

KOREA 1905–1945

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# Korea 1905–1945

From Japanese Colonialism to  
Liberation and Independence



*by*

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*To my wife, Wonsook,  
on our fiftieth anniversary*



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## Editors' Preface



IN THE LATE nineteenth century, then again at the outset of the Cold War, Korea stood at the epicentre of great power conflict. But as Ku Daeyol demonstrates, the peninsula continued to attract intense diplomatic attention during the intervening period of Japanese colonial rule. Building on meticulous archival research, and interweaving Korean, Japanese, Chinese, and Western sources, Ku's volume explores the civilizational lens through which British and American officials viewed Korea in the decades after the Russo-Japanese War, and analyses how that lens helped to frame postwar partition. Casting the 'Korean question' in an international light, and showing that its origins long predated the U.S. entry into World War II, Ku reveals how diplomats in Seoul and Tokyo tried to make sense of Japanese colonialism, East Asian geopolitics, and the emergence of anti-colonial nationalism, as they measured whether Koreans had the 'maturity' to govern themselves.

As a carefully crafted work of diplomatic history, Ku's book identifies and explains the key events that drove this tumultuous period in Korea's past. Deprived of the right to conduct its own foreign relations by the Protectorate Treaty of 1905 (and more forcefully by its annexation in 1910), the decades at the heart of this book have heretofore been neglected by scholars of Korean foreign affairs. But, more broadly, Ku also provides us with a thoughtful examination of the nature of 'international politics' in a polity subject to the rule of another. In exploring the 'Korean question' within the wider ebb and flow and imperial visions and forces within and beyond the region, it sheds light on the entangled politics of competing empires and nationalisms in the making of modern East Asia.

Rob Fletcher & Tehyun Ma  
Missouri & Sheffield  
*November 2020*



# Abbreviations



- CCP: Chinese Communist Party  
*DBFP: Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919–1939*  
DFEA: Division of Far Eastern Affairs (U.S. Department of State)  
DS: U.S. Department of State  
FO: Foreign Office (Britain)  
*FRUS: Foreign Relations of the United States*  
*Handbook: Handbook of Far Eastern Conference Discussions, Treatment of Political Questions Relating to the Far East at Multilateral Meetings of Foreign Ministers and Heads of Government 1943–1949, Research Project No.62, November 1949, in Yi and Chông, vol. 2*  
KIA: Korean Independence Army  
KIP: Korean Independence Party  
KMT: Kuomintang (Guomindang), Chinese Nationalist Party  
KPG: Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai, later moved to Chongqing  
KRP: Korean Revolutionary Party  
*Military Mission: U.S. Military Mission to Moscow (October 18, 1943 – October 31, 1945), in Sin, vol. 4.*  
*NGB: Nihon gaikō bunsho* (Japanese Diplomatic Documents).  
*Park: Park, Il-keun, Anglo-American and Chinese Diplomatic Materials Relating to Korea 1887–1897* (Pusan: Pusan National University, 1984).  
*Shilliao: Guomin zhengfu yu hanguo duli yundong shilliao* (Historical Materials Concerning the Nationalist Government and the Korean Independence Movement) (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindai-shi yanjiusuo, 1988)  
*Sin: Han'guk pundansa charyojip* (Collected Materials on the History of the Korean Division), by Sin Pongyong  
*Soviet Entry: The Entry of the Soviet Union into the War against Japan: Military Plans, 1941–45*, U.S. Department of Defense, 1945, in *Sin*, vol. 1.  
SS: U.S. Secretary of State  
SWNCC: State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee

*Yi and Chŏng: Haebang chŏnhu miguk ũi taehan chŏngch'aeksa charyojip*  
(Collected Materials on the History of American Policy toward  
Korea before and after Korean Liberation) by Yi Kilsang and  
Chŏng Yong'uk

# Notes



1. When volumes with long titles are quoted, the titles are abbreviated from the second quotation, *e.g.*, *FRUS, Conferences at Cairo and Teheran, 1943* → *FRUS, Cairo and Teheran*.
2. When an author has more than one work cited, from the second instance of quotation, his/her works are listed with the year of issue in parentheses, *e.g.*, Lowe (1986).
3. In most cases, British documents are listed in the following order: sender to receiver (or the title of the document), date, FO (Foreign Office)/class number/file number/document number. However, since most of the documents on Korea, Japan and China relations belong to class number 371, FO/371 is omitted, *e.g.*, Jordan to Grey, January 1, 1904, FO/371/100(123/123) → Jordan to Grey, January 1, 1904, 100(123/123).
4. Annual Reports on resident countries by an embassy/legation/consulate general are generally drafted as of January 1 of the next year. Therefore, the annual reports are identified without dates, sender, or receiver. Only the name of the country, the year and document number are identified, *e.g.*, Korea, Annual Report, 1911, 100(123/100).
5. In principle, American documents are listed in the following order: sender to receiver (or the title of the document), date, class number, file number, document number or page. In the case of microfilms, the order is as follows: sender to receiver (or the title of the document), date, microfilm class number, roll number, document number or page.
6. However, when the absence of document number poses difficulty for data searching, all the information available is given (such as page and number of the dispatched document). As in the case of some internal DS documents or documents from embassies that do not have titles, pages in microfilms are indicated. "Document number" means the receipt number given by the Foreign Office or the State Department. "Number of dispatched document"

means the numbers given at the time of filing by the embassy or the consulate general.

7. American embassies or major consulate generals generally report to the Secretary of State. The Consulate General in Seoul reported to the Secretary or senior officials of lower rank, depending on the nature of pending issues. Accordingly, the formats are mixed, *e.g.*, “Miller to SS”, or “Miller to DS.” For documents dispatched from diplomatic posts that rarely appear in this study, the name of the post is noted, *e.g.*, U.S. Embassy (St. Petersburg).
8. This book follows the traditional order for Chinese, Japanese and Korean names; that is, the family name precedes the personal name(s). In cases such as Syngman Rhee or the Kuomintang, where the Westernized form has become standard or better known, this study adopts the Westernized form. For transliteration of Oriental languages, the modified Hepburn system for Japanese, the McCune-Reischauer system for Korean, and Pinyin (often with the Wade-Giles form in parenthesis for Chinese) are employed.
9. An additional, brief glossary is included below, for reference.

### **Korean**

### **Japanese**

pu	fu	urban prefecture
kun	gun	local district
myŏn	men	smallest local administration
myŏnjang		head of myŏn
li	ri	village
bushel		approx. 36 litres



## Preface



THIS STUDY AIMS to explore colonial Korea with special emphasis on its foreign relations during the Japanese occupation (1905–1945). Korean “international relations,” strictly speaking, did not exist during this “Japanese” period. Since the nation-state is traditionally a formal actor in international politics, Korea could not qualify for this role after the 1905 Protectorate Treaty that deprived it of the right to represent itself in foreign relations, or after the subsequent annexation in 1910. The 1907 International Conference at The Hague refused to recognize the legitimacy of the delegates of the Korean king, and this refusal formally confirmed Korea’s eroding sovereignty. Korea’s diplomatic history, in the conventional sense, thus came to a halt in 1905 and entered a political limbo, until it was resurrected with the liberation from Japanese rule in 1945, and the establishment of two independent nations in 1948.

Accordingly, this research essentially deals with Japan’s relations with Western powers, particularly the United States and Britain, *in regard to* Korea; and, in this sense, it is an attempt largely to record the attitudes and policies of these Western powers toward Korea, and to observe Korea through their looking glasses. One might ask whether or not the issue of Korean international relations during this period can be considered a valid subject for academic research. What does it mean to discuss Korean international relations when the Korean people, deprived of a nation-state, could not orchestrate an independent diplomacy? And if we can speak of such relations, how do we define them? Recent studies on Korean history under Japanese colonial rule have gained much currency because of the prevailing nationalistic atmosphere in contemporary Korean academia. They typically wish to reestablish Korea’s legitimacy by minimizing the role of alien, illegitimate rulers during this period. How, then, can we search for a “Korean perspective” in this study, given the fact that Korea’s international relations were inherently dependent upon the great powers’ attitudes and policies, and the premise that the Korean peninsula was just a pawn in those policies? These are questions I have been pondering since I began this research. I hope what follows will provide some answers.

First of all, one must fill the “blank space” (1905–1945) in Korean diplomatic history in one way or another. However, this is only a first step and cannot bring a complete resolution to the questions I just raised. These can partly be answered if we explore in some detail what “the Korean question” during the Japanese occupation period really meant. The Koreans’ agenda was, in short, “liberation and independence.” Yet we cannot understand the intricacies of “liberation and independence” as a purely intramural question; that is, simply as Koreans’ resistance to Japanese rule. A true picture of Korea during this period must take into consideration both international perspectives and bilateral relations between Japan and Korea, since both played a part in deciding the outcome of the issue. Or one might argue that “the Korean question” emerged with the outbreak of the Pacific War, independently of any domestic developments on the peninsula. There is some truth to this: the Allies did not begin to discuss the liberation and independence of Korea until after 1941. We will soon see, however, that domestic situations reflecting Japanese colonial policy, its external implications, and Korea’s society as modernized by the colonialists, to cite only a few of several factors, became overwhelmingly important in determining the attitude of the great powers toward the future of Korea.

Herein lies the significance of the history of Korea’s foreign relations. It is not a subcategory separate from Korea’s domestic history, but rather an integral part of Korean history as a whole. Since the opening of the country to the outside world in the 1870s, Korean diplomatic history is not simply the record of the external initiatives of Koreans *de jure* or *de facto*. The diplomatic history of the great powers may be seen as a record of their external activities – from the planning of policy objectives, and calculations of their capacity to implement these objectives, to implementation itself, and an ultimate evaluation of the outcome for a certain region. What is unusual about Korean diplomatic history is the extraordinary extent to which outside powers shaped Korea’s domestic political landscape. In the 1880s, for instance, China’s overbearing claim to sovereign rights in Korea spawned the rise of the Independence/Reform Party in Korea, which in turn intensified factional conflicts between conservatives and reformists. This means that perceptions of, and reactions to, this environment had long shaped Koreans’ diplomatic, as well as domestic, history. And, when Korea was liberated at the end of World War II, the influence of foreign elements reached its zenith.

However, these observations do not completely clarify the questions raised earlier, because Korean foreign relations in a traditional sense had left the scene with the 1910 annexation. Here arises the next, perhaps more essential, query: can “international politics”

be properly applied to “the Korean question” during Japanese colonial rule; and, if they can, how do we define the Korean question in the wider context of international relations? For Koreans, the definition was simple: liberation and independence. However, for the great powers, the definition was more problematic. The liberation and independence which were central to the Koreans were of less, if any, interest to the outsiders. British reports in the 1910s maintained that “the Korean question” was “a thing of the past,” and that “Korean independence exists outside the sphere of real politics.” (See Chapter 4.) At governmental level, the United States did not express any position on this subject before the Pacific War. Even towards the close of the war, Secretary of State Edward Stettinius allegedly asked one of his subordinates to tell him where Korea was located.<sup>1</sup> This fact implies that even a specialist at the Department of State had little or no idea about Korea. Japan, facing defeat, still had hopes of continuing its occupation of Korea in the post-war era. During the war, American policy-makers talked of the possibility that “Britain and the United States might be obliged to promise aid to Japan in the event of Soviet aggression,”<sup>2</sup> although it would be morally indefensible and a grave political error to perpetuate Japanese control over Korea.<sup>3</sup> All these facts suggest that “the Korean question” remained on the back-burner for the great powers even during World War II. China and the Soviet Union, both of which opposed Japan over Korean issues much more bitterly than the United States and Britain, favored Korea’s liberation. Nevertheless, the powers could not agree on a specific definition of “independence.” In fact, China, putative supporter of Korean liberation, gave little real support for its independence. (See Chapter 9.)

The Korean perspective on history emerges again at this point. Some claim that quasi-diplomatic activities in the Korean independence movement can be regarded as the most significant record of Korea’s external relations during this period. However, “the Korean question” cannot be answered merely by the perspectives of the independence movement, which is usually described in terms of the opposition between “Japanese oppression” and “Korean resistance.” Indeed, this basic formula of oppression versus resistance did very much define the life of the Korean people under Japanese rule. Yet

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<sup>1</sup> Halle, Louis J., *The Cold War as History – with a New Epilogue on the Ending of the Cold War* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> A-A13 Thirteenth Meeting of the Armament Group, August 13, 1941, Council on Foreign Relations, “Studies of American Interests in the War and Peace, Far East, Korea,” *Yi and Chông*, vol. 1, p. 147.

<sup>3</sup> P-B81 Problem of Constituting an Independent Political Regime in Korea, May 28, 1944, *Yi and Chông*, vol. 1, pp. 198, 200.

it would be impossible to explicate, within such a simple framework, many of the issues of international politics concerning Korea. The domestic situation spawned gray zones, where people engaged in various social activities that were not part of traditional Korean society. These days, such phenomena have often become the subjects of “colonial modernity” studies.<sup>4</sup>

The Korean independence movement and its quasi-diplomatic activities might eventually have more smoothly paved the way for Korea’s liberation. But, as clearly shown throughout this book, such international relevance was never strong in the case of Korea. Whether in the case of armed struggles or diplomatic activities, the powers regarded the entire process of the Korean anti-Japanese movement as if it were a sequence of meaningless and/or sometimes reckless acts by a few individuals, which amounted to little more than minor and episodic resistance that could be easily suppressed. Organizations within the independence movement were also not capable of truly making Korea an actor in international affairs. The Korean Provisional Government (KPG) at Shanghai (later moved to Chongqing), probably the most well-known institution in the Korean independence movement, neither ruled any part of the Korean territory nor had any means to influence changes in the political processes of Japan-occupied Korea, much less great-power policies in East Asia. Consequently, the powers did not recognize the KPG or other institutions in the independence movement as partners in official talks. When the KPG demanded recognition during World War II (in a situation which, from a Korean viewpoint, should have favored recognition, since the Allied powers were at war with Japan), the Allies completely dismissed it.

What, then, constituted “the Korean question” that did actually exist, and which influenced, even if only slightly, the powers’ attitudes toward Korea during this period? A primary answer to this question is that, even though Korea had lost its status as an independent state, the value of the Korean people and the peninsula remained valid in terms of international politics. While the powers identified the Japanese Government-General as “The Korean Government,” and recognized its actual control over the peninsula and its people, they also took a constant interest in Korea and its residents for various reasons. As Japan ruled the Korean peninsula and implemented expansionist policies further inland, the strategic value of the peninsula in East Asian politics was elevated. When a weaker nation is in a geo-politically important location, it is valued as an object for competition; when

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<sup>4</sup> Shin, Gi-Wook and Robinson, Michael (eds.), *Colonial Modernity in Korea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Asia Center Monographs, 1999).

an outside power has, in fact, occupied it, it is likely to be regarded by neighboring countries as an immediate threat to security. The former was the case in the competition among the powers (and especially China, Japan and Russia) before 1910; the latter was the case when Japan sought political expansion into Manchuria and China, with a sort of base in Korea, after the annexation. Hence the paradox that losing its independence in some ways heightened Korea's geo-political value. The forty years, from the protectorate in 1905 to liberation in 1945, was a period of unprecedented fluctuations and two global wars. Japan respectively won and lost World War I and II. The Korean peninsula was explicitly and implicitly connected with global/regional conflicts, was evaluated in the light of these wars and other regional conflicts, and was then restored to its truer value in the postwar disposal of Japan and the realignment of the world order.

Governance in the peninsula had developed based on the relationship between the alien rule of Japan and the governed Korean people. For the powers, this created an additional area of interest in the question of the Korean peninsula. In the process of some hundreds of years of colonial rule, the Western powers had been facing various problems, including the legitimacy of alien rule and the "fairness" of their overseas governance, and over time their approaches underwent considerable change. The practical problems of colonies were brought together with questions of morality, in the form of mandates and trusteeships after both World Wars.

"The Korean question" was one of the "problems of colonies." The powers had accumulated various records by diplomats, missionaries and journalists in Seoul and Tokyo, who were first-hand observers of different aspects of Japanese rule over Korea, including the relationships between the powers and the Tokyo/Seoul government, or between the alien rulers and the Korean people; the ways in which Korean society was changing under Japanese rule; and the potential of the Koreans to run an independent nation. Korean "international relations" during this period had to do not only with the peninsula's political and strategic value, but also with matters such as the powers' understanding of, and approach to, the questions between Korea and Japan, and the causes of changes in their attitudes. These had a great impact on issues concerning the legitimacy of Japanese rule over Korea, when the Western powers seriously considered Korean liberation with the outbreak of the Pacific War.

My research also tries to explicate "continuity" in the study of Korean diplomatic history. Perhaps naturally, general historical descriptions mainly rest upon causal explanations. Since social phenomena have both diachronic and synchronic/structural elements, it is necessary to consider the relationships among social forces

operating upon specific circumstances when a great event occurs. In reviewing this research, it is obvious that the power of “the past” is operating surprisingly well, especially in the area of “perception” where human beings (or personalized nations), who observe and perceive events, can accurately relate one event to another.

The way the powers observed “the Korean question” was definitely influenced by their perceptions of the country, including their views on the government and society of the late Chosŏn Dynasty. Their standard was “civilization” in the Western sense. Whether their perceptions and evaluations were objectively accurate is, of course, quite a different matter. The attitudes and policies of the powers in 1945, when they discussed Korean liberation and independence, were not so different from before the annexation, even after the lapse of forty years. It is almost certain, therefore, that the questions of Korean liberation, independence and division cannot be completely grasped if the starting point is the decisions that the Allies took at the close of the war in 1945, or at the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941. The “lacunae in the historiography of Korean foreign relations,” which I address in this book, refer not merely to this apparent gap of forty years but also to breaches in the frame of perception by which “the Korean question” has been discussed. We, who are still living in “the age of division,” may not be so free as we might like to think from such bonds of the “past.” With a formal objective of filling in some of the documentary and psychological lacunae of Korean diplomatic history, this study aims to identify the essence of “the Korean question,” with the powers’ historical perceptions and attendant attitudes as a backdrop. It will also explain how this led to a great tragedy in modern Korean history, via the process of liberation-independence-division-war.

Lastly, this study strives critically to supplant the methodologies with which Korean academic circles have hitherto approached “the Korean question,” especially the issues of liberation/independence/division. It should be recognized that Korean academia has dealt with this issue through a prism of “the Korean question in itself,” i.e., a too Korea-centered perspective. “The Korean question” should start from accurately positioning “Korea” within the structure of international relations in East Asia and the world. It is especially hard to define and position the Korean question, as it emerged among numerous post-war proposals in the wake of catastrophic changes in the international order. What were the top priorities in the post-war settlement in the eyes of the Allied leaders like Roosevelt, Truman, Churchill and Stalin? What, for them, was the significance of Korea? Did they seriously discuss the Korean question? If they did, to what circumstances did they relate it? Were the circumstances

immediately related to the Korean question or not? Did the powers conflict heavily or compromise easily over the priorities? How was the Korean question influenced in the process? A tentative conclusion is that the existence of “Korea” was of little importance to the Allied powers. John L. Gaddis, who explained World War II and post-war U.S. policy from the standpoint of the origins of the Cold War, does not directly address the Korean question. In the five volumes of the official historiography of World War II by the British Foreign Office, Korea is mentioned only once.<sup>5</sup> Each chapter of this study begins with a summary of East Asian international relations. These are efforts to illuminate the structure of international relations within which the Korean question was placed.

Supporters of the “Korean perspective” have tended to interpret the wartime diplomacy of the great powers, in so far as it concerned Korea, through an *ex post facto* Cold War prism. An added encumbrance of the question of “Korea-centered historiography” is that the Korean War, and more than three decades of industrialization, reinforced such views by creating a South Korean society imbued with nationalism and economic confidence. Such an attitude is all the more powerful in its appeal, as it tends to conform with one of Korean academics’ favored historical theories; that is, Benedetto Croce’s “presentism”, which claims that practical requirements, which are said to underlie every historical judgment, give to all history the character of “contemporary history.”<sup>6</sup> But to evaluate the Korean question *too much* from such a standpoint could prove misleading and dangerous, as we will see throughout this work.

One need not wholly discard a “Korea-centered perspective,” but its application must be prudent and selective. There is a certain prerequisite, moreover, if this perspective is to be useful in academic research. Those who advocate this perspective must make a well-grounded effort to define Korean identity, and to position Korea in a much wider regional/global scene. The United States, and President Roosevelt especially, have been accused of “imperialistic arrogance,” and of “belittling Korea” by suggesting a 40-year Korean trusteeship.<sup>7</sup> Detractors neglect, however, to investigate the political, social and

<sup>5</sup> Gaddis, John Lewis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941–1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); Woodward, Llewellyn, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1970–1976), vol. 5, p. 34. Here Korea was mentioned, in a way: “even so distant a ‘nationality’ as the Koreans of Siberia attempted to obtain representation”.

<sup>6</sup> Croce, Benedetto, *History as the Story of Liberty* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964), p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> Sin, Pongyong, *Han’guk pundansa yŏn’gu* (A Study on the Division of Korea) (Seoul: Han’ul Academy, 2001), p. 71; Kim Ilsung, *Kim Ilsung tongji hoegorok – segi wa tōburō*

intellectual conditions of his world and that of colonial Korea, i.e., some of the conditions that made him reach that conclusion. If Western political leaders considered Koreans a backward people in need of “education,” this arrogance must be understood as historically shaped. Their perceptions may not have been entirely accurate and were possibly fallacious. Nonetheless, historians must untangle and clarify the accumulated mix of events and mythology that created these attitudes. Only such research will give us a critical understanding of President Roosevelt’s “arrogance.” At the same time, we must ask whether Koreans themselves are free from all responsibility for their past misery. Koreans’ non-belligerence did not save them from the anarchic world of international politics. As we will see in subsequent chapters, the Korean people faced a virtually impossible challenge, and their best efforts to create a united and independent nation were thwarted by what some would call historical destiny.

We have been overusing grand frameworks like “colony, oppression, and exploitation,” and doing too much “sketching of totalities” (*Gesamtschilderung*, in Jacob Burckhardt’s term).<sup>8</sup> Diplomatic correspondence has been mocked more often than not as “what one clerk said to another clerk,” as if to suggest that it only deals with “agitations on the surface” or “the dust of various events.”<sup>9</sup> It might be true. However, whoever wrote a given dispatch – whether he was only a junior “clerk” in the Department of State (as in the case of Ramsford Miller), or an “acting” Consul-General in Seoul, a colony’s capital (as in the case of William Royds), or someone writing just a “private letter” to his colleague in the London Foreign Office (as in the case of Sir Charles Eliot, Britain’s Ambassador in Tokyo in the early 1920s), these reports represent starting points in the study of diplomatic history, so long as they reflect the policies of the countries these diplomats represent. This study, especially Part I, uses such dispatches to illuminate certain aspects of “low politics” (in modern international relations parlance), which have often been disregarded as uninteresting, and thus have been neglected or ignored by those who are accustomed to the “high politics” of alliances, war and diplomacy. However, in this way, this study hopes to draw a newer and more specific picture of colonial Korea, thus contributing to a broader understanding of it, even if the final result may still be imperfect.

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(Memoir of Comrade Kim Il-sung – Together with the Century) (Pyongyang: Chosŏn nodongdang ch’ulp’ansa, 1998), vol. 8, p. 452.

<sup>8</sup> Burckhardt, Jacob, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Taylor, A. J. P., *Europe: Grandeur and Decline*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967) p. 167.



As one might expect, this study draws principally on diplomatic records. East Asian international relations, especially the relations between Japan and the Western powers during 1905–1945, have been substantially covered elsewhere. Nevertheless, data, let alone research, on “the Korean question” of the period have not been well utilized or prepared. The Korean question after the annexation failed to draw any sustained attention from the great powers. It was only given momentary attention when a significant socio-political movement, like the March First Movement of 1919, burst forth. The Korean question was hardly included in the published documents of the powers’ governments. For instance, *Foreign Relations of the United States* and *Documents on British Foreign Policy* address the Korean question as an independent item only immediately after the annexation or during the Pacific War. Consequently, I had to rely on open but unpublished documents, meaning that my research has largely been based on U.S. and British records. The fact that these two countries were the only powers that exercised any real influence on the Korean question was another reason. (See Part I, Chapter 1.)

This book is divided into two parts because of the changing nature of debates on the Korean question after the 1940s. Part I covers the problems until the end of the 1930s, while Part II examines those of the 1940s. Chapter 1 of Part I examines some theoretical problems. This book is not primarily a work of theoretical criticism, but an analysis of the international politics of the Korean peninsula during the Japanese colonial period and, as such, requires a comprehensive understanding of U.S. and British East Asian policies, Japan’s policy in Korea, and the problem of perception in any study on international history. It is therefore necessary to summarize these subjects briefly.

The chapters in Part I are divided into decades. This is not based on a mere division of time, but on specific and distinctive questions that arose during these ten-year periods. Certain chapters overlap, since questions did not automatically arise or become eclipsed according to a precise ten-year cycle. The 1940s of Part II covers the questions of Korean liberation, independence, and division that materialized with the outbreak of the Pacific War. This period might have lasted only until the liberation in August 1945, but was extended by the Moscow Conference of the three foreign ministers in December 1945, when certain important aspects of the Korean question were at last settled. Subsequent problems should be separately covered under the subject of the “politics of post-liberation.” Although Part II deals with the Korea policies of several relevant countries, it mainly focuses on the United States, as this power bore the brunt of fighting against Japan, and became the party most concerned in the settlement of the Korean question. It is also due to the fact that, while the other three

powers, i.e., China, Britain and the Soviet Union, pursued East Asian/Korean policies in line with their own direct interests, U.S. wartime policy assumed a more universal nature, focusing on such questions as the establishment of an agreed international order that would ensure lasting peace. Soviet participation in Korean affairs had been increasingly important after the tide of war turned in the Allies' favor in Europe, but this work's discussion of its Korea policy is largely based on U.S. and British records, because Russian data on the pre-liberation period that is of relevance to my arguments is scarce, even though its archives have been open since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s.

During my research for this work, I was supported twice by the Fulbright Foundation, and also by the Korean Research Foundation (National Research Foundation) and Ewha University. This assistance enabled me to conduct my work at the Public Record Office, now the National Archives (TNA), London; at the National Archives, Washington DC; Georgetown University; the University of Minnesota; and the Korea Institute at Harvard University. I am most grateful for their support. The Korean version of this study was published in 1995. Yet with the discovery of new archives, especially in China and Russia, with new collections of NARA archives by Korean scholars, and with the appearance of new research on the colonial period, I have rewritten parts of my original study, shortening and/or expanding some parts to a considerable extent. In the process, I have been greatly indebted to a number of colleagues and friends. Dr. Horace Underwood and Mrs. Shim Jaeok of the Fulbright-Korea Foundation, Professor David Steinberg at Georgetown University, and Professor Joseph R. Allen at the University of Minnesota provided me with facilities for research. At Harvard, Professor Carter Eckert took care of me during my research year in Cambridge, Massachusetts, giving useful suggestions to improve the manuscript. Susan Laurence and Mrs. Myong-suk Chandra at the Korea Institute also helped me in various ways. Professor Vipin Chandra at Wheaton College discussed important issues within the manuscript with me after reading the bulky text. Professor Akira Iriye provided valuable comments on some chapters. Mr. William R. Carter, linguist and historian in Cambridge, generously gave his time, copy-editing the entire manuscript, and helping me with stylistic refinements. I am most grateful to Dr. Jim Hoare, my long-time friend and former British *chargé d'affaires* to Pyongyang, who was so helpful and supportive, urging me to rewrite the manuscript, which had been lying dormant for years, and provided himself as an efficient channel of communication between me and the publisher. I also thank Mr. Paul Norbury, the publisher and editor of Renaissance Books, who managed to make

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Ku Daeyeol  
Seoul  
*Autumn 2020*



**PART 1**

**THE PERIOD OF ANNEXATION**



## A General Framework



THE MAIN TEMPORAL background of this research is the age of imperialism, two world wars and an early phase of a germinating “Cold War.” In East Asia, the traditional Chinese world order had been in the process of decline, and was finally destroyed by China’s defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95. A new era was ushered in by the imposition of the Western/British informal empire, in which Western powers, together with Japan, maintained a sort of balance-of-power system among themselves, while uninterruptedly encroaching on China and neighboring countries. Korea was a helpless prey and was, in these circumstances, absorbed by Japan. It is an intrinsic aspect of international politics that the great powers take the lead in formulating and regulating the norms and nature of inter-state relations, which then naturally became tinged with the current thoughts and views of these few great powers. In the past, China’s views had dominated the international relations of the region; now, Western norms replaced them. Thus, the powers’ reactions to Japan’s rule over Korea, as well as their ultimate “Korea policies,” can only be accurately understood within the framework of their attitudes and perceptions, and, above all, their value systems, insofar as they related to Korea’s external relations and Japan’s colonial rule in the peninsula. This chapter will briefly examine the issues that will help provide the general frameworks for this research.

### JAPAN AND KOREA

It is very demanding for any Korean, whose country was once a prey of Japanese imperialism, to make strictly objective judgments on Japan’s policy in the Korean peninsula during the colonial period. It is easy enough to condemn and criticize the entire process and reality of Japan’s occupation. While Japan’s policies afflicted residents in all the target areas of Japanese expansion, Japan’s ways of dealing with the

Korean people, either on a national or an individual level, or in the name of enlightenment or civilization, trampled on Korea's national pride and inflicted severe material and mental agonies. However, such facts alone will not bring us to a full understanding of the realities of Japan's policies in Korea. Since Japanese imperialism represents only one form of governance among the many that have appeared in the course of human history, its position should be objectively evaluated in relation to the story of how the whole world was developing. This introductory section will seek out some of the factors that influenced Japan's policy toward Korea, and especially toward Korea's foreign relations.

After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Japan successfully built an empire in East Asia in less than a half century, starting with the annexation of the Ryūkyū (Liuqiu in Chinese) Islands in the 1870s, and including the annexation of Korea in 1910, and its 1932 redesignation as the puppet state of "Manshūkoku" (usually known to the outside world as "Manzhouguo"). The term "empire," of course, entails many complexities. In international politics, it means a great power with an imperial system that can control or exercise a hegemonic influence on neighboring regions or countries. Japan called itself an empire to demonstrate that the Meiji Restoration of 1868 had reestablished the sovereignty of the divine "emperor." It may be possible to interpret the basic policy objective of the Japanese "Empire" as "imperialistic" in a broader sense. Yet these two terms should be distinguished from each other.<sup>1</sup>

One might raise questions about whether it is possible to call Japan an empire in terms of international politics. For instance, can we

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<sup>1</sup> The terms "imperial" and "imperialist" are separately defined in more strict senses. It is claimed, among other things, that imperial policies or postures are not fundamentally or necessarily economic in nature, that they are neither motivated by economic gain nor structurally rooted in any particular socio-economic system such as "capitalism." Imperial relationships are concerned with power, either for its own sake or as an instrument of some larger, primarily non-economic objective such as "world order." [Slater, Jerome, "Is United States Foreign Policy 'Imperialist' or 'Imperial'?" *Political Science Quarterly*, 91-1 (spring 1976), pp. 66–67.] The policy of Benjamin Disraeli, Britain's prime minister at the height of British imperialism in the 1870s, was "essentially concerned with questions of power and security, while revealed no deep understanding of the needs of England in the economic sense." [Langer, William L., *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890–1902* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), p. 70.] See also Iriye, Akira, "Imperialism in East Asia," in Crowley, James B. (ed.), *Modern East Asia: Essays in Interpretation* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970), p. 124.; Ferguson, Niall, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power*. (New York: Basic Books, 2002), p. 303–304. For a Korean study on "empire" in modern Japan, see, Yi, Samsōng, "'Cheguk' gaenyōm kwa 19segi Ilbon", (The Concept of 'Empire' and modern Japan in the nineteenth Century), *Korean Political Science Review* 51-1(2011).



put Japan on a par with the Roman, Chinese, Mongol and British Empires? Japan did not qualify as the equal of these great empires. The period from Japan's establishment of a new "empire" to its fall spanned just three-quarters of a century. As made manifest by the case of China's three northeast provinces (commonly known to Westerners as "Manchuria"), the international community did not recognize a large portion of the territories under Japan's occupation as part of the Japanese empire. Western powers, like Britain, the United States and Russia, restrained Japan's ambitions in various ways. However, despite all these limitations, Japan seemed to be establishing its "empire" in East Asia, with the Korean peninsula both the victim and a major engine for this expansion.

The next issue I must unavoidably confront is how to explain the nature and motives of Japan's policies toward Korea. This is an old and widely debated controversy, which still casts a lingering shadow over Korea and Japan, both politically and academically. Was there a clearly defined Japanese "imperialist scheme," or was it more an unintentional, incremental absorption of the peninsula? One side sees Japan's Korea policy as being inherently aggressive and expansionist after the "*seikanron*" ("conquer Korea arguments") of the 1870s, and the annexation as an outcome of scheming imperialist motivation. Yet there is another, more apologetic side that views Japan's Korea policy as being originally of a peaceful, incremental and economic nature, with the good intention of aiding Korean reforms; even if, alas, the East Asian political situation of the time made annexation come to seem the best, unavoidable measure against the national challenges Japan faced. This is the so-called "idealism versus realism" thesis, which Hilary Conroy discusses in his seminal study on Japanese policy toward Korea. Most Western academics accepted Conroy's view in this argument, and their reasoning is justifiable in many respects.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from the usual Korean view, which starts with the premise that Japanese policy toward Korea had been aggressive from the very beginning, a new revisionist approach to the subject may be observed in Western academia. Donald Calman has condemned W.G. Beasley's analysis (which falls into the category represented by Conroy) as that

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<sup>2</sup> Conroy, Hilary, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea: 1868–1910 – A Study of Realism and Idealism in International Relations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960) and Dong Chon, *Can Aggression be Justified and Imperialism Rationalized by 'Realism'? A Review of Hilary Conroy's The Japanese Seizure of Korea* (Seoul: Korea Research Center, undated). See also Myers, Ramon H. and Peattie, Mark R. (eds.), *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), Introduction, Part 1 and Part 4. Theories on overseas imperialism by Hannah Arendt basically take the same stance as Conroy. [Arendt, Hannah, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harvest Books, 1973), chapters 5 and 8.]

of “an eminent Victorian Japanologist.” Beasley, representing the current Anglo-American orthodoxy of Japanese studies, claims that “Japanese imperialism dates from the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95,” and argues that “there is no evidence that in declaring war on China in 1894 its government had any expectation of territorial gain, but the ease and rapidity of Japanese victories soon prompted them.” However, Calman has rejected this theory, insisting that Japanese imperialism was not simply a response to external conditions, but that its wellsprings may be found within Japanese history, as the Meiji Restoration came complete with the *seikan* slogan.<sup>3</sup>

Akira Iriye’s position is somewhat in the middle. On the one hand, he claims that Japan deliberately created a crisis in Korea in 1894 as an excuse to provoke a war with China. On the other, he argues perceptively that “the Japanese government is generally pictured as having sought the revision of the existing unequal treaties and military security vis-à-vis the Korean peninsula as the fundamental national goals. Such a view ignores the far more significant undercurrent in Japanese thought, concern with expansionism that paralleled the growth of expansionism in other parts of the world.” Until the events of 1894, however, that kingdom was considered vital to Japanese national interest primarily in non-economic terms.<sup>4</sup> Peter Duus, in his *The Abacus and the Sword*, sheds new light on Japan’s occupation of Korea by connecting economic factors and political ambition, but contends that Japan had no specific objective in, for example, the case of the “conquest Korea debate.” His conclusion was that “the sword was the servant of abacus; the abacus was the handmaid of the sword.”<sup>5</sup> Malcolm D. Kennedy, the military attaché at the British embassy in Tokyo in the 1910s, explained that Korea was to Japan what the “low countries” had been to Britain from Marlborough’s time in the early eighteenth century onwards. Just as Britain was unable to dissociate itself from events in that coastal region of the European continent, Japan was unable to dissociate itself from events in Korea, which, like a dagger, pointed at the heart of Japan.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Calman, Donald, *The Nature and Origins of Japanese Imperialism – A Reinterpretation of the Great Crisis of 1873* (London & New York: Routledge, 1992), preface. For Beasley’s views on this issue, see Beasley, W.G., *Japanese Imperialism 1894–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 9, 55.

