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Goguryeo Ghosts: China's History Dilemma and the Future of Sino-Korean Relations

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I. INTRODUCTION

Historical narratives lie at the core of national identity. As a result, competing interpretations of the past can come to define international relationships. Nowhere is this more evident than in Northeast Asia, where symbolic "history wars," combined with destabilizing Chinese growth, have contributed to a fraught security environment. The best known of these disputes stems from Japan's annexation of Korea and occupation of much of China in the decades before 1945. But if arguments about the legacy of Japanese imperialism have occasionally united Beijing, Seoul, and Pyongyang against Tokyo, another quarrel with much older roots has the potential to pit both Koreas against China and could even play a defining role in Sino-Korean relations in the event of Korea's reunification.

Understanding the significance of this speculation requires a brief foray into the pre-modern history of Northeast Asia. For over 600 years, between the first century B.C. and the seventh century A.D., much of the Korean Peninsula and Manchuria were ruled by the kingdom of Goguryeo. Although governed in its final two centuries from Pyongyang, the kingdom's early capitals sat north of the Yalu River, which today demarcates the western portion of the border between China and North Korea. At its height in the fifth century, Goguryeo controlled lands that would now include parts of South and all of North Korea, as well as contiguous land in northeast China and a sliver of maritime Russia. Because the peninsula's south was then split between two other states, Silla and Baekjae, contemporary historians refer to this era as Korea's Three Kingdoms Period. The tripartite division finally came to an end in the second half of the seventh century, when the southeastern kingdom of Silla, having enlisted the assistance of China's Tang Dynasty, absorbed its western and northern rivals.

Tying modern nations to ancient predecessors can be a messy business, but historians generally concur in describing the Goguryeo state as proto-Korean. In 2002, however, this mainstream view came under attack, when the Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS), a government-backed think tank, launched a re-evaluation of Goguryeo history under the auspices of its "Northeast Project," which sought to recast the pre-modern history of Manchuria and Korea. The project concluded Goguryeo had not been an autonomous political entity but rather a vassal of the Middle Kingdom, falling within "Chinese local history,"

according to Gilbert Rozman's 2010 book, *U.S. Leadership, History and Bilateral Relations in Northeast Asia.* It is unclear to what degree CASS's work was directed by the central government, but official actions permit an inference of collusion. In 2003 and 2004, while the project was still underway, China applied to UNESCO to register Goguryeo tombs in China as a World Heritage Site, and China's Foreign Ministry conspicuously scrubbed its website of references to pre-modern Korean history.

In South Korea, the effect of China's Goguryeo revisionism was explosive. In the popular press, which gave the issue extensive coverage, the Northeast Project was depicted as a negation of Korea's ethno-cultural independence from China. To combat China's version of history, the South Korean government established its own Goguryeo Research Foundation in 2004 and summoned China's ambassador in Seoul to protest the alterations to the Foreign Ministry website. The dispute triggered a near-instantaneous reversal in positive South Korean attitudes towards China, which dated back to the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1992. While it is harder to gauge the issue's effect on China-North Korea relations, the North Korean regime, which filed its UNESCO application for its own Goguryeo tombs in 2001, has a strained relationship with its greater patron and employs a distinctive nationalist mythology valorizing Goguryeo vis-à-vis its southern rivals, Silla and Baekje.

In 2004, seeking to quell the controversy, China promised South Korea that it would not include its own account of Goguryeo history in Chinese high school textbooks. Although the dispute was not forgotten in South Korea, it went into remission. In late January 2013, however, South Korea's *Hankyoreh* newspaper reported that a group of scholars in the northeastern Chinese province of Jilin was conducting "closed research" on a freshly discovered stele, an engraved memorial stone dating to the fifth century. "Concerns are being raised," the *Hankyoreh* piece noted vaguely, "that with key figures from the Northeast Project taking part in the research, it is very likely that China will use the results of the study…to reinforce its argument that Goguryeo belongs to China."

