

# China-ROK Cultural and Educational Exchanges Since Establishment of Diplomatic Ties<sup>\*</sup>

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Since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1992, bilateral relationship between China and the Republic of Korea (the ROK) has been developing rapidly. Politically, mutual trust has been enhanced through high-level reciprocal visits and intergovernmental cooperation. The two countries have been communicating and coordinating with each other on important critical issues directly related to their essential interests. At the same time, they have maintained consultation and cooperation on regional and international affairs. Economically, Sino-Korean bilateral trade and investment have been growing exponentially. China now is the ROK's largest trading partner and primary investment market while the ROK is China's third largest trading partner. In the socio-cultural sphere, the two countries are expanding cooperation in both culture and education. Developing at a quick pace in personnel exchange, China and the ROK have turned out to be biggest sources of international students for each other. In a short span of 18 years, the Sino-ROK relations have progressed from

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one of *friendly cooperation* in the early stage after the establishment of diplomatic ties to one of *partnership oriented towards the 21st century* in 1998, then to one of *comprehensive partnership* in 2003, and further to one of *strategic partnership* in 2008, witnessing a leapfrog development.

Bilateral cultural and educational exchanges have remained a hallmark of the relations between the two countries since they established diplomatic ties, and such exchanges cover music, dance, broadcast, television, fine arts, sports, education, science and tourism, forming a pattern of cultural exchanges featured by multi-levels, multi-channels and diversity. Meanwhile, as the level and quality continuously improves, the exchanges are deepened and broadened. Reflecting this is the increased number of participants involved. From the inter-governmental level to the people-to-people programs, the bilateral exchanges have been growing. ROK's mass culture, including TV serials, movies and pop music, has been widely spread across China, giving rise to the phenomenon of so-called "Korean wave". At the same time, a craze for Chinese things called "Chinese wind" has also appeared in the ROK. The flourishing development of the Sino-ROK cultural and educational exchanges has not only promoted mutual understanding between the two peoples but has also laid a solid foundation for strengthening the partnership of strategic cooperation between the two countries.

#### I. CULTURAL EXCHANGES AFTER ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

At the first stage, cultural exchanges between China and the Republic of Korea were initiated mainly by the governments, with non-governmental groups being involved. Along with the number of exchanges and the expansion of scope of cooperation, the exchanges eventually extended from the government to the entire society. During the past 20 decades and more, the development of the bilateral exchange and cooperation has shown a trend featuring a wide scope, multi-levels, multi-channels and diversified forms, together with substantial progress that is shown in the following three aspects.

**i. Government Concern and Support on Both Sides**

The governments of both China and the Republic of Korea have attached great importance to and rendered great support to the cultural exchanges between the two countries. State leaders of both countries have made important expositions on cultural exchanges between the two countries during their official visits. In March 1994 when President Kim Young-Sam visited China, the two countries signed an agreement on culture cooperation. In 2002, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and ROK President Kim Dae-Jung reached a consensus on setting up cultural centers in each other's capitals. Following this, a Chinese Culture Center and a Korean Culture Center were established in Seoul and Beijing, respectively. To celebrate the 10th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties, Premier Zhu Rongji visited the ROK in October 2000 and agreed with President Kim Dae-Jung on designating 2002 as the Year of Sino-Korean Exchanges. The launching of this event further promoted bilateral exchanges and cooperation in various fields, including culture, and turned out to be a vital opportunity for Chinese and Korean people to enhance mutual understanding, strengthen exchange and develop friendship.

In November 2005 when Chinese President Hu Jintao visited the ROK, he reached an agreement with ROK President Roh Mu-Hyun on designating 2007, the 15th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries, as Year of Sino-Korean Exchanges, and governments of both countries prepared colorful commemorative activities in various forms, addition to appointing image ambassadors of friendship, establishing special agencies, and sponsoring either independently or jointly a number of activities. The implementation of the Year of Sino-Korean Exchanges strengthened mutual understanding and friendship between China and the ROK and promoted bilateral exchange and cooperation in various fields, playing a positive role promoting bilateral relations between the two countries. Further, exchange and cooperation were also enhanced between local governments of both countries. According to statistics collected up to April 2013, Chinese provinces and cities had formed 149 pairs of sister cities with ROK provinces cities, which included Beijing/

Seoul, Shanghai/Busan and Shandong/Gyeongnam, among others. The friendly communication, cooperation and exchanges between the local governments of the two sides further enhanced bilateral relations.

