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# Relating History Education with National Identities on Modern State-Building: Korean and Chinese History Textbooks in Comparative Perspectives

# Da-Jung Ryu and Taekyoon Kim

Despite the fact that both South Korea and China have similar past histories of being invaded and colonized by foreign powers, these two countries rarely have common acuities or shared recognition mechanisms. With this puzzling phenomenon, this study compares Korean and Chinese high school history textbooks to reveal their own national identities which are embedded and forged in the textbook discourses. It sets out to locate what Chinese and Korean governments' national identities have echoed in history textbooks of senior high schools by investigating 'language use,' employing ethnomethodology to shed light on the perception gap between the two countries. The perception gap between Korea and China, which has appeared in history textbooks, becomes a potential powerhouse producing various malaises of identity-based struggles stemming from organized delusions on each other.

Keywords National identity, History education, History textbooks, Language use, China, South Korea

# **INTRODUCTION**

As the power of China grows, the politico-cultural threat of China began to rise accordingly. Many people in South Korea (hereafter, Korea) become afraid of China's possible rule of the entire East Asian region, yet China has consistently understated its power and argued that it intends to rise peacefully even if this excuse is recently perverted to the so-called 'Wolf-Warrior Diplomacy' (Zhu 2020). Not only Korean people but also non-Chinese public groups in East Asia doubted the intention of Chinese political engagement in international society and have psychological fears that China's strong commitments challenging the US-led liberal international order mark the openness of China's world order projecting the new standard of civilization in search of the Chinese hegemonic ruling in East Asia (Zhang 2003; Goh 2014; Buzan 2014). Yet,

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Chinese people believe that China is a peaceful country compared to the West, who had fought thousands of times with each other in the past. Accordingly, it can be asserted that the Chinese role is aimed to promote democracy in international society through the state-mobilized globalization, where the United States or the Western bloc has been long dominating the value and activities of democracy (Ye 2020).

Against this backdrop, this study is undertaken to delve into the following research questions: "Despite their shared experiences of (semi-) colonization by the Empire of Japan, why do Korea and China have a different understanding of modern history?" It focuses on the differentiated pathways in forming and transforming national identities embodied in the banality-led identification process through the analysis of contemporary history textbooks, with the particular reference to the nineteenth and the twentieth-century of Korea and China.

# BANALITY AS AN EVERYDAY PRACTICE IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

National identity *per se* is imagined and constructed (Anderson 1991; Duara 1995; Smith 1989, 1991). It can hardly be formed by oneself; on the contrary, it is educated, memorized, and constantly reproduced by processes and practices of government, administration and acclamation (Jessen and von Eggers 2019). Banality is a significant factor in shaping one's identity and therefore repetition and reiteration in the education system, especially in history textbooks, are of importance to share historical memories and construct people's national identities (Billing 1995; Huntington 2004). Mundane and everyday life is often taken for granted as nothing special, but this is the exact element that social scientists would be asked to focus if they want to know the internal process of the *governmentality* – like what Michel Foucault insightfully suggested – shaping people's knowledge, mindsets, and identity (Adler et al. 1987; Lemke 2012). The politics of everyday life, therefore, involves the techniques and strategies – such as history textbooks in this study – by which Chinese and Korean are rendered governable within a standardized frame for common identities (Ahonen 2001; Balibar 1991).

Michael Billing, in his book, *Banal Nationalism* (1995) analyzes everyday nationalism and argues that the process of flagging the nationhood is banal and vapid. "We" are repeatedly noted that "we" live in "our" country, and "our" identity is being flagged such that it saturates people. Billing contends that the language is reminders of nationhood. The routinely familiar habits of language continually are expected to act as reminders of nationhood according to his theory. In a similar vein, Jon E. Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss (2008) characterize nationalism as 'everyday nationhood,' and further counterargue that national identity is explicit and even distinguishable, in response to David Miller (1995, 2000)'s implicit everyday nationalism. On top of that, McCrone and Bechhofer (2015) hold that national identity is not deceptive and disguised, with the emphasis on 'identity-as-doing,' by verifying national identity behaves from time to time for certain aspirations. Flags, speeches, banners, songs, and education become main factors that people often take for granted as banal sources of identities. However, questioning the matter of course and excavating the social impacts

in what we see as the matter of banalities everyday are worthwhile to further understand national identities and perception gaps in different countries (Ichijo et al. 2017).

Many scholars' academic contributions are appreciated in a sense of providing a framework of analyzing the mundane practices (Morgan and Henning 2013; Samra-Fredericks 2009). In line with this, this study chooses the banality of an everyday practice as a theoretical framework to capture and visualize the national identities shown in Korean and Chinese high school's history textbooks. History education is the banal practice exercised in every country to let the youngsters remember their history and their nationality. The education for teenagers is compulsorily asked to be educated and governed by reading the history textbook at any rate. Indeed, history textbook is read by all students who go to senior high schools in Korea and China, thereby holding a large scale of readers. China had 87.5% of gross senior high school enrollment in 2016, whereas Korea achieved 93.1% of senior high school attendance in the same year.

In so doing, national identity is defined as a social construct which is constantly created and developed from the diverse fronts of the division between ours and others, mainly by answering who we are and who our enemies are to confine self-identification and form threat perception towards others in everyday life (Smith 1991). In a nutshell, a comparative method, based on the banality framework, is employed for the sake of categorizing self-identification and threat objects described in senior high school history textbooks in China and Korea.