Even before this stele's discovery, as the Goguryeo dispute lay dormant, related controversies over culture and history continued to roil China-South Korea relations. In 2011, for example, South Koreans were outraged when China included the quintessentially Korean folk melody "Arirang" on an official list of Chinese cultural assets, purportedly to celebrate an artistic contribution from China's own ethnic Korean population. In summer 2012, South Korea registered formal concern with China after Chinese archeologists claimed to have established that the Great Wall was more than twice its previously estimated length, extending almost to the Korean border. For their part, many Chinese objected to South Korea's 2005 UNESCO registration of a local holiday derived

from China's traditional Dragon Boat Festival, which fed Internet rumors (largely false) that Koreans also claim other Chinese icons, from Confucius to Sun Yat-sen.

As North Korea expert Andrei Lankov has observed in a 2006 *Asia Times* article, there is a certain absurdity to arguing over "ownership" of any ancient kingdom or tradition. Lankov has described the Goguryeo dispute as a "retro-projection of modern identities," the application of anachronistic labels to a long-gone people:

> The real-life Goguryoans would have been surprised or even offended to learn that, in the future, they would be perceived by Koreans as members of the same community as their bitter enemies from Silla. Describing Goguryo as Chinese or Korean is as misleading as, say, describing medieval Brittany as French or English or Irish.

But while the dispute may be ahistorical, it still has contemporary political resonance, particularly in South Korea. Given the symbolic power of the issue and the challenges it poses to Sino-Korean relations, it is worth considering why Beijing has continued to flirt with revisionism. This paper considers the strategic thinking that may underlie China's new and controversial reading of Northeast Asian history, placing China's actions in the context of perceived threats to the state's integrity and security. Specifically, it draws connections between this dispute and Chinese concerns about the long-term future of Northeast Asia and independence movements on its western frontier. It then discusses the apparent effects of the Goguryeo dispute and other identity-related controversies on Korean perceptions of China. Finally, the paper outlines the dilemma that China faces in attempting to recast Northeast Asian history to its own advantage and the implications of these efforts for Sino-Korean relations, suggesting that China's internal imperatives make it likely that historical debates will continue to sow regional discord.

II. THE VIEW FROM BEIJING

From overseas, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) can appear self-assured and optimistic, buoyed by decades of relentless growth, and increasingly willing to flex its diplomatic and military muscles in East Asia and beyond. For many foreign observers, the Beijing Olympics offered the definitive image of the new China: modern, proud, regimented, and efficient. China's visible success, contrasted with the ongoing financial and sovereign debt crises besetting the West, has led some to conclude that the CCP's combination of "meritocratic" one-party rule and state capitalism may be a compelling alternative to liberal democracy and Anglo-Saxon economics. In addition, although the United States

retains a significant military edge over China, China has cut into the American lead, which has no doubt contributed to its willingness to press maritime territorial claims in the South and East China Seas. Considering China's trajectory—it is projected to have the world's largest economy within a decade, surpassing the United States—why shouldn't the CCP be confident?

In fact, as its own leaders are aware, China's political horizon is as hazy as its skies. Unlike the United States, which maintains a strong network of alliances around the globe, China's closest friends are troubled states with little international clout. At home, the legitimacy of CCP rule has come to hinge on its ability to deliver jobs, meaning that a sharp drop in asset prices or even anemic growth could lead to serious unrest. Environmental and public health disasters, gruesome accidents, and shocking stories of elite corruption have filtered through the Great Firewall, igniting fury on Twitter-style microblogs like Sina Weibo. Meanwhile, on China's lightly-populated Himalayan and Central Asian frontiers, independence movements simmer, posing at least a conceptual threat to the state's integrity and stability. For reasons stemming from China's history, demographics, and strategic fears, these movements obsess Beijing.

More than 90 percent of China's 1.3 billion citizens are members of the Han ethnic group, which dominates the country's major cities and populous coastal provinces, but China is a multinational state with 56 officially recognized ethnic groups and growing religious minorities (including tens of millions of Muslims and Christians). China's diversity—along with its sheer size, geographic centrality, and long record of distinctive cultural achievements—has led some, including the CCP apologist Martin Jacques, to describe China as a "civilization state," incomprehensible to foreign observers whose understanding of international relations is based on the experience of the splintered, Westphalian West. Whether or not this assessment is accurate, it is certainly true that China has no Western analog. The Middle Kingdom has always maintained a sense of its own cultural integrity, not to say superiority, even when overrun by Mongol or Manchu "barbarians" or riven by civil war. Over millennia, it has thus exerted tremendous influence on the peoples around its borders.