## **ii. Formation and Development of “Korean Wave” and “Chinese Wind”**

A few years ago, a “Korean wave” swept China. TV shows, movies, novels, DVD and various other products from the Republic of Korea became increasingly appreciated in China, even giving rise to the so-called Koreaphiles, people who learned the Korean language, dressed in Korean-style clothes and became fans of Korean movie stars. By “Korean wave,” it is a kind of general designation given to Korean cultural products that were fashionable in China for a time, a general reference to a popular trend caused by Korean cultural products and lifestyles in China, which include mainly Korean TV shows, movies, pop music and games among others. As the Korean wave went on, it gradually incorporated in it Korean cosmetology, fashion, soccer, cell phones and cars. In China, the manifestation of the Korean wave can be summarized in the following: (1) import Korean TV shows in large numbers; (2) an influx of Korean movies; (3) Korean music and dance enchanting Chinese Koreaphiles; (4) a ready market for Korean novels; (5) Korean online games impacting Chinese online gaming market; (6) a good market for Korean products; and (7) the popularity of Korean food.

China and the Republic of Korea are not only close to each other geographically but share one same cultural origin. Therefore, Chinese people do not unfamiliar or have a barrier with the Korean wave represented by Korean TV plays. On the contrary, they feel a sort of natural intimacy towards it. This explains the Korean wave has enjoyed a lasting popularity and appeal in China. Besides, the extensive spread of the Korean wave has enhanced the Chinese people’s understanding of Korean culture.

While the Korean wave has been surging in China, a gale of the Chinese wind (also known “China craze”) was also blowing vigorously in the Korean society thanks to the rapid development

of Sino-Korean bilateral relationship. The main expressions of the Chinese wind are learning of Han Chinese and Chinese culture, construction of Chinatowns, tours in China, having Chinese food and establishing Chinese-language media. With increasingly extensive spread of Chinese culture in Korea, rapid increases have been seen in the number of Koreans learn the Chinese and making visits to China either for tours or study. In order to meet Korean people's need in learning Han Chinese language and Chinese culture, major media outlets in the ROK have one after another launched Han Chinese websites or TV channels. The emergence of the Korean wave and Chinese wind signal that Sino-Korean bilateral cultural exchanges have penetrated both the Chinese and Korean societies, together with an interactive trend.

### **iii. Flourishing of Youth Exchange**

With the development of China-ROK bilateral relations, youth exchange programs have become an important component part of relations between the two countries. Thanks to attention of governments and joint efforts made by young people of both countries, great progress has been achieved. At the early stage after the establishment of diplomatic ties, the number of teenagers involved in the exchange visits was 40 every year from each side. Now, it has been increased to about 1,000, together with constant expansion of the scope and enrichment of the content of the exchanges.

The young people from both countries have carried out substantive communication in such fields as history, culture, literature and art, sports, environment protection, politics, economy and science. Their mutual friendly feelings have been enhanced through participating in such activities as visits, get-togethers, workshops, competitions, summer camps and family visits coupled with their enhanced understanding of the other country's history, traditional culture and folklore. What are more lively are student exchanges, which are usually conducted in the following ways: reciprocal visits of student delegations; exchange camps of university student volunteers; cultural exchange summer camps; overseas field trips during vacations; and Chinese communities (neighborhoods)

inviting ROK students to take part in get-togethers; online exchanges; students pairing up for language learning, etc. In addition to bilateral exchanges mentioned above, youngsters from the two countries have also carried out exchanges during multilateral communication activities, such as the International Youth Forum, International Youth Camp, International Youth Sea Festival, International Youth Square, Youth Sports International Football Tournament, Korean Studies Forum for Graduates from World-famous Universities, Asia-Europe Teacher Training School, Asian Youth Forum, Asian Teenager Summer Camp, Northeast Asia Youth Forum, CJK (China, Japan and ROK) Young Leaders Forum, CJK Teenager Forum, and CJK Teenager Sports Meet.