# FORGING NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN KOREAN AND CHINESE HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

For the comparative analysis on the formation of national identities in Korea and China, this study analyzes the seventh curriculum of government-designated history textbooks for the case of Korea and People's Education Press' history textbooks for that of China. This is simply because they are closely related to each government's educational policies and political identities and have also prevailed in Korea and China for almost a decade (Kang and Pak 2010; Kim 2006). It is therefore justifiable to figure out how differently two governments' efforts for national identities have been reflected in their own senior high school history textbooks.

### The Seventh Curriculum of the Kuksa Textbook in Korea

Up until the seventh curriculum, the senior high school history textbooks were government-designated textbooks, which means there was only one common book which provided for the education of national history for the whole nation. Also, the 'history' class is compulsory to tenth-grade students (first year of the senior high school) and students had to learn Korean history for their midterms and finals alike. *Kuksa* (national history), via the Korean senior high school history textbook based on the seventh curriculum, was taught by all Korean high schools from 2002 to 2010 (National Institute of Korean History 2010).

The seventh curriculum was authored by the Education Reform Committee (ERC)

which had huge supports from the former President Kim Young-sam (1993-1998). In 1994, the Director-General of the Ministry of Education received the direction that the 'curriculum revision' should be included in the reform task of ERC. However, he strongly opposed to it since the sixth curriculum had not been implemented yet, so that the new curriculum would reduce confidence in implementing its educational policies. Nevertheless, ERC was eventually forced to work on the seventh curriculum under the president's sharp guidelines (Kwon 2006). The Kim Young-sam government, the first civilian government long after military regimes, proactively designed and pursued broad-scale reforms including history textbooks for Korean high school students. The seventh curriculum emphasized 'democracy' under the national goal of history education to "foster democratic citizens who can contribute to the development of democratic operations and the development of national culture and democratic nations" (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology 2009).

As for the contents of *Kuksa*, the seventh curriculum divided the history textbook into political, economic and social parts: Chapter III as 'governance structure and political activities'; Chapter IV as 'economic structure and economic life'; and Chapter V as 'social structure and social life.' Among them, the analysis of *Kuksa*'s some parts covering the nineteenth and twentieth-century history, hereinafter, is carried out for the self-identification mechanism embedded in it.

#### Self-identification of National Identity in Korea

In fact, the Korean mandatory history textbook included several nationalistic subjects such as 'our nation,' 'our country,' 'our people,' 'our compatriot,' 'Korean people,' 'Korean labors,' 'Korean farmers' and so on (Kim et al. 2014). As confirmed here, the expression of *our* or *Korean* is frequently used as the prefix identifying the belonging of the following nouns. Here the questions come: who are "we"?; and who is "Korean"? Answering these fundamental questions properly leads us to examine the scope of "we" and the identification of what "Koreans" are through the dissection of the Korean history textbook.

"Koreans" and "we" symbolize the national people who resided in the Korean peninsula between the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Prior to the Korean Empire (*Daehan jeguk*) proclaimed by King *Ko-jong* in 1897, the *Chosŏn* Dynasty was the official nation governing the Korean peninsula in the unified form. When the textbook explains the reason why Japan waged the war with the *Qing*, it says that "Japan wanted to maintain interference with *Chosŏn*." Also, there was an economic invasion to 'our country' and 'our *minjok* (national ethnicity),' which made our people suffering from the pain because of opening the ports and unequal treaties to the Japanese colonial rule. Consequently, the South Korean history textbook emphasized the solidarity for who lived in the Korean peninsula, and the ethnicity of the people.

However, the pattern describing the Korean people as one single unity was altered in Chapter V of 'modern society.' Chapter V still explained 'our people' as a subject, but stated disagreement with it – after the failure of the 3·1 Independent Movement in 1919 – appeared within the independence camp due to the different perceptions of the post-independence state system. Therefore, the camp split into three sub-groups: the nationalist group, the socialist group, and the anarchist group. Hereinafter is no selfdescription such as 'we', 'our', or 'Korean', and the nation has been divided into several groups. '*Singanheo*', 'farmers', 'workers', 'young people', 'women', 'socialists', 'nationalists', 'the rich', and 'ordinary people' were used as subjects to describe Koreans in accordance with different groups' identifications. Socialists and nationalists had different blueprints of what should be identified as an independent country, and the rich and the poor had distinguished lifestyles and various degrees of hardships. The textbook confirmed apparent divisions within the nation and put no more stress on the unity as a one. To be short, 'we,' 'our,' and 'us' appeared in the sentences holding the need for the emphasis on national unity – for example, when the Korean people were invaded by external powers or suffered from them.

The four distinct portfolios shown by *Kuksa's* self-identification mechanisms are, by and large, summarized as follows. First, *Chosŏn* actively engaged in the process of its modern state-building but foreign powers forced it to fail its modernization project. "In 1873, when Min came to power, a group that insisted on opening and trading grew politically...The *Chosŏn* government promoted the open-door policy with the aim of prosperity and military power" (p. 108). However, "the *Qing* and Japan's economic invasion have led to anxiety and discontent among farmers" (pp. 109-110). The textbook defined the *Chosŏn* government as a "*kaehwa* (enlightening) government" which indicated that the *Chosŏn* government gave positive implementation to open-door policies. Although the *kaehwa* government collapsed after King *Ko-jong* took refuge in the Russian legation in 1896, the Korean Empire was founded a year after. The Korean Empire tried to prevent the economic invasion of foreign powers and establish a modern national economy, such as the monetary system reform, establishment of the central bank and foundation of the educational institutions. However, "these were frustrated by the invasion of Imperialist Japan" (p. 178).