Where exactly those borders lie has never been fixed for long and remains in some areas a matter of contention. As the international relations theorist David Kang noted in 2010, the East Asian political order prior to the arrival of European powers was fundamentally different from that of the West: rather than a jumble of delineated sovereign nation-states, East Asia was hierarchical, with rulers of smaller kingdoms paying tribute to the Middle Kingdom. Neighboring nations have thus maintained a complex and mutable relationship with China across the centuries—neither fully integrated into its empire, nor wholly autonomous in foreign policy. This can make it surprisingly hard to say, for

example, whether Tibet was ruled by China throughout the late Qing Dynasty (as China claims), given that the Qing continued sending administrators to Lhasa long after its actual power in the Himalayas had waned. By any measure, China as it exists today is larger than during most of its recorded history, yet smaller than at the Qing's peak in the early 19th century, before the disastrous collision with the West and later Japan.

That collision and the "century of humiliation" that followed still contribute to a sense of strategic insecurity in China and are important ingredients in a nationalist narrative that portrays China as the perpetual victim of jealous foreigners. This history also helps explain the CCP's fixation on China's independence movements, each of which is closely tied to its anxiety about outside interference.

Taiwan, governed from Taipei since the Nationalists fled to the island after China's Civil War, was previously severed from the mainland by Japan in 1895. The "loss" of Tibet in 1912, meanwhile, is generally blamed on Britain, which invaded in 1904 to force the Dalai Lama to establish relations with the British Raj. China's third major independence movement in the Turkic Uyghur homeland of southwest Xinjiang, or East Turkestan, seeks autonomy for a region that was dominated by the Soviet Union throughout the 1930s and 1940s. China's line is that the People's Liberation Army was only acting in accordance with its name when it invaded Tibet and Xinjiang in 1949 and 1950, freeing "Chinese" peoples from foreign tyranny. Losing either region would not only take a great terrestrial bite from western China (and, in the case of Tibet, increase China's exposure to rival India), but recall an era of mortifying impotence.

Faced with the challenge of integrating restive Tibet and Xinjiang into Greater China, China has encouraged Han Chinese to work and live in both regions, provided substantial aid for their development, and assiduously monitored and suppressed local dissent. But, it has also employed nationalism and history—which is where the line connecting Goguryeo and China's anxiety about Tibetan and Uyghur "splittists" becomes clear. Ruling over a vast and multinational civilization-state, Beijing has embraced a modern concept known as *zhonghua minzu*, usually translated as "Chinese nationalities"—the idea that Chinese identity transcends ethnic and cultural divisions, embracing peoples outside of the Han heartland who have fallen within China's sphere of influence. Appreciating that any challenge to this theory could endanger the entire edifice, Beijing regards its minority populations in parallel. Thus, CASS's Northeast Project was accompanied by Southwest and Northwest Projects, situating pre-modern Tibet and Xinjiang within "local Chinese history" as well, according to Rozman.

China's northeast bears little resemblance to its far west. Numbering less than two million residents, ethnic Koreans comprise only 40 percent of the population of the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, where the majority reside, and a mere four percent of Jilin Province, of which Yanbian is a part. Known as *chaoxianzu* in Chinese and *joseonjok* in Korean (names derived from Korea's Joseon Dynasty, which ruled the peninsula from 1392 until 1897), ethnic Koreans in this region are largely descended from families who arrived in China between the 1880s and 1940s, seeking richer farmland or fleeing the Japanese occupation. Many *chaoxianzu* sided with the Communists during the Chinese Civil War and have rarely faced systematic discrimination. Indeed, Beijing has allowed and even encouraged the teaching of Korean language and culture.