#### **iv. Surge in Personnel Exchanges**

China and the Republic of Korea are close to each other geographically and the people of the two countries have a natural feeling of intimacy with each other. The similarity in cultural tradition makes it easier for people in the two countries to better understand the other, thus providing a unique advantage for people-to-people exchanges. With the development of relations and the increase of friendly exchanges among people, China and ROK have become major travel destinations for people of the other country. Furthermore, an air transport agreement was signed in December 1994 to open up direct flights between China and Korea, which facilitated personnel exchanges. There are now more than 40 regular passenger routes with over 860 flights per week and 10 regular cargo routes with over 47 flights per week between major cities in China and ROK. In addition, there are scheduled passenger-cargo liners between Chinese cities (such as Tianjin, Qingdao, Dalian, Yantai, Weihai and Lianyungang) and ROK cities (such Incheon, Busan and Pyeongtaek).

In 2013, the number of people involved in bilateral exchanges between China and ROK exceeded 8 million, an 51-fold increase as compared with the situation in 1993, next year after the establishment of diplomatic ties. In particular, the number of Chinese tourists flocking to the ROK witnessed a rapid growth — from 1.068 million at the end of 2007 to 4.326 million in 2013.

When Chinese President Xi Jinping paid a state visit to the ROK in July 2014, he reached an agreement with the ROK side to increase the number of people visiting the other country to 10 million by 2016. Besides, there are now hundreds of thousands of people from each country taking long-term residence in the other to do business and take up advanced studies. The frequent personnel exchanges have greatly increased the two people's mutual understanding and added more vigor to Sino-ROK people-to-people exchange and cooperation, thus helping lay a solid foundation for further development of the two countries' bilateral relations.

## II. SINO-ROK EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE AFTER ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC TIES

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1992, a sound momentum of development has maintained in Sino-ROK educational exchange and cooperation. The same year, delegations from the education authorities of both have exchanged visits to study on the development of education of the other country. So far, the number of groups in the bilateral educational exchanges has exceeded 100. Moreover, as of 2005 a mechanism of annual consultation at the bureau level of the education ministries and a mechanism of meeting of education ministers at unscheduled intervals were established, which have promoted the exchange and cooperation in education to develop in great depth and width and to a higher level. In July 1995, the Agreement on Educational Exchange and Cooperation between Ministries of Education in China and the ROK was signed in Beijing. Later in 2001 and 2004, the agreement was amended and renewed twice. In May 2008, ROK President Lee Myung-bak visited China and two sides signed a memorandum on mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas of higher education, which laid a solid foundation for deepening substantial bilateral cooperation in higher education, and promoting in particular the sound and sustainable development of student exchange programs. During Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit to the ROK in August the same year, the two sides signed the Agreement on Sino-Korean Education Exchange from 2008 to



2010, in which both sides agreed to dispatch 100 junior secondary school students to the other country for a short-term exchange program as of 2009 and to extend the scope of government-sponsored exchange students to 60 every year. Now, the two sides have also signed the Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Degrees and Qualifications between the PRC and the ROK and reached a consensus on further expanding the scope of government-sponsored student exchanges and starting short-term exchange studies for secondary school students.

