representations of relevant empirical observations, and paying attention to the causal mechanism of fundamental issues is how this method could define and explore this paper's theme (Katzenstein and Sil, 2008, p. 110). This method is also in line with the actual condition of COVID-19 that requires health, psychological, law, international relations, and other perspectives that could help stop the spread of this virus. Analytic eclecticism is also similar to the concept of cultural studies that copes with abundant knowledge variants. This method does not stop in single points of view, but it moves between many. In international relations perspectives, the problem of this virus flows among subjective and inter-subjective, grows alongside sameness and otherness, and solves matters involving national, regional, and global points. Eclectic understandings enable researchers to separate one fundamental and then recombine each into a different idea of knowledge (Katzenstein and Sil, 2008, pp. 110-111).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

COVID-19 as Global Common Enemy

In March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially announced COVID-19 as a pandemic and asked all countries to pay more attention to health, economy, social disruption, and human rights. WHO also stated that the virus is a shared global enemy for humanity since it concerns all humanity issues (WHO, 2020 and Miranti, 2020). Besides, the vast spread of COVID-19 makes Li Li argue that COVID-19 must be considered a common enemy that can unite the world and create some joint action (Li. 2020). According to Hans Haller and Britta Hoyer, a common enemy is a phenomenon in which group members work together when they face an opponent. However, they otherwise have little in common (Haller and Hoyer, 2019, p. 163). Unlike World Wars and other global events that pit one set of countries and people against another, all countries and all people nowadays are on one side against a common enemy – the COVID-19 virus (Reykjavik Global Forum, 2020). This global common enemy is different from the initial of its emergence, even though some countries like Indonesia use various dimensions, including military, to deal with COVID-19 (Taufika, 2020, p. 4). Currently, the

faced threats may endanger human existence in non-military and non-conventional, referred to as non-traditional security threats.

According to the Consortium of Non-Traditional Security Studies in Asia, "non-traditional security threats may be defined as challenges to the survival and well-being of peoples and states. It arises primarily from non-military sources such as climate change, cross-border environmental degradation, resource depletion, infectious diseases, natural disasters, irregular migration, food shortages, people smuggling, drug trafficking, and other forms of transnational crime (NTS-Asia, 2021)." The 2002-2003 SARS outbreak had become an example of how health problems became a threat so that the COVID-19 pandemic is included in the non-traditional concept. Moreover, this pandemic also reflects trans-national aspects often defined in political and socio-economic terms. Security is no longer just state issues but also touches both individual and societal levels that need more attention from regional and multilateral cooperation (NTS-Asia, 2021).

In action to fight against the COVID-19 pandemic as soon as possible, the International community and country take readiness on active surveillance, early detection, isolation and case management, contact

tracing, and prevention of the onward spread of COVID-19 (Qian, X., Ren, R., Wang, Y. et al, 2020). Multi-sectoral cooperation is a must to present global solutions. The international community and country should cooperate better in sharing information and data, coordination on surveillance and response, and coherence on research priority setting (Qian, X., Ren, R., Wang, Y. et al, 2020).

The effort to fight COVID-19 is the launch of the Access of COVID-19 Tools (ACT)-Accelerator partnership by WHO and collaborators (WHO, 2021). This global cooperation is hoped to be quick, coordinated, and successful efforts in dealing with the ongoing pandemic. This partnership is fully supported through a research and knowledge development network organized by academics, the private sector, and government initiatives. It is hoped that the acute phase of the pandemic can be passed by efforts such as increasing testing, treatment, and distribution of vaccines worldwide (WHO, 2021).

One form of cooperation is the provision of vaccines or COVAX. Through the COVAX scheme, equal and fair access to vaccines may be attained. In November 2020, WHO stated that COVAX Facility has succeeded in procuring global

vaccines with the involvement of 180 countries (WHO, 2020). Various helpful pointers are issued by WHO to break the chain of the spread of COVID-19, such as instructions for staying safe, instructions when being diagnosed with the virus, instructions when visiting a sick person at home and in hospital, instructions when shopping and being on public transportation, and others (WHO, 2021).