Unlike Tibetans and Uyghurs, China's ethnic Koreans have never been politically restive. Any pan-Korean sentiment that might exist in Yanbian has been dampened by the region's proximity to grim North Korea, as well as discrimination *joseonjok* have suffered while working in South Korea. Even if this were to change, demographics are destiny, and the region's Korean population is gradually shrinking in both relative and absolute terms. A credible challenge to Chinese sovereignty over Yanbian would thus require a sea change in the region's population and politics.

Nonetheless, as Andrei Lankov notes in his 2007 *Asia-Pacific Journal* article, "The potential threat of irredentism has never been completely forgotten [in Beijing]." and not without reason. "Greater Korea" fantasies encompassing a broad swath of Northeast China may be limited to a nationalist fringe, but many South Koreans resent the loss of Gando, a marshy plot ceded to the Qing Dynasty by Imperial Japan in 1909 and reject the validity of a 1962 pact between Pyongyang and Beijing acknowledging Chinese sovereignty over much of Mount Baekdu, a peak that plays a prominent role in Korean mythology. In 2007, Seoul was forced to apologize to Beijing after a group of South Korean athletes hoisted signs reading "Mount Baekdu is our land!" at the Winter Asian Games in Jilin.

In reality, of course, Korean invasion or secession is vanishingly unlikely. Still, not all of Beijing's fears concerning the peninsula are groundless. A more pressing threat to Chinese security is instability brought about by a failed North Korea. China scholars are generally quick to dismiss the notion that China has designs on the North, pointing to the dangers and costs of occupation. But if the North Korean regime crumbles, Goguryeo could still figure into China's calculus of intervention. China's contingency plans must account for the chance that South Korea would be unable or unwilling to stabilize a post-Kim North on its own, not to mention the possibility that U.S. troops could approach China's border. And, while few experts believe China would fight to block Korea's reunification under South Korea, China is less than enthused about the idea.

Just as France's colonial rule in North Africa conditioned its voters to support its intervention in Mali, the aggrandizement of China's historical role in Korea could make it easier for China to sell intercession on the peninsula to a skeptical public should such an expedition—however unpalatable—be deemed necessary.

Yet, it would be a mistake to view China's Goguryeo revisionism in the context of Korea and Manchuria alone. Recalling the *zhonghua minzu* concept, it is easy to see why China does not regard far-flung "autonomous" zones like Yanbian, Tibet, and Xinjiang in isolation. According to a 2013 *Washington Post* article, China scholar David Shambaugh observed that the CCP is obsessed with the Soviet Union's disintegration—a process hastened, as the CCP leadership is surely aware, by the rise of ethnic nationalist movements. Throughout the 20th century, such campaigns often proved contagious. The Korean uprising against Japanese rule on March 1, 1919, for example, drew inspiration from Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points" speech of the previous year, as well as the postwar independence of nations like Poland and Finland. China's appreciation of this phenomenon clarifies why China expressed "grave concern" at Kosovo's declaration of independence from Serbia in 2008 and later stood at Belgrade's side before the International Court of Justice.

Viewing the Northeast Project in this light, it appears likely that China's interest in Goguryeo is intimately tied to its fears about Xinjiang and Tibet. By reinforcing the idea that Chinese nationality has always incorporated a diverse array of ethnic groups, the placement of Goguryeo within "local Chinese history" indirectly reinforces China's claim over lands thousands of miles from Korea. China's aforementioned efforts to extend its iconic Great Wall make this connection explicit. In 2012, Chinese archeologists claimed to have found new segments of the Great Wall in Manchuria, more than doubling its length and running almost to North Korea. China's last major Wall-related discovery, a decade earlier, had extended its western terminus into Xinjiang.

III. KOREAN REACTIONS

The old cliché that Korea is a "shrimp among whales" is outdated, a throwback to the days before Samsung and Hyundai, when South Korea's total economic output was far smaller than its current defense budget of $30 billion. Nonetheless, this phrase continues to capture a key component of the national psyche—a fear that Korea could still be overrun by one of its bigger neighbors and a frustration that Korea's distinctive cultural accomplishments receive insufficient recognition from the wider world. In examining why present-day Koreans are so emotionally invested in a kingdom that peaked prior to Europe's Middle Ages, it is important to appreciate the mixture of strategic vulnerability

and national pride that inform the attitudes of both South and North Korea towards their neighbors, as well as the role that Goguryeo has played in forming modern Korean identity.