Rapid development has been observed in exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and ROK higher-learning institutions ever since the establishment of diplomatic ties, especially in the more recent decade. According to incomplete statistics, some 200 Chinese colleges and universities have signed exchange and cooperation agreements and established friendly exchange relations with more than 150 ones in the Republic of Korea. Chinese and ROK institutions of higher learning have been extremely active in such major forms of academic exchange and cooperation as personnel exchange, joint training of students, cooperative study, reciprocal visits of scholars and joint sponsoring of international academic conferences. To further promote cooperation in high-caliber personnel and top-notch research, the two countries have put in place a mechanism of cooperation between the stronger between universities of both countries by launching substantive cooperation projects under the guidance of education authorities of both countries, and have held university presidents forums and academic workshops in different forms and on different themes. Now, apart from the Sino-Korean University Presidents Forum and Sino-Korean Vocational Education Forum under the auspices the two countries' education ministries, there are a number of other forums and academic research activities sponsored by key universities and colleges of the two countries at regular intervals, such as those organized by KFAS (Korea Foundation for Advanced Studies) and other ROK higher-learning institutions together with their Chinese counterparts, such as Peking University, Fudan University, and Renmin University of China. Such exchanges, in addition to make bilateral academic exchanges between Chinese and



ROK higher-learning institutions closer, have proved to be boom to academic exchanges in entire East Asia.

The exchange and cooperation platforms established by the colleges and universities of both countries have promoted Sino-ROK education exchanges, which boast richness in content and diversification in form, as seen in the following aspects:

**i. Personnel exchanges are frequent and student exchanges expand rapidly.**

Every year, education administrative departments and institutions of higher learning in China organize hundreds of delegations to visit the ROK to make studies, hold talks on cooperative programs and carry out academic activities with their hosts. Meanwhile, the ROK also sends hundreds of delegations to China for the similar purposes. Now, quite many a Chinese colleges and universities have signed agreements on student exchange with their ROK counterparts, including such programs as mutual recognition of curriculums and credits, 2+2 dual degree and 3+2 bachelor & master joint program. A considerable number of Chinese university students have been studying in the ROK through the inter-school exchange programs. Aside from inter-school student exchange, an increasing number of Chinese high school graduates have gone to ROK colleges and universities to advance their studies at their own expense. Now, there are in total more than 60,000 ROK students in China majoring in different courses, topping any other country in number of students studying in China. At the same time, there are nearly 60,000 Chinese in the ROK. Constant expansion in the scale and level of student exchange has prepared the human resource foundation for the development of Sino-ROK relations.

**ii. Korean teaching in China and Chinese teaching in ROK has turned fashionable.**

Ever since the establishment of diplomatic ties, the number of ROK schools offering courses in Chinese language has kept growing. Incomplete statistics show that there are now in ROK 91 graduate schools, over 200 universities, 71 colleges, more than 1,000 high schools, 400 secondary schools, and nearly 100 elementary

schools that offer courses in the Chinese language or have started specialties related to the Chinese language and Chinese studies. The number of Chinese training schools or classes run by various social groups or private individuals has exceeded 100, with an annual total of 300,000 trainees. Moreover, the ROK boasts almost 500,000 people who have kept learning the Chinese language for a long time and over 2 million short-term learners who have learned Chinese through optional courses in university, company training, travel or online courses. In many ROK schools, Chinese has been made a second foreign language to be taught and studied in classrooms. In society, many Chinese cram schools are established in view of the demand of the public for learning Chinese. Since the HSK (*Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi*) program, the official Chinese language proficiency test, was launched in the ROK in 1993, the number of the test applicants had kept increasing, soaring from 487 in 1993 to over 70,000 in 2013, leading the world. To satisfy the demand of children for Chinese grading test, China's National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language specially developed a Youth Chinese Test (YCT) for applicants under 15, and tried out the test first in the ROK in 2006.

At the same time, more and more China's higher-learning institutions have launched Korean language courses in recent years. With more and more Korean companies flocking into China and continuous development of Sino-ROK economic and trade exchange, increasing numbers of Chinese have come to study the Korean language. The number of universities offering courses in the Korean language has increased from six to more than 200 now, enrolling in total almost 20,000 students. In addition, there are various types of Korean language training schools and classes to cope with the rising number of people who learn the language. The Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK) was started for Korean learners in China in 1998 and the number of applicants for the test has kept increasing year by year. In response to the "Han Chinese craze" in the ROK and the "Korean craze" in China, the two sides have organized teacher or student training groups for reciprocal visits to the other country either for exchange or for learning.