Barry Desker (2011, in Othman, Jian and Mahamud, 2013, p. 153) stated that in non-traditional security threats, national solutions are sometimes insufficient to solve existing problems, thus requiring regional and multilateral cooperation. The pandemic as a global challenge has implications for addressing global problems. The WHO realizes that many countries are experiencing difficulties dealing with the outbreak. Cases in some countries prove that the pandemic does not only affect health but also economically and socially. Various economic activities have stopped, causing economic growth to fall to a minus level such as Singapore (-12.6%), Hong Kong (-9%), South Korea (-2.9%), India (-24%), Thailand (-12,2%), Filipina (-16,5%), Japan (-1.7%), United States (-9.5%), France (-19%), Spain (-22%) and Italy (-17%) (Lidwina, 2020).

Efforts to present a global solution to the pandemic are also reflected in Global Initiative on Sharing Avian Influenza Data (GISAID) on open access to primary data on influenza and coronaviruses to build quick responses to the problems that occur (GISAID, 2021). One of the results of cooperation from GISAID is the discovery of various coronavirus mutations that have spread throughout the world. British, South African, and Indian mutations are more contagious and deadly than other Coronavirus mutations. The Information sharing that reflects by the GISAID Initiative system is so important. By sharing Data, all GISAID users can be presenting collaborations among researchers based on open sharing of data and respect for all rights and interests (GISAID, 2021). Information sharing, such as genome sequences, can protect more people by preparing the diagnostic and treatment schemes as quickly as possible.

Various collaborations and solutions to the pandemic from WHO, non-state international organizations, academics, and several donor agencies prove that all elements united against a common enemy. Access to various research, research results, test kits, treatment tools, and vaccine distribution must

be distributed throughout the country and the world. Without this distribution, efforts to suppress the spread of the pandemic will never be successful. Many actors realize that the uncontrolled spread of the virus will result in worse things seen from imposed restrictions or lockdowns in many countries. Economic activities and population movements have stopped. Of course, the domino effect of this is the economic figures that have declined sharply and ended in recession in several countries.

Therefore, making COVID-19 a common enemy is realistic because what is faced is not only a matter of public health but other elements related to human life. Collaborations between state and non-state elements will overcome existing problems with one common enemy. Several vaccines have been successfully produced a year after the pandemic, such as Pfizer, Astra Zeneca, Sinovac, Moderna, Sputnik, and Novavax, to slow the spread of the virus.

Of course, an effort to make COVID-19 a common enemy must not end until a vaccine is found. It has been a year since the various elements of life have declined. India, Singapore, Turkey, and several European countries experienced a drastic increase in the positive curve of the outbreak. In addition, it was also reported that there was a new

mutation of this virus. It indicates that global efforts to fight the disease must continue. The latest guidelines regarding the pandemic must be continuously updated. Various responses to COVID-19 must be continuously updated to create protective measures to slow the pandemic's spread.

Today's Regionalism on COVID-19 Condition

The spread of the virus is quite massive, making every country tighten international travel rules, especially against the countries that are the most significantly affected (especially China, Iran, Italy, and now India). However, this rule has a significant impact on the economies of each country. Global tourism, trade, business, education, and labor mobility depend on cross-border travel. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN WTO) estimates a loss of 850 million to 1 billion international tourist arrivals, 910 million US \$ to 1.1 trillion US \$ export revenue, and around 100-120 million jobs (UN Conference on Trade and Development, 2020, p. 7). Therefore, collective handling between countries is still needed to suppress the spread of COVID-19 without destroying the economy massively.

Since world governments can only be a good theory but harmful in practice (Yacoub, 2018, p. 1465), handling COVID-19 challenges regionalism, including Europe and Southeast Asia, are vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19. Europe and Southeast Asia are regions with a reasonably high level of integration. The interconnection between the two regions in terms of the supply chain, trade, investment, tourism, and personal connectivity, both intra-regional and inter-regional, is quite deep (Kliem, 2020, p. 4). In other words, the handling of a pandemic in one country in Southeast Asia and Europe has the potential to have regional impacts. Consequently, pandemic management must be included in the regional agenda because regional cooperation is the *sine qua non* for everyone's security (Kliem, 2020, p. 4) and non-traditional security.