In *Imagined Communities*, his classic 1983 work on the origins of nationalism, Benedict Anderson proposes that national identity is a product of modernity, facilitated by the dissemination of vernacular literature and the development of a shared national discourse. The development of Korean nationalism, which has its roots in the late 19th century, is consistent with this theory. Some patriots sought illumination from abroad, drawing on Western sources from Christianity to Marxism, as well as the stunning industrialization of Meiji Japan. Others peered into to their own nation's past for inspiration. The most important member of this latter group was Shin Chae-ho, an independence activist and intellectual who died in a Japanese prison in China in 1938.

Shin, whose work is still read in both Koreas, was especially interested in the origins of the Korean *minjok* (race) and was the first modern historian to situate its ancient cultural heartland in Manchuria and the peninsula's north. He popularized the Dangun myth, which situates the genesis of the first proto-Korean kingdom, Gojoseon, near Mount Baekdu. Shin also lionized Yeon Gaesomun, a military leader of late Goguryeo notable for his fierce opposition to Tang China. For obvious reasons, this version of ancient history has particular appeal to the present-day mythologists of Pyongyang, where allusions to the ancient northern kingdom have been incorporated into the leadership's personality cult.

According to Shin and his acolytes, Goguryeo was not merely one proto-Korean kingdom, but *the* proto-Korean kingdom—the most authentic and influential predecessor of the various states that subsequently governed the peninsula as a whole. Thus, for South Koreans schooled in this tradition, the proposal that Goguryeo was merely "a minority group and a provincial government of China" reads like a flat negation of their nation's ethno-cultural distinctiveness. Such anxieties are reflected in South Korea's official response to China's Great Wall announcement in 2012: "The government's principal stance is not to overlook any possible history distortion as it directly relates to Koreans' ethnic identity."

Evidence that the Northeast Project has damaged China's image in South Korea is manifold. Between 2004 and 2005, when the Goguryeo dispute reached its height, the share of citizens who expressed a preference for prioritizing relations with Beijing over those with Washington flipped from 61 versus 26 percent to 29 versus 55 percent in one survey by *The Dong-A Ilbo*. Similar polls taken between 2006 and 2008 demonstrated that the trend continued to hold for years after the two nations' governments had formally put the issue to rest, according

to 2009 *Asian Survey* article by Jae Ho Chung. Indeed, when the Asan Institute and German Marshall Fund of the United States polled South Koreans in 2012, only a small majority said that South Korea shares enough values with China to cooperate on international problems, and nearly three-quarters indicated that they now believe China poses a military threat to their country. Another 2012 poll, taken by the BBC World Service, found South Koreans are far more likely than Americans, Russians, Indians, or Australians to describe China's worldwide influence as negative—surpassing on this score even the Japanese. Not all Korean Sinophobia can be attributed to an abstract debate over history, of course, but the revelation of the Northeast Project does appear to have coincided with a sharp reversal in attitudes toward China.

Although it may seem hard to believe that ordinary citizens would take interest in a dispute of such remote provenance, the South's immensely popular television dramas often mine Korean history for material. In 2006, each of the nation's three major broadcasters—KBS, MBC, and SBS—ran an epic fictional series about Gogoryeo or one of its successor states, Balhae, which also ruled territories now within China and Russia. The most popular of these, MBC's *Jumong*, took its name from Goguryeo's founding monarch, who was portrayed (apocryphally) as battling invaders from China's Han Dynasty. Combined with extensive press coverage of the Northeast Project and the lengthening of the Great Wall, pop culture has helped keep the issue at the front of the national consciousness.