**iii. Korea Studies have been flourishing in China.**

Starting in the early 1990s, Many of China's universities and research institutions have established centers or institutes of Korean studies. The scope of research has gradually extended from the ROK history and economy to ROK politics, diplomacy, society, folklore, language, literature, education, philosophy, religion, etc. After the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, many Chinese scholars have made the ROK their object of studies, and contemporary Korean issues also become hot topics in teaching and research. Eventually, many academic works on Korean issues have been published. *A Bibliography of the Korean Peninsula (1992-2005)* was compiled and published thanks to hard work done by a group of specialists and scholars from such institutions of Korean studies as the Research Center for Korean Studies, Peking University, and it is work showcasing the achievements made by the Chinese research workers in this period of time. Available statistics indicate that, in the 21 years from 1992 to 2013, 2,219 books of Korean studies (including monographs, translations, compiled books and dictionaries) and 34,565 research papers had been published in China. Meanwhile, many institutes and research centers of China studies have also mushroomed in the ROK, making remarkable achievements in academic studies.

**iv. The establishment of Confucius Institutes is accorded with positive response and support in the ROK.**

Based on the platforms of the Confucius Institutes, the colleges and universities of China and ROK have engaged in frequent exchanges in education, playing an important role in promoting Sino-ROK relations and enhancing non-governmental cultural exchanges by holding various Han Chinese language teaching activities that comply with the needs of different social groups and the characteristics of different cities. In November 2004, the first Confucius Institute that China established overseas was established in Seoul, the Republic of Korea. Now, 20 Confucius Institutes and four Confucius Classrooms have set up throughout the ROK.

All the above show that rapid development has been achieved in education exchanges between China and the ROK,

and expanding the scope of personnel and academic exchange has become an important content in the development of Sino-ROK friendly relations in the 21st century.

### III. MAJOR PROBLEMS IN SINO-ROK CULTURAL EXCHANGES

After the two countries established diplomatic relations, overall rapid development has been observed in their exchanges and cooperation in such fields as politics, economy and culture, which not only have brought tangible benefits to people of both countries but also made an important contribution to peace, stability and development in Northeast Asia. Despite continuous expansion of the scope of communication between the two countries, there have also been discordant noises and negative views. What is worth noting is the anti-Chinese and anti-ROK sentiments that have appeared in recent years, which should not be dealt with lightly though not possible to become predominant. The major cultural and social problems in the relations between the two countries are ones relative to historical cognition, disputes caused by applications for World Heritage list, and negative comments on the Internet.

#### **i. Problems related to historical understanding**

From the late 1990s to early 2000s, the central government of China put forward a master plan for revitalizing the old industrial bases in Northeastern China. Then, a number of questions related to it that called for urgent answers arose for social science research workers, who came up with their different answers to these questions. These questions touch on the orientation of economic development, territorial security of the Northeastern frontier region, the evolution of the history of ethnic minorities in the region, and peaceful coexistence with neighboring countries. In June 2001, the Institute of Chinese Borderland Studies under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) joined hands with the academies of social sciences and a number of universities in the northeastern China provinces to launch the Northeast Project, the mission of which is to carry out a number of research projects on the history and current status of the northeastern frontier region.

It was against this background the problem of the ownership of Goguryeo was raised.

It is this project that seemed to be nothing impressive in the academic circles of China but provoked wide repercussions from foreign scholars who almost came up with a unanimous theory regarding the ownership of Goguryeo. For instance, *The Chosun Ilbo* in the ROK once released an editorial, arguing that the Northeast Project was more than an academic research project; it had a so-called “strong political background”, claiming that there must be a political intention when China took a historical issue as a cause of state policy and invested lot of money in it; and that China was doing this was to re-identify its relationship with the northeast area where the Korean people had been inhabited and, based on this the justification, to find excuses for getting itself involved in the affairs of the Korean Peninsula. “Here, there must be a strategic intention hidden behind it,” the editorial concluded.