Second, *Kuksa* portrayed the subject of 'our people' as victims of foreign powers. "Japan and the *Qing* made economic invasion to our country," "foreign merchant infiltrated and expanded the trade," and "internal interference and exploitation of national interests" had made "our people suffered from opening the port and unequal treaties" (pp. 174-176). Several resistances were formed by the government and the Korean people, but all of them died on the vine in the end. "We had the opportunity to form a self-reliant national economy with our hands at that time, but we lost that chance due to the ruthless invasion by foreign powers" (p. 178). After Korea had lost its sovereignty, Imperialist Japan controlled and devastated people's lives totally.

Third, the cohesion among the Korean people, which was underlined by stating 'our people' and 'our country,' faced constantly severe fragmentations within itself. For example, during the *Chosŏn* dynasty, there were '*kaehwa* group' and '*wijŏngchöksap'a* (Confucian scholars group)' in terms of debating whether *Chosŏn* was supposed to adopt the Western civilization or not. Moreover, persistent discontents which rose from "old-fashioned soldiers, and the lower class and farmers" resulted in instability within the country. Several movements were driven "in spite of the government's enlightening policies" (p. 110), and national salvation movements had been mushrooming accordingly, even after the sovereignty was lost by Imperialist Japan. A few numbers of national branches for the patriotic movements were formed across different groups which held a variety of ideologies regarding the prospect of the independent nation.

Lastly, it is worth recognizing that the history textbook identified varieties of societal movements aimed for the nation's independence had been mobilized by youth groups, women's groups, and other social groups in Manchuria as well as the Korean Peninsula. The textbook esteemed their sacrifices and devotions to Korea's liberation from the Japanese imperial rule by not only highlighting the unity of the Korean society as an imagined community sharing national identities, but also underlining that 'we are one nation' regardless of the discrepancies in social standing and family backgrounds. As stated by the textbook, the National Debt Redemption Movement, initiated by Cho Man-sik in Pyŏngyang, was symbolized as a constructive civic engagement creating "a sense of national identity regardless of age, gender, location or status" (p. 234).

### Threat Objects of Korea

Historically, the root source of external power's threats to Korea came from the Qing dynasty in China which had demanded the tribute from *Choson* (Dong and Li 2012). "The Oing and Japan made an invasion competition over Choson" (p. 108). "The Oing strengthened internal interference and economic aggression against *Chosŏn*" (p. 109). "The Qing along with Japan threatened Choson politically and militarily for guarding their own merchants who had deprived of economic interests" (p. 176). In response to Qing's threats, some radical young politicians of Choson decided to mount the 'Kapsin jöngbyön [coup détat]' in 1884 and issued the government ordinance which included "abolishing the tribute to the Qing Dynasty" (p. 109). After the coup detat, "the Choson government enhanced its diplomatic relations with Russia for the sake of getting rid of the internal interference of the Qing government" (p. 110). Nevertheless, that political upheaval ended by the Qing's military intervention. The constant intrusion and engagement by the Qing, which had been often justified by its tribute relationship with Choson, left the Choson dynasty crippled with the distorted sovereignty and mutilated autonomy. It is not surprising to contend that the inertia of threat perception towards China was formed in the face of the Qing's expansive influence on the Korean national identity.

After the Japanese victory of the first Sino-Japanese war in 1894, Japan grew into the hegemon position in the region of East Asia. It was Japan which colonized the Korean peninsula for three decades, kept down the Korean people and made Korea a dismal scene. Japan stripped of the Korean autonomy and sovereignty and started their colonial rule from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some words such as 'ignore,' 'intervene,' 'by force,' 'unilaterally,' 'deprive of,' suggest that Korea at that time had no independence and Japan evilly changed Korea on their own. According to Kuksa, Japan's ruling was aimed only for the Japanese modernization and prosperity, with its eventual intention to annihilate Korean national identity and culture. The propaganda of 'Naesŏnilch'e (Japan and Korea are the one body)' never allowed Korean people to use their own language, coerced Korean people to change their names to Japanese, and forced the Korean Peninsula to turn into the war basis in the 1940s when the world had World War II. Men were intimidated to wear military-looked national costume, whereas women were pressured to put on trousers, which were the work clothes of Japanese rural women, called 'momppae.' Imperialist Japan controlled Korea in various fields so sternly that Korea was not able to take shape of their own identity and the culture.

Another source of threats to Korea stemmed from its traditional social class system which hindered the unification and modernization of the nation. Hence, breaking down the hierarchical society was a significant task for Korea's modernization. "The discrimination between *yangban* and ordinary people disappeared. The status system and the slavery system were abolished finally" (p. 233).<sup>1</sup> After opening the ports, big changes have also begun in the housing culture that had been thoroughly regulated by social status. "Local residents, regardless of their social status, were free to build a house without being limited by the size or the style" (p. 235). Through informing the social changes after repealing the status system, the Korean history textbook sought to emphasize the awareness of equality and justice. The spirit of liberty and the protection of human rights have been so improved as to enable the Korean society to purify inhumane traditions such as early marriages, widows' remarriage banning, human trafficking, torture, implicative system and so forth.