Given limited access to elite and public opinion in North Korea, it is much harder to say what effect these historical debates may have had on ties between Beijing and Pyongyang. We know the "lips and teeth" camaraderie of the 1950s is long gone, but the specific nature of the relationship between the North Korean regime and its Chinese patrons is famously mysterious. Mao Zedong's support for Kim Il-sung, borne of ideological solidarity as well as sincere gratitude for Korean contributions to the Communist cause in the Chinese Civil War, was attenuated by the Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s, as Kim cannily sought neutrality between his great-power protectors. Even as China agreed to impose sanctions after Kim Jong-un's nuclear test in February 2013, China remains—by an enormous margin—North Korea's key diplomatic benefactor, as well as its largest trading partner and source of aid. To Chinese frustration, North Korea seems to greet this assistance with resentment, paying little heed to China's economic advice and ignoring its admonitions against weapons testing.

Pyongyang remained uncharacteristically quiet as Beijing and Seoul litigated Goguryeo's status, but this circumspection should not be taken to mean it had no interest in the matter. Goguryeo evidently held a lifelong fascination for Kim Jong-il (who claimed, falsely, to have been born on the slopes of Mount Baekdu). According to Leonid Petrov in his 2004 article "Restoring the Glorious

Past: North Korean Juche Historiography and Goguryeo," the North has long traced its connections to Goguryeo in its propaganda and textbooks—one of which describes the northern kingdom as "a huge and powerful empire, which managed to subdue most of its neighbors in Manchuria" and even "threatened the territorial integrity of ancient China.

Indeed, rivalry between China and North Korea seems to have played a role in igniting the dispute, as China's decision to file a UNESCO application for Goguryeo tombs in its own territory was precipitated by a 2001 North Korean application for similar tombs south of the border. In late 2012, Western media outlets like Comedy Central made light of the North's bizarre claim to have uncovered an ancient "unicorn lair," but China may have found the story less amusing. Pyongyang had not, of course, intended to refer to the single-horned horse of European legend, but rather the mythical Northeast Asian *Kirin*—in this case, the particular beast ridden by Goguryeo's founder. While the Goguryeo dispute may not have produced any visible fissure between China and North Korea, the governments of both nations seem to have used this period of history to send messages and score points.

IV. CHINA'S DILEMMA

As a multinational state sharing land borders with fourteen other nations, China faces a political dilemma in defining its own civilizational scope. On the one hand, Beijing has an obvious incentive to promulgate historical narratives that legitimize its dominion over peoples within China's borders who do not, by and large, regard themselves as Chinese. This imperative is particularly acute in those regions with active independence movements, such as Tibet and Xinjiang, but its logic also extends to areas with quieter minority populations, including Yanbian.

And yet, while Beijing may yield some political advantages through advancing an expansive historical definition of Chinese civilization, such a revisionist project also has the potential to aggravate relations with neighbors. South Korea has generally taken care to balance between China and the United States, maintaining close economic relations with the former, by far its largest trading partner, and robust political and military ties with the latter. In pressing Goguryeo and similar cultural and historical claims, China risks pushing South Korea closer to the U.S.

This is not an idle concern. As recently as 2009, Japan's then-premier Hatoyama Yukio was calling for Japan to hew closer to Asia, an idea that sank as Sino-Japanese island tensions rose. With relations between China and South Korea already strained by North Korean weapons tests, China's security will suffer if China nudges South Korea in the same direction. Today, military cooperation

between Seoul and Tokyo is constrained by their own historical disagreements, as well as Seoul's desire to avoid being ensnared in broader regional conflicts. But, this dynamic could change along with East Asia's balance of military power.

If asked, the Northeast Project's architects might describe their work as corrective and defensive, a response to ethnic separatism and China's rational long-term concerns about a North Korean crackup and Korean reunification. South Koreans, however, generally view the project as an aggressive Chinese effort to delegitimize Korean civilization and perhaps as a signal of Beijing's designs on post-collapse North Korea or even the peninsula as a whole. This is a problem for China. South Korea is not only a close U.S. ally, but one of the world's dozen leading economic and military powers in its own right, fielding what expert Robert Farley has called the most powerful ship-for-ship fleet in Northeast Asia, per his 2012 assessment. With a recent agreement between Seoul and Washington extending the reach of South Korean missiles to 800 kilometers, major northeastern Chinese cities like Qingdao, Dalian, and Shanghai could soon fall within range of weapons originally designed and deployed for use against the North.