Following this, the semi-official Research Foundation for Goguryeo was established in the ROK, staffed with professional researchers. It organized quite a few international academic workshops to debate the issue with Chinese research workers. In August 2006, the Research Foundation for Goguryeo was renamed the Foundation for the History of Northeast Asia, which has organized dozens of workshops of all sizes and published nearly 100 monographic titles and a number of collections of research papers, arousing widespread repercussions in both official circle and civil circles of the ROK. The Institute for Goguryeo, a non-governmental academic body, also sponsored quite a number of workshops directed at the Goguryeo studies in China, and some of its researchers appeared in special TV programs to discuss the Goguryeo issue and criticize the views ventured by Chinese researchers. It is the noise made by the research institutes of varies types and frenzy of the media that triggered a tide of anti-Chinese sentiment in the ROK that, in turn, affected adversely the healthy and steady development of the Sino-ROK relations. It is obvious that the so-called research during this period of time was influenced by too many political and sensational factors; it has gone far beyond the limits of truly professional academic research.

Now, the dominant view in the Chinese academic circles still is that Goguryeo was a local ethnic regime in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD). Most research workers in history from the CASS and research or educational institutions in northeast China agree with this view. There are always different academic opinions, and this is not surprising. Some research workers regard the year 427, when Goguryeo moved its capital to Pyongyang, as a dividing line. In their opinion, Goguryeo was an ethnic minority regime in Chinese territory before 427, and later it became a national regime in the Korean Peninsula. Yet, some other researchers hold the theory of so-called “dual interpretations for one history,” i.e., treating the history of Goguryeo as a minority regime in northeastern China and also a stage of the national history of the Korean Peninsula. Still other scholars put the Tang Dynasty and Goguryeo into entire framework of state relations in Northeast Asia at the time and studied their vassal relations in line with the traditional Chinese idea of universal order.

Proceeding from a purely academic perspective, different opinions should be allowed. Yet, due to interference of too many other factors, such politics, national awareness and ethnic emotion, the mainstream academic views in the two countries have remained regrettably incompatible like water and fire. In the opinion of this author, it is necessary to get academic research back to its original scope and to do away with the interference of all non-academic factors, so as to allow as much rational discussion as possible as well as different views.

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## **ii. Disputes caused by application for World Heritage**

It is undeniable that China has produced a far greater influence on the Korean Peninsula in the history of communication between the two countries. Such influence can be traced back to 3,000 years ago when the rice-farming culture in southern China was introduced into the Korean Peninsula.



China's influence on the peninsula has gone on uninterrupted during different historical stages of China, such as the Shang (1600-1046 BC), Han (206 BC-220 AD), Tang (618-907), Song (960-1279), Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1616-1911). One inevitable result of such influence is similarity of Chinese and ROK heritages as they share the same cultural origin. This is self-evident.

Such cultural homology is itself a historic testimony of friendly relations between the two countries, and a precious spiritual wealth. However, when problems occur in bilateral relations, this homogenous culture is likely to turn into become a focus of contention. It is especially so for a country like the ROK which boasts limited cultural resources but strong self-esteem. It is necessary for us to be aware of this.

In the Sino-ROK competition for World Heritage listing, intangible cultural heritages are more likely to cause controversy as compared to natural and tangible cultural ones. According to the existing international convention, there will be no or few disputes on natural or tangible cultural heritages unless there are changes in territories. Even if there are some disagreements between the general public, it tends to not have any serious impact on the government. Regarding intangible cultural heritages, however, they can easily be the heritages of two or more countries rather than that of a single one for their stronger fluidity and cross-boundary characteristic.

The bilateral relations between China and the ROK are closely related to their history, geography, culture and politics, a factor that should never be overlooked in studying their cultural ties. Their shared heritages, such as the Dragon Boat Festival (the fifth day of the fifth Chinese lunar month) and the traditional farmers' dance with musical accompaniment, are bound to have some influence on the political, economic and cultural relations between the two countries. Not handled well, they might easily evolve into political issues harming the long-term interests of both countries.