<sup>4</sup> Iriye, Akira, *Pacific Estrangement: Japanese and American Expansion, 1897–1911* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 17–18, 43–47. See also Townsend, Susan, C., “Yanihara Tadao’s Comparative Critique of Japanese and British Colonial Policy,” *Japanese Perspectives on Imperialism in Asia* (London: LSE-STICERD, 1995), p. 36.

<sup>5</sup> Duus (1995), p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Kennedy, Malcolm D., *The Estrangement of Great Britain and Japan 1917–35* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969), p. 37.

This “dagger” point of view was adopted as the pillar of Japan’s expansion policy, and was advocated, among others, by Yamagata Aritomo, the founder of the Japanese army, in his so-called “Yamagata memorial.”<sup>7</sup> His memorial to the throne of 1890 stressed that Japan must be ready, first, to defend its line of sovereignty, and then to defend its “line of interest,” which lay in the Korean peninsula. In the modern international relations lexicon, this meant that Korea was “vital” for Japan’s security. It was a minimum requirement for Japan that Korea should remain a neutral area between itself and its potential enemies. Even under such circumstances, the policies of the Korean government should be understood not only as friendly, congenial, and non-threatening to Japan, but as sensitive and positively deferential to Japan’s needs. The optimum situation, as far as Japan was concerned, was that it would have its own grip on power in the peninsula. At the very least, Japan would not allow the Korean government to pursue an independent foreign policy under any circumstance. Japan’s guarantees for Korean independence, which the Tokyo government had made public on numerous occasions before the annexation, indicated only that that Korea should not be absorbed by, or enter friendly relations with, a power hostile to Japan. It was with such reasoning that Japan intervened in the Korean domestic problem of the *Tonghak* (Eastern Learning) Movement in 1894, precipitating the Sino-Japanese War, and later annexing Korea under the rubric of “stability in the Korean peninsula and everlasting peace of the East through it.”<sup>8</sup>

After the two wars against China and Russia, the theme of Japan’s “security” was very useful in justifying its overseas expansion. In terms of international politics, however, Japan’s target territories had belonged to the Chinese world order for over a thousand years, and were now included in the treaty port system of the European powers’ “informal empire.”<sup>9</sup> This meant that, apart from China, Japan had to overcome various sorts of challenges and resistance from the leading powers, including Britain, the United States and Russia. Faced with various difficulties, Japan armed itself with ideas from Western international relations, rejecting the Chinese world order and hence laying the groundwork for Japan’s advances into the continent.

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed discussion on this subject, see Mayo, Marlene, “Attitudes toward Asia and the Beginnings of Japanese Empire,” in Goodman, Grant K. (ed.), *Imperial Japan and Asia – A Reassessment* (New York: Occasional Papers of the East Asian Institute, Columbia University, 1967), pp. 12–15. Also see, Iriye, trans. by Yi, Sŏnghwan, *Ilbon ūi ogyo* (Japanese Diplomacy) (Seoul: P’urŭnsan, 1993), pp. 45–46.

<sup>8</sup> Treaty of Annexation, *NGB*, 43-1, pp. 679–682.

<sup>9</sup> As for the term “informal empire,” see Peter Duus, Ramon H. Meyers, and Mark R. Peattie (eds.), *The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895–1937* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), xi.

After initial successes in revising unequal treaties, and in brushing aside Western interests in Korea and South Manchuria after the Russo-Japanese War, Yamagata's concept of a "line of interest" became firmly established as an economic and strategic doctrine. The Korean peninsula was now part of the Japanese empire, and its security had as much of a "divine value" as that of the Japanese islands. Logically, neighboring Manchuria emerged as a place of vital interest for Japan, to protect Korea. When China was gripped by the chaos of its revolution in 1911, Japan acquired concessions in Inner Mongolia, which bordered South Manchuria, and subsequently declared that it reserved the right to take necessary actions there.<sup>10</sup> In the 1920s, South Manchuria and its vicinity, including Inner Mongolia, were claimed to be gates by which Bolshevism might find its way into Japan.<sup>11</sup> It was largely in this manner that expansion into Manchuria became justified.

Of course, Japan succeeded in its northern advances largely due to a certain power vacuum created by the earlier defeats of China and Russia, but it is also undeniable that the two preeminent Western powers, Great Britain and the United States, both implicitly and explicitly allowed this new Asian power to expand to the north. They believed that Japan's advance into Korea, and then further into Manchuria, would make Japan turn its attention away from the south, where US and British colonial possessions were scattered. These Western powers were thus quite receptive to the Japanese expansion of the 1910s and 1920s, opining, for instance, that "the desire for such expansion [in Manchuria] is natural and legitimate" when seen in terms of its propinquity to Korea.<sup>12</sup> As Japan's expansion began to infringe on their own interests, however, both Western powers began to view Japan's policy in the light of "experiences in Korea and Manchuria" before 1910, and made concerted efforts to stop it. Sir John Newell Jordan, Britain's one-time minister in Seoul, who had supported Japan's activities in Korea before the Protectorate Treaty in 1905, compiled the following dispatch, which starkly makes its point:

Japan claimed special interest in Korea because of her proximity to the Hermit Kingdom. What was the result? Japan claimed special interest in South Manchuria because of this region's proximity to Korea. What was the result? Japan claims special interest in North Manchuria and

<sup>10</sup> Memorandum of Conversation between Acting SS and the Japanese Ambassador, May 16, 1912, *FRUS, 1912*, p. 79.

<sup>11</sup> Memorandum left with Earl Curzon by the Japanese Ambassador, March 16, 1920, 5298 (179/2/10).

<sup>12</sup> Jordan to Balfour, December 23, 1918, *DBFP*, first series, vol. 6, p. 566. For the U.S. attitude, see Davis (London) to SS, October 2, 1919, *FRUS, 1919*, vol. 1, p. 491.

Inner Mongolia because of her proximity to South Manchuria. What will be the result? If A claims special rights in B because of its proximity, and the fallacy be allowed and acknowledged by other powers, A can go on from B to C, from C to D, and continue till A reaches Z. ... Germany just tried and failed. If Japan be not curbed in time she will be big with future trouble and these four years of suffering and bloodshed will be restaged in the plains of Asia.<sup>13</sup>

Japan's security theme was supported and strengthened by another Western ideology; namely, the "mission of civilization," which was applied to the Korean question. To rationalize its actions in Korea, Japan borrowed several Western ideas, variously expressed as the white man's burden, *mission civilisatrice*, manifest destiny, or "dual mandate" (i.e., improving the welfare of the natives, as well as the right of access to natural resources for the welfare of all mankind).<sup>14</sup> "Reform of the Korean administration" was the most significant justification that Japan had maintained during its early activities in Korea. The Western powers blessed Japan's lofty mission, thus rationalizing, at least from a moral standpoint, their policy of approving the latter's takeover of the peninsula. This is a recurring theme of this book which needs to be confronted right up to the end of the Japanese occupation period. Again, Malcolm Kennedy likens Japan's continental policy after the annexation to the British policy towards India:

As the main object is to gain security and peace, the Indian government has decided that it is better to civilise the tribes than to crush or subject them or to attempt anything in the nature of amalgamation... . It is generally believed that Japan's first step would be to occupy an advanced position running roughly from Changchun on the west to the mouth of the Tumen on the east, thus blocking the line of approach to the Korean frontier from the north... . By means of her railway construction policy in Manchuria, the Japanese not only pacify this bandit-infested territory "by forcing civilization to penetrate the mountains and drive out the ignorance born of inaccessibility" but they open up the country to trade and serve as an invaluable military asset.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Jordan to Balfour, December 23, 1918, *DBFP*, first series, vol. 6, pp. 591–592.

<sup>14</sup> On the so-called dual mandate, see Wight, Martin, *International Theory – The Three Traditions*, ed. by Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1992), pp. 68–80.

<sup>15</sup> Kennedy, Malcolm D., *Some Aspects of Japan and Her Defence Forces* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1928), pp. 187–193. Sergei Witte is quoted in Dallin, David, J., *The Rise of Russia in Asia* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1950), p. 36: "Russia also has assumed a civilizing, educational mission."

It is true that models of realism or power politics form the mainstream of European international theories, yet there were times when rationalism/idealism or “revolutionism” prevailed. On the relations between the ruling/colonizer and the ruled/colony, one of the core issues of the colonial period, there were various stances: thorough exploitation with complete denial of any rights on the part of the colonies (realism); limited approval of legal rights (rationalism); and the rejection of the colonizers’ rights to exploit (revolutionism). In the colonial policy of each country, these views functioned, to a certain extent, as an ideology that restrained excessive exploitation. Rationalism is a compromise of the other two models, as it defines the legitimate rights of the colonizers to open a closed society, and conduct trade or missionary activities, while simultaneously imposing the limitation that such activities should not wholly destroy the existing society. This formed a significant part of the theoretical background for governance through League of Nations “mandates” after World War I, and through “trusteeships” after World War II.<sup>16</sup>

However, ideological factors did not play a key role in the case of Japan except during the 1930s, when the concepts of *Lebensraum* and “autarky” were introduced amid the global depression and the trend toward “bloc economies.” Should any ideological elements be identified, it would concern either the traditional Oriental notion of building a rich and powerful nation, or a social Darwinist survival-of-the-fittest approach to defining Japan’s identity; or, alternatively, the role of forming a bridge between Western imperialism and the East. In the 1930s, Japan finally found its role and identity in the formula of “East Asian co-prosperity” and economic self-reliance. It was, in fact, an amalgamation of the security theme, the mission of civilization, and the leadership of Asian peoples against not only the West but against traditional Asia, while self-consciously keeping itself somewhat aloof psychologically and intellectually from the world.<sup>17</sup> What was significant in this new Asian order was that Japan’s leadership was emphasized as being the guardian and mentor of Asian culture. Indeed, this was, as Japan claimed, its own version of “manifest destiny,” no more than a switch from the white man’s burden to the yellow man’s burden.<sup>18</sup> As Beasley observed, Japanese imperialism under the “co-prosperity” slogan was the illegitimate child of “Western” capitalism, with international rivalry as midwife.<sup>19</sup> Or, in

<sup>16</sup> Wight (1992), chapter 4.

<sup>17</sup> Iriye (1993), pp. 142–144.

<sup>18</sup> Ienaga, Saburō, *The Pacific War 1931–1945 – A Critical Perspective on Japan’s Role in World War II* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p. 9; Beasley (1987), pp. 1–13, 251–257.

<sup>19</sup> Beasley (1987), p. 9.

the language of Arendt, Japanese imperialism or its rule was comparable to continental imperialism, in which ethnically and culturally similar neighbors were placed under a forced political and economic dispensation. Korea and its people, both in and outside the peninsula, played an indispensable role in achieving this goal by providing human resources and pretexts for further Japanese-led expansion into the continent.

This raises the question as to how we can evaluate Japan's aggression against Korea under the pretext of security considerations or unintentional incrementalism. It might be true that, as Duus puts it, Meiji foreign policy was characterized by a "paranoid style" – a predilection to see outsiders, and particularly Westerners, as hostile.<sup>20</sup> Taking in to account all of the factors inside and outside Japan, moreover, the Japanese empire became destabilizing for Northeast Asia, and a destabilizing force within Japanese politics.<sup>21</sup>

Besides, it would be problematic to simplify all the clashes in the international arena as mere matters of aggression when a "new force" like Japan started to expand in the East Asian region. It is also improbable that any one aspect of Japan's foreign policy, such as the annexation of Korea, should have been consistently implemented over four decades, regardless of the nature of different governments, leaders, domestic and international environments, and foreign policy priorities, which varied according to era. Such a view, essentially, risks endorsing linear and deterministic fallacies. However, it is also untenable to imagine that Japan suddenly found, in 1910, that the whole Korean peninsula was in its grip, in something like the style of Lord Byron when he said "I woke one morning [in 1812] and found myself famous." Indeed, Japanese leaders, including Itō Hirobumi and Inoue Kaoru, started to make foreign diplomats in Tokyo aware of their intentions to make Korea Japan's "protectorate" as early as 1895.<sup>22</sup>

Historically, the realist view of expansion in the name of security has always existed, and can become a dominant doctrine, especially in fluctuating times of war, when power can seem all that matters. Theoretically, and especially amid prevailing political realism in international relations, security is a national necessity, and therefore one of several absolute national interests. Yet actions in pursuit of that objective might necessitate making changes to the existing international system. If other nations regard these as violating the balance in the

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<sup>20</sup> Duus(1995) , p.16

<sup>21</sup> Duus, Peter, *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1937* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 78–79.

<sup>22</sup> Satow to Salisbury, September 27, 1895, *Park*, p. 602; Satow to Salisbury, October 4, 1895, *Ibid.*, p. 603; Hillier to O'Conor, November 11, 1895, *Ibid.*, p. 675.

existing international system, from their own “subjective” viewpoints, such actions will be considered “aggressive.” In this view, “aggression” only reflects the image one state has of another. Thus, the term “aggression” is ill-suited for accurately diagnosing relations between states, with Japan’s “aggression” toward Korea a case in point.<sup>23</sup>

Human behaviors, however, do not occur in an asocial or ahistorical context. Rather, all social behaviors develop in a specific social and historical context, and in the midst of tensions between selfish interests and social norms, which aim, among other things, to restrain these interests. Japan’s occupation of Korea was different from European powers’ expansion into parts of Africa or the Americas, where a national consciousness had not yet been formed. It should be noted, moreover, that the division of Poland in the late eighteenth century was judged to be among the worst stains on European international history, despite the fact that Poland’s borderlines were traditionally uncertain and changing. Martin Wight argues that, although the “balance of power” is essentially a self-operating mechanism, it also has a morality of its own, such as protecting a system’s weak, but formally recognized, nations.<sup>24</sup> It has long been noted that Germany lacks easily defensible frontiers and terrain, and that the north German plain is wide open from east and west, protected mainly by rivers – barriers which are difficult to defend against determined and properly equipped enemies, such as Napoleon’s Grand Army. From such bitter experiences, the Germans learned that the best defense was preemption, and so attacked neighbors that threatened them.<sup>25</sup> But this security consideration does not relieve them from the burden of having attacked Poland in 1939, and thus starting World War II. Likewise, Japan’s expansionist actions cannot be explained away as non-aggressive by these modern international relations theories, but should be roundly condemned as immoral in the light of an East Asian political milieu where China, Japan and Korea had maintained their relations for millennia with relatively fixed national boundaries.

There remain several other aspects to Japanese colonial policy in Korea which will be relevant to this study. Like it or not, Japan’s rule

<sup>23</sup> On aggression and the international system, see Burton, John W., *International Relations – A General Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 41–42. On similar ideas like *raison d’état*, see D’Entrevies, Alexander Passerin, *The Notion of the State – an Introduction to Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 44–49; Wight (1992), pp. 245–249.

<sup>24</sup> On aggression from the standpoint of international morality, see Wight, Martin, “Western Values in International Relations,” in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (eds.), *Diplomatic Investigation – Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966), pp. 104–105.

<sup>25</sup> Macksey, Kenneth, *Why the Germans Lost at War – the Myth of German Military Superiority* (London: Greenhill Books, 1996), p. 29.



of Korea brought a new era for the people in the peninsula. Politically, the Koreans were totally subjugated by an alien power for the first time in their history. The new regime ruled the country efficiently through a highly bureaucratic system, and rigorously pursued assimilation; that is, a policy of Japanizing Koreans, while virtually excluding them from the ruling elite. Naturally, discrimination in various fields followed. Japan's rule did, however, help transform premodern Korean into a more modern society, while bringing some material benefits. This issue – how to appraise the nature of economic development by the Japanese – raised constant debate among the Japanese colonizers and Korean nationalists during the colonial period, and in the Korea-Japan normalization talks after the liberation. In short, the Japanese believed that through wealth and modernization they could ultimately appease the Korean people. From the Korean point of view, however, the economic development by the Japanese was merely a means of exploitation to strengthen Japan's rule over the peninsula, and benefits for Koreans were only accidental and supplementary, as the lion's share was taken by the Japanese.<sup>26</sup> The Western powers also took a keen interest in this matter, as shown in numerous memoranda on the subject. Regardless of their personal views about Japan's rule in Korea (including harsh criticism of its militarist rule), most Westerners did not hesitate to make some laudatory comments about, for example, "the remarkable and ordered development over the whole country." To a certain extent, the Western powers justified their tolerance toward Japan's repressive rule by the material benefits Japan had brought to the Koreans. As this issue would have a strong impact on the Western powers' attitudes toward "the Korean question," this book will try to examine this problem comprehensively through the eyes of these outsiders.

Next, material progress, as a whole, opened a wide scope of new activities in Korean society, something which has come to be known, in recent years, as "colonial modernity."<sup>27</sup> Korean society was flooded with new regulations and ordinances, which not only replaced traditional norms of the old Chosŏn society, thus destroying Korean identity, but also deliberately excluded Western interests in the peninsula.

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<sup>26</sup> For the Korean stance during the colonial period, see Chung, Henry, *The Case of Korea* (New York: Revell, 1920), pp. 106–126; McKenzie, Frederick, *Korea's Fight for Freedom* (New York: Revell, 1920), pp. 196–197. For a "neutral" and comparative view, see Chen, Edward I-Te, "Japanese Colonialism in Korea and Formosa: A Comparison of the Systems of Political Control," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 30 (1970).

<sup>27</sup> For the theory and various aspects of colonial modernity, see Shin, Gi-Wook and Robinson, Michael (eds.), *Colonial Modernity in Korea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Asia Center Monographs, 1999), especially its "Introduction."

The Koreans were incessantly introduced to strange laws and institutions, such as spring cleaning, reforestation, common graveyards, banking, insurance, cinema, radio, airports, baseball games, income tax, and even public brothels, to cite but random examples, along with new intellectual concepts, especially under Governor-General Saitō Makoto's "cultural policy" in the 1920s.

The reactions of the Koreans varied. Sometimes they resented modernization, as these programs were considered as ultimately eroding Korean national identity and sentiment. However, Koreans adapted slowly to new circumstances as they moved cautiously and steadily toward novel systems. In terms of colonial modernity, the reactions of the Koreans showed a "colonization of consciousness," with its resultant emergence of new identities, in which the line between resistance and collaboration became blurred and permeable. Debarred from active participation in political life, but not losing hope for independence, the Koreans showed interest in elections for self-government, which did not, however, bestow any real power in government. The younger generations leaned toward radical ideologies, such as socialism and communism in the 1920s and 1930s, but still often felt proud of being citizens of the victorious empire of Japan in Manchuria and China in the 1930s, and particularly accepted Japan's defiant stance toward the Western powers over the Manchurian Incident in 1931. Japan's continental expansion, moreover, enabled many Koreans to participate, even if as junior citizens, in Japan's adventures in Manchuria and other places under Japanese control. This book will discuss these new phenomena spawned by colonial modernity, albeit through a Western looking glass, and see how these issues impacted on the attitude of the powers to the final stage of Korean liberation.

#### POLICIES OF THE POWERS TOWARD KOREA: THE UNITED STATES AND GREAT BRITAIN

This section will focus on the stance of the powers on issues regarding the Korean peninsula, with a particular emphasis on the policies of the United States and Great Britain. "The powers," as broadly understood in this book, indicate "the great powers," which in international politics are the nations capable of leading international affairs, and so have a voice not only on their own immediate interests, but also on other issues at either a global or regional level. This might seem to justify the claim that the powers should be vested with rights and responsibilities to maintain peace and order amid the "anarchical" international society of sovereign states. But this may also lead to the criticism that the powers have used such status to

increase not the peace of the world but to further their own national interests.<sup>28</sup>

When the Western countries began to advance toward East Asia, the powers involved in regional politics comprised, in addition to the two regional powers of China and Japan, the commercial-naval power of Britain, the Pacific power of the United States, the continental power of Russia, and the leading European powers of Germany and France. With the decline of the Qing dynasty after the 1894–95 war with Japan, however, China could not play a significant role, itself soon becoming the object of encroachment by other powers. The other powers, according to the nature of their interests and their capacity to pursue their objectives, either actively participated in the region's politics or functioned as relatively inactive units in the power constellation.

The general background of East Asian international relations was, as noted earlier, the European/British informal empire, which Korea reluctantly joined at the last minute. Bearing all of these factors in mind, let us here briefly review the interests and positions of the powers in the East Asian region and, more specifically, in Korea; the international environment in which Korea's foreign relations were determined; and the reasons why the United States and Great Britain were singled out as major actors that exerted substantial influence on the course of events in the peninsula.

A few other points must be briefly raised before we discuss the policies of the Western powers toward Korea. First, the interests of the powers in East Asia might be categorized as involving political/strategic, economic, and cultural or psychological/national prestige orientations. However, such divisions can only be arbitrary, since the interests the powers pursued in that imperialist era intrinsically do not allow for strict classification.<sup>29</sup> As British Prime Minister Henry J. T. Palmerston wrote in 1860, "trade cannot flourish without security ... and security may often be unattainable without the exhibition of physical force."<sup>30</sup> Second, the Western approach to the East Asian region was originally motivated by economic interests, mainly trade with China. With the onset, however, of the new imperialism in the

<sup>28</sup> On the status and role of the great powers and the minor powers in international politics, see Wight, Martin, *Power Politics*, ed. by Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1978), chapter 3.

<sup>29</sup> Regarding the motivations of the great powers' foreign policy during the age of imperialism, see Langer, chapter 3; Lowe, C. J., *The Reluctant Imperialists – British Foreign Policy 1878–1902* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), chapter 1; Thomson, James C., Jr., Stanley, Peter W., and Perry, John Curtis, *Sentimental Imperialists – The American Experience in East Asia* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1981), chapters 3–7.

<sup>30</sup> Porter, Bernard, *The Lion's Share – a Short History of British Imperialism 1850–1983* (2nd ed.) (London: Longmans, 1975), p. 11.

late nineteenth century, in which the traditional pattern of “the flag follows trade” changed to “trade follows the flag,” governments of the Western powers began to intervene in regional affairs to consolidate their economic gains, with political and strategic interests being created in the process. Third, with these so-called “structural changes” in international relations, East Asia emerged as one of the arenas in which European international politics became reflected in rather novel ways. Within Europe, the aggrandizement of one’s own territory at the expense of another’s territory through annexation became almost impossible after the unification of Germany in 1871. However, in other areas, including East Asia, where the Western powers’ positions were more flexible, mutual compensations through bargaining became far easier. In this sense, the interests of the Western powers in Asia were secondary to those in Europe.<sup>31</sup>

All these factors combined to circumscribe the powers’ policies toward Korea. Politically, the Korean peninsula was important for some Western powers, i.e., Britain and the United States, mainly for the protection of their interests in China. However, this value was not “vital” but negotiable, since their interests in China were safeguarded by other means. None had ever contemplated a military confrontation as a solution to the Korean question. This was an important backdrop to the powers’ stance on the Korean question. Nevertheless, the Korean peninsula retained its significance in East Asian regional politics. For China, the peninsula bordered the Gulf of Bohai, which extended to its political center, the Beijing–Tianjin area, and also “Manchuria”; for Japan, it was a “dagger” pointing at its heart; for Russia, it offered an ice-free port, as well as a potential rear base that could support resources, both human and material, for its Siberian and Far Eastern development. In this sense, the three nations’ interests in Korea were vital, immediate and direct.

Economic interests involved trade with Korea and concessions for the development of mines, forests and maritime resources. Behind the powers’ efforts to open Korea in the late 19th century was their assessment that Korea would become a significant trade partner, even if such expectations were frustrated immediately after the opening.<sup>32</sup> The Korean peninsula, however, became a sort of game board for the powers in their pursuit of concessions; especially after the discovery of mineral resources. In the early twentieth century, Britain viewed Korea as the best potential investment in East Asia, while the United States saw it as having the most lucrative mines in the Orient. Given

<sup>31</sup> On “structural changes in international politics,” see Morgenthau, Hans J., *Politics among Nations* (5th ed.) (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), pp. 340–359.

<sup>32</sup> As for the marketability of the Korean peninsula, Kiernan, E. V. G., *British Diplomacy in China 1880 to 1885* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), p. 75.

the peninsula's meager value for the Western powers in political-strategic terms, their Korea policies moved in the direction of safeguarding economic concessions. This is corroborated by the fact that the greater part of the unpublished U.S. diplomatic documents before the annexation are filled with such records.<sup>33</sup>

Under the category of "cultural ventures" fall Christian missions, medical care and educational projects. Western ideas and learning, which were introduced with the opening of the country, had an undeniable influence in catalyzing material and mental changes in Korean society. Among the powers, the United States acquired the greatest economic concessions, aside from Japan, and, culturally, American influence had no close rivals. When Japan annexed Korea, the compromise was made that it would guarantee the powers' interests in the economic and cultural arenas. Yet these economic and cultural issues lay behind several major conflicts between the powers and the Japanese Government-General in Seoul in the decades that followed. The Government-General regarded the Western missionaries as obstacles to its endeavors to consolidate Japan's position in the peninsula, since the missionaries were believed to have encouraged anti-Japanese nationalistic spirit through their educational and medical institutions.

The international politics of East Asia can be described as evolving via the Anglo-Japanese Alliance system, from its formal founding in 1902 up to, and including, the 1910s. Germany and France had relatively little interest in East Asia. Nonetheless, as the central power of European politics, Germany's desire to be considered a *Weltmacht* in the 1890s drove it to advance into the region, which led it to recognize its need to expand its navy. The acquisition of Jiaozhou (Chiaochow) Bay in Shandong as a naval base for its still nonexistent naval forces was a result of this strategy. After Britain and France formed an *entente cordiale* after 1905, Germany concentrated on building a security system in Europe, largely putting aside East Asian interests and assuming "aggressive defense" or "strict neutrality."<sup>34</sup>

The French interest in East Asia was, in geopolitical terms, mainly limited to Indochina. Since the late nineteenth century, the influence and power of France radically diminished in Europe compared to those of Germany and Britain.<sup>35</sup> France did not want to actively

<sup>33</sup> The National Archives of the United States preserve ninety-two volumes of the "Sammons Papers." A large percentage of these papers by Thomas Sammons, who was the consul-general during the protectorate period, refer to such economic interests.

<sup>34</sup> Schrecker, John E., *Imperialism and Chinese Nationalism - Germany in Shantung* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 8-41.

<sup>35</sup> For a comparison of national strengths among European countries in the late nineteenth century, see Taylor, A.J.P., *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848-1918* (Oxford:

intervene in East Asian regional affairs for fear that this might jeopardize its security in Europe. Since 1890, France had considered its alliance with Russia as the pillar of its foreign policy, and this determined its policy toward East Asia. The intervention of the three powers that supported Russia and opposed Japan's acquisition of the Liaodong Peninsula in 1895, after the Sino-Japanese War, was a part of this "grand policy." France did not, however, overly commit itself to East Asian issues, even for Russia's benefit, lest the French position in Europe should be threatened and its relations with Japan worsened. It was such vulnerability that enabled Japan to easily dismiss France's mediatory efforts before the Russo-Japanese War, since any delay by mediation was seen as serving Russia's interests.<sup>36</sup>

As a result, from the late nineteenth century onward the outside countries most concerned with the political life of both China and Korea were Japan, Russia, Britain and the United States. During this period, Russia posed a threat to British interests as the development of railways and transport networks allowed it to push south into the Asian hinterland. The Russian policy was, in this sense, revisionist because it shifted the *status quo* and thus destabilized regional politics in East Asia, but its aggressiveness lost momentum after defeat in the Russo-Japanese War. Even after this defeat, however, the United States and Britain allowed Russia to wield influence, to a certain degree, to block Japan's expansion, creating a balance of power vis-à-vis Japan in Manchuria. For Japan, Russia remained a serious obstacle to its expansionist policies, even after its defeat, forcing it to adopt a more cautious attitude. Nonetheless, the Russian strategic position vis-à-vis Japan was quite vulnerable, as shown by the fact that the Russian-controlled Chinese Eastern Railway and communications network across North Manchuria to Vladivostok was subject to Japanese attack. Hence at no time during this period was the Soviet Union in a position to challenge Japanese control over Korea, although it occasionally made contacts with Korean revolutionaries.<sup>37</sup> This Soviet potential did finally materialize when the USSR later intervened in the region to proclaim war against Japan at the very end of World War II.

Consequently, the powers that kept abreast of issues in colonial Korea with the most interest and capability were the United States

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Oxford University Press, 1986), Introduction.

<sup>36</sup> Nish, Ian H., *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance – the Diplomacy of Two Island Empires 1894–1907* (London: Athlone, 1966), p. 238; White, pp. 124–127.

<sup>37</sup> For studies on Russian/Soviet policy on East Asia, see Dallin (1950); also Dallin, *Soviet Russia and the Far East* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1971). See also Weathersby, Kathryn, "Soviet Policy toward Korea: 1944–1946," Ph.D. dissertation (Indiana University, 1990), chapter 2.

and Great Britain. It must be noted, first of all, that their main concerns – that is – their economic and cultural interests – were greatly diminished as the protectorate regime and its successor, the Government-General, set out to drastically curtail these powers' interests. Such behavior was the crux of conflict between these main Anglophone nations and the Japanese regime in Korea during the colonial period. Secondly, these two powers' policies on East Asia and Korea both coincided and conflicted with each other, because, even though their policy objectives were similarly economic in essence, their means of implementation and traditions of diplomacy differed.<sup>38</sup> But after the annexation in 1910, by which one of the essential issues of "high politics" was resolved, the two powers tended to adopt a comparable stance on local matters of "low politics" with regard, for instance, to the protection of economic concessions or their countrymen, the evaluation of Japan's colonial policy, or transformations in Korean society.

The British stance toward Korea was that the peninsula was only supplementary to its China policy, i.e., the protection of its interests in China, which were of a much greater magnitude. After the Port Hamilton Incident, which led to the British occupation of the Kōmundo islands at the entrance of the Korean Strait in 1885, the British regarded a confrontation with Russia (that is, a clash with a regional power over political problems in the peninsula) as unproductive for its interests, hence turning to a compromise with other powers in the region.<sup>39</sup> Such an attitude was demonstrated by its tacit acceptance of Chinese claims of suzerainty over Korea in the 1880s, and the public acknowledgement of Japan's superior interests by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902. When the British position in the area was deteriorating as storm clouds gathered in Europe in the 1930s, this policy of nonintervention was apparent in China proper. Faced with the problem of protecting its investments in China against an advancing Japan, the British government, especially the Foreign Office and the Royal Navy, favored the strategy of cultivating Japan's friendship.<sup>40</sup>

The U.S. approach to the region was much the same as that of Britain, in so far as economic motives were its primary concern. Nonetheless, since the United States did not possess any particular sphere of interest/influence, it insisted on an open door policy, or

<sup>38</sup> By the turn of the century, the British position in China, including trade by "royal charter," seemed to Americans very much a historical anachronism. [Thomson, Stanley and Perry, p. 10.]

<sup>39</sup> One study comments that "the spirit of Port Hamilton never returned." [Nish (1966), p. 17.]

<sup>40</sup> Trotter, Ann, *Britain and East Asia 1933–1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 5–11.

equal opportunity, under the pretense of fair competition, stressing a morality that championed the political independence and territorial integrity of East Asian nations against European imperialism. Eventually, these two factors – that is – economic equality and morality – became the two cardinal principles of American policy on East Asia. Due to a lack of strong military and naval forces in the region, however, the United States had no choice but to pursue these objectives by diplomatic means. Its policy was likely to become more rhetorical than “successful,” and perhaps to end up as a disappointing compromise with regional powers.<sup>41</sup> This was particularly true in regard to Korea. Confronting China’s claim of suzerainty over Korea in 1888, the United States retreated from an active engagement in Korean politics with the statement that “American interest in Korea is not political.”<sup>42</sup> In this respect, American interest in Korea before World War II remained largely “aspirational.”

American and British policies in East Asia and the Korean peninsula undeniably shared a great number of commonalities. First, as typical maritime powers distant from the Asian continent, both powers shared a “common approach” to continental issues. Though the United States and Britain wanted China to remain *not strong* enough to destroy, or break off from, the *status quo*, they hoped China’s domestic political situation would be *stable* enough to safeguard vigorous commercial activities for them. This meant that the two powers stressed the protection of Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity, while averting efforts by the ‘subversive’ powers of Russia and Japan, along with Germany and France, to divide China or extend their political influence. They also pursued a policy of balancing power among the major countries lest any one mighty nation should emerge on the continent to establish a hegemonic control and threaten maritime communication lines. The following extract from American diplomatic dispatches sent from China demonstrates how sensitive the United States (like Britain) was to maintaining a “balance” among the powers when the regional politics entered a period of great flux with the outbreak of World War I.

Considering the policy of Japan as manifested in its recent [twenty-one] demands on China, and in view of Japan’s political, strategic, and commercial position on the mainland of Asia, it is impossible to

<sup>41</sup> For example, American Secretary of State John Hay’s 1899 and 1900 dispatches of the so-called “Open Door Notes” distilled a conglomeration of motives, pressures and theories into a classic strategy of non-colonial imperial expansion. See Williams, William Appleman, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1972), pp. 50–57.

<sup>42</sup> Bayard to Denby, February 9, 1888, *Park*, pp. 967–968.



suppose that the existing Russo-Japanese understanding can continue much longer. Should a division between Russia and Japan be effected, the latter power would be unlikely to menace us in the Philippines and our advocacy of the 'open door' would be rendered more easy [sic]. ...

An understanding with Japan would free us from anxiety about the Philippines, ...any understanding with Russia should, however, not be so close as to alarm Japan or induce it to seek a counterpoise in an 'entente' with Germany....