As a result, China finds itself in a situation akin to the classic security dilemma, in which a nation's efforts to strengthen its own defensive posture risk being perceived as hostile, thereby elevating rather than abating the danger of conflict. In this case, the measures taken by China have been intellectual rather than military, directed at threats remote from Korea as well as proximate and abstract as well as concrete. But even a symbolic salvo can exacerbate tension if it is perceived to signal aggressive intent. To the extent that China seeks to shore up its own internal security or address concerns about Northeast Asia's future by treading on elemental components of Korean national identity, it will thus continue to find itself at odds with South Korea, and potentially even North Korea.

V. CONCLUSION

In northwestern Seoul, there is a stone arch resembling the Arc de Triomphe and bearing the legend "Dongnimmun" (Independence Gate). Considering that it is located next to a former Japanese prison for Korean dissidents, a visitor might reasonably imagine that the monument was built after 1945. In fact, it is fifty years older, and the independence to which it refers was born of Japanese victory rather than defeat. Japan's 1895 rout of the Qing in the first Sino-Japanese War ultimately paved the way for Korea's annexation, but its immediate effect was to end Korea's tributary obligations to China.

Examining the sources of anti-Chinese sentiment in South Korea today, one finds a range of irritants based firmly in the present: China's support for North Korea, of course, the repatriation of defectors to North Korea, illegal fishing in Korean waters, and animus towards Chinese immigrants (even if the majority are ethnically Korean). Yet, anxiety about Chinese power is not a recent phenomenon, nor is it likely to prove transient. In fact, as Dongnimmun illustrates, such fears have deep historical roots, and they are likely to grow more pronounced as Chinese power grows. These days, concerns about Japanese remilitarization are often paired with speculation that a Chinese superpower would attempt to recreate the hierarchical Sino-centric order that prevailed in East Asia before the arrival of Western powers. Such a system cannot be reconciled with contemporary Koreans' desire and ability to shape their own destiny.

Even without information on public opinion, there is reason to believe Chinese revisionism could increase tension with North Korea as well. In the North, Soviet-style communism has long since been abandoned in favor of a chauvinistic ideology combining abject leader worship, Kim Il-sung's *juche* idea (the spirit of Korean self-reliance), and ethno-nationalism. This amalgamated ideology embraces the pre-modern history of northern Korea in portraying the North Korean regime as the legitimate ruler of the whole peninsula—a narrative inconsistent with China's Goguryeo revisionism.

There is no saying exactly how Beijing will resolve the dilemma described in this paper. China's agreement to step back from the Northeast Project after 2004 suggests that its diplomats, at least, understand the damage the issue inflicts on Sino-Korean relations. Given that self-determination movements in Tibet and Xinjiang will continue in the near future, however, China will have an ongoing incentive to advance a historical narrative that emphasizes the state's historic breadth and diversity. Facing the specter of lagging growth, which threatens a general legitimacy crisis, and the multinational character of the land over which it presides, the CCP can ill afford to concede that any of China's minority groups—ethnic Koreans included—have a long-standing claim to cultural or political independence.

In addition, while Kim Jong-un appears to have consolidated power over the North, the impoverished state's longevity remains in doubt. Like South Korea and the United States, China has undoubtedly prepared contingency plans for the North's collapse, as well as a variety of other reunification scenarios. Whether China is concerned about instability, unification or irredentism, the redefinition of China's ancient relationship with Korea could prepare its own citizens for an unpopular and risky operation to protect Chinese interests on or near the Korean peninsula.

In light of the fact that many Koreans view Goguryeo revisionism as an implicit rejection of their ethno-cultural independence, any further efforts by Beijing to rewrite pre-modern history to its own advantage are certain to color Korean perceptions of China's intentions and exacerbate unease about its rise. What remains to be seen is whether Beijing, with an eye on its own shifting security imperatives, will determine that this is a price worth paying. For the last ten years, Goguryeo's ghosts have been at rest. But William Faulkner's familiar observation is as true in Northeast Asia as in Mississippi: "The past is never dead. It's not even past."

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