### Lishi Textbooks of People's Education Press in China

China's education reform was embarked upon under the Central Commission of the Communist Party of China (CCCPC) and the State Council after the reform and open policy as of 1978 (Wang 2014; Yun 2013; Niu 2014). Since then, all Chinese senior high school students have been mandatorily requested to pass *huikao*<sup>2</sup>, and a deep understanding of history textbooks, as a result, has become compulsory for all students who want to receive a high school diploma. Moreover, students who plan to study liberal arts in colleges or universities are unconditionally called for taking the history subject as a prerequisite to grasp further comprehension of the Chinese history and also passing the examination of *gaokao*.<sup>3</sup>

The Ministry of Education of People's Republic of China (MoEPRC 2011) officially issued the 'Ordinary High School Curriculum Standard (experimental)' (HCS) in 2003, which was used as the basic platform to compile history textbooks between 2007 to 2017 in China. According to HCS, the purpose of history curriculum is to encourage students to analyze and solve problems with the historical view of Marxist and pay attention to the historical destiny of the Chinese nation and all mankind. Therefore, *Lishi I, II*, and *III* were compiled from the Marxist dialectic materialism point of view. By studying history, students were stimulated to contribute to the socialist modernization of the motherland and to focus on the destiny of the nation and mankind. Moreover, HCS includes the emotional attitude and values part in its objects. It emphasized inspiring students' pride in the historical mission and social responsibility for the country

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Yangban means aristocrats during the Chosŏn dynasty. The yangban system consisted of civil servants and military officers. In Chosŏn's status system, yangban was the highest group and Jung-in (the middle class), Sangmin (the commoners), Chönmin (the vulgar), Paekjöng (slaughter man), and Nobi (slaves) were followed in sequence.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> *Huikao* is the graduation examination of senior high school in China. Students are eligible to get their high school diploma after passing this examination.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> *Gaokao* is the Chinese College Entrance Examination.

and the nation.

China's publishers of history textbooks included People's Education Press (PEP), *Yuelu* Press, Beijing Normal University Press (BNUP), and People's Publishing House (PPH), but the PEP's history textbook – *Lishi* – was singled out as a research object due to the fact that it had the largest scale of readers and the closest political linkage with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (Wang, 2014). History textbooks were guided under ten general counsels who were key members of the CCP and the National People's Congress (NPC) or scholars in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). For example, Xu Bin, the author of modern history in *Lishi I* (Politics) and *II* (Economy), was a secretary of the Party Committee in *fenggang* and a chairman of NPC when he wrote the history textbooks. Writing *Lishi III* (Ideology and Culture) was spearheaded by Li Weike and Ruixin, who were all editors in PEP's history office. In consequence, governing Chinese history textbooks had closer ties with the CCP rather than the MoEPRC, even though the curriculum of history textbooks was managed and supervised by the MoEPRC.

*Lishi*, PEP's senior high school mandatory history textbooks, consisted of three volumes, one of which introduces political history, economic history and ideological history in sequence. Those specific parts of *Lishi* are a good counterpart to Korea's *Kuksa* for the exploration and comparison of the difference of national identity formations across China and Korea (Vickers and Jones 2005).

#### Self-identification of China

In Chinese history textbooks, several subjects can be found in describing themselves in specific but various forms of self-identification: 'Qing government,' 'Qing army,' 'Chinese people,' 'China,' 'Chinese national capitalist,' 'Chinese advanced people,' 'Chinese intellectuals,' 'modern Chinese people,' 'national bourgeois,' 'Provisional Government of the Republic of China,' 'the Nanjing National Government,' 'patriotic government officials,' 'bourgeois reformist school,' 'Chinese Communist Party (CCP),' 'the Chinese Kuomintang (KMT)' and so on (Qi and Chen 2018). Unlike the Korean textbooks, there were no subjects such as 'we' or 'I' in describing themselves, which leads us to interpret that Chinese history textbooks explained what happened to 'China' instead of what happened to 'us.' China leaves more ink to the generalization of 'China' rather than the identity of 'ourselves'. The reason why illuminating what China is vital to Chinese society is that China per se is a multiethnic state and how to embrace minorities is of importance. This shows a typical presentation of the unified multi-ethnic state theory that the Chinese government applied to their history textbooks and imbued consolidated national identity within their contemporary territory including controversial areas (Kim et al. 2011).

In the process of analyzing the self-identification, the three characteristics came into light. First, the Chinese history textbook provided somehow a negative perception of the late *Qing* government. "Although the *Qing* Dynasty created the great world, it was only the afterglow of the setting sun, and it soon faded" (*Lishi I*, p. 49). This is because *Qing* had "political corruption, financial difficulties, abolished armaments, and the continuous closing the country policy," and it "embarrassingly sued for peace" (*Lishi I*, p. 50) when British armies came into China. Also, the textbook regarded the *Qing* government

as feudalistic and explained there were two kinds of contradictions, including the national conflict with foreign imperialistic invaders and class contradictions between the peasants and the landlords inside *Qing*'s premodern society. From a Marxist point of view, a series of conflicts and contradictions resulted in transforming feudalism into capitalism, and finally communism. Consequently, feudalism was out-of-date and uncivilized, and it had to be substituted by the new class. The new class refered to the Chinese national bourgeois and proletariats, and the history textbook gave a positive depiction of the Provisional Government of the Republic of China, which "defeated the Qing feudal government and removed the obstacles for the development of national capitalism" (*Lishi I*, p. 62).

However, the textbook gave an emphasis on the cases of patriotic government officials within the *Qing* government, given that they were enlightened, excellent, and intelligent. *Qing*'s government officials such as Lin Zexu and Wei Yuan started to learn about the West and compiled several books of the Western world's geography, history, and politics. It also underlined "they are the first Chinese men to open the eyes to the world" (*Lishi II*, p. 68). Although "the *Yangwu* School," "the *Weixin* thought" were from the *Qing* government, they all turned out to be intelligentsia and liberalists who "fundamentally shook the theoretical foundations of feudal rulers who abided by the ancestral training and opposed the reform, and strongly attacked the feudal stubborn forces" (*Lishi II*, p. 70). Moreover, "they played the role as enlightened pathfinders and promoted the awakening of the people" (*Lishi II*, p. 70). It can be concluded as a paradoxical finding that China's history textbook demonstrated the duality of self-identification of the *Qing* government by contrasting its weakness and strength.