Likewise, the present resentment felt by China at the high-handed methods of Japan cannot be altogether disagreeable to us, and it should be the constant object of our diplomacy to avoid uniting the two great yellow powers by furnishing them with a common grievance. ... We should rather in the future, as in the past, steer a course of friendship toward the Chinese, flanked by Russia on the one hand and Germany on the other. In this way we can probably safeguard our present and future in the Far East.... A strong China is the best assurance of permanent peace on the Pacific, but not a China whose maintenance is guaranteed by Japan.<sup>43</sup>

This sort of balance-of-power approach was unmistakably mirrored in Anglo-American policies toward Korea. Before the Russo-Japanese War, both powers considered Russian expansion to be the most critical threat in East Asia, and consequently supported the regional powers of China (before 1894) and Japan in their efforts to resist Russian hegemony. They did not react strongly when the Japanese succeeded in establishing a dominant position in the Korean peninsula around the turn of the century, as long as the move did not infringe upon their own interests and disturb power relations in East Asia, especially among the United States, Britain, and Japan. For them, the expansion of Japan's interest in Korea after 1905 became a secondary matter, and the annexation of 1910 appeared rather beneficial, seeming as it did to eliminate any precarious situation on the peninsula. From this point of view, Japan had merely displaced China or Russia as the dominant power there. In the same vein, Britain judged that Japan had simply replaced Germany in Shandong in 1914; and that, after Japan occupied the German naval base in Qingdao (Tsingtau) at an early stage of World War I, the status quo in China remained as intact as the British interest in the region.<sup>44</sup> On a global level, this may have been the two powers' way of expressing confidence in their supremacy over Japan.

<sup>43</sup> International Situation in the Far East: American Interests and Policy in China, Heintzleman to MacMurray, July 15, 1915, M341, R.25 (793.94/458).

<sup>44</sup> Chi, Madeleine, *China Diplomacy 1914-1918* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 18, 25-26.

Problems followed, however, as they had no intention of directly confronting Japan or of deploying a larger fleet in Asia to protect their regional interests. In the final analysis, the balance-of-power approach by the two Western powers resulted, however indirectly, in supporting Japan's expansion in Korea. Indeed, both powers believed in their "special relationship" in East Asian international politics.<sup>45</sup>

However, their special relationship hardly meant that either power actually did very much to implement common policies, except in such extreme cases as the two World Wars. This is essential in understanding the British and American stances on the Korean question. With all its intrinsic potential, both strategic and economic, after its absorption by Japan in 1910 the Korean peninsula became a forgotten matter in East Asian politics. The powers concentrated on preserving their interests against the expansion of Japan into China, and so were not in a position to oppose Japan over minor issues in Korea. The Western powers had retreated from the peninsula to the point that their interests in it were greatly diminished, ever since Japan began to exert explicit and implicit pressures on them. This was the situation that both Western powers faced when they began to discuss the Korean question in the 1940s.

#### PERCEPTION IN THE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL HISTORY

Here we shall review the question of "perception" or "image" as a framework to explain international relations as they concerned Korea during the Japanese colonial period. In a strict sense, this subject essentially deals with the disposition and attitude, rather than the "policies," of the powers toward the Korean question. After the Allies' victory over Japan, it was more than natural for the Koreans to expect to regain the country's sovereignty, and to become an independent state in the world community. Korea was indeed liberated from Japanese rule, but independence could not be obtained until two separate regimes emerged in the peninsula three years later. On the one hand, there was a lack of specific agreement among the Allies on how to resolve the Korean question for immediate independence. The powers easily and speedily agreed to the concept of a "trusteeship" in Korea. How can their attitudes to Korea be explained? Of course, security was the major concern for the powers. However, the

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<sup>45</sup> Campbell, A. E., *Great Britain and the United States 1895-1903* (London: Longmans, 1960), pp. 156-157. "Special relationship" does not necessarily mean a cooperative one. See also Epstein, Leon D., *Britain - Uneasy Ally* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), pp. 9-35; Nicholas, H. G., *The United States and Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), chapter 1.

“theory of perception” in the social sciences, particularly in the discipline of international relations, may shed light on some aspects of the powers’ approach to the Korean question. It is particularly useful in explaining the subtle, minor and latent issues among the powers with regard to Korea during the Japanese colonial period, as well as during the time when the Allies were discussing Korean liberation and independence.

The notion of “perception” originates from the idea that knowledge is a social product. The basic idea behind the sociology of knowledge is that not only ideologies, moral prescriptions and value systems (i.e., beliefs without an objective foundation), but also scientific knowledge and objective “truth,” are related to, and influenced by, society and history. In short, all knowledge is social in its nature, and any social relationship is a “perceived” relationship. In the field of international relations, this issue is discussed in terms of the reality/truth aspects of the man-milieu relationship, versus its image and cognitive aspects. Most states and political leaders interpret their information on other nations or foreign events with limited images acquired through such various socialization processes as education, folklore and news media. The objects of perception are not merely limited to the geopolitical, strategic and economic values of a nation or a region, but also include respective cultural traditions, political systems, governance and morality.<sup>46</sup> Diverse studies in this field prove that there has been immense cognitive dissonance between accurate information and images, and that there are many cases where humans (notably political leaders) would rather fall victim to such disparity than overcome it. It is said that fifty to sixty percent of wars have resulted from miscalculating “another’s” intentions or capacities.<sup>47</sup>

Admittedly, several problems arise in establishing “perception” as a framework of analysis for international affairs. First, though a micro-approach to human psychology or individual propensity may explain some aspects of social phenomena, “perception” alone may be insufficient to be treated as a general theory grounded in the major components of society, such as “social structures.” In international relations, essential concepts that govern and regulate state

<sup>46</sup> For a classical description of the man-milieu relationship, see Sprout, Harold and Margaret, *The Ecological Perspective on Human Affairs – with Special Reference to International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 118–122.

<sup>47</sup> For a brief review, see Dougherty, James E. and Pfaltzgraff, Robert L., *Contending Theories of International Relations*, 2nd ed., (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), pp. 68–70, 281–284; also Burton, John W., *World Society* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), chapter 5. *The Origins of War* series by Longman Publishing Co., which covers major modern wars from French Revolution through the two World Wars and the Korean War, finds the origins of most wars in “miscalculation.”

behaviors include, for example, national interest, national capability, power relations and international systems. Second, perceptions are generally dependent on all these sorts of factors. When the national interests of two countries are congruent, people of both countries feel friendly to each other; when divergent, unfriendly. For example, British perceptions of Japan, which were assumed to have promoted Japan's advances on the Korean peninsula, were not always favorable. At times, Britons referred to Japan by such sobriquets as "the England of the East," marveling at Japan's achievements in modernization, and its people's courage and determination. At other times, however, the Japanese were viewed as lacking "spiritual modernization," or as "a hybrid, neither the East nor the West."<sup>48</sup> Third, the process of human perception is in itself complex. Even though human beings create images through the process of socialization, exactly how the cognitive mechanism distorts the psychological environment, or how specific incidents form images through certain mechanisms or influences, defy clear explanation.

Finally, levels of analysis pose another problem. Although the levels of analysis may vary for each researcher, Robert Jervis, who has frequently addressed the problem of perception in international relations, suggests the following four levels: policy-making, the bureaucrats, the nature of the state and the workings of domestic politics, and the international environment. Nonetheless, there is no definite answer to questions such as which level is the most important, or which, if any, should be the focal element. The answer will vary in individual cases, depending on the kind of information collected, and/or the answer pursued. For instance, even though diplomats from Western societies traditionally share similar social backgrounds and education, they all take different stances in the process of bureaucratic policy-making, according to their roles or positions. This illustrates the difficulty of discerning how, and in what phase, "perceptions" start to affect the policy-maker. In conclusion, even if the importance of perception is emphasized in the scholarship of international politics, it still places analysis in the somewhat mysterious realm of the psychological mechanisms through which outside images are received and reactions are made.<sup>49</sup>

Notwithstanding such limitations, the question of perception is very significant for this book. In the first place, Korea under Japa-

<sup>48</sup> Pak, Chihyang, "Yōng'guk kwa tong'asia: kūndae wa chōn-kūndae ūi mannam" (Britain and East Asia: Encounter between the Modern and Premodern), paper presented at Korea-Japan Seminar sponsored by the Korea-Japan Cultural Exchange Foundation, Seoul, November 9–11, 2001, pp. 5–9.

<sup>49</sup> Jervis, Robert, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 15–19.

nese colonial rule could not be acknowledged as a basic actor in international politics, simply because it had lost the status of an independent state. Until the beginning of the Pacific War in 1941, therefore, the powers' observations of Korea remained superficial and did not materialize into specific policies. Their "perception" of Korea, in other words, guided their actions. Second, perception in international politics is, in general, a function of a nation in "great power ranking." A perception may have force or durability based not on superior experience or knowledge, but on a country's relatively authoritative position in an anarchical international arena. As for Korea, its international relations since its opening to the outside world in the late nineteenth century had been controlled by the perceptions and policies of the powers, and during this early period a largely negative perception of Korea was formed. Such a framework of perception persisted among the powers throughout the entire period of Japanese colonial rule, and was in part sustained and further solidified by the Japanese propaganda that Japan was bringing modern civilization and affluence to the Korean people. This eventually became a key framework underlying the powers' attitudes toward Korea. Lastly, and perhaps more importantly, the powers' perceptions of Korea are critical for understanding the liberation in 1945, and the subsequent establishment of two independent Korean states.

However, "perception" has not attracted attention when it comes to the study of Korea's international relations. This is largely because the topic of liberation and independence is usually covered only with the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941. If we address human perception of certain objects in terms of actions, regardless of the ideas behind such actions, the analysis is very likely to be formulaic. In foreign policy, feasibility must be given primary consideration and, as a result, policy recommendations may become quite limited. When a given policy is to be positively adopted, all relevant information from the past and present should be collected, classified and reviewed through certain frames. It follows, therefore, that if this process is not clearly understood, the character of real policies will not be understood either. The Korean question is a useful case in point, precisely because it remained neglected until 1942.

With the outbreak of the war in the Pacific, Korea became a part of the postwar settlements with which U.S. government would eventually have to deal, and the State Department began to examine every aspect of the Korean question. So-called historical perception was here at work and properly in place. Securing U.S. national interests, conforming to a postwar design, and being favorable toward the Korean people, including guaranteeing their self-determination, were all issues considered at this stage. But by the end of the war in 1945,

the other negotiating parties that could help manage the situation in practical terms had been narrowed down to the Soviet Union, limiting the principles and scope of choice. To make matters worse, as the Cold War loomed over the horizon, U.S. attitudes toward the Soviet Union began to move in the direction of confrontation. Thus the more idealistic aspects of the Korea question, namely democracy and the Koreans' aspirations for a unified and independent nation, faded from the American agenda.

The transformation of U.S. Korean policy, from relaxed research to strict policy recommendations, can be confirmed by comparing the State Department's memoranda of 1942–1944 to those of 1945. For example, Article 12 of the United Nations Declaration starts with the following wordy description: "To those non-self-governing territories which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves..." In the revised draft of 1943, the phrase is completely crossed out and the article plainly states: "The Council [of Trusteeship] shall establish a system of administration for territories which may be placed under the authority of the United Nations by treaty or other agreement."<sup>50</sup> By 1945, almost all the memoranda assume the character of mere policy suggestions. This is made manifest in the reports by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC), or "Swink," a body created in December 1944 to discuss wartime operations and postwar settlements.<sup>51</sup> The reports are filled with very brief descriptions of focal points, with titles such as "Problem Raising," "Causes," "Discussions," "Conclusion and Suggestions," and "Revision."

The problem is that it is very difficult to understand U.S. intentions or the factors that drove them based only on the conclusions reached. For example, John R. Hodge, the commanding general of the U.S. military forces in Korea at the time of liberation, retained in his military administration the Japanese technicians formerly employed by the Japanese Government-General in the southern half of the peninsula. This decision by Hodge, a typical military officer, seems to have ignored elements of overwhelming importance in the post-liberation political situation, such as Korean nationalism. Both the 1944 inter-divisional reports by the State Department and by the SWNCC, however, had recommended such a policy as well. It was not Hodge, but the most important organs of the U.S. administration that made comprehensive decisions for the postwar settlements. (See Part II, Chapters 2 & 6.) Furthermore, the memoranda on the Korean situation since 1942 had referred to numerous points

<sup>50</sup> Department of State, *Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation 1939–1945* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1949), pp. 481, 531.

<sup>51</sup> For SWNCC, see Hoag, C. Leonard, *American Military Government in Korea – War Policy and the First Year of Occupation 1941–1946*, in *Sin*, vol. 2, pp. 36–40.

of Japanese colonial policy, and to the extent of education amongst the Korean people, pointing out the lack of professionals among the Korean workforce. Hodge's decision in the fall of 1945 can, therefore, only be properly understood on the basis of a long-term perception by the United States. It should be added that the Soviet command headquarters in Pyongyang also attempted to retain Japanese under their aegis when the Soviet army liberated northern Korea in August 1945.<sup>52</sup> This may suggest that both Americans and Russians had similar perceptions of, and attitudes toward, the Korean problem.

The next problem concerns the standard and level of analysis. What aspects of the Korean question did the powers evaluate, and by what standards? How were the perceived images of Korea incorporated into their policy-making process? Among their perceptions of Korea, which were of course historically created and accumulated through many complex interactions, the most essential criterion was probably what we might call "civilization;" or, more precisely, "the perceived stage of civilizational development." Of the four analytical levels suggested by Jervis, this may fall into the "nature of the state" category.

In short, the Western powers considered Korea's socio-political situation as backward in terms of the evolutionary stages of civilization. From their early official relations with Korea in the 1880s, to the 1910 Japanese annexation, they had witnessed corrupt and incompetent political leadership, the lack of an effective reform drive to become a modern state, ignorant and impoverished people in a chaotic society, and the continued encroachments of neighboring powers. The powers compared the Korean government and its monarch to the Sultans of the Islamic world, in radical contrast to the modern European states, deeming them incapable of managing a modern state.<sup>53</sup> Although many aspects of the late Chosŏn dynasty might have been observed in any premodern society whose established order was rapidly collapsing, this negative perception left a powerful impression

<sup>52</sup> Weathersby, Kathryn, "Soviet Policy toward Korea: 1944–1946," Ph.D. dissertation (Indiana University, 1990), p. 193.

<sup>53</sup> For the British view of Korea during the period, see Ku, Taeyŏl (Daeyeol), *Chegukjuŭi wa ōllon - Baesŏl, Taehan maeil sinbo mit han-yŏng-il kwangye* (Journalism and Imperialism – Ernest Bathell, *Korean Daily News and Anglo-Japanese-Korean Relations*) (Seoul: Ewha University Press, 1986), pp. 77–80. For a comparison of the Korean monarch and those of the Oriental empires, see Nish, Ian H., "Korea between Japan and Russia, 1900–1904," *Papers Presented at the 6th Annual Conference of AKSE* (Seoul, August 2–5, 1982), p. 186. However, theoretically Korea also established modern institutions, such as Tongni Gyosŏp Samu Amun, which was similar to the Chinese Zongli Yamen, and which dealt with foreign relations, but in practice it was overshadowed by the monarch. See Kim, Su'am, "Hanguk ūi oegyojedo yŏn'gu" (A Study on Korea's Modern Diplomatic Institution), Ph.D. dissertation, Seoul National University, (2000).

on their views concerning the demise of the Korean kingdom. These Western perceptions of Korea were influenced by such ideas as social Darwinism, the struggle for existence, the survival of the fittest, the growth of militarism, racial superiority, and “divine” national missions, particularly manifest destiny, combined with ideas like republicanism.<sup>54</sup>

For the Western powers, late Chosŏn society exemplified a people and nation that seemed to be losing out in the socio-political competition of the international arena. President Theodore Roosevelt, who had supported various expansionist policies at the cost of weaker nations, stated that “Korea was powerless to strike a blow in her own defense,” and acknowledged Japan’s protective rights in 1905.<sup>55</sup> Britain viewed Japan’s encroachments in Korea in the context of “a struggle between stronger and weaker races,” especially when Japan brought the Korean peninsula under its control in 1904. The British therefore did not hesitate to predict, with a considerable sense of fatality, that the “timid and inoffensive” Korean people and their declining nation would be subjected to a hated foreign nation, whether it be Japan or Russia.<sup>56</sup> Similar assessments reemerged when Korea’s liberation and independence were under discussion in 1945.

On the other hand, the Western powers highly praised Japan’s efforts at political and institutional reform, and the propagation of civilized culture. When Japan took control of the Korean government and announced diverse reform measures at an early stage of the Russo-Japanese War, the British considered this as replicating their rule over Egypt, and commended it as “a step in the right direction.”<sup>57</sup> The United States also blessed Japan’s occupation of Korea with the following remark made by William H. Taft, Theodore Roosevelt’s secretary of war, during his visit to Japan in 1907: “We are living in an age when the intervention of a stronger nation in the affairs of a people unable to maintain a government of law and order to assist the latter to better government becomes a national duty and works for the progress of the world.”<sup>58</sup> This perception of Japan, along with American or British political and strategic interests in the region,

<sup>54</sup> On social Darwinism and the spirit of the imperialist age, see Langer, pp. 67–100; Hofstadter, Richard, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), chapter 9.

<sup>55</sup> Esthus, Raymond A., *Theodore Roosevelt and Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), p. 110; Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (1986), pp. 9–10.

<sup>56</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, January 20, 1904, FO/17/1659(17) and its enclosure; June 30, 1904, FO/17/1660(144).

<sup>57</sup> Minute on Cockburn to Grey, May 15, 1906, 179(22706/306); Lansdowne to MacDonald, September 26, 1905, 590(151).

<sup>58</sup> Enclosure in Taft to Theodore Roosevelt, October 5, 1907, M862, R.191, 1797/380/383.



formed the basis of support for Japan's expansion into the Korean peninsula from a moral perspective.

Another noteworthy aspect in the powers' perception of Korea is Japan's role in forming the negative image of Korea. Although the powers collected information on Korea directly from their own diplomats, merchants and missionaries, a major source of information was the Japanese.<sup>59</sup> In the process, the information was distorted to Japan's advantage. A typical example can be found in writings by Lord George N. Curzon, a leading British expert on Asian affairs in the late nineteenth century. In his book, written after a visit to Japan, Korea and China before the Tonghak Movement of 1894, he described ancient Korea-Japan relations in terms of "Japanese ascendancy and Korean allegiance." According to Curzon, moreover, the Treaty of Kanghwa, which marked modern relations between the two nations, was signed in 1876 with a Japanese letter of invitation to the Koreans to renew an ancient relationship of friendship and "vassalage."<sup>60</sup> Frederick McKenzie, a British journalist, pointedly rebuked the many Westerners who believed that "the Koreans are a degenerate people, not fit for self-government" for being "poisoned by subtle Japanese propaganda," at the time of the March First Movement (1919).<sup>61</sup> Those involved with the Korean Provisional Government (KPG) in Chongqing during the Pacific War also criticized Japanese diplomats and *agents provocateurs* in China for adverse propaganda against them.<sup>62</sup> While the negative perception by the West cannot be entirely attributed to such propaganda, it is nevertheless significant that so much of the information on Korea was conveyed to the powers through a Japanese filter. During World War II, China took on this role of wielding a negative influence in decision-making with regard to Korea's future. (See Part II, Chapter 3.)

<sup>59</sup> Hugh Borton, who participated in compiling a draft for Korean trusteeship, confessed that most information kept in the State Department had come from Japanese sources. [Iokibe, Makoto, Iokibe (supervised), *Sengo Nihon no sekkeisha: Boruton kaisōroku* (Planner for Postwar Japan: The Borton Memoirs), Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1998, pp. 163–163.]

<sup>60</sup> George Curzon, Earl of Kedleston, *Problems of the Far East* (London: Archibald Constable and Co., 1896), pp. 189–190. See also pp. 94, 147, 165–167. U.S. records also wrote: "In modern times the kingdom of Korea sent embassies and paid tribute concurrently to China and Japan, up to 1832." [John W. Foster, *American Diplomacy in the Orient* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1903), p. 307. However, M. Frederick Nelson repudiated this view, correctly stating that the exchange of missions between Korea and Japan was discontinued in 1763, as the financial burden of the missions proved too heavy for Japan, which assumed all the finances, even including those of Korean missions to Japan. [Nelson, *Korea and the Old Orders in Eastern Asia* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1945), pp. 77–78.]

<sup>61</sup> McKenzie (1920), pp. 317–318.

<sup>62</sup> Vincent to Secretary of State, March 17, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/244.

With the annexation, earlier perceptions of backward Chosŏn were partially displaced as a result of the Japanese Government-General's policies for modernization, while the Western powers' evaluation of Japan's foreign policy played a central role in their Korea policy. From the perspective of the powers, the most critical factor under consideration was Japan's expansion in China, while Japanese activities in the peninsula tended to be condoned so long as the powers' interests in China were not seen as being unduly encroached upon. It was not until Japanese expansionist activities in China encroached on British interests, bringing about a deterioration in this relationship, that Japan's governance in Korea was criticized as being despotic and reactionary, annihilating the identity of the Korean people.

On the other hand, there is no discernible change in the "official" perception of Japan by the United States. A certain tension had persisted in U.S.-Japanese relations throughout the period since the end of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. The United States restrained itself from provoking Japan unnecessarily over the paltry issue of Korea, which had become a domestic problem of the Japanese empire. In the late 1910s, however, two conflicting definitions of the nature of the Japanese state and its foreign policy emerged in the State Department. According to a diplomat, there were two schools of thought in connection with East Asian affairs:

There are certain men in our foreign service whose idolatrous love for Japanese is such that a suggestion of any wrong which they may inflict meets with an instant and indignant denial or an offer of some palliation or excuse for their policy. ... On the other hand, there are men in our foreign service who actively dislike the Japanese and they lay more stress on their shortcomings than on those of people of other foreign countries or of our own. They are inclined to discount anything which bears the Japanese mark and to deny the existence of good Japanese motives even where they exist.

This diplomat saw little chance of agreement between these two extremes, and expressed his concern that the United States must discuss Japan's policies and their practices in East Asia "with more light than heat and without too much coldness."<sup>63</sup> The perception of Japan, therefore, was a combination of favorable and negative judgments on a progressive and expansionist Japan.

With the coming of the 1930s and 1940s, Western views on Japanese policies in Korea changed to include much skepticism. Japanese

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<sup>63</sup> One Phase of the "Japanese Question," Baker to SS, August 6, 1918, M341, R.26 (793.94/716).

policy in China was one of obvious aggression, disregarding the interests of all the other powers in China, and the accelerated industrialization of the northern part of Korea was based on the policy of using the peninsula as a stepping-stone for continental expansion. On the other hand, the moral justification for Japan's rule of Korea, that is, the bringing of modern and civilized government to a pre-modern Korean society, was no longer pertinent. Thus a general consensus was reached among the powers that, although Japan brought a certain degree of material affluence to Korea through economic development, the ultimate profiting party was Japan. The Japanese, moreover, could not secure genuine support from the Korean people due to the harsh imposition of a militant rule and the assimilation policy. The British and American documents of this period contain many reports that make this point.

Lastly, two other levels of analysis – namely, the perceptions held by political leaders (such as presidents, prime ministers and foreign secretaries), and the perceptions held by bureaucrats – should also be considered. Political issues concerning Korea were not on the agenda at the policy-making level, including cabinet meetings, summits, or foreign ministers' talks, except in some special cases, following the annexation in 1910. These issues were handled mainly at the working, administrative level through diplomatic dispatches between the consulates-general in Seoul and the Japan sections of the Far Eastern Department in the British Foreign Office, or the Division of Far Eastern Affairs in the U.S. State Department. The telegraph, even in situations one might have considered urgent, was seldom used. Until the Korean question was deemed crucial with the outbreak of the Pacific War, the only exceptions were a few cases in which Lord Curzon, the British foreign secretary, mentioned the March First Movement in Korea in his talks with Chinda Sutemi, the Japanese ambassador in London.

Yet with the outbreak of World War II, the personal perceptions of political leaders did undoubtedly influence discussion of the Korean question. Although this cannot be positively proven, we can draw some inferences about their images of Korea by examining the approaches adopted by the wartime leaders. President Franklin D. Roosevelt advocated a postwar peace system based on the universal concepts of the United Nations; collective security, four-power cooperation, and trusteeship. Issues concerning individual nations were neglected or sacrificed in his approach to the postwar settlement, often creating tensions between the president and subordinate policy-makers. The case of Korea was, however, somewhat peculiar. As the outcomes of the Cairo Declaration and Yalta Conference indicate, President Roosevelt conferred on the Korean question with the

other Allied leaders without referring to the research results of the State Department or of any other working levels. The State Department officials nevertheless accepted the presidential approach without objection.<sup>64</sup> The same thing happened in Britain. Churchill did not consult with the Foreign Office on the Korean question, either before or after the Cairo Conference. The Foreign Office even complained that the prime minister did not provide any information at all on the Korean clause of the Cairo Declaration.<sup>65</sup> Yet no conflicts surfaced between the prime minister and the working level. These examples show that very similar perceptions and approaches towards the Korean question had been taken by top policy-makers and working level officials.

As to the perceptions held by working level officials in the Foreign Office or the State Department, although there is a lack of clear evidence, some sparse records can help us examine perceptions at this level. The most salient feature in the bureaucratic perception of Korea is its continuity. In general, a perception of another country changes constantly as the nature of the relationships changes, and as the individuals involved in the policy-making process change their personal views. The powers' perception of Japan underwent a great change as Japanese policy in East Asia increasingly revealed its expansionist nature. In the bureaucracy, however, the continuity of previous perceptions persisted to a large extent, as far as Korea was concerned, because, in addition to the fact that the Korean question was no longer considered one of the critical issues of East Asian international politics after the annexation, the number of Western specialists in Korean affairs was very limited. Those Westerners who had had relations with East Asia, and especially Korea, since the late nineteenth century were usually either diplomats who had started out as regional specialists, businessmen who had been involved in East Asian trade for generations, or missionaries who had devoted their lives to the region. As a result, the knowledge they acquired was specific, relatively constant and, more importantly, biased. These views on Korea were conveyed to governments, through official or unofficial reports, and to the media, who were supportive of official Korea policies.

Arthur Hyde Lay had devoted himself almost completely to Korean affairs for decades, ending his official life in 1927 as a British consul-general in Seoul. Lay was also holder of a certificate of qualification in the Korean language, issued by the British consulate in May

<sup>64</sup> According to minutes by the DFEA, the president did not previously consult the Division in the matter, and the Cairo Declaration did not change the State Department's stance on the Korean question. (Memorandum by DFEA, December 2, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/301.)

<sup>65</sup> Minutes on Parliamentary Question, December 8, 1943, 35956 (6467/723/23).

1904. According to his son, A. C. Hyde Lay, he loved Korea so much that when he was reassigned in 1912 to Honolulu, a post that most people would have gladly accepted, he requested to be returned to Korea as soon as possible.<sup>66</sup> But Lay had a stereotyped view of Korea, commonly shared by almost all the Western diplomats. In a report he wrote following his retirement, Lay recalled that the Korean political situation had been dismal before the Russo-Japanese War of 1904, and concluded that the country still lacked the ability to maintain an autonomous government.<sup>67</sup> His successors, too, were bound by this judgment. Among American diplomats, Ramsford Miller may be Lay's counterpart. Around the time of the annexation treaty, Miller, then an official in the Division of Far Eastern Affairs, had drafted a memorandum on U.S. policy concerning possible negotiations with Japan. He was appointed consul-general in Seoul in 1913, and remained in that post, except for some short intervals, until 1930. Retrospectively, his memorandum of 1910 summarized the very crux of the Korean question, and would serve as an oracle for U.S. policy on Korea throughout the remaining period of Japan's rule.<sup>68</sup> Other figures of some policy prominence with connections to Korea or Manchuria, including Carter Vincent and William Langdon, sporadically entered the scene after the 1920s.

In spite of the continuity of perceptions, there were nevertheless some officials who made interesting observations on Japanese actions. Two of these were American Consul-General Thomas Sammons, who had served in Mukden (today's Shenyang) before his appointment to Korea in 1907, and his British counterpart, William Royds, who had been in Taiwan before he moved to Seoul during the March First Movement. Having witnessed Japanese atrocities in Taiwan and Manchuria, in their reports they maintained a very critical stance when it came to Japan's colonial policy, especially the suppression of the Korean Righteous Army in 1907, and of the March First Movement in 1919.<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, George Scidmore, the American consul-general at the time of the annexation, was inclined to support Japan's policy so reservedly that he was reprimanded by the State Department for not having exercised a sort of "eminent domain" as the American representative in Korea, especially on certain issues critical to Ameri-

<sup>66</sup> A.C. Hyde Lay, *Four Generations in China, Japan and Korea* (Edinburgh, 1952), pp. 24–25.

<sup>67</sup> Lay to Tilly, September 30, 1926, 11706 (5030/462/23).

<sup>68</sup> As for Miller's memorandum at the time of the Korean annexation, see minutes of the State Department, June 23, 1910, M.426, R.1, 1166/474 (895.00/475).

<sup>69</sup> Japanese Expansion into Manchuria via Korea Supported by Force, Sammons to Jay, July 28, 1909, RG 84. vol. 87, p.322; Royds to Greene, March 14, 1919, 3817 (61582/7293).

can interests, and was instructed to add appropriate comment on new regulations promulgated by the Government-General.<sup>70</sup> Scidmore had been impressed by Japan's efficient reform drives during previous appointments in several Japanese ports, seeing in them a great contrast to a corrupt Korea lacking any policies for reform.<sup>71</sup>

Even considering the subjective nature of human perceptions, the images of Korea formed by the Western powers cannot necessarily be seen as completely biased. Is it possible, then, to find a balanced and objective view? For the sake of convenience, one may define it as a neutral observation both on Korea's shortcomings and on the negative side of Japan's policies, assuming a sympathetic attitude to the history and tradition of the Korean people. In this regard, let us turn here, as a tentative conclusion, to short excerpts from two scholars who examined the Korean question; namely, George McAfee McCune of the United States, and Arnold Toynbee of Britain. The former worked at the Division of Far Eastern Affairs in the State Department, and the latter served in the British Foreign Office during World War II. Both led the research group, and left memoranda, on the issue of an independent postwar Korea. Although their approaches were not scholarly but policy-oriented in nature, both had academic backgrounds.

McCune might not be on the level of Toynbee in terms of worldwide fame for academic achievement, but his expertise in things Korean far surpassed the latter. He was born in Pyongyang in 1908 to a renowned American missionary family and lived nearly half his life in the country that became his major intellectual concern. His father, George Shannon McCune, was noted for his anti-Japanese activities, which will be covered in several places in this study. In May 1941, he received a Ph.D from the University of California with a dissertation on "Korean Relations with China and Japan, 1800–1864." When the war broke out, he served successively in the Office of Strategic Services, the Board of Economic Warfare, and the Department of State from February 1942 onward. During this period of wartime service, he was generally recognized as the leading American expert on Korean affairs, and participated in crucial decisions on Korea as Chief of the Korea Section in the Office of Far Eastern Affairs in the State Department, where he worked from May 1944 to October 1945. His health was poor from childhood, and all his adult years were lived on borrowed time. It is an irony that, due to his illness, details of the Allies' plan for the post-war settlement of Korea did not make much progress during the crucial period before August 1945. In October 1945, when the war was over, he retired from the government, and

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<sup>70</sup> SD to Scidmore, June 26, 1911, RG84, vol. 74.

<sup>71</sup> Scidmore to Secretary of State, October 10, 1913, M426, R.7, 895.5034/2.

joined the University of California at Berkeley the following year. He died on November 5, 1948.<sup>72</sup>

McCune was known, among other things, for the McCune-Reischauer Romanization system, which since 1939 has been widely used for the transliteration of the Korean language in the Western world. As an academician, however, his interests lay in Korea's past, especially the period before its opening to the outside world in the 1860s, largely due to the difficulty of free access to Korean materials of the post-1860s period. Undoubtedly this background provided him with sound and sympathetic views on Korea and its people, and with new perspectives that were made amply manifest in the numerous memoranda which he compiled at the State Department. It is one thing to say that the Korean question was contemplated "objectively" in a broad political and strategic perspective by the powers concerned. But it is another to be sympathetic in one's views and judgments of Korea's history, its society, the character of its people, and their potential for nation-building in the future. It was here that McCune's views were so prominent and outspoken that they even drew some criticism from his British counterpart, Arnold Toynbee. (See Part II, Chapter 6.) In any event, it is quite moving to read his perceptive articles about Korea and its people during the darkest days in Korean history.<sup>73</sup>

Toynbee's achievement in handling the Korean question was indeed distinguished. He coordinated Britain's Korea policy on the working level as the head of the Korea Committee in the Foreign Office in 1944. While covering some current issues in the Royal Institute for Foreign Affairs (Chatham House), he had devoted himself to writing a masterpiece, *A Study of History*, since 1933. For Toynbee, the basic unit of the study of history was not a "nation" or "dynasty," but a "civilization." He was interested in the origin, creative development and decline of civilizations rather than in the rise and fall of nations. This means that the national prosperity and adversities encountered by Korea and Japan, nations which both belonged to the same category of "Chinese civilization," or, at least, its Japan branch, would have been of only supplementary concern for him.

The following excerpts from a travel journal he kept illustrate some of his sensibilities about the Korean question. During a journey

<sup>72</sup> On McCune's life and work, see Wilbur, C. Martin, "George McAfee McCune (June 16, 1908 – November 5, 1948)," *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, 9-2 (February 1950).

<sup>73</sup> Apart from memoranda which will be discussed in this study, McCune's major works are: McCune, George McAfee, *Korea Today* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950); "Korea: A Study in Japanese Imperialism," *World Affairs Interpreter*, XI-1 (Spring 1940); McCune and Harrison, John A. (eds.), *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States, The Initial Period, 1883-1886*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951).

to Korea and Manchuria in June 1930, Toynbee insightfully described the relationship between the Koreans and the Japanese, based on his experience in a small railway station in the Korean countryside:

The little men and women were all dressed in white – appropriately to the country’s mood, since white in the East is usually the color of mourning, yet in a manner obviously quite unsuitable for the day’s work.... The dominant feature in this Korean landscape was the gold flame of the autumn poplars – a foreground of dull gold – to match the distant mountains’ pale blue. It was a flame without heat, a music without sound. This inaudible music of the Korean landscape was not the serene and triumphant ‘music of spheres.’ It was an elegy in a minor key – a dirge over a country that was in the autumn of its days.

Even when a Japanese wife addresses a few condescending words to the ladies in attendance her face does not lose its rigid ‘ruling race’ and ‘white-man’s burden’ stare. The expressions on the pathetic faces of the Koreans were not even faintly resentful. It was wholly submissive. As I glanced from one row of faces to the other I felt as if I were a spectator of some comedy of manners, with the Japanese playing ‘empire builders’ and the Koreans ‘ryot’ or ‘fellahin’ of Egypt. So the Koreans were Japan’s Bengalis.

