

Creating an Empathic Brotherhood: Empathy in Sino-North Korean Relations during the Korean War

Abstract

This paper will explore how the Chinese and North Korean governments fostered a sense of mutual empathy between their soldiers and civilians during the Korean War. For the newly created PRC, mobilizing the people to fight a dangerous and costly war against the United States was not an easy task. Through carrying out extensive political work among volunteers, it tried to make them understand and share the hardships, suffering, and tribulation that North Koreans were experiencing at the hands of the United States. To facilitate the development of a sense of emotional consanguinity, they were made to think of North Korean women as their own mothers and to consider North Koreans as part of their own families. The North Korean government made similar efforts to create popular empathy for the Chinese volunteers. State propaganda frequently talked about how Chinese families had sent their children to aid North Korea. The DPRK also used mass rallies and cultural performances to inculcate its citizenry with a sense of gratitude for Chinese assistance and emphasize that Chinese and North Koreans were brethren who shared the triumphs and sorrows of war.

Bio

Gregg Brazinsky is a Professor of History and International Affairs and Deputy Director of the Institute for Korean Studies at GW. His research seeks to understand the diverse and multi-faceted interactions among East Asian states and between Asia and the United States. He is the author of *Nation Building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans, and the Making of a Democracy* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007) and *Winning the Third World: Sino-American Rivalry during the Cold War* (University of North Carolina Press, 2017). He served as Interim Director of the GW Institute for Korean Studies during the spring 2017 semester.