Second, 'China,' 'Chinese people,' and 'Chinese national capitalism' were all terribly devastated by the Western powers. Moreover, 'China' – the *Qing* dynasty – was the passive reactor to the Western invaders. Britain used artillery to open the door to China, so China had to open its door regardless of its closed-door policy. The history textbook accounted for this as follows:

"Western powers aggressed the Chinese economy and destroyed the burgeoning capitalism and involved China in the capitalist market... Chinese national capitalism has been brutally hit and in trouble... Chinese agricultural products were subject to the needs of the international market and were increasingly commoditized" (People's Education Press Institute of Curriculum Materials/History Course Textbook Research and Development Center 2007, *emphases added in bold type*).

Third, Chinese history textbooks emphasized several individual leaders with high power as national heroes and stressed their commitments and leaderships. Such a heroization process of personal histories was revealed clearly in the *Lishi III*. It underlined the important persons' leaderships and the idea of guidance: Lin Zexu and Wei Yuan led people to pay attention to the real world of international relations; Marxists mentored the Chinese revolution; 'Three People's Principles' guided the democratic revolution; and the 'Mao Zedong Thought' directed the establishment of the CCP eventually. The whole storytelling of China's modern state-building has been culminated as a success case, thanks to great heroes' leaderships despite imperialistic

challenges from foreign invaders and national adversities inside China.

#### Threat Objects of China

Locating threat objects of China and examining how Chinese history textbooks portrayed major threats from the nineteenth to the twentieth century are helpful to understand what Chinese threat perception was, how its perception has been evolving, or what kind of threat perception the Chinese government recognized. According to HCS, the purpose of history curriculum was to encourage students to analyze and solve problems with the historical view of Marxist and pay attention to the historical destiny of the Chinese nation and all mankind (People's Education Press Institute of Curriculum Materials/History Course Textbook Research and Development Center 2007). Therefore, *Lishi I, II,* and *III* have consistently compiled from the perspective of the Marxist dialectic materialism. Compared to Korea's purpose of history education, HCS included the 'emotional attitude and values' part in its objects. Reflecting such HCS-led initiatives, the two sources of threat objects – external and internal – were clearly engraved in Chinese history textbooks.

The first source involves Western powers along with Japan, which continuously threatened Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity from the Opium War of the nineteenth century to its liberation in the twentieth century. The British empire started the Opium War and forced the *Qing* government to open its doors to compensate its trade deficits and sign the first humiliating *Nanjing Treaty* in 1840. The history textbook described that the British empire "violated international ethics and smuggled drugs and opium to China," and it also stated that the first Sino-Japanese war was illegally "provoked by Japan deliberately" (Lishi I, p. 74). Although the Qing army "welcomed" the war, the war ended in the "absolute defeat of the Qing army" (Lishi I, p. 75), and the Qing government signed disgraceful Shimonoseki Treaty in 1895. In 1900, the allied force of eight powers – Great Britain, the United States, Russia, France, Germany, Italy, Austria, and Japan - invaded China on the pretext of suppression of the Boxer 'anti-imperialist patriotic movement.' The Eight-Power Allied Forces burned and looted Beijing, and "the crimes were sinful" (Lishi I, p. 60). While underlining the severe privations that Chinese people underwent, Chinese history textbooks condemned the foreign forces with moral emotions.

Albeit Japan and the Western powers were viewed equally as foreign enemies to China, Chinese history textbooks expressed nuanced differences in terms of the degree of their imperial brutality. The textbook compared "the foreign guns and cannon" with "the *Qing*'s big blade and long spears" (*Lishi I*, p. 51), showing a huge technological gap between the two. Western powers were "strong and advanced," and therefore Chinese "decided to learn from the West" (*Lishi II*, p. 69). On the other hand, Japan committed "monstrous sins" (*Lishi I*, p. 75) such as the *Nanjing* Massacre, *Panjiayu* Tragedy, and the Army 731's crime. The photographs inserted in the history textbook illustrated that the Japanese should be considered cruel and merciless, since the Japanese soldier held an innocent Chinese person's head laughing and stepped on a number of dead bodies. Moreover, Japan left thousands of deadly chemical weapons in China, and the aftershock injured more than forty people to be poisoned in 2003. The chemical weapons still remain in Chinese land and already led to approximately two-thousand citizens to death

### (Lishi I, p.76-77).

The second source of threat objects comes from domestic enemies, such as the federal class and the later *Kuomintang*'s bureaucratic bourgeois. The feudal *Qing*'s ignorance of the outer world allowed China to be invaded by the Western powers and Japan, and its corruption escalated the conflict between the peasants, landlords, and bureaucrats. Because of the feudal *Qing*'s incompetence, China fell behind on the contemporary trends of international development. After the *Qing* government had collapsed, a new class contradiction between the have and the have-not was brought back to the fore. Mao Zedong pointed out that China needed to move on to the new democratic revolution to end the humiliation and resolve the ideological confrontation between the bourgeois and the proletarian by labelling the bourgeois class as the new enemy (Li 2017).