I was informed that since the annexation, more than fifty per cent of the cultivatable land in the country has passed into Japanese ownership; and when I spoke of the beauty of the poplars I learned that these supreme ornaments of the present Korean landscape had been planted by paternal Japanese administrators in a land which they had found without a tree to cover its nakedness...

Yet Japanese ‘empire builders’ in Korea today might do well to consider the comedy of modern English ‘empire builders’ in India or even of Angevin and Plantagenet kings of England in the Middle Ages. What Englishmen in 1880 would have thought it credible that ‘the mild Hindu’ would ever summon up enough vitality to worry the life out of his self-appointed Nordic caretakers. And what English sovereign in the twelfth or fourteenth century could have conceived that his successors in the twentieth might not have one foot of land in France to call their own?

As I strolled up and down that platform, looking at the scene that was being played before me there, the inaudible music of the Korean landscape began to develop a secondary theme, which was an elegy over the prospects of Japanese domination. While the overtones were still sounding the dirge of Korea’s national past, this undertone sang the transitoriness of all insular conquests on continental ground.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>74</sup> “Japan on Her Island Holds Sway in Korea,” *Baltimore Sun*, June 9, 1930, 14755 (3459/1534/23). The quotation has been slightly abridged by the author.



Toynbee's historical insight became a great asset when he analyzed the Korean question in the Foreign Office. In a memorandum evaluating the Koreans' capacity for independence, he established a set of principles which would be a yardstick for their self-government. Given that the ruling Japanese had not allowed the Koreans a chance for political training, he claimed that if the Korean people were given a better environment and opportunity, there would be no reason to presume their inferiority to other Asian peoples.<sup>75</sup> Since research divisions in the government, such as the Korea Committee, would not ultimately diverge from established British policy on East Asia, his observations were only valuable as a new and academic interpretation. They had little, if any, significance in the overall British perception of Korea, or as a basis for official British policy, as he could not overcome several persistent arguments by Foreign Office officials. In the age of imperialism, however, in which the powers thought their dominance of the world would last forever, the insights of scholars could reveal some as yet unrealized possibilities for the world, rather than simply sketching a few passing phenomena in international relations.

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<sup>75</sup> Korea's Capacity for Independence, February 14, 1945, 46468 (2330/1394/23).

## Politics of Annexation



### PROBLEMS IN EXISTING STUDIES

IF THE ANNEXATION of Korea to Japan is a significant subject in the history of modern Korea, and especially of its “international relations,” it fails to draw as much attention as other topics. This lack of attention results from the tendency to approach the annexation as a step in the “process” or “institutionalization” of Japan’s encroachment on Korea. According to this perspective, Korea-Japan relations had been a continuum of aggression by the latter ever since diplomatic relations were established with the Treaty of Kanghwa in 1876. From this standpoint, all of Japan’s actions and activities in regard to Korea during this period were solid steps toward annexation in 1910. For people who endorse this approach to Korean history, the main focus lies on major incidents in Korea-Japan relations from 1876 to 1910, and their final outcome is seen, without much dissent, as being the “annexation.”<sup>1</sup>

If, however, the annexation should be understood in terms of process and institutionalization, the following questions may be posed. First, apart from the controversy, as discussed in the previous chapter, regarding the idea that a single motive, such as expansion, can provide a linear explanation for Japan’s Korea policy, what were the conditions Japan considered sufficient for carrying out the annexation? When Japan defeated China in 1895, it brought Korea under almost complete control, yet it failed to effect an annexation. Britain and Russia, the two traditional rivals in East Asian politics, contained Japan, mutually supporting the need for an independent Korea for their own selfish purposes. In 1905, Japan subdued Russia and fully occupied Korea, something that was approved by the powers. Such Korean nationalist

<sup>1</sup> See a leading Korean study on this subject, Kuksa P’yŏnch’an Wiwŏnhoe (National History Compilation Committee) (comp.), *Han’guk tongnip undongsa* (History of Korean Independence Movement), 3 vols. (Seoul, 1965–70).

resistance as the Righteous Army Movement during the period 1905–10 was quite insignificant from a military point of view. Yet an official annexation was not to happen for another five years. What, then, were the necessary and adequate conditions for the annexation?

In short, as Itō Hirobumi and Foreign Minister Komura Jutarō clearly indicated, Japan's main concern in the annexation was not Korea's domestic problems but "diplomatic relations."<sup>2</sup> During the protectorate period, conflicting opinions surfaced among Japanese political leaders concerning the Korean annexation, and the final decision waited until the last stage. Japan maintained that the Korean question was completely resolved by the Protectorate Treaty and other treaties with the powers, and that the domestic situation in Korea (such as the confinement of Kojong, the Korean emperor, or concern over the Righteous Army uprising) did not pose a serious obstacle to Japan's decision for annexation. The related international issues, however, were so complicated that they were not to be resolved even after the annexation. Taking advantage of its superior position in the peninsula, Japan arbitrarily reached many decisions concerning the rights and interests of the powers in Korea, maneuvering and forcing them into acknowledging its solutions. Through the entire period of Japan's rule over Korea, this made for a sort of paradigm defining the relations between Japan and the powers. This showed that the "protectorate" was not a mere "process" but a significant phase that sheds light on some important issues, such as the powers' interests, or modes of operation in relations among the powers on the Korean peninsula.

Among the numerous issues to be examined concerning the annexation, this book focuses on aspects of international politics. What were the pending issues among the powers during the five-year period up to the annexation? What part did international relations play in Japan's consideration of this step? How did the powers evaluate the annexation in terms of the balance of power in East Asia? How were the powers' interests in the Korean peninsula compromised or coordinated in this process? Were the powers content with Japan's method of annexation? Did they consider their interests to be safeguarded or not? Finally, what implication were these questions to have at the time of Korean liberation in 1945?

#### EAST ASIAN RELATIONS AFTER THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

The East Asian international system was largely reoriented after the Russo-Japanese War in 1904–1905. The defeat of Russia, which had

<sup>2</sup> Komatsu Midori (ed.), *Itō kō seiden* (Official Biography of Prince Itō), vol. 3, (Tokyo: Shōwa Shuppansha, 1928), p. 196.

enthusiastically implemented a revisionist policy since the late nineteenth century, signaled a radical change in the balance of power in the region, and Japan's annexation of Korea was agreed upon among the powers in this context.

After the Russo-Japanese War, a modification in the balance of power in East Asia was achieved through postwar settlements between the two former belligerents, and through certain accords on interests among Japan, Britain and the United States. But, although Japan won major battles both on ground and at sea, they occurred mostly outside Russian territories. In addition, Japan faced increasingly adverse circumstances in conscripting human and material resources as victories were won, while Russia maintained its war-operations capacity by transporting provisions via railways in Siberia and Manchuria.<sup>3</sup>

At the peace conference at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, mediated by President Theodore Roosevelt in September 1905, Japan, then the winning party, actively sought an end to the war due to financial pressures. The powers were also anxious about Japan's over-expansion in East Asia and infringement on some of their interests, and lent their support for a mediation process. Naturally, the United States (as well as Britain) considered the Japanese to be the victors, and that Japan therefore had a right to ask for everything that was included in their conditions. From this point of view, they regarded Japan's terms as legitimate and not excessive, and as needing to be safeguarded.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, it was best to maintain the equilibrium of power in Manchuria, while a complete elimination of Russian influence in East Asia was not at all desirable for the Western powers.<sup>5</sup> As a result, Japan's penetration into Manchuria progressed far more comprehensively by obtaining the Liaodong Peninsula and the South Manchurian Railway, but, as intended by the United States and Britain, Japanese and Russian interests bisected Manchuria below Harbin and formed a so-called "balanced antagonism."<sup>6</sup> The Russo-Japanese coordination of interests in Manchuria portended the destiny of the Korean peninsula.

<sup>3</sup> Even in victory, Japan's losses in battle often surpassed those of Russia. In the battle of Port Arthur, Japan's casualties reached 57,780 as opposed to 28,200 for Russia. [White, John Albert, *The Diplomacy of the Russo-Japanese War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 186.]

<sup>4</sup> Merrill, John E., "American Official Reactions to the Domestic Policies of Japan in Korea 1905–1910" (Ph.D dissertation, Stanford University, 1954), pp. 58–59.

<sup>5</sup> For the U.S. stance on the Treaty of Portsmouth, see Esthus, Raymond A., *Theodore Roosevelt and Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), pp. 37–39, 62–66.

<sup>6</sup> According to a classic theory on the balance of power, "antagonism" inheres in maintaining such a balance. [Wight, Martin, *International Theory – The Three Traditions*, ed. by Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1992), pp. 178–179, 261–262.]

Britain had been allied to Japan since 1902. Immediately before, during and after the Russo-Japanese War, the alliance between these two potential enemies of Russia underlay a superb cooperative relationship on a regional and local level in the Korean peninsula. Helped along by the personal friendship between John Jordan and Hayashi Gonsuke, the resident ministers of the two countries in Seoul, Anglo-Japanese cooperation, specifically British support for Japan's Korea policy, reached its height. In the revised alliance, which was designed to cope with the inevitable changes in East Asia-related politics, the British accepted Japan's demands for the Korean peninsula without much objection. The British further justified their abrupt refusal of support for Korean independence, insisting that protection by Japan would be the more desirable solution since Korea was unable to reform independently due to its incompetent and corrupt court and government.<sup>7</sup>

The U.S. position on the Korean question was not much different. The Americans, too, judged that the balance of power in East Asia would last despite Japan's control, and that the economic opening of the peninsula would not be hindered. The Taft-Katsura Memorandum of July 1905 should be seen in this context. On the one hand, the agreement was only an exchange of opinions, not a secret contract that promised a *quid pro quo* over Korea and the Philippines.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, it is also true that, as the United States had previously had no understanding of a political nature with other major powers in East Asia, this sort of "memorandum," "note" or "understanding" with Japan should be evaluated as having an important bearing on American strategic thinking in East Asia.

Russia's stance after 1905 was distinctly different from that of the United States and Britain, even though it accepted Japan's position in Korea. Russia contended that the sovereignty of Korea was an international question, and that this sovereignty could not and should not be canceled out by a bilateral act on the part of Russia and Japan. Above all, as Russia aimed to check an expansionist Japan, it was never willing to risk a strategically disadvantageous action that would endanger the security of its Far Eastern possessions. To accept the deployment of Japanese troops in northern Korea, or the construction of fortifications there that menaced the Russian Maritime Province, or to dismantle its own fortifications in Vladivostok, were all out of

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<sup>7</sup> Nish, Ian H., *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance – the Diplomacy of Two Island Empires 1894–1907* (London: Athlone, 1966), pp. 312–322.

<sup>8</sup> Esthus, pp. 7, 39, 97–100, 102–106. According to Taft's autobiography, he had not come to Japan to conduct serious negotiations [Anderson, Donald F., *William Howard Taft – A Conservative's Concept of the Presidency* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1968), pp. 22–23.]

the question. In the end, the Articles II of the Portsmouth Treaty were so organized that Russia recognized Japan's preponderant political, military and economic interests in Korea while both countries agreed to refrain from any "military measures" that would threaten security at the Russo-Korean frontier.<sup>9</sup>

The consent of the three powers to Japan's rule over Korea belonged to an archetypal pattern found in the search for power equilibrium. When tension and conflicts were created in the international order of one region (for example in East Asia, by the expansionist policies of Japan and Russia), they were often resolved by war or by mutual compensation, typically involving the "partition" of a weaker neighbor, as in the case of the partition of Poland by Russia, Prussia and Austria, or that of Thailand by Britain and France. In the East Asia of 1905, Japan and Russia settled their conflict through a war, and then coordinated interests to the former's advantage. Britain and the United States were not directly involved in receiving any particular compensation. Their interests in East Asia, however, had not been trespassed against, and the two powers were guaranteed more fruitful commercial activities when the power of a much less "open" Russia became circumscribed. What is important for the purposes of this book is that such optimistic judgments included their stance on Korea. Japan's rule over the peninsula meant, on the whole, a transfer of former Russian interests to Japan. Consequently, the English-speaking powers took the attitude that Japan's policy on Korea – for instance, the protectorate or the annexation – would not bother them. To Russia, however, these postwar arrangements meant the frustration of its objectives. Its defeat in war, and Japan's takeover of its interests, meant a breach of balance. Japan's new interests had to be limited as provisional and variable. Should Japan's rule over Korea be as permanent as "annexation," Russia's chance of restoring its original interests would diminish accordingly. This is why Russia emphasized the importance of maintaining Korea's "independence" at the Portsmouth Conference. It endorsed Japan's new position in Korea in the same terms used in the second Anglo-Japanese Alliance of August 1905; that is, that it should stop short of annexation. Russia's basic position of those days was to resurface at the end of World War II.

#### PROTECTORATE POLITICS AND THE POWERS

Following the realignment of the power balance in East Asia after the Russo-Japanese War, there seemed little possibility in 1905 that

<sup>9</sup> White, pp. 251–254, 268–271. For the text of this treaty, see *FRUS, 1905, Russo-Japanese War*, p. 825.

the issues on a “local level” in Korea should develop into regional problems that would threaten the powers’ relations, although the germ of discord had not been entirely uprooted. Indeed, the Korean question was not given much attention in the relationship of the powers until World War II. For the United States and Britain, the friendship with Japan was far more important.

However, these friendly relations did not last long. Japan, a rising power in the region, was naturally discontent with a postwar system which would set limits on it advancing further. As a result, the system of balance began to change, even if its basic framework did not. Now that it was a great continental power with a secure footing on the Korean peninsula, Japan could break away from the control of Britain and the United States. One important fact to consider is that the powers did not have any means effectively to oppose Japan, even when their interests were infringed upon by Japan’s expansionist drive. By 1905, the British entrusted the Pacific to Japan and the United States, and called their own navy home due to the unpredictable European scene, especially the threat posed by the buildup of the German navy.<sup>10</sup> The United States did not permanently position its navy in the Pacific and East Asia. It has been suggested that Britain’s intervention would not have made a difference in Japan’s final decision on Korean annexation, and that by 1919 it was to have regrets over the annexation of Korea.<sup>11</sup> Had the United States opposed a Japanese protectorate in 1905, moreover, this would only have served to increase Japan’s determination to make its position in Korea secure.<sup>12</sup> Although such a conclusion might be interpreted as an apologia for the two powers’ policies, a review of Japan’s handling of Korean affairs would prove these policies to have been appropriate.

The relationship of the two Western powers with Japan has been fairly well covered by many authors.<sup>13</sup> What is striking is that the competition and confrontation became concentrated on the United States and Japan, as Britain became more deeply engaged in the European theater. Their confrontation took various forms: Japanese immigration to California, the U.S.; the “Great White Fleet” naval demonstration in the Pacific (1908); and, above all, the “open door” policy that the Americans expected to remain effective in Manchuria and Korea. In Manchuria, the two Western powers believed that Japan

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<sup>10</sup> Nish, *Alliance in Decline – A Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations 1908–23* (London: Athlone, 1972), pp. 22–27, 45–47; Lowe, Peter, *Great Britain and Japan 1911–15, A Study of British Far Eastern Policy* (London: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 17–18.

<sup>11</sup> Nish (1972), pp. 35–36.

<sup>12</sup> Esthus, p. 111.

<sup>13</sup> Nish (1972); Lowe; Esthus; Neu, Charles E., *An Uncertain Friendship – Theodore Roosevelt and Japan, 1906–1909* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967).

would protect their commercial activities in observance of the principle of open door, which had been declared as one of their aims in the war against Russia. Japan frequently stated its compliance with the principle, but hindered the powers' trade activities in various ways, including discriminatory railway rates.<sup>14</sup>

Britain's relationship with Japan started to sour from 1905, and the friendly atmosphere witnessed before the Russo-Japanese War was not to be recovered throughout the entire period of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, which was ended in 1922. As Britain, especially the community of British traders in East Asia, revolted against Japan's economic expansion, such sentiments exerted a strongly negative impact on these worsening relations, despite the fact that government policy continued to emphasize the strategic necessity of the alliance. Commercial jealousies and competition emerged as a main feature of the bilateral relationship, and Japanese-British frictions were intensified when Japan tried to extend its interests in the Yangzi valley in 1913.<sup>15</sup> Considering that the powers' relations in the region had developed mainly in relation to economic issues after the Russo-Japanese War, it was only natural that this friction at the regional level should be reflected at a local level in Korea, even if the two Western powers believed that the conflicts with Japan were irrelevant to "the Korean question."

During the protectorate regime, Korea was in practice under the control of Itō Hirobumi, its "resident-general." The Westerners regarded his approach to Korean affairs as more conciliatory and flexible than the military's. However, they came to view their reduced rights with critical eyes. I have written in some detail about Anglo-Japanese relations during this period in Korea in another study.<sup>16</sup> As trade and tariffs in Korea were controlled by John McLeavy Brown, the British inspector general of Korean customs, Britain anticipated that its economic activities could still be promoted regardless of the altered status of Korea. According to American reports, capital from London that had been invested in Australia and South Africa had started moving towards the "most promising land" of Korea, with its rich mineral resources.<sup>17</sup> However, it soon suffered a rapid decrease in economic enthusiasm when Japan began limiting concessions in trade and the mining industry, and also expelled most Western economic advisors. Under Japanese

<sup>14</sup> Wright to SS, June 27, 1907, *FRUS, 1907*, pp. 779–780; Pearl, Cyril, *Morrison of Peking* (Penguin Books, 1970), p. 192.

<sup>15</sup> Lowe, pp. 18–20; Nish (1972), pp. 35, 99.

<sup>16</sup> Ku, Taeyŏl (Daeyeol), *Chegukjuui wa ōllon – Baesŏl, Taehan maeil sinbo mit han-yŏng-il kwangye* (Journalism and Imperialism – Ernest Bathell, *The Korean Daily News and Anglo-Japanese-Korean Relations*) (Seoul: Ewha University Press 1986), chapter 3.

<sup>17</sup> Annual Report on Commerce and Industries in Korea, May 4, 1909, RG84, vol. 36; Concessions and Franchises in Korea, January 30, 1909, RG84, vol. 51.



duress, McLeavy Brown left for China in 1905. For Britain, Japan was breaching its promises in a “very slim” way, tormenting its competitors as a result of its reinforced status in the peninsula.<sup>18</sup>

The Americans had greater interests in Korea, hence were more eager to protect them. Reports titled “American Interests in Korea,” which had been frequently compiled during this period, were full of anticipation that American interests were going to remain unchanged, or even grow, after Japan established a protectorate. The nature of American interests in the peninsula could mainly be categorized into missionary-medical and economic. According to a survey in 1911, there were 640 American residents in Korea, out of which five hundred were engaged in missionary and medical activities. They owned 123 mines and 17 commercial companies, with a business volume far greater than the combined sum of the economic interests of all the other powers except Japan. The Oriental Consolidated Mining Company, the Seoul Mining Company, Collbran and Bostwick Development, and Standard Oil were all especially important.<sup>19</sup>

Missionaries were a lasting cause of friction after the 1905 protectorate treaty, since their influence on the Korean people was regarded as hindering Japan’s complete absorption of the peninsula. It was indispensable for the missionaries to maintain a friendly relationship with both the Koreans and the Japanese protectorate to secure unrestrained religious and educational activities. The majority of them approved of Japan’s rule. They viewed Japan’s “civilization” policy as being more favorable to them than the misrule of the former Korean government, and believed that the Japanese regime would guarantee freedom for their evangelical missions. Yet they did not want Japanese policies to exploit the Korean people or destroy their national identity. The protectorate, moreover, strove to reduce some of the privileges they enjoyed under the late Chosŏn government. Consequently, their position posed an inextricable dilemma. The problem was only resolved when the Government-General in Seoul stopped them from intervening in political matters after the annexation. Although the American government tried to take a neutral stance, saying that the whole issue was a matter of religion, this issue wielded direct and indirect influence on U.S.-Japanese relations in Korea, since the majority of the missionaries were Americans.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Cockburn to Grey, August 20, 1906, 45 (32806/32806), minute on Cockburn to Grey, September 24, 1906, 45 (36164/27709).

<sup>19</sup> Inspection of Consulate-General, July 8, 1911, RG84, vol. 12, p. 102.

<sup>20</sup> On the relationship of the missionaries with Japanese authorities from the opening of the country until the March First Movement (1919), see Ku, Daeyeol, *Korea under Colonialism – The March First Movement and the Anglo-Japanese Relations* (Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society-KB, 1985), pp. 27–36 and chapter 6.

Trade with Korea was insignificant, since the size of the Korean economy was relatively small with little in the way of manufacturing, commercial, or engineering industries, while its people could rarely afford the high prices of American products. Yet its “potential” was highly valued. Compared to British cotton products, which had faced severe competition from Japanese counterparts, American products were on a steady rise since most of these exports consisted of oil and materials for railway construction.<sup>21</sup> For the Americans, their primary economic interest was in the mines. The United States had acquired the largest mining rights in Korea, partly through the friendships which Horace N. Allen, an American missionary and longtime (1890–1906) diplomat in Seoul, had cultivated with the pre-protectorate Korean court, and partly by fostering the illusion of protecting Korea’s independence. The United States was the only power that was successfully developing mines with modern equipment. The Unsan gold mine in North P’yŏng’an Province, with an average annual profit of US\$100,000 was estimated to be the “foremost gold mine in the entire Orient.” Another report in 1909 related that American mining interests were quadrupled in 1908, and optimistically forecast the “inauguration of [a] vigorous mining movement” with the acquisition of other mines.<sup>22</sup>

American mining interests seemed to be supported, at least outwardly, by Itō, who argued that the Korean people would be the ultimate beneficiaries of mine exploitation. Americans also believed this, since American companies spent over 50 percent of the value of the gold acquired from Korean mines for supplies, and on wages paid to thousands of Korean laborers, something expected to benefit the Korean people as a whole.<sup>23</sup> In this regard, Thomas Sammons, the U.S. consul-general, strongly urged the Japanese protectorate officials to promote these mining operations by pioneering American companies, and to allow necessary privileges in the process.<sup>24</sup>

The United States, however, sensed growing restrictions on its economic activities once Japan had taken control with the protectorate treaty. In principle, the Japanese protectorate strictly applied existing

<sup>21</sup> American Interest in Korea, Sammons to O’Brien, April 22, 1909, RG84, vol. 46, p. 79. According to an official statistic of 1909, the powers’ profits in Korea ranked in this order: Japan (US\$10,803,372), Britain (US\$3,339,988), China (US\$2,431,236), the United States (US\$1,193,694) and Germany (US\$255,474). [Annual Report on Commerce and Industries, July 22, 1910, RG84, vol. 9, p. 130].

<sup>22</sup> Annual Report on Commerce and Industries, May 4, 1909, RG84, vol. 36.

<sup>23</sup> Forest Laws and Detailed Forestry Regulations and American Mining Interests in Korea, Sammons to SS, January 28, 1908, M862, R.783, 11718/36.

<sup>24</sup> Forest Laws and Detailed Forestry Regulations and American Mining Interest in Korea, Sammons to SS, April 13, 1908, M862, R.783, 11718/17–20.

rules, but, in practice, they refused to recognize rights formerly granted by Emperor Kojong, unless due process had been followed. Moreover, Japanese officials made issues more complicated by strictly observing every clause of treaties, including matters of extraterritoriality. Timber, for instance, had been mostly obtained from state lands, while business procedure was based upon Royal Household orders, which instructed local officials to assist foreign companies in getting the fuel and logs that they required at reasonable prices. But the protectorate government considered this removal of timber to be irregular, tantamount to stealing from state lands, and demanded timber taxes for reforestation. The Americans became skeptical about Japan's promise to safeguard their interests.<sup>25</sup> Although the United States and Britain fostered their diplomatic power to resist, they began to yield to the protectorate's pressure and to withdraw from the Korean peninsula. Sammons left a bitter comment on this process, saying that negotiations were possible only with inexhaustible patience in advancing reasonable arguments, coupled with judicious, tireless pressure. He also advised that this was the "golden rule" in dealing with the Japanese, and that the Americans should not betray any "unfriendly, racially antagonistic and prejudiced" attitude.<sup>26</sup>

Another means the Western powers used to protect their interests were the privileges granted by the old Chosŏn government, especially in matters related to judicial "extraterritoriality." I have elsewhere written about British policies in regard to Earnest Bethell, an anti-Japanese journalist who owned a newspaper in Seoul.<sup>27</sup> The United States had been more sympathetic than Britain and other European powers toward Japan's endeavors to revise the "unequal treaties" of the past,<sup>28</sup> and, similarly, it largely acknowledged the necessity of Japan's reform policy in Korea. It stressed, however, that none of the rights admitted prior to the protectorate treaty should be marred, even if Japan was now supervising the Korean government. The State Department strongly reminded Sammons of America's extraterritorial rights, whereby the arrest and punishment of Americans belonged to the authority of the consul. Alarmed at potential excesses of Japanese authority, the State Department revealed its determination to observe treaty rights and extraterritorial formalities strictly, by means of establishing consulates in Pyongyang and Inch'ŏn, while seeking advice

<sup>25</sup> Mining Law, Paddock to Wright, July 17, 1906, RG84, vol. 7; Korean Mining Laws, February 10, 1910, RG84, vol.34.

<sup>26</sup> Collbran and Bostwick Controversies in Korea Adjusted, Sammons to Jay, August 2, 1909, RG84, vol. 88, p. 66.

<sup>27</sup> Ku (1986).

<sup>28</sup> See Nish, Ian H., *Japanese Foreign Policy, 1869-1942 - Kasumigaseki to Miyakezaka* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), chapters 2 and 3.

from the consulate-general in Seoul on dispatching consular agents to the vicinity of mines where American interests were concentrated.<sup>29</sup> Sammons suggested that they should protect mining concessions in northern Korea, and set up a consulate or assign consular agents in Pukchin, in the vicinity of the Unsan mine, to resolve any problems. Japan, however, flatly rejected the American plan to open a consulate at Pukchin, citing a precedent in which it had turned down China's request for a consulate in Sinŭiju, the terminal station of Seoul-Sinŭiju railway, since the town was not an "open port."<sup>30</sup>

This issue clearly indicates that the protectorate regime wielded ultimate and absolute power in Korea. This was also clearly demonstrated by the Bethell case. Since 1904, Ernest T. Bethell, a British citizen, had published the *Daehan Maeil Sinbo* and the *Korea Daily News* under the protection of extraterritoriality, and with the support of the Korean court. He was often critical of Japan's policies, something that eventually developed into the most serious diplomatic issue between Japan and Britain in Korea during the protectorate era. Britain, however, stated its intention to protect its treaty rights in the peninsula by choosing a legal process with the British consul-general as judge, instead of expatriating Bethell from Korea. Through the Bethell case, Britain tried to prove that the Union Jack had not yet been lowered in Korea. Eventually, Bethell was expelled from Korea, and died in 1909.<sup>31</sup> Intent on guarding treaty privileges, however, the United States, like Britain, realized that it was facing a protectorate regime of a very exclusive nature. By treaty, the resident-general, whenever he deemed necessary, could order that a Japanese official be resident in major ports or provincial offices, to supervise and handle administrative and consular affairs. Comparing this with privileges of "the most favored nation," Sammons questioned whether Japan could hinder the authority of other powers in appointing consuls in those regions when they saw a need for them. Japan believed that the protectorate was its exclusive right, as recognized by the powers, while the powers' privileges could be easily adjusted through negotiations when extraterritoriality was abolished. This attitude indicated that Japan would remodel (or even expel) the interests the powers had acquired through the previous Korean government.<sup>32</sup> As a result of the Bethell trial, and disputes over the appointment of additional American consuls, the powers

<sup>29</sup> SD to Sammons, September 5, 1907, RG84, vol. 64.

<sup>30</sup> Appointment of Consular Agents and the Establishment of Consulates in Korea, Sammons to SD, November 21, 1907, RG84, vol. 35, No.121.

<sup>31</sup> See Ku (1986).

<sup>32</sup> SD to Sammons, January 21, 1908, RG84, vol. 60; Consular Agency for Pukchin, Korea, Sammons to SD, March 30, 1908, RG84, vol. 61.

once again realized that Japan's authority in Korea remained solid, and that the protectorate might have priorities that did not involve sharing the rights to the "most favored nation."

The powers' critical views of Japan, meanwhile, continued to be fomented, partly by its "unfair" treatment of foreigners. As Japanese immigrants from the lower classes of society, along with disorderly soldiers, arrived in an avalanche after late 1904, missionaries, mine engineers and nuns from the United States, Britain and Australia started to suffer violence and maltreatment. In addition, as Japan harshly suppressed the Righteous Army insurgents; slighted Korean traditions and sentiments in favor of its military considerations; unjustly implemented development policies; and focused its administration mainly on benefits for Japanese residents, the powers gradually realized that the alleged Japanese policy of promoting the welfare of the Korean people was largely fictional. This was reflected in the decision of Henry Cockburn, the British consul-general, to declare as *persona non grata* the Japanese official who was in charge of the Bethell trial, so critical was he of the protectorate's policy. His seniors in Tokyo and London did not approve this *démarche*. American Consul-General Sammons admitted that, although the American "men in the street" resident in Korea had been favorable to Japan, their feelings were now becoming so soured that they would sympathize with Bethell. He also accepted a report by Frederick McKenzie as being quite in accord with the facts. McKenzie had described the "alleged barbaric policy of the Japanese versus the hopeless although patriotic task of the rebels [i.e., the Korean Righteous Army]."<sup>33</sup> Just before the Korean annexation, Acting Consul-General Ozro G. Gould criticized the protectorate, writing that, given the achievements that it had made in various fields, the protectorate had actually made its task more difficult than was necessary, and its success less complete than was possible.<sup>34</sup>

The Japanese protectorate perceived this change of attitude among Western people, especially the criticisms of American missionaries, as detrimental to the political future of Korea. Itō was particularly forthright in this view, partly because he had been paying great attention to the attitude of the powers toward an "ultimate solution" for the Korean question, i.e., annexation. He therefore tirelessly lauded Japan's protection of the powers' economic interests and their missionaries' activities in medical care and education.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Insurrection in Korea, Sammons to Dodge, September 10, 1907, RG84, vol. 40; September 20, 1907, RG84, vol. 62, p. 79; Merrill, pp. 167, 204.

<sup>34</sup> Gould to SD, June 1, 1910, M426, R.1, 895.00/523.

<sup>35</sup> Marquis Itō and the Commercial Partition in the Far East, Sammons to SD, July 2, 1907, RG84, vol. 66, p. 47.

According to Itō, however, the circumstances were quite different from a past that saw missionaries as participants in the Korean political scene. Korean society now had three identifiable groups: members or sympathizers of the pro-Japanese *Ilchinhoe*, the anti-Japanese Righteous Army, and Christians who nonviolently opposed the *Ilchinhoe*. Certainly, the *Ilchinhoe* provided Itō's administration with valuable tools for the implementation of his policy, but nationalist groups reacted sharply to this pro-Japanese association, condemning *Ilchinhoe* adherents as traitors, and creating an atmosphere hostile to Japanese rule within Korean society.<sup>36</sup> While the Righteous Army could be subdued by the Japanese military and police, many anti-Japanese Koreans, mostly Christians, were under the influence of the missionaries. Important as its relationship with the missionaries was, the Japanese protectorate could not simply allow such a state of affairs to continue.<sup>37</sup>

At the government level, however, the United States and Britain tried to suppress such political expressions by their citizens. Bethell was found guilty in two consular trials. Sammons distributed a public announcement to American residents in Korea by Minister John B. Sill, who had urged them in 1897 (at the height of the Independence Club activities) to avoid interference with affairs of a political nature.<sup>38</sup> Thomas J. O'Brien, the U.S. ambassador in Tokyo, advised his consul-general in Seoul that the American policy seemed to allow Japan a free hand in Korea, and it would therefore be wise for all concerned to use the utmost discretion in all their relations, both with the "natives" and with the Japanese.<sup>39</sup>

At the same time, the two Western powers did not view nationalist resistance in Korea with favorable eyes. They were shocked by the satisfaction expressed by the Koreans on Itō's assassination by An Chunggūn, a Korean patriot. Gould commented that it was additional evidence of the ignorance, hatred and shortsightedness which had held Korea back in the past, and which angered many Japanese

<sup>36</sup> A new study shows that the *Ilchinhoe* was armed with advanced ideas, and tried to reform Korean society. However, its activities antagonized the Christians and conservatives in Korean society, and moreover its members were condemned as traitors for helping the Japanese encroachment into Korea, and above all for supporting the country's annexation by Japan. It must be added that the majority of the *Ilchinhoe* members came from the lower classes of Korean society. See Moon, Yumi, *Populist Collaborators: the Ilchinhoe and the Japanese colonization of Korea, 1896–1910* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University of Press, 2013).

<sup>37</sup> American Missionaries in Korea, Sammons to O'Brien, February 24, 1909, RG84, vol. 44, p. 102; February 13, 1909, RG84, vol. 52, p. 147.

<sup>38</sup> American Missionaries in Korea, Sammons to Smith, March 21, 1908, RG84, vol. 61. See also Taff's speech in Conclusion of this chapter.

<sup>39</sup> O'Brien to Sammons, November 13, 1907, RG84, vol. 35.

who were concerned for Korea's welfare.<sup>40</sup> There was, however, one person, perhaps the only one in American official circles, who maintained a relatively objective or friendly attitude toward Korea. According to Thomas Sammons, the U.S. consul-general in Seoul during the protectorate period, the Koreans generally possessed "patriotic sentiment," and resented the protectorate by Japan, with such tendencies having been apparent from an early stage, when Japan first tried to possess and exploit their country.<sup>41</sup> In the very first report that he wrote after his appointment to Korea in 1907, Sammons retrospectively observed that the Korean people had a certain "pride of assumed racial superiority," and "patriotism and loyalty for their native government, which had through official corruption and incapacity contributed so little to their welfare."<sup>42</sup> Even when he stressed the non-participation of American missionaries in political matters, he reported that, as a general rule, Koreans, Christian and non-Christian alike, were anti-Japanese, and thus their antipathy had nothing to do with the teachings or precepts of the missionaries.<sup>43</sup>

It is necessary, finally, briefly to consider how "racial issues" between the United States and Japan influenced the Korean question. The Americans acknowledged that the "surplus population" of Japan proper, which was augmenting at the rate of some 600,000 annually, needed an outlet, and proposed Korea and Manchuria as one solution. They welcomed Japan's policy on the high fees to be deposited with emigration agencies, and on the establishing of the Oriental Development Company. More Japanese emigration to Korea would diminish emigration to Hawaii and America.<sup>44</sup> Japan proposed to keep its population within certain regions, namely in Japan, Formosa, Korea and South Manchuria, so that even emigration to Central and South America was discouraged. This was interpreted by the United States as an advantage gained by a strong diplomacy, and as evidence of the American purpose to defend its rights.<sup>45</sup> The Tokyo government and media used the same reasoning to justify directing its surplus popula-

<sup>40</sup> Assassination of Prince Itō, Gould to O'Brien, November 8, 1909, RG84, vol. 83, p. 30.