In 1997, the Danoje Festival was designated as one of the ten major local celebrations in the ROK. In 2000, an application was made to the UNESCO to have it listed as an intangible cultural heritage. On November 24, 2005, the Gangneung Danoje Festival nominated by the ROK was officially approved as one of the

Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by the UNESCO. The proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity was started by the UNESCO in 2001 after the value of an intangible heritage in the history of mankind and the necessity of its preservation were realized by the public. The Gangneung Danoje Festival is on the list of the Third Proclamation. The successful enlisting of the Gangneung Danoje Festival as a world cultural heritage aroused disputes between China and the ROK. Many Chinese expressed their disappointment for this. Some Chinese netizens reacted in quite a fierce way, and they published many articles on the major Chinese web forums, demanding the ROK to give up the claim.

### **iii. Negative comments online**

Internet information transmission transcends time and space and is strongly interactive, and thus prepares a favorable condition for trans-national and trans-regional transmission of information. At the same time, however, it also brings with certain disadvantages. In 2005 when the news that the ROK succeeded in getting the Gangneung Danoje Festival nominated as a World Cultural Heritage reached China, many Chinese citizens thought that Koreans had robbed off their much valued Dragon Boat Festival. Eventually, a bitter debate surged online. Later, some Korean netizens claimed that both traditional Chinese medicine and Chinese characters were invented by their ancestors. They even went so far to assert that Confucius and Sun Yat-sen were Koreans. Moreover, some Korean TV plays made misinterpretations of Chinese historical figures. Such issues, which normally would not cause serious conflicts, eventually evolved into a contest of emotion and self-esteem and a bitter dispute on mutual cognition.

The spread of online messages without any constraint and lack of moral self-discipline on the part of the netizens caused an inundation of false information on line, and such false information is usually very catching to the eyes, which in turn lures many young netizens. Besides, quite a few ROK media outlets were involved in making negative reports on China or directly took part in the hype, which have exacerbated the ROK public's misunderstanding

about China in addition to causing anger and doubts from among the Chinese public, particularly Chinese netizens. Examples at hand are the “theory of China threat” and the unfriendly conduct of some Koreans during the torch relay for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games in the ROK. The provocative and irresponsible language online made by people in both countries has been proved to be extremely harmful to the development of the China-ROK partnership of strategic cooperation.

#### **iv. Causes for the problems**

The rapid development of Sino-ROK relations is obvious to all, although there are discordant noises and negative views in the course of progress. The negative factors in the development of Sino-ROK relations are not caused due to differences in politics or economic gaps, but culture, including particularly differences in the understanding about modern national state, touching on not only blind patriotism but also lack of a rigorous attitude in academic research. What is noteworthy is that in recent years an emotional negative cognition about China has been turned increasingly serious among ROK netizens, exceeding the negative cognition about the ROK in the Chinese public. Though not the mainstream in Sino-ROK relations, it should never be overlooked. For this, it is necessary for us to adopt a calm attitude, neither deliberately exaggerating nor turning a blind eye to it, but treating it rationally and focusing on finding the right solutions to tackle the emotional clashes. In the relations between the two countries, the negative factors are multifaceted and complicated, and they can be generalized as follows:

##### **a) A significant change in national mentality**

Now, both China and the ROK are experiencing “transpositioning” and adaptive process in terms of the national mentality. As one of the East Asian Tigers, the ROK created the so-called Hanguangui Gijeok (Miracle on the Han River), which greatly boosted the national pride and sense of superiority of the Koreans. When the ROK was rapidly rising, China was still at a rather underdeveloped stage, with a wide gap between the two. Yet, a great change has taken place in the positioning of the two countries since China

put in place the policy of reform and opening up. Now, China is no longer its former self — it jumped to the second place in the world in terms of both the aggregates and scale of its economy. For the ROK, its world GDP ranking had dropped from the 11th place in 2007 to the 14th in 2013. The rise of China brought a big psychological shock to the public of the ROK. In this context, the ROK public feels uneasy. Therefore, it has become problem how to view this role and position change and how to deal with a change in the public mindset arising from the role change. It is a problem calling solution now and for a certain period to come.