However, the importance of this regional cooperation was not accompanied by the actions of its regional organizations. Neither the ASEAN nor the EU has yet to show good cooperation. When ASEAN is intensively holding several meetings through assessments (ASEAN, 2020), including with external partners such as the United States, there are still few collective actions taken by ASEAN (CSIS, 2021). Moreover, the existence

of ASEAN in dealing with the challenges of COVID-19 needs to be questioned (Falahi dan Nainggolan, 2020, p. 10). In the conditions of the spread of this pandemic, each ASEAN country took unilateral and uncoordinated steps to reduce further spread (Kliem, 2020, p. 4).

The discrepancy in regional and national-level actions probably stems from how the pandemic affected each ASEAN member state (Thuzar, 2021). Regional efforts against pandemic establish some of the regional responses such as ASEAN Centre on Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Disease, ASEAN Emergency Operating Centre Network for Public Health Emergency and the ASEAN Bio Diaspora Virtual Centre, and also ASEAN Risk Assessment and Risk Communication Centre to combat misinformation and fake news (Thuzar, 2021). Different leadership, national pandemic taskforces, and other measures against COVID-19 at the national level caused bilateral cooperation more precedence than regional cooperation. Regional measures, which provided the foundation for various national responses and policies, are not immediately visible on the ground compared to national measures and bilateral cooperation against pandemic COVID-19 (Thuzar, 2021).

For instance, Malaysia was suddenly closing borders closing the supply of goods and labor to Singapore. Vietnam also closed its borders with Cambodia and Laos, while the impact of this closure was Cambodia's closing of the borders as retaliation. Meanwhile, other countries postponed border closings simply out of respect for China (Kliem, 2020, p. 4). It indicates that ASEAN still lacks coordination between members of the state to build at least one joint action for ASEAN. As John Michael, Sebanz and Knoblich argue that high coordination could enhance the commitment of members to embrace a joint action (Michael, Sebanz, and Knoblich, 2016, p. 23). As a regional organization, ASEAN still faces a trusted program due to the intangible nature of regional cooperation (Thuzar, 2021)

Meanwhile, in Europe, the President of the European Commission of the EU, Ursula von der Leyen, stated that European member countries are still acting independently in dealing with this COVID-19. She stated that when Europe needed an "all for one" spirit, too many countries initially responded, "only for me" (Leyen in European Commission, 2020). Each EU member country has different objectives, levels of vulnerability, and

capacity in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. France, Italy, and Spain have the highest rates of COVID-19 victims compared to Nordic countries, but requests for assistance from these three countries have not received a convincing response (Alter in WEF, 2020, p. 14). Therefore, there is still little solidarity between EU member countries handling this pandemic.

From the explanation above, it can be seen that although both ASEAN and EU have a joint commitment in handling this COVID-19 pandemic, there is still little integrated coordination between member countries to create joint policy products. Likewise, for the EU, the high level of EU integration has not eliminated the own sides of each country. As Greece did not obey the Common European Asylum System by refusing refugees from Syria (Anadza, 2019, p. 162), realism is still relevant even when there is a crisis. The state is still the leading actor in international relations. Reinhold Niebuhr states that "the increased economic interdependence among the nations, and the whole apparatus of a technological civilization, increase the problems and issues between nations much more rapidly than the intelligence to solve them can be created" (Niebuhr in Walt, 2020).

On the other side, some regional regimes still face unfinished bilateral problems among member countries. In SAARC, instead of solving this pandemic together, the regime is still overshadowed by the feud between India and Pakistan, two major countries of SAARC. Pakistan has declared a contribution of US\$ 3 million to the COVID-19 Emergency Fund of SAARC, but India was suspicious that the action would gain more power to Pakistan in the region (Campos, 2020). The two countries appeared to be at odds even during a SAARC video conference regarding the pandemic of COVID-19. It was reported that Pakistan boycotted the conference and said that the meeting could be effective only if it were not India leading it (India.com, 2020). It indicates that problems between countries in one region are obstacles to regional cooperation in regional organizations.