<sup>41</sup> American Missionaries in Korea, Sammons to O'Brien, February 24, 1909, GR84, vol. 44, p. 102; Sammons to Jay, July 22, 1909, RG84, vol. 87, p. 284.

<sup>42</sup> Confidential Notes on the Korean Situation, Sammons to SD, July 1, 1907, RG84, vol. 66, p. 13.

<sup>43</sup> American Missionaries and Political Organization in Korea, Sammons to O'Brien, May 23, 1908, RG84, vol. 38; Wiju School Matter, May 25, 1908, RG84, vol. 38.

<sup>44</sup> Dodge to Root, October 11, 1907, M862, R.254 (2542/157); October 7, 1907, (2542/154).

<sup>45</sup> Enclosure in O'Laughlin to Root, November 16, 1908; O'Brien to SS, November 18, 1908, M862, R791, 12611/20-21.

tion to Korea and Manchuria.<sup>46</sup> This is why the United States (and Britain, for that matter) acquiesced to some extent in the exploitation carried out by the Oriental Development Company, even though this was an object of major criticism during the period of Japanese colonial rule.<sup>47</sup>

#### ANNEXATION AND THE POWERS

The Japanese government reached its final decision on the annexation of Korea in a cabinet meeting of July 1909, and then via a memorandum entitled “Japanese policy on the annexation of the [Korean] administration,” dated June 3, 1910.<sup>48</sup> During the protectorate government of 1906 to 1910, it was generally assumed that confrontation had lingered between civil politicians, headed by Itō Hirobumi and Saionji Kimmochi, and the military, which was guided by Yamagata Aritomo and Katsura Tarō. Itō had endeavored to prevent the destruction of Korean independence during his service in Korea. After Itō was assassinated in October 1909 by An Chunggūn, the military took a hard-line initiative, which materialized in the form of the annexation. This stance was agreed to by Britain, the United States, and other pro-Japanese individuals who had been against the military policy and favored Itō’s government.<sup>49</sup>

According to this view, the military harshly suppressed Korean resistance, ignoring the people’s interests and blindly pursuing Japan’s national interests. An American report highlighted the observation that Hasegawa Yoshimichi, the commander of Japan’s *Chōsen* Army, was very severe toward the “natives,” and dealt with Righteous Army insurgents summarily, and with harsh and relentless extermination.<sup>50</sup> Itō, on the other hand, took a refined soft-line approach to preventing the peninsula from posing a threat to Japan’s security, while trying to promote the welfare of Koreans through harmony and cooperation between the two peoples.<sup>51</sup> Itō was also of the opinion that,

<sup>46</sup> According to Itō, if Japanese people “were unwelcome in America and other parts of the world, they must expand westward into Korea and Manchuria as a natural outlet.” See Movement of Japanese Emigrants Westward into Asia and the Disputed Chinese-Korean Territory (Kando), Sammons to O’Brien, May 4, 1908, RG84, vol. 37.

<sup>47</sup> Criticizing American restrictions on immigrants, Japanese media insisted that the two regions were a “logical field” to replace the United States. (Wilson to Root January 23, 1908, M862, R.255, 2542/358.)

<sup>48</sup> Tokutomi Iichirō (ed.) *Kōshaku Katsura Tarō den kon maki* (Biography of Prince Katsura Tarō), (Tokyo: Ko Katsura Kōshaku Kinen Jigyōkai, 1917), vol. 2, pp. 459–463; Komatsu (ed.), vol. 3, pp. 197–200.

<sup>49</sup> See a general survey of this subject, Ku (1986), chapter 2.

<sup>50</sup> Sammons to Dodger, September 10, 1907, RG84, vol. 40, p. 92.

<sup>51</sup> Komura Jutarō, the Japanese foreign minister at the time of the annexation, explained Itō’s policy in the same vein. See Nihon Gaimushō (Japanese Foreign Ministry) (ed.)



since the protectorate in Korea was already posing a considerable financial burden, annexation would result in an additional load that the Japanese government would struggle to bear. Accordingly, with his comprehensive authority over affairs in Korea, Itō declared as late as April 1909 that he would respect its independence and not destroy its people.<sup>52</sup> Contrary to Itō's expectations, however, the resistance of Korean nationalists rapidly burgeoned, as a result of what may be called "social communication," by which all sections of Korean society gathered together around the cause of anti-Japanese sentiment.<sup>53</sup> Itō, finally persuaded that no policy could be realized through compromise, tried to justify his actions in agreeing to Korean annexation with the remark that Korea was destroying itself (through the Righteous Army movement), rather than being destroyed by other nations.<sup>54</sup> Itō's moderate policy in Korea was severely criticized by the elements who favored annexation. Along with the military group, for example, the Kokuryūkai (usually known by foreigners as "The Black Dragon Society"), which had tried to engineer Japanese public opinion on Korea, criticized Itō's policy as "gradualism."<sup>55</sup>

To conclude, however, that the annexation was a struggle between two factions of the Japanese political elite would be superficial. Hilary Conroy modifies this view by arguing that the policy debates and decisions made by these two groups were, in essence, collective, and retained the strong oligarchic character of Japanese politics in the Meiji era. When the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was signed in 1902, Itō yielded to this decision despite his desire to find a compromise with Russia, and then the oligarchs delegated the Korean question to Itō himself. This settlement included giving Itō control of the Japanese army stationed in Korea. There is therefore no point in attempting to

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*Komura Gaiikōshi* (Komura Diplomatic History) (Tokyo: Benitani Shoten, 1953), vol. 2, pp. 378–383.

<sup>52</sup> Annexation of Korea by Japan Denied, Sammons to O'Brien, April 24, 1909, RG84, vol. 46, p. 99.

<sup>53</sup> For nationalist social communication, see Deutsch, Karl W., *Nationalism and Social Communication* (New York: MIT Press, 1966), p. 101. For a discussion on the Korean nationalist movement during this period from the social communication perspective, see Ku (1986), pp. 111–112, 129–136.

<sup>54</sup> Japanese Policy in Korea – Annexation and Insurrection, Sammons to O'Brien, May 17, 1909, RG84, vol. 91, p. 8. Sammons, however, insightfully remarked that the alleged activity of the Righteous Army insurgents, which was given as a reason for Japan's annexation proposal, could not be a matter of grave concern. The insurrection lacked organization and forces, and as a rule the insurrectionists were classed by the Japanese as mere "robbers." See also Moriyama, Shigenori, trans. by Kim Semin, *Kūndae Han'il kwangyesa yōn'gu – Chosōn singminjihwa wa kukje kwangye* (Japan-Korean Relations in Modern Times – the Colonization of Korea and International Relations) (Seoul: Hyōn'umsa, 1994), p.219.

<sup>55</sup> Kokuryūkai (Black Dragon Society) (ed.), *Nikkan gappe hishi* (Hidden History of Japan-Korea Annexation) (Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1966) vol. 1, chapter 8.

distinguish between the governing policy of Itō and the Korea policy of Yamagata and Katsura.<sup>56</sup>

Conroy's argument seems reasonable in its own right, but is not entirely so. Seeing only the result, one might well assume that any policy debates were bound to arrive at just one "conclusion," even if through a kind of collective process. What counts in this process is not whether opinion is united or divided (whether, in other words, there is a single or multiple conclusion), but the fact, in and of itself, that there have been differences of outlook among the leaders. While different opinions indicate a distinction in individual views or strategies, they also represent the interests and worldviews of groups to which the individuals may belong. A compromise may be found to these difference, according to the power relations among the groups, which can then be presented as the intention of all, when it is in actuality only one party's view that has won out. Differences may be temporarily reconciled but this does not necessarily mean that they have been permanently resolved, leaving them prone to reemerge in certain situations. It is, therefore, not at all surprising that Itō's Korean policy should have been replaced by that of other factions after his death.

A problem of a more serious nature might be the readiness to see Meiji political elites in a strict dichotomy; that is, as hard-line military versus soft-line civil politicians. Itō's attitude, in short, should not be interpreted as a mere opposition to the annexation. In 1904, he had already claimed that Korea was not able to permanently sustain its independence, and in 1909 he reached the decision that the protectorate regime should not last much longer.<sup>57</sup> Since his appointment as resident-general in Seoul, when he spoke of his respect for Korea's independence, he usually added the condition "if Korea ultimately becomes firmly pro-Japanese." At the first meeting with Sammons, the new American consul-general, Itō emphasized that he was against annexation, even if everybody else was for the idea. Yet he clearly stated that Korea might be independent only if it was not free to exercise "that measure of independence that would result in becoming allied to any other power than Japan." He would allow no independent foreign policy by Korea, especially if it might generate problems for Japan. Korea was too different from India, which Britain had controlled with relative ease by sustaining the independence of several maharajas; nor could it be considered a neutral state, such as Switzerland. According to this reasoning, Korea must stand

<sup>56</sup> Conroy, Hilary, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea: 1868–1910 – a Study of Realism and Idealism in International Relations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960), p. 379. On the *gemō* in Japanese politics, see Nish, (1966), pp. 4–5, 192–196.

<sup>57</sup> Moriyama(1994), p. 206; Komatsu (ed.), vol. 3, p. 196.

with Japan and could only exercise some form of autonomy in a union with the latter.<sup>58</sup>

Itō's perceptions of immorality and corruption in the Korean government, and especially his conviction of the people's disillusionment – as a result of which the Koreans were expected to tolerate Japanese rule – might have undermined him, or he might have been over-confident in his self-assumed mission of bringing Western-standard “civilization” to Korea. Itō's idea, moreover, was evidently self-defeating, since tutelage and independence are two incompatible concepts. It is obvious that independence as defined by Itō could not guarantee autonomy. Even today, when national sovereignty is much respected and democratic exchanges have become more a common norm, this Itō-style adult/minor or senior/junior power relationship could hardly be established in practice. It was merely an idealistic, if not downright deceitful, type of rhetoric to think that, in the age of imperialism, Japan could exercise full authority over Korea's foreign policy for the sake of “security,” while on other issues promoting cooperation between the two peoples on an equal footing.

In March 1909, Foreign Minister Komura Jutarō proposed to Prime Minister Katsura that Korea should be annexed at an “appropriate time,” in a memorandum titled “Korean policy and Japanese administration,” pointing out that other powers' reactions to it would be more important than the consolidation *per se* of the protectorate in the peninsula. Komura, remaining on the cautious side, argued that, since the Portsmouth Treaty, Japan had been unsure of the attitude of the other powers, except for an understanding with the United States, regarding the future of Korea. Even if it was gradually depriving Korea of its sovereignty through the protectorate, very careful deliberations on “diplomatic options” still seemed necessary to realize a full annexation. Japan should wait for the proper moment, as an annexation would contradict its continuously avowed support for Korea's independence and open doors in Manchuria. With the consensus of the prime minister and Itō, Komura's ideas were recorded in diplomatic documents as an official opinion of the Tokyo government.<sup>59</sup> When he mentioned “suspicions” and an “appropriate time,” he was no doubt addressing Japan's relations with Russia.

In such circumstances, the powers assumed that Japan would not precipitously rush into annexation. In early 1909, the British commented that the Japanese were not likely to add to their difficulties in Korea by annexing it just as the Righteous Army rebellion was on the

<sup>58</sup> Confidential Notes on the Korean Situation, Sammons to SD, July 1, 1907, RG84, vol. 66.

<sup>59</sup> *Komura gaikōshi*, vol. 2, pp. 373–383; *NGB*, 42–1, pp. 659–660.

wane.<sup>60</sup> Drafting a memorandum on the possible annexation on June 23, 1910, the U.S. Department of State cited the opinion of George Scidmore, consul-general since August 1909, that Japan would not hasten the process of annexation as other powers would claim considerable *quid pro quo* for abandoning extraterritoriality. Instead, Japan was likely to pursue more intermediate steps, such as taking over interior and other minor departments. At such a stage, Japan would do well to allow independent tariffs in Korea to ease financial burdens, as the United States had done in the Philippines.<sup>61</sup>

Here a “Manchuria factor” entered the considerations of Japan’s government. Although the Korean question, as such, was unlikely to erode the relationship with the powers, the discontent that both the United States and Britain had felt over Japan’s control of Manchuria might potentially influence the Korean issue. What the two countries stressed, above all, was importance of the “open door” in this region. And, when Japan was seen as violating pledges to open Manchurian markets, their relationships started to deteriorate. Indeed, these sorts of tensions might induce Russia to make an alliance with the two English-speaking powers. This would be the worst scenario for Japan. So long as Korea was not recognized, even under the rubric of special “tutelage,” as a territory of the Japanese empire in terms of international law, its future was subject to further, possibly adverse, developments in this situation. Moriyama argues that the uncertainties regarding Manchuria thus provided a background motive for Japan to speed up the annexation of Korea.<sup>62</sup>

Even after its defeat in 1905, Japan still viewed Russia as posing an obstacle to its policy in the Korean peninsula. In April 1906, Russia objected that the Japanese emperor should issue an “exequatur” for George de Pançon, as the Russian consul-general at Seoul, on the grounds that Korea was still an “independent state.” It recognized Japan’s paramount position in Korea, yet it did not have any intention of acknowledging the end of the peninsula’s functioning as an independent state.<sup>63</sup> Japan interpreted Russia’s argument as a renewed challenge to its position in Korea. The victor retorted that it had already nullified all the treaties between Korea

<sup>60</sup> Minute on MacDonald to Grey, December 7, 1909, 877 (2668/988). Even in May 1910, Komura repeated that no date had been decided upon for annexation.

<sup>61</sup> SD Memorandum, June 23, 1910, M426, R, 1, 1166/474.

<sup>62</sup> Moriyama, pp. 241–242. The Japanese military expressed anxiety over the defense of Manchuria vis-à-vis Russia, but did not particularly associate Japan’s precarious position in Manchuria with the Korean question. [See Tsunoda, Jun, *Manshū mondai to kokubō hōshin* (Manchurian Problems and Defense Policy) (Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1967), p. 587.]

<sup>63</sup> Grey to Benckendorf, April 9, 1906, 179 (10163/306); *Japan Times*, August 8, 1907, enclosure in Wright to SS, August 18, 1906, *FRUS*, 1906, pp. 1044–1045.

and Russia in May 1904, and that when Russian representatives asked their Japanese counterparts for a most-favored-nation status at the peace conference, it was virtually tantamount to the recognition by Russia of the Japanese protectorate over Korea. Britain, as an ally, faithfully supported Japan's response. Foreign Secretary Edward Grey mentioned that a precedent for the issue of exequaturs to foreign consuls by a "protecting power" of a state, instead of by the authorities of that state, was afforded by the case of Zanzibar. In the end, Russia had to acknowledge Japan's argument and its new position in Korea.<sup>64</sup>

Russia, nonetheless, continued to question Japan's policies of strategic significance in the peninsula. From October 1908, Japan started fortifying the bay of Chinhae (near Masan) to become a bastion more powerful than the former Russian counterpart at Port Arthur had been. By 1907, it was directly involved in the Jiandao (Chientao, region of China's Jilin Province, pronounced "Kando" in Korean) problem, and entered into an agreement with China in September 1909. Russia regarded Japan's claims to Jiandao as the sort of expansion into the Asian continent, via the Korean border, which could menace its own position in East Asia.<sup>65</sup> Japan, moreover, completely disbanded the remaining Korean army in September 1909. In October of the same year, Itō and Vladimir N. Kokovtsov, the Russian finance minister, were scheduled to hold a meeting (that never actually took place) in Harbin, to discuss the crisis caused by Japan's military moves, as well as by the two countries' interests. Conflicts between Japan and Russia over the Korean question exposed the Russian concern that Japan, with its reinforced position in Korea, would annex it without Russia's consent. For Japan, these problems resulted from an incomplete rule over Korea, which suggested the necessity of compromise with Russia.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Grey to Benckendorf, April 9, 1906, 179 (10163/306); Memorandum Communicated by Japanese Chargé d'Affaires, August 10, 1906 (27405/306). See also *NGB*, 1906, 39–2, pp. 87–156.

<sup>65</sup> Moriyama raised the issue of Jiandao in relation to the annexation. Those in Japan who supported the "continental policy" strongly upheld the annexation due to the geopolitical importance of Jiandao. Although Japan had to recognize China's sovereignty over the region in the "Jiandao Agreement", it still obtained a substantial means for wielding future influence on the continent. In any event, with this agreement Japan's concerns over Korea were reduced and annexation was delayed. (Moriyama, pp. 241–263.)

<sup>66</sup> On the policy of the protectorate toward Jiandao before 1910, see Kang, Ch'angsök, *Chosön t'onggambu yŏn'gu* (A Study of the Residency-General of Chosön), (Seoul: Kukhak Charyowŏn, 1995), chapter 4. Japanese records at the time clearly indicated that "Japan assumed that Jiandao was Korean territory." See Shinoda Shunsaku (ed.) *Tōkanfu rinji Kantō hashutsu kiyō* (Bulletin of the Temporary Jiandao Branch Office of the Residency-General) (Seoul, 1909), reprinted in 1984 by Asia Munhwasa, p. 65.

Japan would resolve the issue of Manchuria by compromising with Russia, rather than via the sort of open door sought by the British and the Americans. As a result, the Korean question was ironed out when Japan and Russia entered into two agreements to coordinate their mutual interests. The first, in July 1907, was realized partly through the *Entente Cordiale* between Britain and France, and largely through Japan's and Russia's common interest in East Asia. Despite strong Russian distrust toward Japan and demands for a war of revenge, such hard-line views gradually weakened with the atmosphere of revolution within Russia, and the country's financial problems. Foreign Minister Aleksandr Izvolsky actively worked for compromise. Having lost almost all influence and economic interests in southern Manchuria to Japan, he advocated that the main target of Russia's East Asia policy should be to rebalance, through judicious diplomacy, the unbalanced situation in Manchuria.<sup>67</sup>

In the first agreement, Japan and Russia affirmed their respect for the independence of China and "the maintenance of the *status quo* and respect for this principle by all the pacific means within their reach,"<sup>68</sup> though this *status quo* did not refer to the nominal "independence of Korea." In a secret clause, both powers, with a view to bolstering their respective political and economic activities, divided Manchuria between north and south, and undertook to refrain from interfering with one another's respective interests. As a *quid pro quo* for Japan's recognition of Russia's special interest in Outer Mongolia, Russia would undertake not to interfere with nor hinder further Japanese-led "development" in Korea. Shortly before this agreement was ratified, Japan concluded its second agreement with Korea on July 24, taking over the domestic administration of the peninsula and disbanding the Korean military establishment. Komura recollected that the Tokyo government strove hard to include this non-interference clause. He instructed Ambassador Motono Ichirō to exchange secret papers if Russia had any objection to stipulating this condition; and, if they did, to clarify that "the future development" of Korea meant annexation, lest any misunderstanding should arise.<sup>69</sup>

In the secret clause, there is no reference to an annexation, and it is not even clear whether there had been any discussion of the subject. However, considering Japan's repeated claim in 1910 that the annexation had already been resolved three years earlier, it seems

<sup>67</sup> Price, Ernest Batson, *The Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1907–1916 Concerning Manchuria and Mongolia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1933), pp. 26–28.

<sup>68</sup> NGB, 40–1, pp. 173–175. For an interpretation of this issue, see Price, pp. 28–38.

<sup>69</sup> *Komura gaikōshū*, vol. 2, pp. 380–381.

to have regarded the open clauses as including the issue.<sup>70</sup> As far as Russia was concerned, however, the annexation of Korea was not included in the agreement of 1907. Another significant outcome of this agreement at the regional level was that the two powers united to thwart the economic advances of the United States into Manchuria. With this agreement, Japan successfully eliminated a grave concern; namely, the potential reconciliation of Russia with the United States, and, for that matter with Britain. Despite the secret clause of the agreement, a United States consular official accurately made the interpretation that “as long as Russia was concerned,” Korea and South Manchuria would be considered as Japan’s exclusive sphere of interest. He was unerring in his observation that this agreement represented a Japanese effort toward Koreanizing southern Manchuria.<sup>71</sup>

The second Russo-Japanese agreement of July 4, 1910, showed a stronger determination for close cooperation between the two powers, faced with America’s so-called dollar diplomacy and its aggressive economic proposal regarding Manchuria. Upon American request, Russia pondered the possible sell-out of its Chinese Eastern Railway, but eventually chose to compromise with a power that was more immediate and influential in the area. The agreement between Japan and Russia specified that, in case any event to menace the *status quo* should arise, they would enter into communication with each other to agree upon the measures they might judge necessary to maintain the *status quo*. Compared to the earlier agreement, which would keep or defend the *status quo* “by all pacific means,” this was a step forward, which came close to being a defensive alliance.<sup>72</sup> More importantly, the settlement over Manchuria signified that the Korean question had been processed in keeping with Japan’s intentions. During the discussions leading up to the agreement, Japan casually brought up the subject of annexation. Presumably it was only to give Russia further notice about an issue that had already been settled, according to the Japanese view, by the earlier agreement. According to a British report, when the Russian foreign minister mentioned Korea to Ambassador Motono, the latter’s tone immediately changed, and he put on a “bulldog expression.”<sup>73</sup> Russia responded that it had no intention or reason to oppose the annexation but asked the Japanese government to be prudent about the timing. With Foreign Minister

<sup>70</sup> MacDonald to Grey, May 22, 1910, 877 (21768/988); May 19, 1910 (17940/988).

<sup>71</sup> Einstein (Beijing) to Knox, June 27, 1910, M341, R.23, (793.94/150).

<sup>72</sup> Price, pp.44; *NGB*, 43–1, pp.150–154. A study on the Japanese policy toward Manchuria regarded these agreements as “a triumph of Komura’s diplomacy.” (Tsunoda, p. 596.)

<sup>73</sup> Nicolson to Grey, May 12, 1910, 877 (18094/988). See also MacDonald to Grey, May 22, 1910, 877 (21768/988).

Izvolsky already suffering public criticism over the failure to prevent the annexation of Bosnia by Austria, another incident of such a kind would further jeopardize his position.<sup>74</sup> In a larger framework, the annexation of Korea was ultimately realized by eliminating all the obstacles to the two powers' coordination of interests in East Asia.

If Russia, at the official level, seemed to put up with the decision for annexation, its response was very emotional at a more informal level. According to a report by the American embassy at St. Petersburg, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov, while admitting the inevitability of the move, cynically commented that "Japan had swallowed Korea, but whether she could digest it was another question." Contrary to the American or British belief that the power balance of East Asia would remain unchanged, Sazonov concluded that Japan had "undoubtedly created a new situation, and brought a great possible danger for the future as a continental power."<sup>75</sup> The general public responded more vehemently. The annexation was a violation of the Portsmouth Treaty, and it could have been a *casus belli* in other circumstances. The *status quo* had absolutely been overturned, and the strategic, political and economic interests of Russia would suffer in the not-so-distant future. One newspaper of rather liberal slant lamented that the Japanese action made for the "saddest and bloodiest pages of Russian history in the Far East." The annexation was, in such a view, the last act of this tragedy.<sup>76</sup> Although surprised, neither the United States nor Britain particularly protested against the final decision for annexation in August 1910. In a report drafted in July, American Ambassador O'Brien noted that the new resident-general, Terauchi Masatake, would be fully prepared for any emergencies in connection with the approaching annexation. So, in other words, the annexation was only a matter of form.<sup>77</sup> In Britain, Francis Langley, the superintending undersecretary for the Far East, pointed out in March 1910 that Article Three of the revised Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1905 merely laid down that Japan had the right to take such measures of guidance, control and protection in Korea as it might deem proper. He brought up the question of whether the article could be read as precluding annexation, but did not express any particular objection.<sup>78</sup> The London government was resigned to the fact that as long as "the Japanese meant to make it a *fait accompli* in a very short time, Britain and other powers would have little grounds other

<sup>74</sup> MacDonald to Grey, May 22, 1910, 877 (21768/988); *NGB*, 43–1, pp. 117–118.

<sup>75</sup> US Embassy (St. Petersburg) to SS, August 25, 1910, M426, R.1, 895.00/488.

<sup>76</sup> US Embassy (St. Petersburg) to SS, September 2, 1910, M426, R.1, 895.00/490.

<sup>77</sup> O'Brien to SS, July 13, 1910, *FRUS*, 1910, p. 678.

<sup>78</sup> Minutes on Bonar's memorandum, January 13, 1910, 877 (7306/988).



than commercial to object to the annexation.<sup>79</sup> Finally, on August 25 (after the annexation treaty was signed in Seoul) Foreign Secretary Grey informed the ambassador in Tokyo that, although the second Alliance agreement did not contemplate the annexation and that it therefore did not entail any positive obligation upon Britain to support the annexation of Korea, it would be inconsistent with the spirit of the Alliance for Britain to oppose it.<sup>80</sup> In this way, despite their discontent over the issues of Manchuria and Korea, the two Western powers did not confront or oppose Japan, and Japan's annexation measure seemed to be formally closed.

One important factor in the later development of East Asian affairs is that none of the powers (or, at least, their Foreign Offices) associated the annexation with Japan's expansion into the continent, nor did they seriously consider the issue as being of much strategic significance. Certain individual diplomats, however, who had witnessed Japan's actions in Korea and its expansionist disposition, warned that the peninsula could become a stepping-stone for Japan's expansion if the annexation was given approval by all the powers. Such was the concern expressed by Henry Bonar, the British consul-general in Seoul. His view was that the Russo-Japanese agreement of 1910 publicly proclaimed that Japan was to be afforded more liberty in South Manchuria than had previously been the case. Japanese activities to the north of the Yalu, along with the Japanese-owned railway to Mukden, would constitute a threat to the so-called territorial integrity of China. He felt sure that the proximity of China and Japan on the Yalu frontier, which extended over some 300 miles, did not make for peace. The Foreign Office in London, prioritizing the strategic alliance with Japan on the regional level, merely commented that it was "an interesting dispatch," refusing to give credence to Bonar's prediction that the annexation was only the beginning of further encroachment into Manchuria by Japan.<sup>81</sup>

Among American officials, Sammons called for his government to pay greater attention to the situation, often referring to Japan's expansionist disposition. The Japanese military was building a large barracks and a small arms factory in Ch'ongjin, near the Russian border, while extending the military railway to the Jiandao region.

<sup>79</sup> Minutes on Memorandum Respecting British Trade Rights in Corea in the Event of Its Annexation by Japan, July 6, 1910, 877 (24141/988).

<sup>80</sup> Grey to MacDonald, August 25, 1910, 878 (31016/988).

<sup>81</sup> Bonar to Grey, August 28, 1910, FO/371/878(35493/988) and minutes; Bonar to Langley, July 17, 1910 (private), (24592/988). Several British newspapers published in/near China and Australia gave strong warnings as to Japan's expansionist ambitions. See enclosures in Consul-General (Shanghai) to SS, September 7, 1910, M426, R.1, 895.00/509; Consul-General (Sidney) to SS, August 26, 1910, M426, R.1, 895.00/434.

According to Sammons, these preparations demonstrated that Japan was planning on providing modern ways and means of reaching the Jiandao district, and beyond into other parts of eastern Manchuria, from the Korean side. On the continental expansion issue, Sammons was suspicious of Itō's intentions. In his farewell address as resident-general in July 1909, Itō had said that the interests of Japan and Korea were identical, and that his chief aim was to unite the Far East as one family. The consul-general remarked that this was the essential feature of Japan's policy. He was referring, in other words, to the extension of Japan's position in Korea further into "South Manchuria."<sup>82</sup> Sammons added that Japan was not capable of preventing a revolution in China, yet it was capable enough of catalyzing one with its influence. Since the Beijing Agreement in December 1905 (by which Japan took over the concessions previously owned by Russia), Japan's policy was therefore intended to bring China to its "senses," so that it would recognize Japan as its guide, good friend and master. Thus Sammons suggested that the powers should prepare themselves for Japan's expansion and the preservation of China's integrity.<sup>83</sup> Reaching his conclusions based on his service both in Manchuria (1905–1906) and Korea (1907–1909), Sammons's reports showed considerable insight.

As such, what Britain and the United States emphasized was not politics but the preservation of their acquired interests. Yet the details of their interests varied greatly. In the export of cotton to Korea, and the export of agricultural products from Southeast Asian colonies to Japan, the British were in competition with Korean-grown products, mainly rice. Tariffs, therefore, were their primary concern, while extraterritoriality was secondary. The United States, on the other hand, was more interested in mining concessions, and missionary and educational activities. Extraterritoriality was required to guarantee the smooth operation of the mines and to protect real estate obtained by the missionaries. Consequently, the United States focused on such matters as the protection of consular jurisdiction and foreign property.

After the establishment of the protectorate government in 1906, Japan was planning to abolish extraterritoriality when it proceeded with the comprehensive overhaul of the Korean judicial system. The immunity the powers had enjoyed via agreements with the Korean government had to be coordinated within this new legal and policing system. Japan, borrowing from the arguments employed over the

<sup>82</sup> Japanese Expansion into Manchuria via Korea Supported by Force, Sammons to Jay, July 28, 1909, RG84, vol. 87, p. 322; Japan's Far Eastern Policy, Sammons to Jay, July 7, 1909, p. 61.

<sup>83</sup> Chinese Situation, Sammons to SD, August 31, 1909, RG84, vol. 88, p. 340; Kando (Jiandao) Question – Japanese Troops, Tang Shao-I's (Shaoyi's) Visit to America, Sammons to Jay, August 18, 1908, RG84, vol. 69.

previous two decades in its negotiations with the Western powers to abolish extraterritoriality, strongly maintained that it was only natural to abrogate such privileges when a modern system of law and an improved judicial system were introduced in Korea. The protectorate government complained about being forced to come to court as a plaintiff before a British consul/judge, in its case against the overly critical British newspaper publisher Bethell.<sup>84</sup> The powers, on the other hand, realized that the extraterritoriality issue should not be viewed merely in terms of improving the system of law, since they were continually witness to cases of maltreatment of their citizens.<sup>85</sup> Sammons took the position that consular jurisdiction should not be given up until practical evidence demonstrated that American interests would not suffer by doing so. He felt, therefore, that Japan must come up with practical results to increase confidence that foreigners were afforded adequate protection by law or other means, and that it was not yet the right time to discuss the abolition of extraterritoriality.<sup>86</sup> Britain also showed a determination to preserve its extraterritorial privileges throughout the Bethell-related court procedures in 1907–08.

In the midst of all this concern and indecision, Japan put an end to extraterritoriality with the annexation in 1910. With the annexation, Japan argued that the Japanese government had promised the powers the same level of fairness that they enjoyed in the Japanese homeland. In any case, criminal cases involving Westerners were a very rare occurrence, since there were only about 700 Europeans and Americans in the whole peninsula, the majority of them missionaries and teachers, while the rest were principally government officials and merchants. Foreigners, moreover, were to be tried by Japanese judges, rather than Korean ones. Other than that, the *status quo* in foreign settlements was to be preserved for the time being, except in regard to police administration.<sup>87</sup> The British finally accepted the abolition of extraterritoriality as a *fait accompli*, and also succeeded in getting the Japanese to make some trade concessions, in return for coaxing the other powers into accepting Japan's new move.<sup>88</sup> When the American embassy in London asked in late 1910 for a British opin-

<sup>84</sup> Sammons to SD, August 11, 1908; August 15, 1908, RG84, vol. 55.

<sup>85</sup> SD to Sammons, September 5, 1907, RG84, vol. 64; March 26, 1908, RG84, vol. 53. The Department of State gave a fairly comprehensive definition of the American interest as a "policy of emphasizing and preserving intact all our treaty rights and our political privileges and position in Korea."

<sup>86</sup> SD to Sammons, October 21, 1908, RG84, vol. 48; Sammons to SD, August 11, 1908, RG84, vol. 55.

<sup>87</sup> Grey to MacDonald, August 25, 1910, 878 (31895/988); September 23, 1910 (34504/988).

<sup>88</sup> Schulyer to SS, October 24, 1910, M426, R.1, 895.00/443.

ion on the issue, the Foreign Office supported Japan's position, while arguing that both Western countries would not have any opportunity for a joint representation since the Japanese government had already declared the abolition of extraterritoriality.<sup>89</sup>

The United States did not find it easy to follow the British position. Gould, the *chargé d'affaires* in Seoul, was utterly clear in his objection to the abolition of extraterritoriality, stressing that American interests would in no way be helped by the loss of treaty rights, and that there would be no open door in an economic sense if Japanese tariffs should be applied in Korea.<sup>90</sup> In the State Department, Ramsford Miller, who was in charge of the Korean question in the Division of Far Eastern Affairs, drafted a very detailed report. He divided the American interest in Korea into four categories: extraterritorial jurisdiction, customs and tariffs, mining concessions, and educational/missionary enterprises. Miller forecast that since their chief interest lay in the first of these, the powers would require some *quid pro quo* in negotiation with Japan; and that, considering France and Germany's jealousy of their extraterritorial rights, they would bear the brunt of the contest on this point. He also suggested that surrender of extraterritoriality be used as a bargaining point for favorable consideration of American trade, should the tariff schedule be changed. In addition, the last two categories (mining and missionaries) would not be affected by the Japanese annexation.<sup>91</sup> Miller, however, overlooked certain aspects of the situation: first, that missionary and educational activities in Korea, combined with a nationalistic tendency in Korea, caused some serious problems for Japan; second, that France and Germany had less interest in Korea than in the past; and, lastly, that the United States would have to take the initiative this time, since extraterritoriality was pivotal in protecting its own interests.

To the surprise of the United States, Foreign Minister Komura, announcing the annexation to O'Brien, flatly informed the U.S. ambassador that consular jurisdiction would be completely terminated, since it was "wholly incompatible with the orderly administration of Korean affairs."<sup>92</sup> The State Department, regarding Japan's decision as unacceptable, swiftly countered it. It gave an urgent directive to the consulate-general in Seoul to report on the judicial

<sup>89</sup> US Embassy (London) to SS, November 7, 1910, M426, R.1, 895.00/518. When Germany suggested pressuring Japan to extend extraterritoriality in Korea for two years, Britain also refused the idea. [Memorandum by von Kuhlmann, September 20, 1910, 878 (34119/988); Grey to MacDonald, September 23, 1910.]

<sup>90</sup> Korean Political Situation, Gould to O'Brien, August 8, 1910, RG84, vol. 76, p. 383.

<sup>91</sup> SD minute, June 23, 1910, M426, R.1, 1166/474. (895.00/475 iterates the same)

<sup>92</sup> O'Brien to SS, August 24, 1910, M426, R.1, 1166/479.

situation in Korea, in regard to protecting foreign property. It then started to address the matter, directly but cautiously. Admitting the value of reform, O'Brien sought clarification from Tokyo regarding provisions for administering justice for American citizens, recognition of titles to property held by Americans, the disposition of foreign settlements, the treatment of American missionary enterprises, and "other general measures."<sup>93</sup> At the same time, the Department asked the German ambassador in Washington for any information Berlin had on this subject. For fear of aggravating the situation, however, it did not solicit the active cooperation of their two ambassadors.<sup>94</sup>

American officials in Seoul and Tokyo deemed the issue concluded. O'Brien, in compliance with the directive from Washington, sent two cables to Consul-General Scidmore to maintain consular jurisdiction for the cases in process, but later asked for additional instruction from Washington.<sup>95</sup> In Seoul, Scidmore defended Japan's stance. According to him, "this body of Japanese law contained many excellent features, and if properly applied, would in nearly every instance, result in satisfaction and justice."<sup>96</sup> After receiving further instruction from Washington, however, O'Brien approached the issue from various angles. He dispatched Montgomery Schuyler, a secretary at the American embassy in Tokyo, to scrutinize the situation.<sup>97</sup> Afterwards, O'Brien approached the British ambassador in Tokyo for support.