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**b) Nationalist sentiment**

The development of the Sino-ROK relations has been increasingly subject to the negative effect of cultural nationalism.

The development of Sino-ROK relations has been increasingly subject to the negative effect of cultural nationalism. As a parochial and negative form of nationalism, Cultural Nationalism overemphasizes the independence and self-respect of national culture, hoping to gain a sense of superiority from its own culture. Cultural nationalism represents a backward worldview; it seals people's

thinking in a traditional community and reduces the adaptive and creative power of a nation. At present, such a social mentality can be found in both China and the ROK; it holds back the healthy development of Sino-ROK relations. With the progress of globalization, the boundaries of traditional communities turn increasingly blurred and the structure of the traditional communities becomes more and more loose due growing worldwide cultural interaction and integration as well trans-national immigration. It is necessary for us have a clear understanding about the limits of cultural nationalism.

**c) Differences in identity**

Due to differences in state system and political culture, the Chinese people and media have a higher level of identity with the government and its conduct than their counterparts in the ROK. The differences between the Chinese and ROK media has turned increasingly outstanding in the process of continuous

development of Sino-ROK relations. In their report on the ROK, the mainstream media in China has always observed one principle, that is, authenticity, objectivity and responsibility, in addition to keep compatible with the foreign policy of the Chinese government. On the part of the ROK media, however, the principle it has observed is to keep a distance from the standing of the ROK government in making reports about China. It often “creates” and “hype” on some so-called hot topics by way of business operation. The rapid development of online media gives people greater power of speech on online platforms, and this, in addition to playing a positive role in enhancing democracy, has also produced quite some irresponsible noises and negative opinions. Generally speaking, the Chinese media has adopted an attitude of “not intensifying conflicts and not hyping” towards ROK media’s negative reports on China, while the media outlets of the ROK have adopted, due differences in system, the approach of direct involvement in hyping. It is natural that such conduct rouses indignation and dissatisfaction from the Chinese public, particularly Chinese netizens, in addition to intensifying ROK citizens’ misunderstanding of and emotional anger against China.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Traditional friendship between China and the Republic of Korea prides on a long history, with friendly exchanges being the mainstream. The two countries are linked by same mountains and rivers and belong to the same cultural circle. Such historical bonds bred their similar cultural foundation and values, thus making cultural exchanges playing an important and unique role in enhancing their mutual cognition. Therefore, it is very important in the development of their bilateral relations to further strengthen cultural exchange and cooperation. It is necessary for us to proceed from the cultural perspective to substantiate and develop the connotations of the Sino-ROK partnership of strategic cooperation and further promote practical cooperation between the two countries in various fields. The establishment of the partnership of strategic cooperation signifies the Sino-ROK relations have

entered into a new stage. China and the ROK will deepen their relationship of cooperation by transcending their social/political systems and different ideologies and enhance mutual understanding in line with the spirit of mutual trust and positive attitude, so as to seek common development by making the two countries' advantages complementary to each other and further strengthening cooperation.

With regard to existing problems in cultural and educational exchanges, it is necessary for both sides to keep calm and adopt a rational attitude, neither willfully exaggerating nor escaping them. The right way is to first find the main reasons for the differences in the social and cultural fields, adopt an objective and rational attitude, build up mutual trust and understanding, and seek common grounds in major aspects and reserving minor differences. It is necessary to tackle academic issues through academic platforms and in line with the rules governing academic research, and avoid exaggerating or politicizing academic issues. It is necessary for both sides to make every effort to find solutions and countermeasures to resolve any emotional conflicts among the public of the two countries, so as to ensure the healthy development of the Sino-ROK partnership of strategic cooperation.