Economically speaking, the history textbook interpreted the historical pathway of China's state-building from the perspective of the Marxist historical materialism. The textbook demonstrated that "self-sufficient natural economy could not defeat capitalistic out-put caused by the Western Industrial Revolution" (*Lishi I*, p. 50). Indeed, imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism entailed brutal squashes of Chinese national capitalism. During World War I (WWI), when imperialist powers were busy with their wars, China was able to develop its capitalist economy, but Chinese national industries were rapidly declining when Western powers returned to China after WWI. Also, the second Sino-Japanese war conceded Japan to do either illegal annexations or ruthless annihilations of Chinese national companies in the enemy-occupied area. The textbook negatively considered *Kuomintang* by evaluating that the *Kuomintang* bureaucratic class eventually utilized the war to control the economic lifeline and crushed the national enterprises, thus causing the bureaucratic capital to expand and the national capital to shrink.

# ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL IDENTITIES, THE NINETEENTH TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Based upon the contents analyses of Korean and Chinese history textbooks, we can compare similarities and differences of how national identities were constructed by history textbooks in Korea and China.

### **Commonalities of Korean and Chinese National Identities**

Korea and China have some common characteristics found in their history textbooks. First, they both were forced to open the ports via unequal terms with foreign powers in the nineteenth century, as reactive responders of the foreign invasions. They were deprived of sovereignty and lost their diplomatic autonomy and self-help for their own citizens. In the face of the myriads of changes in international relations, various political factions debated whether they should adopt Western civilization and disclosed signs of severe discords within societies. Second, economic invasions by Western powers and Japan retarded and frustrated the economic development plans that China and

Korea sought for. Owing to imperial interventions, Chinese and Korea people suffered from heavy tax burdens and economic exploitations. Third, society had undergone tremendous changes in a modernized and civilized fashion. The Korean history textbook enumerated a series of changes in clothing, food, housing, and transportation, and less discrimination towards the ordinary classes other than *yangban*, stressing out the equality and equity. In China, on the other hand, Chinese officials, by adopting the Western civilization, especially began to emancipate from the traditional creed, *Tianxia*, literally meaning the 'all under heaven' thought. To emphasize, the Chinese history textbook regarded these officials as civilized and called those who stuck to all under the heaven to be ignorant and benighted.

## Differences between Korean and Chinese National Identities

As table 1 recapitulates, subjects as 'our' and 'we' prevailed in the Korean history textbook (*Kuksa*), whereas such words did not appear in the Chinese history textbook (*Lishi*). *Kuksa* constantly mixed 'our *minjok* (national ethnicity)' and 'our *kukmin* (people)' as the subject of the 'Korean.' This tendency indicates that Korea normally puts an emphasis on ethnic identity as one nation and distinguishes its nation from others. Meanwhile, due to divergent of minorities in China and constant changes of national enemies, *Lishi* did not mention 'our ethnicity' but stressed the significant magnitude of the narration and theories of the 'unified multi-ethnic state' and the Marxist historical materialism. China's most concern was to combine all the minorities and let them be less marginalized. Hence, emphasizing 'China' as the referent object of national identity is a critical mission of the Chinese government which might be eager to implant the meaning of what is China into the mindsets of the Chinese people. One China in Chinese history textbooks includes all 54 minorities, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao.

Korea was relatively an active actor in the modernization and enlightening processes for its state-building beyond imperialistic interventions by Western powers and Japan, but China rather reacted passively to the national priority of modernization. *Kuksa* portraited the *Chosŏn* government positively, but it felt helpless because it was at the end of her resources to protect the Korean national interests and its sovereignty. Korea's other foe was the *Qing*, who incessantly interfered with *Chosŏn*'s domestic affairs and often made economic invasions against *Chosŏn*. Another interesting point of differences comes from the comparison that *Kuksa* critically censured the foreign powers, but *Lishi* tried to find fault with internal issues – particularly, the *Qing* – as well as aggressive exploitations by external powers. China's modernization was subject to non-Chinese authorities without China's full commitments and engagements. Given the fact that late *Qing* officers were reluctant to change and made less effort to learn outside the world, *Lishi* deemed the late *Qing* officials as incompetent, ignorant, and corrupted feudalists who were stuck in mind, thereby undermining Chinese national interests.

While *Kuksa* described relatively less on Korean victory over Japanese colonial rule, *Lishi* rather put more ink on their glorious triumph over the Western countries. The Chinese history textbook used more energetic and emotional expressions with proactive adjectives such as 'unyielding,' 'going forward,' and even 'heroic,' instead of mere 'incessant resistance' showing in the Korean history textbook. This reveals the nuanced

Korean History Textbook ( <i>Kuksa</i> 2010)	Chinese History Textbooks ( <i>Lishi</i> 2007)	Differences	
Self-definition	1		
Our minjok/country	Chinese renmin (people)	The first person vs. The third person	
Modernization			
Opened its doors to imperialist powers	China's door was forced to open	Active vs. Passive	
Made an effort to modernization but failed	Struggled in the cracks of cruel extrusion		
Found a way to the independent modernization	Destroyed the burgeoning capitalism		
Failing Reasons			
Without fully developing modern elements, the Imperialist powers came	<i>Qing</i> 's heyday was an afterglow of the setting and soon faded		
The colonial reality distorted modernization	For the semi-colonial and semi-feudal China, the road to industrial salvation is simply not feasible.	External vs. External & Internal	
Antagonists			
Coercive colonial rule by Imperialist Japan	Series of wars of aggression against China	Japan vs. Western Powers	
Imperialist Japan	Western powers		
Description of Victory			
Struggle of our people and the victory of Allied forces	Finally realized the great victory of Anti-Japanese War		
Incessant resistance	Unyielding, going forward, heroic resistance	Dry liberation vs. Vivid victory	
Suffered from the pain	Suffered from a cruel blow		
Social Impact		·	
Social reform	Ideological emancipation	Lifestyle changes vs. Ideological emancipation	
Abolishment of hierarchical status and increase of the awareness of equality	Woke up from the dream of "all under the heaven"		
Independent Movements and modernization efforts	Emancipation Trend of learning from the West and seeking ways to strengthen the country		

Table 1. Keywor	rds in	Kuksa	and	Lishi
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Source: Compiled by authors.

contrast between the ruthless hardship that *Kuksa* emphasized for Korea's self-dignity and liberation from the Japanese rule, and the proud victory that *Lishi* emphasized for China's self-pride and the Communist revolution (Smith and Kim 2006).