According to a British report, the American ambassador seemed very disappointed that the British government had not protested against the annexation, and especially against the abolition of extraterritoriality. Yet Ambassador MacDonald responded in a lukewarm manner. He merely remarked that relations between Japan and America were not very cordial at that moment, but that the Japanese government was not at all likely to raise difficulties.<sup>98</sup> The American description of this issue was more candid. According to O'Brien, MacDonald informed him that the British government had been notified in advance of Japan's annexation plan, and was in negotiations to settle all matters concerning it. Since everything was still open at that stage, the United States would be guaranteed

<sup>93</sup> SS to O'Brien, September 14, 1910, M426, R.1, 895.00/487; September 18, 1910, RG84, vol. 77, p. 395

<sup>94</sup> Wilson to Count Wedel, September 15, 1910, M426, R.1, 895.00/509a.

<sup>95</sup> SD to Scidmore, August 31, 1910, M426, R.1, 895.00/483; O'Brien to Scidmore, August 24, 1910, RG84, vol. 77, p. 115; August 30, 1910, M426, R.1, 895.00/502; O'Brien to SS, September 1, 1910, M426, R.1, (895.00/486).

<sup>96</sup> Scidmore to SD, September 1, 1910, M426, R.1, 895.00/485.

<sup>97</sup> O'Brien to SS, October 14, 1910, M426, R.1, 895.00/513.

<sup>98</sup> MacDonald to Grey, October 4, 1910, 878 (38212/988).

similar treatment, depending on the outcome of the Anglo-Japanese negotiation.<sup>99</sup> MacDonald's description, however, was not wholly accurate. Britain, in fact, pacified by Japan's compensatory measures, had already acquiesced on the issue of extraterritoriality by that time.

Schuyler, who visited Seoul at O'Brien's behest, took the view that there were both positive and negative aspects to Japan's governance, and that no real harm would come from the end of extraterritoriality. High officials of the Government-General in Seoul were trying to avoid offending foreign governments, and were being extremely careful in managing the judicial system in the hope that extraterritoriality would be abolished, and that foreign residents would place trust in Japanese judicial procedure. Many foreigners in Korea, however, still felt that ending extraterritoriality was unfortunate, and that the annexation was premature. Above all, many feared that a provision, declaring that foreign residents in Korea would enjoy the same rights and immunities as in Japan proper "so far as conditions permit," was subject to intentional misuse. Since Japanese law would be applied to all foreign residents, there was an undoubted loophole for the Japanese to do practically whatever they desired in individual cases.<sup>100</sup> Schuyler's report was a mixture of acknowledgment of, and resignation to, such realities. In addition to this report, the American embassy in Tokyo also received the opinion of Sammons, submitted at the request of O'Brien. The former American consul-general in Seoul, pointing out that foreign lawyers resident in Japan had frequently experienced the short end of justice, defeated by endless delays, recommended that the United States should have the authority to choose the place where trials and hearings involving American citizens would be held, with an American consul present.<sup>101</sup> The final compromise reached by the United States included these proposals by Sammons.

Having resolved the extraterritoriality issue with Britain, Japan came up with a response that it hoped would pacify the United States. In a reply to O'Brien, Komura reiterated his country's basic stance. He also made it clear that, contrary to the fears of some Americans, the phrase "so far as conditions permit" did not refer to specific guaranteed rights and immunities, but was only the result of "abundant caution" in the face of unpredictable future events.<sup>102</sup> As far as the United States was concerned, Komura's response contained nothing new, but was seen as disappointing and inadequate. As a matter

<sup>99</sup> O'Brien to SS, October 14, 1910, RG84, vol. 78, p. 282.

<sup>100</sup> Schuyler to O'Brien, October 12, 1910, RG84, vol. 78, p. 282.

<sup>101</sup> O'Brien to SS, October 7, 1910, F426, R. 1, 895.00/517.

<sup>102</sup> Komura to O'Brien, October 6, 1910, RG84, vol. 78, p. 93.

of fact, given that the privileges foreigners enjoyed in Japan were so much less liberal than those in the old Korea, extensive and irksome restrictions of the sort implied in Komura's response signaled that a great many of these privileges would not be allowed from then on.<sup>103</sup>

During this period, two novel factors emerged in U.S.-Japanese relations in Korea. First, the United States, which had hitherto approached the issue mainly in terms of criminal courts, realized the importance of the land issue. Issues of land ownership and titles had continually surfaced since the Japanese protectorate launched its land survey project in 1906. Yet the American government optimistically predicted that American land-related interests would be protected. Missionaries possessed considerable amounts of land for evangelical or educational purposes. If such rights could no longer be protected, it would be "most destructive to American interests in Chōsen."<sup>104</sup> Second, when an American citizen by the name of Kavanaugh was arrested in Pyongyang in early October, the problem of criminal jurisdiction gained new and immediate importance.<sup>105</sup> *Chargé d'Affaires* Schuyler requested an immediate decision by the Department of State on whether the consul-general in Seoul should exercise its consular jurisdiction. Trying to avoid a dispute, the Japanese government promptly ordered a change of venue so that any criminal cases should take place in a location advantageous to the defendant. In other words, it permitted the trials of all American citizens to take place in Seoul, albeit not under consular jurisdiction, no matter where the alleged offense might have been committed.<sup>106</sup> The State Department, apparently satisfied by Japan's promise that real property owned by U.S. citizens would be respected, and that recorded titles on file in the office of the consulate-general at Seoul would be taken as establishing *prima facie* evidence of the titles, decided to close the issue.<sup>107</sup>

A remaining issue was trade. Britain, accepting of Japan's stance on extraterritoriality, now determined to preserve its economic interests. A "Memorandum respecting British Trade Rights in Corea in the Event of Its Annexation by Japan," drafted in early July, comprehensively reviewed this issue. The Foreign Office referred to two previous cases, in 1890 and 1896, when Germany acquired Zanzibar, and France annexed Madagascar, respectively. It acknowledged that

<sup>103</sup> Schuyler to SS, October 24, 1910, M426, R.1, 895.00/512.

<sup>104</sup> Land Ownership, Schuyler to SS, November 17, 1910, RG84, vol. 78, p. 396.

<sup>105</sup> SS to US Embassy (London), November 4, 1910, M426, R.1, 895.00/452; Schuyler to SS, November 20, 1910, M426, R.1, 895.00/524.

<sup>106</sup> Schuyler to SS, November 29, 1910, M426, R.1, 895.00/525.

<sup>107</sup> SS minute on Wilson to Clark, March 28, 1911, M426, R.2, 895.00/539; Schuyler to SS, December 27, 1910, *FRUS*, 1911, p. 330.

treaties expire when one of the contracting parties loses its existence as an independent state. As a result, British trade with, and on, the islands had decreased sharply. Taking as its precedent the proceedings that had followed the establishment of the protectorate government in Korea in 1906, the British were urged to “endeavor to make some reservations in negotiating the Japanese commercial treaty,” as their trade seemed bound to suffer heavily after the annexation in every way – tariffs, coasting trade, trademarks, monopolies, tonnage due.<sup>108</sup> Consul-General Bonar also warned repeatedly that unless guarantees for special tariffs could be secured for several years, British trade, under annexation, would collapse entirely.<sup>109</sup>

Although it did not deal with the consequences of annexation, an annual report from the United States complemented the aforementioned British one, evaluating Korea’s significance (or lack of it) as a trade partner. Korea, it concluded, was a small, backward country whose importance to the United States was slight except in its commercial potential. Its importance lay in possibilities rather than in current activities. Yet as Japan aggressively implemented new railway construction and expanded experimental industries, the purchasing power of the inhabitants would increase along with economic development. The exporting of American goods needed for industrial facilities, including railway materials and petroleum, would also increase accordingly. Interestingly, this report viewed Korea as experiencing a sort of social revolution under the initiative of Japan, to the effect that the former ‘coolie’ or peasant had been enabled to keep what he earned and to spend or save as he pleased. The United States judged that Japan’s reform policies would augment the export of American products.<sup>110</sup>

On July 14, 1910, Foreign Secretary Grey met Ambassador Katō Takaaki (Kōmei) in London to convey his government’s stance. The British did not wish to oppose in any way the consolidation and strengthening of the Japanese position in Korea, but Grey nevertheless mentioned that on economic grounds the application of the Japanese tariff to Korea would raise considerable feeling in his country. He further cited the annexation of Madagascar by France. When France established a protectorate on that island, the French government had informed the British that this would not change the treaties between Madagascar and other states. Subsequently, however, the French government had declared the island to be a colony and applied the French tariff. Japan’s actions were very similar to those of France. In such

<sup>108</sup> Aforementioned memorandum, 877 (24141/988).

<sup>109</sup> Bonar to Langley, July 17, 1910 (private), FO/371/877 (24592/988); Bonar to Grey, June 20, 1910, FO/371/877 (27566/988).

<sup>110</sup> Annual Report on Commerce and Industries, July 22, 1910, RG84, vol. 9.



circumstances, Grey demanded that Japan “should maintain for a long term of years the present Korean tariffs as guaranteed by treaties.”<sup>111</sup> To this, Japan announced that the present tariffs between Korea and other countries would remain in force for a considerable period of time; that the coasting trade between Korean ports, as well as between Korean and Japanese ports, should continue; that the government tobacco monopoly should be delayed; and that all existing open ports, with the exception of Masanp’o, would be left open, while a new port should open at Shinūju, at the mouth of the Yalu, on the Chinese border.<sup>112</sup> Although Japan guaranteed that foreign settlements would remain unimpaired for the time being, they were absorbed from April 1914, causing no serious problems. Thus all the issues caused by the annexation, as far as the interests of the powers were concerned, were resolved.

#### CONCLUSION: THE ANNEXATION AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

For the Japanese, the annexation of Korea was, as Katsura, the then prime minister, commented, a long-cherished dream of Japan since “the beginning of its history,” and “a resolution of an issue pending since the Meiji restoration.”<sup>113</sup> However, as the German consul-general commented, it was in the nature of a *Gewaltakt* or *acte de force*.<sup>114</sup> Instead of approaching the Koreans’ nationalistic resistance in a more refined, perhaps superficial, manner, the new Japanese Government-General resorted to ruthless suppression. John E. Merrill remarked that the position of the powers, especially of the United States, was not so much “approval” as “compliance with reality.”<sup>115</sup> George Curzon, an expert in East Asian affairs and viceroy of India (1899–1905), blamed Britain for being too irresolute in its response and in safeguarding British interests.<sup>116</sup> The annexation of Korea, however, was not really an example of give-and-take games, but rather proof that by 1910 Japan was capable of imposing its will on the powers in the peninsula.

The policies of the powers toward the annexation of Korea revealed the true nature of the Korean question in international politics. First, the annexation was of a piece with realignments in the

<sup>111</sup> Grey to MacDonald, July 14, 1910, 877 (26243/988).

<sup>112</sup> MacDonald to Grey, July 21, 1910, 877 (26451/988); Reply of the Japanese Government to the Communication made to Them by the British Government Respecting the Annexation of Corea by Japan, August 15, 1910, 878 (29791/988).

<sup>113</sup> Tokutomi (ed.), vol. 2, p. 451.

<sup>114</sup> Bonar to Grey, July 20, 1910, 878 (30280/988).

<sup>115</sup> Merrill, p. 342.

<sup>116</sup> *The Times*, March 28, 1911. For Parliamentary debates on the issue, see files in 1136 (20298; 22034; 30943; 45340/138).

powers' relations, especially in terms of the coordination of interests between Japan and Russia in Manchuria. In the early stages of World War II, the United States considered Korea an "appendix to Manchuria," judging that the resolution of issues in the latter would naturally settle issues in the former. The status of Korea in international politics, and the powers' approaches toward it during this period, would turn out to be very similar even thirty-five years later. Second, the annexation revealed, in a rather "empathetic" way, the "presence" of Russia in the Korean question. Although Russia could only play a limited role in East Asia after its defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, Japan recognized that compromise with that power was crucial for resolving the Korean question. Third, the significance of the peninsula was relatively limited for Britain and the United States, and definitely secondary to their political and strategic relations with Japan. As far as the United States and Britain were concerned, Japan, with its rule over Korea, was merely a substitute for one or another of the former dominant powers (China and, briefly, Russia) in the peninsula, and the balance of power was perceived as being protected. Contrary to such expectations, the equilibrium among the powers was eventually disturbed, and the overarching privileges that they had expected to enjoy would ultimately no longer be guaranteed. A major corollary to this policy orientation is that, unless the power structure at the global or, at the very least, at the Pacific-Asian regional level, were violently shaken up, these powers' policies toward Korea would not fundamentally change throughout the colonial period.

Another striking feature in the annexation process was Anglo-Japanese cooperation. Despite the deterioration of the relationship after 1905, Britain continued to support Japan on Korea-related matters. It solved most of the resulting issues that it faced through bilateral negotiations, refusing to take part in any sort of concerted effort with other powers. In this way, Britain not only secured as many of its interests as possible but played a key role when Japan felt it needed to rebuff protests or representations from the United States, Russia or Germany. In this sense, the British attitude in 1910 was that of a great imperial power. Commenting on Korean international relations from the opening of the country in the 1870s to the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95, E.V.G. Kiernan remarked that "Anglo-Chinese Korean policy" initiated the relations of the period, and did so very successfully.<sup>117</sup> Later, the annexation showcased the fact that Britain had succeeded in maximizing its interests through an alliance with the country that was then the dominant power in Korea.

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<sup>117</sup> Kiernan, E. V. G., *British Diplomacy in China 1880–1885* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), p. 85.

Meanwhile, despite its greater interests, the United States maintained a low profile. While trying to work out how best to protect its privileges, it kept on compromising with “inexhaustible patience,” and acquiesced to Japan’s demands. Despite all this cooperation, however, the United States was completely shut out from negotiations on the abolition of extraterritoriality in the final stage of the annexation. This had, at the very least, a two-fold significance. First, with competition over hegemony in the Pacific, and with Japan’s political and commercial advances into China, tension and conflicts would endure in future American-Japanese relationships until the war in the Pacific in 1941. The United States had no reason to incur Japan’s displeasure by bringing up relatively insignificant issues when their bilateral relationship was already suffering. In this regard, the Korean nationalists of the 1940s had a point when they argued that Korea was sacrificed for the sake of the Japan-US mutual relationship.

If the “Korean question” had become better established in Anglo- and U.S.-Japanese relations, Korea could have become, at best, a pawn for bargaining; or, at worst, a scapegoat in the relationships between the powers. During his second visit to Japan in September and October 1907, Secretary of War Taft used the peninsula to ease tensions with Japan. When the public constantly discussed potential war over issues including immigration and naval rivalry, Taft had unexpectedly lauded Japan’s Korea policy. A closer examination of his speech, however, shows that to ease tension between the two countries, the United States was “leading” Japan’s expansion toward the Korean peninsula. The following is an excerpt from Taft’s speech in Tokyo:

What has Japan to gain by it [i.e., war]? .... With the marvelous industry, intelligence and courage of her people there is nothing in trade, commerce and popular contentment and enlightenment to which she may not attain. Why should she wish a war that would stop all this? She has undertaken with a legitimate interest in a close neighbor [Korea] to reform and rejuvenate an ancient kingdom that has been governed or misgoverned by a fifteenth century method.... We are living in an age when the intervention of a stronger nation in the affairs of a people unable to maintain a government of law and order, to assist the latter to better government becomes a national duty, and works for the progress of the world. Why Japan wish a war that must stop or seriously delay the execution of her plans of reform in Korea?<sup>118</sup>

The five years after the Protectorate Treaty in 1905 were not a mere period of transition to prepare for the annexation. A great

<sup>118</sup> Taft to Roosevelt, supplement to October 5, 1907, M862, R.191 (1797/380–383).

many of the issues raised during these years have remained very significant for the entire subsequent history of Korean and Korea-related international relations. They can also provide keys to a clearer understanding of the problems faced by the Korean people during World War II.

## Consolidation and Expansion: The 1910s



### ISSUES

IN 1910, KOREA was annexed to Japan, downgraded to a mere frontier province in the Japanese empire. For the time being, regional competition and confrontation over the Korean peninsula were at an end. Korea was forgotten, disregarded as a thing of the past in East Asian international politics. Yet the powers' interest in the peninsula did not vanish completely. For the maritime power of Japan, the annexation provided a foothold for penetration into the continent. The international relations of the East Asian region would now progress toward instability rather than stability, unless the powers of the continent and the West were capable of counterbalancing Japan. Japan, indeed, pursued political and economic expansion into Manchuria and China proper, chiefly from its secure footing in the Korean peninsula. During World War I, this Japanese activist policy seemed to be rather successful vis-à-vis China and Russia, both in the throes of upheavals. Paradoxically, this would heighten Korea's geopolitical value in East Asian politics.

In terms of the balance of power, the East Asian regional order was a subsystem that reflected, and was therefore subordinate to, the balance of power in Europe. The extent of the European powers' interests in the region was hardly uniform, however, and the European system of balance was not entirely projected onto it. The existence of regional powers, such as Japan and China, also contributed to a considerable degree of autonomy in the region. World War I clearly demonstrated this characteristic of the East Asian order. As the European powers neglected East Asia because of the war, a power vacuum created by their withdrawal seemed to allow for Japan to make the most of "an opportunity that only

occurs once in a thousand years.”<sup>1</sup> Despite China’s declaration of neutrality, Japan proclaimed war against Germany, and quickly seized Qingdao (Tsingtao), the German naval base in Shandong. During this period, Japan advanced economically into the Yangtze valley, China’s economic hub, which had traditionally been considered a British sphere of influence. This move signaled a deepening conflict in Anglo-Japanese relations. When the new Republic of China was shattered by military warlords, giving rise in 1915 to separate southern and northern governments, Japan seized the opportunity and made its so-called “Twenty-One Demands.” The situation indicated that the United States was now the only power that could prevent Japan’s advances in East Asia. Unlike the powers of the old continent, which were devoting all their energies to the European theater, the United States had enough capacity to intervene in East Asian affairs. Consequently, the American-Japanese relationship was one of the key factors in the East Asian scene.<sup>2</sup>

The structure and details of the conflicts between Japan and the other powers in East Asia, and their impact on Korea, should be understood in this context. Korea, however, was not the cause of the conflicts; rather, the powers related the causes of regional conflicts to Korea, and their view of Korea was affected accordingly. Feelings of distrust between Japan and the two Anglophone powers, the United States and Britain, were in the air, and spread within the societies of each nation. Mutual emotional responses were provoked by the failure to set up negotiations, and then to resolve differences within them, as an incapacitated Britain came to harbor commercial jealousy toward an expansionist Japan, and America attempted to contain Japan. The mutual distrust of the powers was further reflected when they discussed the Korean question.

Some “international issues” included Japan’s taking of crucial strategic measures in Korea, related to expansion further into the continent, to which the powers reacted sensitively; and Japan’s continued seizing or restricting of the powers’ economic interests in Korea. These factors formed the backdrop to the powers’ reactions to Korea during the 1910s. In retrospect, the perceptions being created among the powers during this period had not much changed by 1945, at the time of Korea’s liberation.

<sup>1</sup> Chi, Madeleine, *China Diplomacy 1914–1918* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> For the international situation before and after 1910, especially American-Japanese relations, see Iriye, Akira, *Across the Pacific – an Inner History of American-East Asian Relations* (New York: Harbinger Book, 1967), chapter 5; Griswold, A. Whitney, *The Far Eastern Policy of the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), chapter 6; Nish, Ian H., *Alliance in Decline – a Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations 1908–23* (London: Athlone, 1972).

## THE EAST ASIAN SITUATION AND KOREA

According to a British diplomat's report on East Asian regional politics in the 1910s, the growing discord between Japan and the Anglophone powers since the time of the Russo-Japanese War was largely the result of the latter's perception that Japan was "on the make,"<sup>3</sup> and that the Far Eastern problem after the Korean annexation now chiefly concerned "Japan's position in China."<sup>4</sup> However, the American-Japanese and Anglo-Japanese conflicts had different backgrounds. The cooperative relationship based on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was turning sour primarily because of commercial rivalry, while the American-Japanese relationship suffered from issues of a strategic nature.

The issue of "spheres of interest" represents one starting point for discussion. This concept joined the lexicon of international relations in East Asia during the late nineteenth century. Especially after U.S. Secretary of State John Hay declared the "open door" principle in 1899 and 1900, it was a cause of conflict and confusion, and was arbitrarily interpreted and applied by each country.<sup>5</sup> Before the Russo-Japanese War, the United States and Britain had been opposed to Russia's consolidating a sphere of interest in Manchuria, and Japan was all for joining the two Anglophone powers to support the open door principle. Upon securing its interests in southern Manchuria through victory in war, however, Japan enraged the Western powers by quietly working on a gradual encroachment on their interests, even while outwardly endorsing the open door in both Manchuria and Korea. Japan insisted that the other powers respect its largely exclusive interests in Korea and South Manchuria, while arguing that the British sphere of interest near the Yangzi should remain "open," because such a vast and hard-to-define region as the Yangzi basin should not be either limited or monopolized by special privileges in commerce and trade.<sup>6</sup> As a consequence, by 1913 the United States and Britain judged that the open door policy in China was almost entirely a failure. According to a British report, "Japan was guilty of insidious encroachments of the accepted policy."<sup>7</sup> President Woodrow Wilson, who was inaugurated early in the same year, appointed Paul S. Reinsch, a strong advocate of

<sup>3</sup> Lowe, Peter, *Great Britain and Japan 1911-15, A Study of British Far Eastern Policy* (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Jordan to Balfour, December 23, 1918, *DBFP*, first series, vol. 6, p. 566.

<sup>5</sup> For the open door principle of Hay and the powers' interpretations of it, see Langer, William L., *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), pp. 686-688.

<sup>6</sup> Marquis Itō and the Commercial Partition in the Far East, Sammons to SD, July 2, 1907, RG84, vol. 66, p. 47. See also *Illegal Taxation of Foreign Products in Manchurian Provinces, FRUS, 1911*, pp. 72-82.

<sup>7</sup> Nish, Ian H., *Alliance in Decline - a Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations 1908-23* (London: Athlone, 1972), p. 104.

the open door and expert in East Asian affairs, as minister to China in a vain effort to maintain the policy.<sup>8</sup>

In Japanese society, too, both anti-American and anti-British sentiments were rising steadily. This was because the third Anglo-Japanese Alliance had allowed Britain to shirk its responsibilities in the event of war between Japan and America Alliance, and because the two powers were perceived as the only obstacle to Japan's continental expansion. Japan had concluded that the original Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 was beneficial, that the second (1905) by no means disadvantageous, but that the third (1911) was decidedly disadvantageous, and likely to prove more so after the war, since the opportunity for expansion at the expense of declining European powers was hampered by it.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, British "navalism" and "commercialism" had menaced the peace of the world ten times as much as German militarism ever had.<sup>10</sup> The antagonism between Japan and the United States was more serious since it was in essence "strategic" as well as emotional. Although the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had proved burdensome for Japan, it was still tolerable since this European ally was so fully occupied with the war in Europe. The United States, on the other hand, was considered by the Japanese navy to be "the prime enemy contemplated."<sup>11</sup>

A further notable aspect of East Asian regional politics in this period was Russo-Japanese relations. Japan was aware that Russia would, under any circumstances, play some role in East Asia. However, with World War I and a domestic revolution to attend to, Russia could not afford to intervene in regional affairs and had to tolerate Japan's advance into Manchuria. The two countries mutually acknowledged their special interests in July 1916, by agreeing to confer on "measures to be taken ... for the safeguarding and defense of these rights and interests." It was, in fact, a sequel to a previous agreement of 1910 that had guaranteed the annexation of Korea in that year. Americans saw it as a diplomatic victory for Japan, and something which might be taken as an unconditional surrender of Russia's rights in the face of an "ever-increasing Japanese lust for expansion."<sup>12</sup> As for Korea, the agreement showed that one of the powers with a potential capacity to intervene there had, as it were, drifted further away.

International relations in East Asia during this period developed, therefore, around Japan's penetration into China, and Anglo-American

<sup>8</sup> Pugach, Noel, "Making the Open Door: Paul S. Reinsch in China, 1913–1919," *Pacific Historical Review*, 38–2 (May 1969), pp. 157–158.

<sup>9</sup> Greene to Grey, January 22, 1916, 2690 (29952/26193) and its enclosures.

<sup>10</sup> Greene to Balfour, September 19, 1918, 3234 (178860/7896) and other supplements.

<sup>11</sup> Nish (1972), p. 87. There were other issues such as racial disputes between the two countries.

<sup>12</sup> Heintzleman to SS, July 11, 1916, *FRUS*, 1916, pp. 432–435, 437–442.



resistance to it. Notably, these two powers were increasingly inclined to link regional conflict in East Asia to Korea, by approaching Japanese expansionism from the vantage point of what was termed “the experiences in Korea.” The British Ambassador to Tokyo, Claude MacDonald, concluded in an annual report of 1910 that the action of Japan in annexing Korea, after it had repeatedly given a solemn assurance that it would “definitely guarantee the independence” of that country, would no doubt be borne in mind by Russia and other countries when they deliberated over Japanese assurances on Manchuria and other matters.<sup>13</sup> John Jordan, a strong advocate of Japan’s activities in Korea before 1905, started to criticize Japan’s penetration into China from 1911, immediately after the annexation, in view of his “experiences in Korea.” In his view, the shadow of Korea was spreading over Manchuria, and there was certainly a striking resemblance in the methods employed.<sup>14</sup>

After the Twenty-One Demands, the subject of “experiences in Korea” was further emphasized. The Demands not only sought economic privileges in Manchuria, Mongolia and China proper, but also a certain amount of political intervention in Chinese affairs. Granting of the demands, in the view of the American minister in Beijing, would be the end of an independent China, and would place it in “a position of vassalage” through loss of control over important parts of the Chinese administration, and over Chinese industrial and natural resources, actual and prospective.<sup>15</sup> “A position of vassalage” risked making China “a second Korea,” and Japan seemed to be replaying its earlier activities in both Korea and Manchuria in both its policy and its methods.<sup>16</sup> Jordan, who had observed Japan’s methods in Korea and Manchuria, commented that a railway running from a principal port in China to the capital of a province owned, policed and controlled by Japanese was not an economic concession, but a political instrument of territorial expansion. This old, familiar device would deceive neither foreigners nor Chinese who had any knowledge of Japanese methods in Korea and Manchuria.<sup>17</sup>

In the same vein, the United States, recollecting that Japan had earlier secured economic interests by “inching along diplomacy” in Korea, before turning them into interests of a political nature, feared

<sup>13</sup> Japan, Annual Report, 1910, 1142 (9892/9892).

<sup>14</sup> Lowe, p. 25.

<sup>15</sup> Reinsch to SS, January 24, 1915, *FRUS, 1915*, pp. 80, 85–86.

<sup>16</sup> Chi, p. 59. See also Jordan’s report after Japan’s occupation of Qingdao, Jordan to Grey, November 16, 1914, 2018 (83412/35445).

<sup>17</sup> Jordan to Curzon, September 5, 1919, *DBFP*, first series, vol. 6, p. 713; August 4, 1919, p. 657. Also see Chi, pp. 25–26.

that the same sort of diplomacy with respect to China could produce unpredictable results.<sup>18</sup> Japan extended the business of the Oriental Development Company, which it had used to fortify and enlarge Japanese interests before the annexation of Korea, as far as Shandong and other parts of northern China.<sup>19</sup> While doing this, it promoted the peaceful penetration of Koreans into Manchuria in the same way that it had promoted the emigration of Japanese to Hawaii.<sup>20</sup> When Governor-General Terauchi Masatake pushed through the reform and integration of the Japanese administrations in both Korea and Manchuria, i.e., the Liaodong Leased Territory and the South Manchurian Railway zones, the United States reserved comment as to whether the plan was based solely on an imperialistic concept or was also dictated by the law of necessity. Yet Americans admitted that Korea furnished a precedent for Japanese actions in southern Manchuria, and paid close attention to demands in the Japanese media for the “annexation” of the Liaodong region, following this precedent.<sup>21</sup>

This change of attitude by the powers signified that they were beginning to review the basic framework of Japan’s continental policy more critically. The powers, while criticizing Japan’s “continental policy,” still would not wholly object to it so long as Japanese actions were pursued in accordance with an accepted code, since, owing to the poverty of Japan’s domestic natural resources, it seemed that the country’s economic needs could only be fulfilled by the expansion of its interests in the productive areas of China. Indeed, such expansion was natural and legitimate.<sup>22</sup> This attitude, however, began to change substantially by the late 1910s, and many were to express regrets over the Korean annexation.

#### KOREA AND MANCHURIA

Japan’s first two governors-general in Korea were Terauchi Masatake (October 1910–October 1916) and Hasegawa Yoshimichi (October

<sup>18</sup> MacNair, H. F., and Lach, D. F., *Modern Far Eastern International Relations* (New York: D. van Nostrand Co., 1955), p. 151.

<sup>19</sup> Oriental Colonization Company Extension to Shantung, Consul (Qingdao) to SS, July 18, 1919, M341, R. 28 (793. 94/989).

<sup>20</sup> Protection of Korean Residents in Manchuria: Japanese Consular Conference in Seoul, Miller to SS, November 1923, M329, R. 182 (893. 5595/10).

<sup>21</sup> Japanese Continental Policy, Heintzleman to SS, August 2, 1916.

<sup>22</sup> Jordan to Balfour, February 24, 1919, *DBFP*, first series, vol. 6, p. 566. In another report, Japan’s policy was judged to be logical for its national security vis-à-vis Russia. (Alston to Curzon, July 18, 1919, p. 620.) On the other hand, Ambassador Greene disputed this claim: “Over-population as a compelling force has been exaggerated. The Hokkaido is not yet fully colonized.” [Greene to Grey, September 26, 1916, 2693 (222589/83294).]

1916–August 1919), both from the mainstream “Chōshū faction” of the Japanese military. This was a clear sign of how the military continued to control and govern the peninsula. Furthermore, it meant, as the *Asahi Shimbun* commented at the time of Hasegawa’s inauguration, that ruling Korea was permanently related to continental problems, and that the powers were likely to suspect Japan of “sinister designs upon the adjoining territory.”<sup>23</sup> According to a recent study, throughout his tenure of office in Korea, Terauchi was at the center of all policy debates on China within Japanese government circles, and facilitated the roles played outside Korea by the Japanese “Chōsen Army” from the time of the Chinese Revolution (1911), through the Qingdao campaign (1914), to the period of the Twenty-One Demands (1915).<sup>24</sup>

After the annexation, Japan implemented several important measures in the peninsula to facilitate its strategic plans for continental expansion. The first was to raise two new army divisions for Korea. After successfully completing the annexation and the revision of the third Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1911, the Katsura cabinet resigned and a new cabinet, led by Saionji Kimmochi, came to power in 1912. This new cabinet released a plan to normalize Japan’s political and social institutions so that they conformed to the standards of a peacetime system. The military, however, demanded the investment of any surplus budget in building up the army and the navy. Yamagata Aritomo, the most influential *genrō* (senior statesman) after the assassination of Itō, supported the army’s attempt to add two more divisions that would be assigned on a permanent and independent footing to Korea, as did Terauchi. The Japanese army, which was then made up of 19 divisions (excluding Formosa), one and a half of which were on service in Korea, and another one of which was stationed in southern Manchuria, would thereby increase to 21 divisions.<sup>25</sup>

The plan was especially significant in terms of Japan’s continental policy. First of all, the annexation proceeded smoothly in Korea without much harm to public peace, since the Righteous Army movement had started to wither away as early as 1908. The powers believed, therefore, that the Japanese military were insisting on this augmentation plan against strong opposition from the public

<sup>23</sup> Wheeler to SS, October 21, 1916, M426, R. 3, 895. 001/2. On the careers of governors-general of Korea during the colonial period, see Yi, Kwangsik (comp.), *Chosŏn ch’ongtok sib’in* (Ten Governors-General of Korea) (Seoul: Karam, 1996).

<sup>24</sup> Matsuda, Toshihiko, “Ilbon yukgun ūi Chungguk ch’imyak chŏngch’ak kwa Chosŏn 1910–1915” (Korea and the Japanese Army’s Policy of Aggression in China 1910–1915), paper presented at the Korea Culture Institute, Seoul National University, June 5, 2003.

<sup>25</sup> Rumbold to Grey, November 3, 1912, 1390 (55161/37637).

“for obvious strategic reasons.”<sup>26</sup> “Strategic issues” here specifically implied relations with Russia, as China could not pose a threat to its neighbors. The Japanese army, having always considered imperial Russia a potential enemy, was apprehensive about the likelihood of a war of revenge, and Russia also succeeded in turning Mongolia into a Russian protectorate in 1912.<sup>27</sup> Although Japan had renewed its alliance with Britain, the Japanese military did not really believe that the safety of their country or the security of the Korean peninsula could be guaranteed through this alliance, as Britain already coordinated its interests with Russia in northern India (Afghanistan).<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the army plan could not be implemented on an amicable footing since it was made unilaterally by the military, with total disregard for the sentiments of the people. The retrenchment carried out by the Saionji cabinet had firm support not only from the media but also from the public in general, including businessmen and intellectuals. Despite strident public complaint, the military defied the political parties and public opinion by carrying out the plan, and in 1916 the 19th division was permanently stationed at Nanam near the Russian border, while in 1919 the 20th division was stationed at Yongsan near Seoul, with one brigade stationed at Pyongyang.<sup>29</sup> Yet as the Japanese military later pointed out, political problems, such as the powers’ doubts over Japan’s true intentions, were also inherent to this expansion.<sup>30</sup>

Japan’s second continental policy measure involved two construction projects: a railway bridge over the Yalu to connect the Seoul–Shinūiju line to Manchuria, and a railway from Andong (now Dandong), on the opposite side of the river from Shinūiju, to Mukden (Fengtian, now Shenyang), the heart of Manchuria, to complete a rail connection between the South Manchurian Railway and Beijing. Japan had discussed the Yalu railway bridge project since 1907, embarked on its construction in 1909 and, with scant regard to the cost, completed it in the short span of two years. The railway bridge opened in late 1911, and the new Andong–Mukden line was opened

<sup>26</sup> Sommerville to MacDonald, September 11, 1911, 1140 (42466/2370).