Global, Regional, and National Perspectives on COVID-19

Global governance can be considered successful when dealing with common problems such as terrorism, environmental destruction, HIV/AIDS (Anadza, 2019, p. 159), and the COVID-19 pandemic. The global common enemy concept and regionalism in today's pandemic lie in the crucial differences between global

and particular levels. Those tensions are widely emphasized in eclectic globalization theory, which includes various perspectives besides international relations (Scholte, 2005, p. 136). This eclectic view is so cultural that it may involve philosophy, literature, or psychology (Ivanova, Bilalova, and Knyazeva, 2018). In this case, tensions between 'the global' and 'the particular' have shaped different policies towards this virus outbreak.

Countries and regionalism know the WHO statement of a global common enemy as part of the particular. However, the concept is merely worldwide information handled differently by each country (Qian, X., Ren, R., Wang, Y. et al, 2020). The countries as the particulars understand the concept but still move by themselves regarding their potentials.

The eclectic perspectives on globalization view that countries and other global actors may move in unpredictable patterns (Ivanova, Bilalova, and Knyazeva, 2018). Casualties in this perspective are only seen in proximate cause and effect factors, but saying that this actor will do that action because of that particular reason is out of sense. It seems in today's pandemic situation. By not undermining the efforts made by every country and individuals to

deal with the virus, it seems that each country acts by their interests, and even regional organizations play fewer roles besides merely written formal assessments.

Then, depicting COVID-19 as a global common enemy does not reflect regional actions towards the pandemic. There are some reasons why the reflection is still a blur from national, regional, and global matters. States inevitably remain crucial today, as stated in realism in the national aspect. National actors could only take total actions, especially in this critical condition (Ivanova, Bilalova, and Knyazeva, 2018). In the regional aspect, as widely known through liberalism, goodwill of every country in regional regimes is needed to unite urgent policies towards the pandemic issues. Regionalism is full of flexibility but facing the sovereignty of the nationals is also unavoidable. In the global aspect, this level has the superiority to handle much broader problems without any idea. The United Nations (UN) may speak to almost all countries about traditional and non-traditional security issues (Qian, X., Ren, R., Wang, Y. et al, 2020). However, without any honest policy from countries, the speaking is merely dialogues of panels and councils.

There are reasons why stating COVID-19 as a global common

enemy does not automatically reflect joint regional actions. First, a global common enemy concept is not in line with common sense. It does not say that it is irrational, but the concept must face other senses that have been theorized and practiced by global actors. As stated in the whole and the particular above, tensions between global, regional, and national levels are inevitable. Those levels have their logic, and introducing a new logic needs more process to be realized. The global common enemy as a new knowledge must be handled with different approaches, but global actors may only know a few of the virus and its outbreak (Qian, X., Ren, R., Wang, Y. et al, 2020). The pandemic is different from any threat before. Even the SARS outbreak - only spreading in 29 different countries- is not comparable to today's COVID-19. The national level of actors could only adopt some aspects from global health protocols and some regional socio-economic advice, but the others are still related to their senses. In regionalism, having more cooperation in crucial conditions is still limited. The senses are still regarded as beneficial factors rather than helping others voluntarily. The primary important sense at the state level is protecting the citizens, degrading regionalism participation (Scholte in Political Science Note,

2017). The assessments of regionalism are clear and visible. However, the applications are still limited from inside and restricted from outside.

For instance, in ASEAN's assessment, the pandemic indeed threatens progress in poverty reduction. Poor people with congested housing are not conducive to social distancing (ASEAN, 2020, p. 22), but evacuating them into more proper places is never possible. They are putting a balance between public health and economic concerns (ASEAN, 2020, p. 26). However, limited movements are still in line with the limited flow of capital that will affect the limited progress of the economy. Giving more benefits to reduce unemployment is goodwill. This pandemic may make people lose their jobs (ASEAN, 2020, p. 37), but it is another matter to use the competencies instantly to survive everyday needs. In those cases, the sense is still business without any urgency followed. States are still the main actors in regionalism, and regional aspects only have roles in taking notes of what their member states have done in the pandemic.

Second, the existence of various cultures could be omitted from global ideas. While global ideas remain uniform, culture moves in relative measurements (Raikhan, et al., 2014).