Another distinction between Korean and Chinese national identity formation is closely related to the degree of national sensitiveness with international affairs. *Kuksa* allocated spacious sections for the issues of changing global architectures of international order. However, *Lishi* limited itself to the current Chinese territories with no genunine mention of the problems that have occurred outside China. For example, the *Shimonoseki Treaty* was regarded as a critical watershed by *Kuksa* since it allowed *Chosŏn* to become officially an independent state from the *Qing* government. The first Article of *Shimonoseki Treaty* stipulated that the *Qing* recognizes definitively the full and complete independence and the autonomy of *Chosŏn*, which made *Chosŏn* out of *Qing*'s control and allowed to control *Chosŏn* much more easily. However, in Lesson 12 of *Lishi I* (p. 59), Article I's contents of the *Shimonoseki Treaty* were excluded. Also, deleting the first Article gives the image of Japanese intention specifically towards China, which could easily make Korea neglected.

The final difference encompasses the social construction of national identity through the social change and even revolutionary movements during and after foreign powers' imperial interventions (Yu 2014). *Kuksa* highlighted independent movements of Korean people and modernization efforts of political leaders and elites, all of which were aimed to abolish hierarchical class systems and promote the awareness of equality in the process of modernization. By contrast, *Lishi* proactively advanced the concept of 'ideological emancipation' by waking up the people from the dream of 'all under heaven,' pushing them to learn from the West, and seeking ways to strengthen China. In sum, China was eager to imagine ideological emancipation, whereas Korea was willing to achieve social reforms by liberating and strengthening itself.

# INTERPRETING DIFFERENT TEXTBOOK DISCOURSES OF TWO COUNTRIES

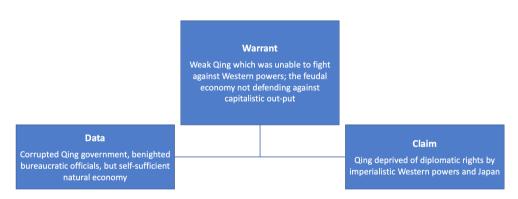
Based on the comparative analysis of *Kuksa* and *Lishi*, we interpret the path dependence of different perceptions on threat objects between Korea and China, which have been persistently accumulated by each government's history education. Different textbook discourses of two countries become nations' enduring identities embedded in past memories but still remaining as key sources of perception and misperception. Borrowing Toulmin's Argument Method (Toulmin 2003), we follow the logical flows of different discourses from two countries' history textbooks and then decipher why the fixed idea on national identities and threat objects via history textbooks is still working as main foundations to understand the other country's behaviors.<sup>4</sup> Focusing on each

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Developed by philosopher Stephen E. Toulmin (2003), the Toulmin method is a style of argumentation that breaks arguments down into six component parts: claim, grounds (data), warrant, qualifier, rebuttal, and backing. Given that every argument in the Toulmin method uses three fundamental parts (claim, grounds, and warrant), this study focuses on three parts rather than

history textbook's argumentation process, we seek to find out their underlying warrants that connect grounds (data) and claims.



**Figure 1.** Korea: "Shrimp Bursts in Whale Fight Discourse" Source: By authors.



**Figure 2.** China: "Weak Countries Have No Diplomacy Discourse" Source: By authors.

First of all, the Korean history textbook can be characterized by the notion of "shrimp bursts in whale fight discourse" (see figure 1) and the Chinese textbook by that of "weak countries have no diplomacy discourse" (see figure 2). Chinese people believe that premodern China had a humiliating history because of its weakness and incompetence; therefore, modern China has been trying its best to be strong enough not to repeat the same history. China desired to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese

the whole set of six parts.

nation and has repeatedly stated that it would rise peacefully. However, the Korean history textbooks have been continuously infusing Qing's aggressive intervention as a vital source of threats into the mentality of high school students, whereas the Chinese history textbooks have been targeting central threats to China at Western powers, rather than South Korea. The fact that Korea has been struggling to survive for a century due to great power competitions still drives Korean people to react hypersensitively against China's rise and its rivalry against the United States. The term that "shrimp bursts in whale fight" has been frequently cited in the Korean newspapers and mass media, especially during the THAAD crisis<sup>5</sup> and the China-US trade war.<sup>6</sup> The Chinese government strategically defended itself in international society by publicizing both principles of its foreign policy: "hiding the capacity and keeping a low profile (taoguangyanghui)" and "striving for achievements (fenfayouwei)." The former principle focuses on economic power, while the latter centers more around political power (Yan, 2014). Nevertheless, the aggressive path of China's foreign policies in contemporary years easily develops into a sensitive reminder to Korean people who would recall the dark history of unequal relationships with the *Oing* dynasty in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.