<sup>27</sup> See the Russian views, “Russia and Chinese Revolution,” *Krasny Archiv in The Chinese Social and Political Science Review*, vol. 16–1, pp. 25; *Ibid.*, vol. 16–2, pp. 286–287. See also Dallin, David, J., *The Rise of Russia in Asia* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1950), pp. 103–104, 108.

<sup>28</sup> Rumbold to Grey, November 3, 1912, 1390 (55161/37637).

<sup>29</sup> Kennedy, Malcolm D., *Some Aspects of Japan and Her Defence Forces* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1928), pp. 181–182. As shown during the March First Movement, however, the Japanese troops tended to be dispersed to various regions to deal with bandits [and Korean nationalists] rather than necessarily concentrated in areas of “strategic importance.”

<sup>30</sup> Korea, Military Report by Captain Bennett, October 20, 1920, 6680 (197/197/23).

immediately afterward. Railways had been fulcrums for “expansion” in the age of imperialism, and constantly figured as a vital diplomatic issue among the great powers in areas including Asia Minor, Persia, Mesopotamia, India, China, and even Korea. From this perspective, the Andong-Mukden line and the South Manchurian Railway were considered as a preliminary condition for Japanese political inroads in Manchuria. The powers therefore ordered their diplomats in Seoul, Tokyo and Beijing, as well as those in Port Arthur (Dalian), Mukden and Andong, to monitor the construction project and its likely impact, feeling anxious lest the project could infringe upon their interests more directly than the military buildup plan.<sup>31</sup>

Bonar viewed the Andong-Mukden line as a prolongation of the Korean railways, even though it was being made by the Japanese as an integral part of the South Manchurian Railway system. Japan claimed, furthermore, that without the railway, the interests of Japan in the annexed territory of Korea could not be properly safeguarded. It is true that the Andong-Mukden line was a milestone that was necessary to preserve Japan’s status in Korea, and to ensure that Japan maintained permanent control over the vicinity of the South Manchurian Railway. U.S. and British officials believed that, with this rail link, Japan achieved one notable objective; namely, the placing of the Manchurian capital, Mukden, within 80 hours by rail from Tokyo, on lines controlled entirely by the Japanese government. It was, in essence, an attempt to penetrate into the heart of Manchuria.<sup>32</sup>

The United States, however, beyond the far-reaching importance of the bridge for political and strategic reasons, was intent on seeing it in terms of practical economic penetration, as well as in the light of its own short-term interests. The construction project was evaluated as “sound,” on the grounds that the Yalu River was frozen each year from November–April, and that the Andong-Mukden line would reduce transport time to Dalian while facilitating development in all these areas. Yet beyond such assessments, the Americans were

<sup>31</sup> Britain tasked Ambassador Claude MacDonald in Tokyo, Consul-General Henry Bonar in Seoul and officials of the consulate in Dalian with this work; the United States ordered Consul Carleton Baker in Andong to do the same. For Japan’s construction of Manchurian railways, see Adu, Emmanuel O., “British Diplomatic Attitudes towards Japanese Economic and Political Activities in Korea, South Manchuria, Kwangtung and Shandong 1904–1922” (Ph. D dissertation, University of London, 1976), chapters 3 and 5; Spinks, Charles Nelson, “Origin of Japanese Interests in Manchuria,” *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, 2–3 (May, 1943).

<sup>32</sup> Bonar to MacDonald, September 22, 1911, 1145 (42469/42469); Wills to Jordan, November 17, 1911, (50205/49905); Scidmore to SD, May 11, 1912, RG84, vol. 11, p. 133. Baker(Andong) to SS, October 18, 1910, M341. R. 23, 793. 94/159; Chino-Japanese Questions involving Korea (Yalu River Bridge), Sammons to O’Brien, November 25, 1908, RG84, vol. 48; November 2, 1908, vol. 49.

quite critical of almost every other aspect of Japan's railway plans. In the first place, the intention of establishing a "fixed type" of railway bridge appeared suspect. The U.S. government demanded forcefully that a drawbridge be built over the Yalu, since a fixed bridge would close off the existing trade channel. Japan finally yielded and agreed to build a drawbridge over the Yalu, as Britain sided with the United States to push for the revised plan.<sup>33</sup>

Around this time, Westerners began to anticipate the eventual annexation of South Manchuria by Japan. With Japan's abuse of political and economic supremacy, illegal behavior in every form greatly increased. Chinese customs officers lost control over black market dealings and smuggled goods, their surveillance over the vicinity of the railway having been compromised. The Japanese had continuously occupied the premises of the *yamen* (office) of the local *daotai* ("taotai," usually translated into English as "circuit intendant"). American Consul Carleton Baker described such actions by the Japanese as "what's yours is mine and what's mine is my own," and commented that all efforts to confine Japanese jurisdiction had been futile. This heavily affected American interests, and threatened to place the American consul in a very awkward situation. It was almost certain that southern Manchuria would ultimately be dominated by Japan.<sup>34</sup>

Immediately after the annexation of Korea, Japan also started to reveal its intention of permanently wresting sovereignty from China in the vicinity of railway centers such as Andong. In several reports, Baker warned that the Japanese were so persistently carrying out a program of aggression and absorption that, if this tendency was to continue unchecked, it would not be long before the city of Andong, in which Japan had established its own exclusive settlement in 1905, or at least the best and greater part of it, would be as completely owned and governed by Japan as Dalian, Seoul or even Tokyo. On top of everything, the Japanese were carefully circulating a theory that Andong and its environs were formerly part of Korea, and that, as a result, they should not be under the same jurisdiction as the rest of China. They even developed some ingenious arguments in favor of this theory, to the effect that some time ago a wonderful stone which

<sup>33</sup> Baker to SS, October 18, 1910. There were about 30,000 Chinese, 3,000 Japanese and 6,000 Koreans at work on the line. Most of the tunneling was done by the Koreans, many of whom had mining experience and were able to use modern drills effectively, a skill which they had acquired during the construction of the Seoul-Pusan and the Seoul-Sinŭiju line; Chino-Japanese Questions involving Korea (Yalu River Bridge), Sammons to O'Brien, November 25, 1908, RG84, vol. 48; Merrill, p. 247.

<sup>34</sup> Heintzleman (Mukden) to Reinsch, March 13, 1915, M341, R. 23 (793. 94/307); Japanese Acquiring Sovereignty at Andong, Baker to Calhoun (Beijing), February 13, 1911, (continued from 793. 94/159d), M341, R23; Japanese Activity in Andong Consular District, August 30, 1911, (793. 94/171).

bore a most curious Korean inscription was unearthed in the vicinity, and that it was evident from this that Korea once governed the region. Attention was now being drawn to a rail station called “Koryōmun” (Korea Gate) which was situated about twenty-six miles away along the Andong–Mukden Railway.<sup>35</sup>

Japan’s policy thus aimed not only at economic expansion, but also at the expansion of its jurisdiction in Manchuria, at the expense of Chinese sovereignty. Meanwhile, China’s reaction to the expansion was weak-kneed, as both central and provincial governments had lost control over the region following the 1911 revolution. When the governor-general of the Kwantung (Liaodong) Leased Territory was making a personal inspection of plague conditions in 1911, Japan, after consulting with Russia but not China, committed an army almost the size of a division to assist with stamping out the plague, as if to confirm that interests in Manchuria were equally divided between itself and Russia. The Russians at first had no objections to this dispatch, but later became exceedingly disturbed at learning of Japan’s ambitious programs to obtain additional privileges in southern Manchuria.<sup>36</sup> By 1913, the Japanese had won considerable influence in the provincial assembly at Mukden, and the president of that body was a leading spirit in the formation of a Chinese–Japanese Association in the region. The United States commented that there were two sovereignties in this region, “the one, old, decaying and contracting, and the other, new, virile and expanding.”<sup>37</sup>

Another “Korean factor” in Japan’s policy was the Jiandao (Chientao) problem, and Korean immigration across the Manchurian border. Although the issue surfaced with the Wanbaoshan (“Manbosan” in Korean) Incident, a prelude in the summer of 1931 to the “Manchurian Incident,” it was one of the problems over which Japan and China had been bitterly opposed since the period immediately following the annexation. Korea’s chessmen were indeed key players in the game of Japan’s continental policy. The issue of Koreans in Manchuria is highlighted by the problem of Jiandao, a hub of the Korean community known for its “hotbeds of anti-Japanese conspiracy,” as well as for its role in Japan’s expansion policy under the cover of Korean cross-border immigration.

Jiandao, called “Kando” in Korean and “Kantō” in Japanese, lies to the north of the Tumen river, which forms the eastern part of the

<sup>35</sup> Japanese Acquiring Sovereignty at Andong, Baker to Calhoun (Mukden), February 23, 1911, M341, R. 23 (793. 94/159a); Japanese Activity in Andong Consular District, August 30, 1911 (793. 94/171).

<sup>36</sup> Calhoun (Mukden) to SS, February 23, 1911, M341, R. 23 (793. 94/161).

<sup>37</sup> Chinese Japanese Relations in South Manchuria – Increasing Influence of Japan, Meyers to SS, September 30, 1913, M341, R. 23, (793. 94/187).

border between China and Korea. As a territory, it is about 300 miles long and 60 wide, and currently encompasses the four districts of Helong (Holung), Yanji (Yenchi), Wangxing (Wangshing) and Hunchun. It was a kind of oasis of exceptionally fertile valleys in the wild mountains and forests along the Korea-Manchuria border, and had therefore attracted a large number of Koreans since the 1860s, in spite of the ban imposed by the Chosŏn government against crossing the frontier. The Korean population there increased steadily, from 71,000 in 1907, to 109,500 in 1910, 253,916 in 1918, and 307,806 in 1921, while the number of the Chinese living there was less than one third of these figures, being 21,983 in 1907, and 73,746 in 1921. The area west of Jiandao was called Xijiandao (Sŏkando in Korean), and was also home to a considerable number of Koreans. A border dispute between Korea and China had flared up in 1882, as the Chinese government noticed the rapid increase of Koreans in the area. This was eventually settled on September 4, 1909, with the Jiandao Agreement between China and Japan, during the Japanese Residency-General in Seoul. The agreement covered only the three districts of Helong, Yanji and Wangxing, and thus Hunchun and Xijiandao were generally excluded from discussion of “Jiandao” afterwards. With this agreement, China obtained Japan’s recognition of its sovereignty over the region, and of its jurisdiction over the Korean inhabitants, while making several concessions to Japan, including the right to extend the Changchun-Jilin (Kirin) railway to the Korean frontier, the opening of four trade-marts in Jiandao, and the right to establish consulates or branch offices in the area.<sup>38</sup>

A report from the American consulate in Andong, dated January 1911, confirmed that Korean immigration to Manchuria, mainly around Jiandao, was rapidly growing following the annexation, and had already reached 10,000 in the space of the first few months.<sup>39</sup> According to Japan’s propaganda, these immigrants were moving for economic reasons. However, Japan’s political control over Korea and new exploitative land practices there, as well as the policy of encouraging Japanese immigration into Korea, could not be disregarded. The Korean immigrants to Manchuria did not imagine that they were going into a land of milk and honey, but they believed that there was little opportunity for them in their native country and that it was better to go of their own accord than wait until they were forced out. The fact that there were only 27 Koreans in Dalian, in spite of the

<sup>38</sup> For the text of the Jiandao Agreement, see *FRUS, 1909*, pp. 119–120; See also Government-General of Chōsen, *Annual Report on Reform and Progress in Chosen (Korea), 1910–1911*, p. 35.

<sup>39</sup> Immigration of Koreans to Manchuria, Baker to Calhoun, January 12, 1911, M329, R. 182 (893. 5595/5)



region's easy accessibility, suggested either that the Koreans wanted to avoid Japanese communities, or that the Japanese made conditions for them there too difficult, or both.<sup>40</sup>

China had allowed this immigration to take place because Koreans were believed to contribute economically to the region by cultivating former wastelands, and because they expected them to be meek and incapable of disrupting Chinese society. Yet China soon saw that the Koreans were becoming insolent and aggressive towards its citizens. Some of them even went so far as to tell the Chinese that Manchuria would soon be Japanese territory, and that then their equality, if not superiority, would be complete.<sup>41</sup> China realized that Korean immigration was not only part of Japan's infiltration of Manchuria, but was also a long-term scheme for the division of Chinese territories. In the event of a dispute between China and Japan, regarding Japan's application to extend the lease of the Kwantung Territory, Japan would be backed by Russia, and, at the same time, Japan would stand by Russia if the latter should refuse China's proposal to buy back the Chinese Eastern Railway at the end of the thirty years stipulated in the Russo-Chinese Bank contract of 1896. It became obvious that the substantial number of Koreans living outside Korea's borders constituted both a serious responsibility for the Japanese government and a valuable political asset, given that there were only about 40,000 native Japanese in Manchuria, the leased territory not included.<sup>42</sup> After the 1910 annexation, the Chinese authorities had no objection to the naturalization of Koreans, and a few Koreans did avail themselves of China's naturalization laws. The Japanese, however, blocked this move by demanding that Koreans get permission from the Japanese authorities before taking any steps in the naturalization process.<sup>43</sup>

The Sino-Japanese conflict over the Korean immigrants in Manchuria entered a new phase in August 1915, with Japan's Twenty-One Demands to China. Article III of the treaty gave all Japanese subjects without distinction liberty to reside and travel in all parts of South Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia, and to engage in business and in manufacture of any kind. Article V conferred on Japanese consuls in South Manchuria exclusive jurisdiction over suits brought

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<sup>40</sup> "Another Land-ownership Problem," *The Japan Chronicle*, May 29, 1913, M329, R. 182 (893.5595/7); Korean Residents in Manchuria, Baker to SS, February 17, 1917, M329, R. 182 (893.5595/8).

<sup>41</sup> Immigration of Koreans to Manchuria, Baker to Calhoun, January 12, 1911, M329, R.182 (893.5595/5).

<sup>42</sup> Korean immigration into Manchuria – Number of Koreans in Country, Meyer (*Chargé* in Mukden) to SS, September 18, 1913, M329, R182 (893.5595/7).

<sup>43</sup> The Korean Immigrants in Manchuria, Meyers to MacMurray, April 19, 1928 (893.5595/12).

against Japanese subjects resident therein. The two countries engaged in a heated argument over the application of the above articles to Jiandao. Japan insisted that the Jiandao Agreement of 1909 had been replaced by the new treaty, and that the Koreans were amenable to the new terms. To this, China made the rebuttal that the new treaty could not replace the Jiandao Agreement, as there was no reference to its defeasance. The Chinese also contended that the new treaty applied only to “South Manchuria,” to which Jiandao was said not to belong, meaning that it should not be affected by the treaty.<sup>44</sup>

It might seem utterly insignificant for the Jiandao problem to be studied only from such a purely legal perspective, when Japan’s penetration further into China was getting into full swing with the Twenty-One Demands. It was evident that the Sino-Japanese relationship in Manchuria had become a sheer showdown of power, and that most of the problems were being treated according to Japan’s wishes.<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, despite its neutral stance, the United States supported Japan from a legal perspective. The Americans considered that the whole dispute boiled down to the question of whether Jiandao belonged to “South Manchuria” or “North Manchuria.” Politically and geographically, the Jiandao region undoubtedly formed a part of South Manchuria, and therefore came within the scope of the treaty of May 1915. The United States advised China that it should take care to command the sympathy and respect of the world so that it could count on support, not only in maintaining the *status quo* in Manchuria but in strengthening still further its political position in China proper. The U.S. contended that this was possible by respecting clearly stipulated and genuinely vested foreign rights, and by resisting the temptation to take an extreme position in an attempt to “recover” rights, while at the same time quietly and steadfastly refusing to accept further encroachments.<sup>46</sup>

In the international arena, the problems of Korean immigration and Jiandao represented more than simply Japan taking steps to expand, and China venturing to contain it. For Japan, to gain interests in Manchuria was one thing, but to gain the recognition of the powers was another. The foundation of “Manzhouguo” (Manchukuo) in 1932 corroborated this, since while Japan succeeded in founding the new state, none of the other powers would recognize it. By late 1911, rumor in London, Paris, Berlin and other European capitals already had it that Japan was going to annex South Manchuria. Secret nego-

<sup>44</sup> Guthrie to SS, October 8, 1915, M341, R. 23 (793. 94/475) and *FRUS, 1915*, pp. 204–206.

<sup>45</sup> *Japan Times*, October 9, 1915, enclosure in Guthrie to SS, October 10, 1915, M341, R.25 (793. 94/476).

<sup>46</sup> Heintzleman to Reinsch, September 25, 1915, M341, R. 25 (793. 94/477).

tiations were said to be under way, at Japan's behest, between Tokyo and St. Petersburg on the annexation of South Manchuria by Japan and North Manchuria by Russia. Russia, however, argued against the annexation of North Manchuria, partly because of the great expense of maintaining troops in Manchuria, but also, and more importantly, because they realized that such a move would replace their weak Chinese neighbors with a Japanese territory that stretched from Korea to Mongolia.<sup>47</sup>

In 1917, Japan finally succeeded in institutionalizing its interests in Manchuria, even if not comprehensively, through the plan known as the "integration of Korea and Manchuria." Given Japan's sovereignty in Korea and its sphere of growing interests in the vicinity, the plan was intended to unify independent, loose administrations, and to ensure that all regions would have a close relationship with mainland Japan. Korea was, in itself, a separate entity with its own administration, communications and military powers, all of which were under the control of the Government-General. The Kwantung Leased Territory, at the southern tip of South Manchuria, was politically and economically separate from Korea, on the one hand, and from the Chinese hinterland on the other. The military power of the governor-general of Kwantung stretched into the territory via the administration of the South Manchurian Railway Company (SMRC). This company had its own diplomatic agents at Mukden and Jilin. Besides all this, administrative procedures were terribly confused. It was in this complex situation that an amalgamation of the existing tripartite administration, comprising the Government-General of Kwantung, the SMRC, and the consular staffs in Manchuria, was formed.<sup>48</sup>

It was notable that, to all appearances, this venture was initiated by Terauchi, and that Korea was at the center of the plan. In Terauchi's design, the centralization of the outlying and overlapping Japanese jurisdictions would lead to the creation of a Japanese "co-government" in Manchuria, which would automatically paralyze the Chinese administration, and would eventually leave it inanimate. It would also serve as a Japanese bulwark against Russia. This, in turn, made the powers perceive Japan's actions from a political perspective. For the British, it represented a decided advance toward discarding any pretence, and openly treating South Manchuria as an integral part of Japan's colonial empire. British Ambassador Conyngham Greene reported that a mysterious "hidden hand," obviously the military party, was exerting pressure upon the government in the background

<sup>47</sup> Rumored Annexation of Manchuria, Maynard to SS, November 22, 1911, M341, R.23 (793. 94/174).

<sup>48</sup> Japan's Continental Policy, Heintzleman to SS, August 2, 1916, M341, R25 (793. 94/520).

to prepare the way for the fulfillment of a “*Drang nach Norden*.” As far as Greene was concerned, if there was to be a “*Drang*” in any direction – and that seemed inevitable – a *Drang nach Norden* would, on the whole, fit much better than one in any other direction. By 1917, British commercial interests in Manchuria and Mongolia were almost extinct, and Japanese control of those regions could not be said to menace any of Britain’s Eastern possessions.<sup>49</sup>

In late 1917, when injuries to American interests by Japan’s high-handed encroachments into Chinese territory were being viewed as serious, American Consul John K. Davis at Andong suggested that the State Department should send a strong complaint to the Japanese ambassador in Washington, requesting an assurance that such incidents not be permitted to recur.<sup>50</sup> In 1918, recalling the dispute that had seen John McLeavy Brown, the Briton formerly in charge of the Korean customs service, expelled from Korea in the early days of the protectorate government, Japan demanded that Japanese subjects be appointed as the customs commissioners at the ports of Andong and Niuzhuang, since the bulk of the direct foreign trade at these ports was Japanese. Perceiving this Japanese demand to be an extremely serious menace to what was left of American trade in Manchuria, Americans responded that any alleged need for it was utterly ungrounded.<sup>51</sup> As far as the United States was concerned, while blandishments and honeyed words showed that the Japanese were making a pretense of keeping the “open door” ajar, there was much evidence to prove that the fraudulent and cunning practices of the Japanese in the region were destroying the “equality of commercial opportunity.”<sup>52</sup> To put it in a more extreme way, the open door was a trap-door, and Japan was a “trap-door spider,” waiting attentively for its prey to fall through so that its venomous fangs might sink deep into the victim’s flesh.<sup>53</sup>

The Russians reacted sensitively, as they believed that Japan’s continental policy would directly or indirectly sacrifice the interests of their country; or, at the very least, take aim at them. When Japan argued that, when completed, the Amur Railway, i.e., the eastern extension of the Trans-Siberian Railway to Vladivostok via Khabarovsk, would

<sup>49</sup> Greene to Balfour, July 3, 1917, 2949 (158922/2611) and minutes; August, 17, 1917 (182554/2611). See also Alston to Curzon, July 18, 1919, *DBFP*, first series, p. 620.

<sup>50</sup> Davis to Reinsch, October 18, 1917, M341, R. 26 (793. 94/623). John K. Davis was assigned to the position of consul-general in Seoul in the 1930s.

<sup>51</sup> Davis to MacMurray, October 11, 1918 (793/94/730) and editorials in its supplement, from *Manchurian Daily News* (September 22, 1918) and *Peking Leader* (October 4, 1918).

<sup>52</sup> Japanese Ways of Hampering Foreign Trade in Manchuria, Baker to SS, January 16, 1918, M341, R. 26 (793. 94/668).

<sup>53</sup> Japan’s Role as a Trap-door Spider in Manchuria, Baker to SS, February 16, 1919, M341. R27 (793.94/788).

be a menace to Korea's security, Russia's ambassador in Tokyo criticized the Japanese army reinforcement and its deployment in Korea. He told the British *chargé d'affaires* that he was keeping a close eye on this question of stationing two divisions in Korea.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, Russia set about rearranging its officials in Korea to cope with the new, changed environment. Before the Russo-Japanese War, when Russians were competing with Japan in the peninsula, it had seemed necessary to monitor Japanese actions in Pusan and Inch'ŏn. Yet now Russian economic interests in these ports were so meager that Russia closed its consulate in Pusan and downsized its consulate in Inch'ŏn, while establishing a new consulate in the main city of the Russo-Korean frontier, Ch'ŏngjin, where Japanese activities were prolific, in order to keep watch over their movements.<sup>55</sup> The setting up of a new Russian consulate on the northeast coast was fairly prophetic, in that Japan later developed the Ch'ŏngjin region as a pivotal base for advances into Manchuria.

One of the powers' most symbolic responses to Japan's expansive drives may be observed in regard to proposed amendments by Japan of the third Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1911. The second Anglo-Japanese Alliance, agreed upon in 1905 after Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War, was supposed to be renewed in 1915. This notwithstanding, Britain and Japan moved the timetable for entering into the third alliance forward by four years, to cope with the new environment in East Asia after the annexation, and lest there should be any military conflict between the United States and Japan. This third alliance was generally known for its "arbitration clause," by which Britain was relieved of responsibility in the event of war between Japan and the United States. In this regard, the arbitration clause implied that Britain considered its relationship with a traditionally friendly state more important than that with an ally. As a *quid pro quo*, Japan was relieved of the responsibility of supporting Britain in the event of war in the northern part of India. This led a Russian newspaper to comment that the alliance was now a mutual insurance agreement against undefined contingencies – that is, disturbances in China after the 1911 revolution – and no longer represented a sort of British "weapon" against Russia.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Rumbold to Grey, November 15, 1912, 1390 (54682/37637).

<sup>55</sup> Bonar to MacDonald, November 2, 1911, 1145 (42404/42404). The Russian consulate in Ch'ŏngjin was closed in February 1924, when Communist influence was expanding in Korea. Other Russian establishments, except for the consulate-general in Seoul, followed suit. [Lay to Palairt, March 1, 1924, 10309 (1314/2169/23).]

<sup>56</sup> Article of *Novoe Vremya* (New Times), enclosure in July 17, 1911, 1140 (28728/1827). For the third alliance, see Nish (1972), pp. 47–59, 81–88.

The British intention to contain Japan's expansion through the third alliance was reflected in its relatively neglected insistence on amending one article on Korea. As already mentioned in Chapter 1, Japan tried to make an analogy between British policies in India and its policy in Korea, for the sake of justifying its "security need." In the second alliance, Japan recognized its partner's right to take such measures in the proximity of the Indian frontiers as it might find necessary for safeguarding its Indian possessions. Reciprocally, Japan now insisted on the same recognition from Britain. Japan's traditional view of security boiled down precisely to this. After coming to power in Korea, Japan's concern about security was directed at regions or forces that could menace the peninsula, which specifically meant instabilities in Russia or Manchuria. Based on this notion, Japan insisted on exerting a certain influence on Manchuria to protect Korea. As far as Britain was concerned, "the special rights in the frontiers" clause did not need to be given any significance, since its purpose was not expansive but purely defensive. On the other hand, as Foreign Secretary Grey pointed out, be the excuse security or whatever else, Japan's special interest in Korea's frontiers with Manchuria and Russia could only mean that it intended to expand its influence in Manchuria. What is more, so-called "special interests" always had the potential for dispute over how such terms should be interpreted. Here, the Korean clause was understood as Japan's attempt to gain political recognition of its new interests along Korean-Manchurian frontiers, along with its existing interests in Manchuria. Britain refused this demand and crossed out that clause in the draft put forward by Japan.<sup>57</sup>

#### DOMESTIC AFFAIRS AND CHANGES OF PERCEPTION

The 1910s, the first decade of the colonial government, was a period of militarist rule by Governors-General Terauchi and Hasegawa. Unbound by the constitution of their homeland, the governors-general of Korea controlled the peninsula through their "prerogative," as delegated by Japan's emperor. Japanese rule started with incessant promulgations of laws and ordinances. On the one hand, the Japanese implemented modernization policies, based on the principles of "simplicity and effectiveness." On the other, they subjected the people to tighter and more rigorous controls, which would ultimately lead to

<sup>57</sup> Draft Agreement proposed by the Japanese Government, July 28, 1911, 1140 (29759/1827). On negotiations in 1907 between Britain and Russia near the Indian frontier, see Grey, Viscount of Fallodon, *Twenty-five Years 1892–1916* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1925), p. 154.

efforts to eradicate the national identity of the Korean people.<sup>58</sup> This section will trace the domestic affairs of the new colony under its alien rulers, and, in doing so, will find clues that explain the powers' changing attitudes and perceptions, which reflected and affected – even if only to a moderate degree – Japan's relations with them in East Asia.

During the first decade of colonial rule, Korean perception of international politics had undergone a drastic change, especially among intellectuals. Unlike the traditional Confucian elites, these new leaders were mostly enlightened and mostly Christians, with Western educational backgrounds.<sup>59</sup> These people, who included Yi Sangjae (1850–1927), An Ch'angho (1878–1938), Yi Sŭngman (later known as Syngman Rhee, 1875–1965), Pak Ŭnsik (non-Christian, 1859–1925) were leaders of the Korean independence in, respectively, Korea, the United States and China. In general, they thought that the frustration of the enlightenment movement before 1910, and the consequent demise of the Korean kingdom, were largely due to the monarchial political system and Confucian political ideology, and that republicanism and democracy would be their substitute. Naturally, they were inclined to view the United States as the power that would save the colony Korea. Democratic ideals had, in fact, been imported into Korea in the latter part of the 1890s by the activities of Philip Jaisohn (Sŏ Chaep'il) and his Independence Club, and had been warmly received by the people. Philip Jaisohn had returned to Seoul from the United States after twelve years of asylum due to his participation in the 1884 coup. These leading Koreans thought that Korea was not adequately prepared for the prevailing ideologies of the time, such as the Social Darwinism, the survival-of-the-fittest, and militarism. At the same time, they criticized the hypocrisies of Western international laws, which vainly preserved peace and stability in the East Asian region, and those of Japan's doctrine of Asian peace. Their activities would be in full bloom in the March First Movement of 1919.<sup>60</sup>

However, despite the Western powers' skepticism in accepting the policies of the Government-General, they still preferred Japanese

<sup>58</sup> For this subject see Lee, Chulwoo, "Modernity, Legality and Power in Korea under Japanese Rule," in Shin, Gi-Wook and Robinson, Michael (eds.), *Colonial Modernity in Korea* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Asia Center Monographs, 1999).

<sup>59</sup> For example, Syngman Rhee got his Ph. D degree at Princeton University in 1912 with his dissertation of "Neutrality as Influenced by the United States."

<sup>60</sup> For a general survey of this subject, see Yi, Hojae, *Han'gukin ūi kukjehōnggh'igwan* (Korean International Politics Outlooks), (Seoul: Pōbmunsa, 1994), chapter 2. Japan also left bulky reports on the activities of Koreans abroad. See Kim, Dohun, "Ilbon oemusōng ūi kumi hanin tonghyang bogo" (Reports on the activities of Koreans in America and Europe by the Japanese Foreign ministry), *Han'guk Tongip Undongsa Yōnguso*, *Han'guk tongip undongsa yōngu*, 21 (December, 2003).

reform measures to the iniquities, incompetence and corruption of the former Chosŏn government, and to calls for Korean independence. Claude MacDonald, the British ambassador in Tokyo, visited Korea and Manchuria twice in 1910 and 1911, and left a lengthy report which surveyed anti-Japanese sentiments in the British community in these regions, as well as discussing Japan's colonial policy. He concluded by accepting the overall outline of Japan's policy, and by describing the attitude of the officials in the Government-General in a positive manner, believing as he did that wealth seemed to be increasing thanks to the enterprises carried out by the new Seoul government.<sup>61</sup> Britain judged the costly and burdensome decision to inject large amounts of budgetary expenditure into Korea to be "decidedly progressive."<sup>62</sup>

It was true that the efforts of the Government-General to boost the Korean economy were serious and tenacious. Based on the analysis that inadequate transportation would delay development, Terauchi constructed the Kyŏngwŏn (Seoul-Wŏnsan) and the Honam (Taejŏn-Mokp'o) lines, with the ultimate aim of connecting the railway system to Europe, while expanding port facilities in Pusan, Inch'ŏn and Chinnamp'o (now Namp'o). Britain's evaluation of the future of Korean trade was quite optimistic. When the domestic situation in Korea stabilized, they surmized, the sluggish trade would steadily grow, and a promising future lay ahead for agriculture and the mining industry.<sup>63</sup> MacDonald interviewed British officials and missionaries wherever he went, and the consensus of opinion was that the lot of Koreans had greatly improved during the short time that they had been under direct Japanese rule.<sup>64</sup> In 1915, the fifth year of the Government-General, Consul-General Lay commented that the Seoul industrial exhibition being hosted by Japan not only aimed to promote trade, but also to give the Koreans an opportunity to view modern conveniences.<sup>65</sup>

The powers were also favorable to Terauchi's policy to "protect Koreans." Immediately after the annexation, Lay reported that Terauchi was sure to succeed, as he had given a directive to show no mercy to, and exercise rigorous control over, any Japanese who abused Koreans, this measure being "conscientious insistence upon impartiality and protection of the natives."<sup>66</sup> In stark contrast to the harsh handling

<sup>61</sup> MacDonald to Grey, November 11, 1911, 1145 (49456/38568).

<sup>62</sup> Lay to Grey, February 7, 1911, 1142 (9244/9244) and minutes.

<sup>63</sup> Lay to Grey, January 25, 1911, 1142 (6267/6267); February 22, 1911, 1136 (10188/138); January 17, 1911, 1141 (5371/5371); Lay to Rumbold, May 23, 1911, 1142 (23575/6267).

<sup>64</sup> MacDonald to Grey, November 11, 1911.

<sup>65</sup> Lay to Greene, November 4, 1915, 2392 (186543/186543)

<sup>66</sup> Lay to Rumbold, July 11, 1911, 1136 (31186/138).



of Koreans by the Japanese before the annexation, there was now a security of property unknown before. This meant that there was a direct incentive for Koreans to work and save money, which under the old regime would have been a waste of time and energy, since the money saved would very soon have been taken by government officials and high personages in Seoul. In Lay's words, the new regime's vigorous plan to develop the country was "sound and unpretentious," and it was "patience and help, not criticism," that were required. Lay even accused anti-Japanese writings of being "scurrilous, disgraceful and incendiary."<sup>67</sup> The Americans took a largely similar stance.<sup>68</sup> In 1916, one journalist, who had reported on Russian frontier areas during the Russo-Japanese War and World War I, described neatly paved streets, when in 1904 the very same streets sat ten inches deep in mud whenever it rained. He also commented that the shiftless and unmotivated population was now industrious.<sup>69</sup>

As long as Japan could justify its rule with new riches and protection of the Koreans, and as long as the powers' response was favorable, Koreans found it hard to justify their claim to independence. For people like Lay, such resistance was no less than "the voice of calumny raised against the authorities by good-for-nothing fellows whose ambitions were thwarted."<sup>70</sup> Ambassador MacDonald tartly pointed out that some of the older people, and especially high personages, regretted the loss of an independence that they were unable to preserve unaided, and that they had used to no good purpose when they possessed it.<sup>71</sup> For the Westerners, the Korean independence movement was nothing more than an expression of a "distorted idea of patriotism" and "rancorous hatred of the Japanese."<sup>72</sup> Similarly, American officials regarded the independence movement in Jiandao, the Russian Maritime Province and the United States as the result of selfish motives or sentiment on the part of high officials of the old regime or their young relatives, and that these people held misguided and bigoted ideas and were unable to keep pace with progress.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Lay to Grey, February 22, 1911, 1136 (10188/138).

<sup>68</sup> For the reports of Consul-General Scidmore, see instruction to Police by Governor-General, July 9, 1911, RG84, vol. 74; Japanese Settlers in Chosen, December 8, 1911, RG84, vol. 30; Annual Report on Trade and other Commercial and Industrial Conditions of Chosen, July 12, 1911, RG84, vol. 74; Conditions in Chosen, Scidmore to SS, May 1, 1913, M426, R. 2 (895. 00/555).

<sup>69</sup> Washburn, Stanley, *On the Russian Front in World War I: Memoirs of an American War Correspondent* (New York: Robert Speller and Sons, 1981), p. 275.

<sup>70</sup> Lay to Grey, February 22, 1911, 1136 (10188/138).

<sup>71</sup> MacDonald to Grey, November 11, 1911.

<sup>72</sup> Lay to Rumbold, July 24, 1911, 1144 (33591/33591).

<sup>73</sup> Japanese Administration in Chosen, Miller to SS, April 22, 1914, M426, R. 2 (895. 00/557).