The reality of different knowledge, potential, resources, and funding could never be taken out of context. The concept of the pandemic as a global common enemy must face diversities of contexts among states and their regional regimes. On the cultural side, the concept of a global common enemy is just such ground for future policies, but the building built above it is according to national policies. The global aspect is not monolithic, yet culture could never be reduced to universality (Scholte in Political Science Note, 2017). Foreign policy is a matter of the paradigm of culture best known by global actors. It may be affected by various backgrounds, but policy certainty is various. This perspective is seen in the national aspect.

For instance, in WHO's statements, movements of populations should be limited to respond to this common enemy concept (WHO, 2020). Not all countries applied the same policies, and some did national lockdowns while others restricted to more micro areas. Some countries blocked foreigners from entering their countries, while others opened and closed their borders regarding the curve of infection cases. Some countries guarantee their people to have adequate funds and everyday needs during the pandemic, while

others could not fulfill everyone's needs at the same time.

In the regional aspect, how western and eastern countries handle this pandemic are pretty different. EU may hold more power to sustain the availability of hospitals and even vaccine across its members (The Brussels Times, 2021), while ASEAN could only exchange information and share experiences facing the pandemic. EU could call for more resources to stop the broader outbreak in a state, while SAARC could only play minimum roles when India faces a drastic increase in infection cases and deaths (Swain, 2021 and Campos, 2020).

Third, the common enemy is not similar to having common anxiety. In psychology, defense mechanisms often overcome anxiety (Perrotta, 2020, p. 1-7). In this global pandemic case, countries and regional regimes have different anxiety levels towards the pandemic. Some countries are still in alert situations, and some deny the urgent conditions and focus on fixing their economy. Statement of global common Enemy does not reflect the uniformity of defense mechanisms of countries and regionalism (Swain, 2021).

The mechanisms are still relative based on how urgent global actors indicate the pandemic situations.

United States may ignore the pandemic due to former Trump's policies (US News, 2021). Recently, India and Israel have faced high cases because of cultural-religious events that disobey health protocols (Swain, 2021 and US News, 2021). Indonesia still restricts many massive movements, although the infection cases are declining. At the regional level, the EU may distribute more vaccines than any regionalism, but its level of anxiety is still low (The Brussels Times, 2021). ASEAN and SAARC may have high anxiety about the virus, but their joint actions are still limited (Swain, 2021). Some could fix the problems at ease, while others play roles in other aspects such as public health awareness in grass root aspects.

Those three reasons above show that the concept of a global common enemy should not be considered the wholeness for the particulars. In reverse, it is such a necessary universal condition for specific pandemic policies. This idea then contains two faces. On a hand, the universal concept may contain broader possibilities for national and regional actors to move (Raikhan, et. al, 2014). Various policies could be applied depending on their resources. This side appreciates the diversities of policies or even the anxiety of global actors.

On the other side, there is a consequence that the global common enemy is just mere information for global actors and will affect only as advice. Regional joint actions could not be confirmed to be done in an instant as there are limitations and restrictions due to state sovereignties (Swain, 2021). Sharing experience and information is the top point that can be reached and will never touch the commonness of perspectives and actions towards the pandemic. More complicated aspects could be found at national levels that directly touch people's lives. More transformations are needed so that usual policies may contain urgent aspects to cope with daily infection cases.

CONCLUSION

Stating COVID-19 as a global common enemy does not resolve such everyday actions towards the pandemic. This crisis needs to be resolved in one country and at the upper level, regional or even global. Many meetings and agreements at a regional or global level but not followed by coordination lead to a global commitment. COVID-19 as a common danger has not united the actors with different interests or even enemies. Even at the regional level, some organizations such as the EU, SAARC, and ASEAN face challenges realizing regional efforts against

COVID-19. The lack of ordinary senses, various cultures, and low level of common anxiety about this pandemic is the main problem that leads to the absence of joint action regionally and globally. Countries are more concerned with protecting their respective citizens than fighting the outbreak together. The WHO recommendations are only used as a benchmark for the policies of each country. Finally, the eclectic perspective of globalization proves that countries do not move as Aristotle predicted about a common enemy. Countries move in unpredictable patterns in facing COVID-19.

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