**Figure 3.** China's Argumentation Analysis of "Elitism Discourse"<sup>7</sup> Source: By authors.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> China implemented economic retaliation against Korea since the Korean government agreed on THAAD deployment. Yet, it was the United States that required the arrangement for the sake of protecting the US army and Korean citizens in the Korean peninsula. https://www.mk.co.kr/news/ politics/view/2017/06/368656/ (accessed 14 November 2021).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> http://biz.chosun.com/site/data/html\_dir/2018/03/23/2018032302365.html (accessed 10 May 2022).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Sun Yat-sen's *sanminzhuyi* (Three People's principle) includes *minzuzhuyi* (nationalism), *minquan* (people's rights), and *minsheng* (people's lives). Nationalism suggests that an independent nation-state should be established; the principle of people's rights proposes that people become an emperor and establish a republic country; and the concept of people's lives signifies to equalize the landownership between peasants and land owners.

#### Relating History Education with National Identities on Modern State-Building 17



**Figure 4.** Korea's Argumentation Analysis of "Egalitarianism Discourse" Source: By authors.

Moreover, the egalitarianism discourse versus elitism discourse would develop huge perception gaps between Korea and China. Chinese history textbooks keep educating students about the importance of the political elites. Consequently, it is important to note that laying stress on contemporary leaders' philosophical visions such as Jiang Zemin's 'Three Representatives' thoughts, Hu Jintao's 'Scientific Development Concept,' and Xi Jinping's thoughts on 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in New Ear' has the historical roots in Chinese elitism which creates and consolidates national identities (see figure 3). Yet, the Chinese way of elitism-centered governance contradicts with the Korean egalitarianism (see figure 4). Not only the leader groups but also all walks of people could play an influential role in social movements in the context of modern Korea. Therefore, emphasizing the elite only could be understood as authoritarian and unequal, which obstructs political, economic and social progress in a democratized country.

In a nutshell, history textbooks have been used as an effective instrument to legitimize government's socio-political systems and deliberate permeation into people's everyday life. Indeed, different discourses, which history textbooks dealing with the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries rely on, come up with perception gaps between China's socialism embedded in Marx's historical materialism and Korea's positivism for capitalistic modernization, even though two countries shared the history of invasion by Western powers and Japan. The South Korean national identity shown in the history textbook is proactively constructed under the historical trajectories where every group - the young, the old, women, or ordinary people - emphasized 'one nation' to highlight the egalitarianism, despite constant debates and cleavage throughout the historical process of modern state-building. On the other hand, the Chinese textbooks took into account the Marxist materialistic point of view and asserted that feudalists hindered national progresses. After the Republic of China was founded by Sun Yat-sen, Mao Zedong announced a 'new-democratic revolution' to fight against the bourgeois to establish a socialist society. Nevertheless, all Chinese people were victims of the Western imperialists, and they had a hard time due to the invasion and plunder by these powers.

# CONCLUSION

This study examines comparatively Korea's national identity with the seventh curriculum government-designated textbook, *Kuksa*, and China's identity formation with People's Education Press' government-authorized textbook, *Lishi I, II*, and *III*. It also explores the connections between the use of language and the social and political contexts in which the language was forged. The contents analysis of *Kuksa* and *Lishi* helps us to understand not only what political discourses can be defined as sources of national identities, but also how national identity has been differently formed by the history textbooks in China and Korea (Vickers and Jones 2005).

*Kuksa*, emphasized 'we' and 'us' to make Korean one. 'We' and 'Koreans' indicate the people who live in the Korean peninsula, and such words would be especially highlighted if 'we' were attacked by the foreign powers. The Korean way of selfidentification has the following four properties described in *Kuksa*: (1) Korea's proactive efforts for modernization, despite its failure in the face of foreign powers' interferences; (2) its strong victimized perception; (3) the emphasis on the unity of one nation; and (4) its stress on egalitarianism for all individuals. Along with four characters, three threat objects can be detected in the Korean history textbook: (1) Korea's negative perception toward China as a consequence of *Qing*'s constant intervention, economic invasion, as well as a tribute relationship with *Chosŏn*; (2) Japan's deprivation of Korean sovereignty and its colonial rule, which made Japan an unforgiven enemy of the Korean people; and (3) the class system of *Chosŏn* which impeded the unified identity among the Korean people. *Kuksa* indicated that the political and social freedom finally arrived in Korea after putting an end to the feudal class system.

Lishi, on the other hand, conveyed the contradiction of self-perception of China's national identity. The textbook, on the one hand, paid more attention to the patriotic enlightened officials of the *Qing* dynasty and philosophical legacies of their leaderships. On the other hand, it described the history of China's modern state-building from the Marxist materialistic point of view. Negative perceptions towards feudalism prevailed and the Chinese bourgeois was positively identified before the Republic of China was established to take over the *Qing* dynasty. However, the Chinese bourgeois became a defeated object and Chinese proletariats were requested to wage the 'new-democratic revolution' according to the Mao theory. Nevertheless, all Chinese people were victims of Western powers' invasions. Two categories could be made for Chinese threat objects during the nineteenth to the twentieth century of humiliation. First, threat objects came from abroad. Western powers, who destroyed Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity, triggered Chinese people to become extremely sensitive since China before the Opium War thought to be a central great power in the world. Second, domestic enemies hampered China's development at the same time. They were fatuous and corrupted officials along with bureaucratic capitalists that made China fragile and crump, and as a result, China was easily assaulted by the foreign powers.

Although it is commonplace to document that both Korea and China have similar past histories of being invaded and colonized by foreign powers, they rarely have common acuities or shared recognition mechanisms. Accordingly, this study concludes that a plenty of misunderstandings of each other's behaviors and speeches would be continuously witnessed in the contemporary Korea-China relationship, mainly due to the enduring perception gap between Korea and China which has been historically embedded in their differentiated paths to forge national identities.

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