The powers' favorable evaluations of Japan's governance did not last long, however. In a British report drafted in 1915, the criticism was made that Japanese thought was trending toward becoming more arrogant, and had taken on a tone of "overlordship" in everything which concerned the Far East, and that Japanese colonial subjects – Ainus, Formosans and Koreans – were ruled with "German discipline."<sup>74</sup> When Terauchi, judged by most to be the right man for the job, became Japanese prime minister the following year, the British embassy in Tokyo commented that with his powerful personality he had shown himself to be a capable administrator in Korea, but that he had ruled the country with "an iron hand." Koreans had, indeed, been made well aware of his semi-military discipline.<sup>75</sup>

Hasegawa, who took over from Terauchi in Korea, was "essentially a soldier, a bluff, straightforward man, free from secretiveness, who inspired fear among Koreans partly owing to his saturnine cast of countenance."<sup>76</sup> The Americans predicted that his regime would be characterized by harsh military methods, due to his insufficient experience in administration.<sup>77</sup> By 1919, Britain decided that the Government-General was "no doubt despotic and at times reactionary."<sup>78</sup> Given the fact that such memoranda and documents were written when Britain and the United States were at war with Germany, or in the period immediately after, when the atrocities of German militarism, including the massacre of civilians in Belgium, were still very fresh, and given the fact that a section of public opinion in Japan was decidedly anti-British, anti-American and pro-German, such criticism of the Government-General went so far as condemning Japan's "heinous" policies in its colonies.<sup>79</sup> As Japan's continental policy was implemented more thoroughly, and Japan's relationship with both powers turned sour, the gap between the powers' perceptions of Japan's policy at the East Asian regional level and the Korean local level narrowed accordingly.

The change was a matter of profound significance in the powers' policy toward Korea. Before the annexation, the powers believed their

<sup>74</sup> Greene to Grey, December 8, 1915, 2689 (7243/7143) and its enclosure.

<sup>75</sup> Greene to Grey, October 10, 1916, 2694 (234308/185538). See also Greene to Grey, December 8, 1915, 2689 (7243/7243) and its enclosure; Admiralty to FO, March 11, 1918, 3244 (46022/3971).

<sup>76</sup> Greene to Grey, October 17, 1916, 2694 (234314/234314).

<sup>77</sup> Wheeler to SS, October 21, 1916, M426, R. 3, 895. 001/2. The report predicted that Terauchi, as prime minister, would wield a strong influence on the rule of Korea.

<sup>78</sup> Memorandum on Korea's relations with China, Russia and Japan, May 20, 1919, 4379 (PID, 435).

<sup>79</sup> Some reports concluded that Japan's colonial policy was worse than that of Germany. See Admiralty to FO, March 11, 1918, 3233 (46022/3977).

interests and Japan's occupation were not incompatible. The sentiment among Western communities in the region – mostly merchants, in the case of Britain – was not so hostile as to push their governments toward opposing Japan. The British government generally acquiesced to Japanese policy, in keeping with its wider East Asia policy, which meant cooperation with Japan no matter the level of criticism that it was receiving. Before the annexation, the Foreign Office in London disregarded or downplayed critical newspaper coverage by Ernest Bethell and Frederick McKenzie, or equally critical reports by Consul-General Henry Cockburn in Seoul. Yet, within a decade, an extremely anti-Japanese atmosphere had developed both in the British community in East Asia and in the Foreign Office, though to varying degrees. Eventually, some of London's policies began to take on a certain anti-Japanese color. As far as the Korean question was concerned, this tendency was made manifest in the wake of the March First Movement. The unfavorable opinions expressed by the region's American community, who were mostly missionaries and merchants, tended to be ignored at government level, however, since major issues in U.S.-Japanese relations, including Japan's expansion into China and the military intervention in the Russian Maritime Province and Siberia, were considered highly delicate and strategic in nature.

There is no evidence of any comprehensive account of the subject having been written at this time by the powers. Nevertheless, a review of various records created in the nine years that followed the annexation allows us to infer some of the events in Korea that caused the powers to adjust their stance. The powers' evaluation of the economic advances under the Government-General never changed during the whole colonial period. On the other hand, their belief in the moral justifications for Japan's governance – namely, its claims of protection and fair treatment for Korea's people – swiftly gave way. The issue was important, in terms of the protection of both the “natives” and of the powers' interests, as the fair administration of justice was directly connected to it. The evangelic and educational work of the missionaries was deeply related to how Japan treated Koreans, and economic interests could not be secured if laws were not enacted justly. With this in mind, Ambassador MacDonald advised Terauchi and Foreign Minister Uchida Yasuya in the early days of annexation that if Japan approached the task of governing Korea in a spirit of justice, equality and sympathy, all would be well, and a most valuable asset would be added to the Japanese empire. If such principles were abandoned, however, Korea would become a veritable thorn in their side.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> MacDonald to Grey, November 29, 1910, 879 (45764/988).

An incident that particularly disappointed the powers was the so-called Conspiracy Case that occurred in late 1911. The whole story, which originated from the Sinminhoe (New People's Society), organized by Yun Ch'ihō and Yang Kit'ak in 1905, was well-documented in a number of records. In brief, in 1911 the government arrested leading Korean Christians in a country-wide sweep. They were charged with conspiring to murder Governor-General Terauchi on various occasions, including, and most particularly, when he was on his way to the ceremony for the opening of the Yalu Bridge on December 28, 1910. Many of the arrested were kept in jail for months without knowing the charges against them.<sup>81</sup> The Western powers paid attention to this case not because of its deeper implications – namely, Japan's suppression of Korean nationalism –, but because of more minor matters (at least in Korean eyes). First, there was the Westerners' contention that Christian Koreans were being persecuted, as the majority of the people involved in the case were Christian, and the missionaries were frequently subject to police interrogations. Second, as revealed in subsequent trials, the whole case was a fabrication, meaning that inhumane means of torture had to be employed to extract "confessions." Third, the trial was completely at odds with the Government-General's early declarations that justice would be fairly served. The court did not admit any claims or defense made by the defendants.<sup>82</sup>

When the Conspiracy Case was first publicized, Britain believed that some of the Christian Koreans who opposed Japan's rule had indeed conspired to assassinate Terauchi, even if no missionaries were involved.<sup>83</sup> On receiving reports that the police were searching mission schools and arresting students, American Consul-General Scidmore refused to listen to the insistent claims that the Government-General resorted to torture to extract confessions. However, as Christians in Korea were arrested and the Government-General used newspapers to spread rumors of the possible involvement of Protestant missionaries, many of the latter felt their position was insecure and zealously started a campaign of self-defense. Missionaries insisted that they never participated in any student conspiracy to subvert the government, yet also insisted that torture was being used during some

<sup>81</sup> See a collection of materials on the incident, Kuksa P'yōnch'an Wiwōhoe (National History Compilation Committee) (comp.), *Hanminjok tongnip undongsa charyojip I: paek'oim saqōn kongp'an simalsō* (Materials of Korean Independence Movement I – Explanatory Record of the One Hundred Five Persons Incident Trials) (Seoul: 1986). The records of the time can be found in Seoul Press, *The Conspiracy Case in Chosen* (Seoul, 1912).

<sup>82</sup> Japan, Annual Report, 1912, January 1, 1913, 1666 (7834/7535).

<sup>83</sup> Lay to MacDonald, November 4, 1911, 1143 (49457/19230). See also Bonar to MacDonald, February 8, 1912, 1388 (10684/10684).

investigations. Yet the Government-General insisted that “such absurd rumor [about torture] had not even the slightest foundation,” and that “fair trial and examination were to be conducted in strict compliance with the provisions of law.” The issue, nonetheless, began to develop into a confrontation between the Government-General and the missionaries, who were supported by their headquarters in their home countries, the United States and Britain<sup>84</sup>

However, at the trial all the prisoners repudiated their confessions in open court. Almost all of them asserted that these confessions had been extorted from them by threats of outright torture. The court, notwithstanding, accepted these “confessions” as conclusive evidence, not making inquiry into the allegations of torture. Two of those arrested had originally “confessed” to having shadowed the governor-general with the intent to murder him, but they were eventually released because it was discovered that they were already in police custody at the times stated on another charge.<sup>85</sup> The alleged assassination conspiracy against the governor-general by the New People’s Society had always, in reality, been nonexistent.

When such facts became known to the outside world, Britain was the first to question Japan’s principles in enforcing justice. Acting Consul-General E. Hamilton Holmes made a detailed report of the trial, and concluded that the exercise of judicial power in Korea was as oppressive as in the early period of Japan’s governance in Formosa, and that there could be no doubt as to the torture of the defendants.<sup>86</sup> Ambassador MacDonald called the trial a “travesty of justice,” an unusually strong criticism in view of diplomatic conventions.<sup>87</sup> His successor, Sir Conyngham Greene, did not differ much in his attitude, and was even more scathing in his criticism. In his review of the case, 99 out of 105 defendants were acquitted for lack of evidence. The 630 years of total prison time to which the defendants in the first trial had been sentenced were reduced to only 30. Greene commented that this was “the best evidence of the grotesque irregularity of the earlier trial and the most gigantic miscarriage of justice in history.”<sup>88</sup>

The Foreign Office pointed out, however, that it was the U.S. government’s responsibility to submit any official complaint to the Gov-

<sup>84</sup> Memorandum by Governor-General in reply to representations of Avison, Moffet and Whitmore, January 22, 1912, RG84, vol. 14, pp. 174, 185; Bonar to MacDonald, February 8, 1912, 1388 (10684/10684). Fox to FO, August 14, 1912, 1388 (34392/10684).

<sup>85</sup> Conspiracy Case, November 4, 1912, RG84, vol.24, p.91; Japan, Annual Report, 1912, 1666 (7834/7534).

<sup>86</sup> Holmes to MacDonald, July 18, 1912, 1388 (13539/10684).

<sup>87</sup> Japan, Annual Report, 1912, 1666 (7834/7534); MacDonald to Grey, August 2, 1912, 1388 (35539/10684).

<sup>88</sup> Greene to Grey, April 25, 1913, 1668 (21904/21904).

ernment-General, as the majority of Christian Koreans were under the direction of American missionaries, and the missionaries who had allegedly been involved were all Americans.<sup>89</sup> Yet the U.S. government did not make any kind of representation against Japan. As expressed in numerous communications among American diplomats in Washington, Tokyo and Seoul, they only paid special attention to the issue on the request of missionary groups. The United States thus took a cautious approach, coming to the conclusion that it was not desirable to damage their relationship with Japan over the Korean question, when that relationship was already worsening. This was the most notable characteristic of American policy on Korea until the early 1940s, when the Japan-U.S. relationship had become irretrievably tainted. As for the missionary activities, they were further limited by the Educational Ordinance, despite some effort on the part of the U.S.. Mutual distrust deepened between the Japanese authorities and the missionaries, and there was another clash between them on the issue of the “persecution of Christians” during the March First Movement.

Beyond increased confrontations in East Asia and skepticism about Japan’s colonial policy, what gradually, yet decisively, affected the change in the powers’ attitude was the various economic measures that Japan conducted after the annexation. The powers had originally supported Japanese measures to reform the old Chosŏn government, and so there was no good ground for objecting to the enforcement of these measures.<sup>90</sup> Even when some of them infringed upon the Westerners’ rights, or violated the spirit and promises made at the time of the annexation, they still tended to believe that their interests could be secured through negotiation. If early-stage representations were made regarding the ambiguities inherent to certain regulations, the issue was generally resolved by Japanese concessions on an *ad hoc* basis. The real problem, however, was that such compromises were disposable, and in a few years the powers’ interests in almost all fields were eroded or ended.

Nonetheless, in the case of the United States, the attitude demonstrated by Consul-General Scidmore contributed to generally mild reactions. According to Scidmore, the Mining Law could not possibly infringe upon the vested interests of foreign companies; rather, it would encourage U.S. interests in a relatively expeditious and liberal manner. The Educational Ordinance, too, was expected to unify the system of elementary education and lead to loyalty inculcation, so the authorities and missionaries perpetuated their smooth relations. Police Regulations were the same as had been enforced in Japan, and, in terms of the Company Law, it was not apparent that this ordinance would immedi-

<sup>89</sup> Minutes on MacDonald to Grey, August 2, 1912, 1388 (135539/10684).

<sup>90</sup> Grey to MacDonald, February 8, 1911, 1136(2607/138).

ately affect the interests of American companies operating in the country. As mentioned in Chapter 1, however, he was reprimanded by the State Department for not having duly exercised his rights of “*eminent domain*,” that is, for not having added his critical analysis to the issues.<sup>91</sup>

While the Government-General strongly enforced reform policies for Korea’s economic development, London encouraged British firms in East Asia to extend business ventures into Korea, in the expectation that trade with the peninsula would radically increase. The consulate-general in Seoul stressed that trade conditions in the peninsula were now “*distinctly favorable*.” Money was being freely spent by the authorities on improvements of all sorts, including railways, roads and harbors. These considerations, added to the guaranteed continuance of the existing low tariffs, were sufficient to warrant a belief that Korea deserved more attention than it was receiving as a field for British enterprise. MacDonald had been urging local British firms to establish themselves in Korea and obtain a good footing there. The Foreign Office, too, advocated paying more commercial attention to Korea, and forwarded these reports from Toyo to the headquarters of major British companies.<sup>92</sup>

The United States was also optimistic about the economic advance of Korea, on the grounds of good crops, equitable taxation and liberal expenditure for public works, as well as the stabilized political situation. In 1911, American exports to Korea amounted to 2,121,930 dollars, a 526,005 dollar increase compared to the previous year. There was unprecedentedly large government expenditure in Korea, as Japan made lavish investments in such areas as the military, civilian services, the police, judicial administration, railways (especially the Taejŏn-Mokp’o line), port facilities, posts, telegraphs, telephones, and other public works. The mining industry was the most productive and promising investment for the United States. In 1910, the Oriental Consolidated Mining Company produced \$14,000,000 worth of gold from Unsan alone. Naturally, the United States expected to export more locomotives, materials for railways and railway bridges, steel, oil, mining equipment, and flour.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>91</sup> SD to Scidmore, June 26, 1911, RG84, vol. 74; Mining Interests of Americans in Chosen and Regulations of Chosen Mining Company, Scidmore to SD, June 26, 1911; Education Ordinance of Chosen, August 30, 1911; Review of Ordinances, September 13, 1911, RG84, vol. 74; Education Regulations, December 5, 1911, RG84, vol. 30; Education in Chosen, June 25, 1911, RG84, vol. 31.

<sup>92</sup> Bonar to MacDonald, February 2, 1912, 1388 (10689/10689); MacDonald to Grey, February 22, 1912; June 4, 1912, 1390 (27411/17411); FO to Board of Trade, April 15, 1912, 1388 (10689/10689).

<sup>93</sup> Annual Report on Foreign Trade and other Commercial and Industrial Conditions of Chosen, July 12, 1911, RG84, vol.74; Report on Trade and Industry of Chosen of 1911, August 7, 1912, RG84, vol. 24.

In a short while, however, the powers' expectations were frustrated by several ordinances by the Government-General on economic issues. The first of this kind was the Company Law, which took effect in early 1911. The law ruled that, in the event that one wished to establish a new company or a branch for conducting business in Korea, the governor-general's permission should be obtained. The law was designed to allow the Seoul government to keep the industrialization of the new colony within acceptable bounds.<sup>94</sup> At first, Lay reported that the law was aimed at protecting Koreans' commercial activities, and to prevent certain Japanese "adventurers" from establishing companies in the peninsula, while the authorities had not taken any special regulatory measures directed at companies that had already been conducting business without any special permission from the Government-General, at least "for the time being (10–20 years)."<sup>95</sup>

The Foreign Office in London, however, did not share the views of its representatives in East Asia. It viewed the new laws as being against the policy of the economic open door that Britain had sought in the Korean peninsula, although the ordinance had not marred British interests as yet. The London government asked Ambassador MacDonald for his opinion, pointing out that Britain was guaranteed the protection of existing interests when it consented to the annexation of Korea.<sup>96</sup> As anticipated by the Foreign Office, in practice the ordinances were to become the means by which the Government-General blocked the establishment of foreign companies on various pretexts and impeded their advance into Korea, especially in relation to the Mining Law. When Linklater & Co. hinted in 1914 that they were interested in participating in mining development in Korea, the Seoul government saddled this British firm with the difficult condition that its headquarters, not

<sup>94</sup> Eckert, Carter J., "Total War, Industrialization, and Social Change in Late Colonial Korea," in Duus, Myers, and Peattie, Mark R, (eds.), *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931–1945*, p. 4. When the Government-General came to the conclusion that an enlarged continental market after World War I would permit a certain degree of industrialization on the peninsula, Governor-General Saitō Makoto abolished the law after 1920, following the March First Movement, on the ground that it hindered regular economic activities. (ibid, p. 5.)

<sup>95</sup> Lay to Grey, January 17, 1911, 1136 (5370/138). American Consul-General Scidmore supported the stance of his British colleague. (Commercial Companies in Chosen, January 10, 1911, RG84, vol. 31; Company Law, Scidmore to SD, November 19, 1912, RG84, vol. 24.)

<sup>96</sup> Minutes on Lay to Grey, January 17, 1911; Campbell to MacDonald, February 25, 1911, 1136 (5370/138). MacDonald replied that anyone doing business in a foreign land should be prepared for regulations of such an extent. [MacDonald to Grey, March 24, 1911, 1136 (13231/138).]



a mere branch, should be established in Korea, eventually forcing it to give up the plan.<sup>97</sup> In the end, the Foreign Office left the following cynical comment.

This is a good example of the Japanese determination to make existence impossible for foreign concerns in Korea in the hope that foreigners will throw up their interests in disgust and sell cheap to Japanese.<sup>98</sup>

While inconveniencing foreign firms with new regulations, Japan indirectly pressured those already doing business in Korea to withdraw. One case involved the British-American Tobacco Company. More than 50% of the tobacco market in Korea was occupied by the Japanese Monopoly Office. According to American analyses, however, Japan was at the time concentrating on tobacco exports, meaning that B.A.T. could avoid failing in Korea despite the restrictions imposed, if it made sufficient efforts to remain afloat.<sup>99</sup> In the event, the Government-General promulgated a new ordinance on tobacco tax instead of insisting on a strict monopoly of the business. What was significant was that this new ordinance gave Japanese authorities the right to inspect all the facilities in the plants owned by foreign firms, as well as to inspect raw materials and sales accounts. Considering that the East Asian Tobacco Company, the main rival of the B.A.T. in Korea, was, to all intents and purposes, the Japanese government itself, it is easy to see how such rights would directly provide confidential information on manufacturing and sales to a formidable competitor. As Japan would obviously use the confidential information in China and Manchuria as well, the B.A.T. decided it would rather not take the risk of continuing its tobacco business in the small market afforded by Korea, but would rather protect its bigger markets in China and Manchuria. The company demanded indemnification for its losses and withdrew from Korea in 1914.<sup>100</sup> In this and other ways, the Japanese government successfully expelled the powers' interests

<sup>97</sup> Lay to Grey, January 17, 1911, 1136 (5370/138); Greene to Grey, July 24, 1914, 2014 (41900/14580).

<sup>98</sup> Greene to Balfour, January 16, 1917, 2952 (40718/40718) and minute.

<sup>99</sup> Tobacco Trade Competition in Korea, Sammons to SD, April 13, 1908, RG84, vol.71; FO to B-A Tobacco Co., July 7, 1911, 1136 (24584/138).

<sup>100</sup> Miller to SS, April 17, 1914, M426, R.2,895.00/557; B-A to FO, April 12, 1914, 2015 (17610/16955); Lay to Greene, March 20, 1914, 2015 (16955/16955). The B.A.T. complained of the difficulty to compete brought by the non-tariff tobacco passed from Korea into Manchuria. [Hunt, Michael H., *Frontier Defense and the Open Door – Manchuria in Chinese-American Relations, 1895–1911* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), p.108.]

in the peninsula, while not specifically violating its commitments. The Foreign Office was very concerned about the future relationship of the two countries, as British opinion in East Asia became ever more disposed to condemn every act by the Japanese government, and left this trenchant comment on the economic policies of Japan in Korea when the Mining Law came into effect in 1916:

This probably has little practical importance to British mining interests but it is interesting as an example of how quickly equal opportunity is suppressed in territory on which the Japanese have laid hands.<sup>101</sup>

The School Ordinance announced in August 1911 provided grounds for intervening in the curriculum of schools managed by the missionaries. Yet since the Government-General explained that the ordinance would not be applied as strictly to schools in Korea as it had been in those in Japan, missionaries did not particularly object to it.<sup>102</sup> By 1915, however, the “Education Ordinance” ruled that private elementary schools should teach the same curriculum as public schools, and should be willing to recognize the state’s ultimate authority over the educational system. A provision on the separation of religion and education had to be applied to private schools, but religious institutions were given a respite of ten years. The missionaries regarded this provision by the Seoul government as unfriendly, saying that “an educated heathen is more dangerous than an ignorant man.”<sup>103</sup> Mission groups were represented by Arthur Brown, a pro-Japanese missionary and president of the Foreign Mission Conference of North America, in conveying their grave concern to the Seoul government. Yet, overpowered by the Government-General’s claim that education should be free of foreign intervention, since it was a matter related to the institution of the state, their protests did not produce any results.<sup>104</sup> This provision was eliminated after the March First Movement by the new governor-general, Saitō, who wished to improve relationships with the missionaries.

Save some specific examples such as the B.A.T. Company, the issues mentioned above were not treated as being so serious as to damage the powers’ relations with Japan. Any discontent over new measures would, it seemed, be swiftly resolved when necessary, and

<sup>101</sup> Greene to Grey, January 13, 1916, 2691 (34703/34703), and its enclosures and minute.

<sup>102</sup> Education Regulations, December 5, 1911, RG84, vol.30; Education in Chosen, June 25, 1911, RG84, vol. 31; Scidmore to SS, November 5, 1911, M426, R. 6, 895. 42/7.

<sup>103</sup> Miller to Guthrie, February 10, 1915. M426, R. 6, (895. 42/11); March 31, 1915, (895. 42/14).

<sup>104</sup> Brown to Komatsu, June 16, 1915, M426, R. 6, (895. 42/15); Miller to SS, November 30, 1915, (895. 42/19).

on an *ad hoc* basis, by a generally conciliatory Government-General. Even if the powers acknowledged that there was room for a certain *quid pro quo*, however, the new measures, as accomplished facts, would control the development of affairs from then on, and eventually reduced the interests of the powers. The more Japan became estranged from Britain and the United States by its intensified expansionist policy, the more frequently such problems occurred. The changing stance of the powers toward Japan was to be revealed during the Korean uprising in 1919.

### CONCLUSION

Major Korea-related disputes between the Western powers and Japan in the 1910s were concentrated in the first few years following the annexation. Within that short period of time, almost all of what the powers believed to be their major interests were brought under Japanese control. Japan often seemed to take arbitrary decisions, and sometimes pursued its intentions so cunningly that, in the eyes of the powers, it could not be said, strictly speaking, to have violated its former commitments. The British consul-general in Seoul was allowed to compile an independent "annual report on Korea" until 1912, and this was included in the "annual report on Japan" from the following year onward. In *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, issued by the U.S. State Department, separate sections on Korea disappeared after the resolution of the foreign settlements issue in 1914.

Nonetheless, the powers' responses to Japan's moves in the peninsula were fairly obvious. Since their reaction was based on the geopolitical value of the peninsula, frictions tended to build as Japan's policy became more daring. The pattern of U.S.-Japanese and Anglo-Japanese relations remained almost the same as at the time of the annexation. Britain took advantage of the official relationship of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, knowing that the alliance belonged to the highest form of cooperation in international politics. On the basis of the elusive concept of being an "ally," Britain continued to have a voice in Japan's Korea policy, despite the fact that the usefulness of the alliance became uncertain as the definition of potential enemies became more difficult, and Japan found new excuses for expansion with the outbreak of World War I. The United States, on the other hand, approached it in a more reserved manner. American attitudes were again confirmed by the Conspiracy Case. In contrast to Britain's severe criticism, the United States only advised self-restraint when the American missionaries were faced with hardships. Knowing that it did not have the same relationship with Japan as Britain did, Schuyler remarked that the note sent by the British ambassador in

Tokyo to the Japanese Foreign Ministry regarding the land issue had been much stronger than his own.<sup>105</sup>

The importance of political and strategic issues in American-Japanese relations, and the extent of the conflict between them were, however, on a different level from local Korean issues. There was therefore an absolute necessity for the United States to maintain the relationship as it was, without further aggravating the situation. It was under these circumstances that Carleton Baker, the American consul-general in Mukden, used a certain amount of circumspection in a diplomatic dispatch that referred to the problems faced by people who were suffering “in a state of slavery” under Japan’s aggression. Relating the “Japanese question” to Korea, Formosa and certain parts of China that were under Japanese control, Baker insisted that people who opposed Japan’s gradual enslavement of the above-mentioned territories had been carelessly dubbed “anti-Japanese,” when in fact they were no more anti-Japanese than abolitionists were anti-Southern in the days preceding the American Civil War. The abolitionists had no quarrel with the Southerners as Southerners, but they were unalterably and bitterly opposed to slavery as an institution. His argument continued:

Those who opposed the aggression of Japan were not anti-Japanese, but were “anti-aggression.”... Divested of all its outward trappings the question of Japanese aggression and intrigue was simply a question of human rights. It was in its essence a moral issue and should be settled according to the principle that “nothing can be politically right, which is morally wrong.”... The enslavement of a country should be dealt with in the way in which we deal with the enslavement of an individual. ... It will never be settled by diplomatic blandishments and honeyed words nor will it be settled by closing our eyes to the obvious trend of events... Just so should we treat any question of enslaving the peoples in the region as aggression.<sup>106</sup>

With his pro-Chinese and anti-Japanese propensities, Carleton Baker had made some insightful points and observations regarding Japanese intentions and likely future actions, which seemed difficult to ignore.<sup>107</sup> The State Department, nevertheless, did not

<sup>105</sup> Schuyler to SS, December 27, 1910, *FRUS*, 1911, p. 330.

<sup>106</sup> One Phase of the “Japanese Question,” Baker to SS, August 6, 1918, M341, R. 26 (793. 94/716).

<sup>107</sup> Baker retired from public life as consul-general at Mukden and became commercial advisor to General Zhang Zuolin, the Chinese warlord in Manchuria during the period September 1920–July 1923. A memorandum he prepared for the Washington Conference of 1921–22 is also full of indictments against Japanese aggression in

respond to them. Perhaps the Department believed no specific and practical response was needed. The United States would, however, be faced with this problem when there was a surge of Korean nationalism in 1919. Its response to it will be reviewed in the following chapter.

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Manchuria. See Schuman to SS, December 13, 1921, M341, R.29 (793. 94/768). See also McCormack, Gavan, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China, 1911-1928 -- China, Japan and the Manchurian Idea* (Folkestone, Kent: Dawson, 1977), pp. 61, 122.

## The March First Movement and the Powers



### PROBLEMS IN EXISTING STUDIES

THE MARCH FIRST Movement was one of the most significant incidents during the Japanese colonial period, in that it was an anti-Japanese nationalist movement of the largest scale. It was also one of the most significant incidents in the history of Korean international relations in this period. This kind of understanding has never truly taken root in Korean academia, perhaps because very little research on the international relations of Korea's colonial period has ever been completed. This is partially understandable, given that the "Korean question" had disappeared from East Asian international politics by its annexation in 1910. Upon the outbreak of the March uprising of 1919, the powers began to reconsider the issue. They also returned to it toward the end of World War II, examining Korea's potential liberation and independence by making reference to peaceful demonstrations, the courage and sacrifice of the Koreans, their ability to organize a nationwide movement, and the "Korean Provisional Government" (KPG); all things which had played their part in the movement that had surfaced more than two decades earlier.<sup>1</sup>

Before we discuss the main topic, it is useful to review the present state of studies on this subject, with a particular emphasis on

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Research and Analysis Branch of the Office of Strategic Services of the U.S. Army (whose director was William Langer), "organized movements for the freeing of Korea from Japanese domination began in 1919, although their origins reach back before that date." (Korean Independence Movement, April 25, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/60-21/26.) Arnold Toynbee, as chairman of the Korea Committee of the Britain's Foreign Office, emphasized the importance of the March First Movement, and subsequent formation of the Provisional Government, in various memoranda about the future of Korea. [The Achievements and Failures of the Japanese Administration in Korea, September 2, 1944, 41813 (990/443/23); Korea's Capacity for Independence, February 14, 1945, 46468 (2330/1394/23).]

the role of foreign factors in the movement. Save in certain cases,<sup>2</sup> studies on the uprising have focused on domestic factors in terms of its outbreak, development and outcomes. This contributed to studies on the political, economic, social and cultural aspects of colonial Korea, and shed light on topics such as changes in Korean society, Japan's colonial policy, the problem of tradition, and modernization. Yet it is true that the excessive emphasis on domestic (and hence nationalistic) factors may have distorted and narrowed the historical significance of the March First Movement. This approach tends to downplay claims that the influence of foreign factors, including President Wilson's call for the self-determination of peoples, played a substantial part in the movement (at least in its early stages), while highlighting instead the "national capacity" of Koreans to organize and stage resistance. The theory posits that the self-determination of peoples in itself lacked the power to ignite such large-scale demonstrations for independence by a weak, colonized people.<sup>3</sup> It is worth pointing out that the Government-General deliberately chose to lay more stress than was warranted on such external influences as "the false idea of Wilson's self-determination," missionary support, and the Korean practice of "flunkeyism or submission to the stronger," to gloss over the fact that this unprecedented uprising was evidence of the failure of Japan's colonial policy.<sup>4</sup> It is undeniable, however, that several cases of national independence movements did occur elsewhere in the world under the influence of Wilsonian doctrine in the post-World War I period.

The national capacity theory also claims that the movement had global significance. According to this view, the Korean movement had a degree of impact on the May Fourth Movement in China, and even on nationalist movements in other colonies, such as India, Egypt and Ireland.<sup>5</sup> While it is valuable to consider such movements from the perspective of comparative history, possible causal linkages should not be stretched too far. Each nationalist movement developed under

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Baldwin, Frank P., "The March First Movement: Korean Challenge and Japanese Response," Ph.D. dissertation, (Columbia University, 1969).

<sup>3</sup> Sin, Yongha, *Samil undong ūi sahoesa* (Social History of the March First Movement) (Seoul: Hyōnamsa, 1984), p.31.

<sup>4</sup> Different approaches to Wilson's self-determination between the Japanese government and the Korean nationalists, see Kim, Sungbae & Kim, Myōngsōp, "Berūsaiyu p'yōnghwa ch'eje ūi 'pop'yōnjōk p'yōjun kwa Han'guk kwa Ilbon ūi yimong" (The Versailles Peace system' 'Universal Nomos' and the different Dreams between Korea and Japan), *Korean Journal of International Studies*, 52-2 (2012).

<sup>5</sup> Sin, Yongha, *Han'guk minjok tongnip undongsa* (History of Independence Movement of Korean Nation) (Seoul: Ūllyu Munhwasa, 1985), chapters 3 and 4. In fact, the independence movement in Egypt had started with the end of World War I, much earlier than the Korean uprising.

the specific circumstances of each country. There was little similarity between the May Fourth Movement of China and its Korean counterpart, except for the fact that both occurred at a similar period and were anti-Japanese. The March First Movement had its origins in expectations that the Korean question would be discussed at the Paris Peace Conference, while the May Fourth Movement exploded from disappointment over how the Shandong issue was handled on the same occasion. But other background factors, such as the political and social climate of the two countries, their leadership and their ideologies, starkly differed.<sup>6</sup>

A fuller understanding of the uprising can only be arrived at by putting it in a broader perspective. As a mass movement, it started on March 1, on the eve of the funeral of Kojong, the ex-Korean emperor, and lasted at least one month and a half, until mid-April. As a struggle between the ruling Japanese and the ruled Koreans, it lasted about two years, until the end of the Jiandao Incident in early 1921, and as a political and diplomatic campaign, it was not limited to the peninsula but spread over the globe to Japan, Manchuria, China proper, the United States, the Russian Far East, Moscow, Paris and London. A study of the March First Movement should therefore be allowed the needed breadth, both temporally and geographically.

The uprising can be singled out as demonstrating the influence historical perception sometimes wields on the actions of individuals. One of main issues in the uprising involves violence. Korean nationalist leaders emphasized the non-violent, peaceful nature of the demonstrations in the “Three Points of the Pledge” in the Declaration of Independence. Missionaries, as well as the governments of Britain and the United States, praised the peaceful character of this movement by Koreans, which contrasted with the brutal suppression by the Japanese. This new regard for the non-violent nature of the Korean uprising did not, however, signify the Westerners’ recognition of Korean capacity for independence; rather, it meant that people who once carried out reform by “[killing] off all the members of the Cabinet”<sup>7</sup> were now capable of showing their strength in a systematic and peaceful way. Korean leaders were strongly (and wisely) committed to peaceful resistance in the March First demonstrations, partly due to the practical consideration that a violent struggle against Japan would get them nowhere, but also because they were aware that Westerners took a very dim view of Korea’s past. Similar considerations led

<sup>6</sup> For this subject, see Chow, Tse-tung, *The May Fourth Movement – Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1960), pp. 358–361.

<sup>7</sup> Enclosure in Jordan to Landsdowne, January 20, 1904, FO/17/1659 (17).



Korean nationalists abroad to claim that a “new Korea,” i.e., the Korean Provisional Government (KPG), was being established by thousands of Koreans who had been educated and trained abroad in Western ways, and who had “high character and ability, eminently capable of establishing a Republican form of government.”<sup>8</sup>

How, then, do we evaluate “foreign factors” in the March First Movement? The Korean uprising had developed in distinct, very different stages. First, it is certain that foreign factors were almost non-existent in the early stage of popular diffusion, when the uprising was spreading from major cities to the countryside, because the Government-General severely limited the influx of foreign influences, such as media coverage on Wilson and the self-determination doctrine. A Japanese police report made fun of the observation that even educated Confucian scholars in the countryside mistook the term *chagyŏl* (in its new meaning of “self-determination”) for *chasal* (*chagyŏl*’s old meaning of “self-resolution” or suicide).<sup>9</sup>

The real factor that ignited the uprising seems to have been the national identity crisis that was provoked by the death of Emperor Kojong. This aspect has been somewhat ignored, as he was a traditional monarch who was responsible for the loss of the kingdom, and so was assumed to have gained little in the way of respect from his people, especially when compared with the “growth of national capability” theory. However, by the time of his death the Koreans felt that they had been completely deprived of Korean identity, and were becoming merely second-class Japanese. A Japanese report, quoting an unnamed Korean, described Korean feeling this way: it is better to lead a hard life with real parents than to enjoy a comfortable life with stepparents.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that foreign influences had had a strong impact on Korean nationalists in Japan, China, the United States and the Russian Far East, as well as in Korea. The outbreak of the March First Movement

<sup>8</sup> Earl K. Paik to Lloyd George, April 14, 1919, 3817 (54904/7293); April 15, 1919, 3817 (64139/7293).

<sup>9</sup> The Government-General prohibited, as of January 28, 1919, any news on the self-determination of peoples in Korean newspapers, and even forbade the showing of a film that included pictures of President Wilson. [Ku, Daeyeol, *Korea under Colonialism – The March First Movement and Anglo-Japanese Relations* (Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society-KB, 1985), pp. 45, 170. See also Kim, Sŭnghak, *Han’guk tongnipſa* (History of Korean Independence) (Seoul: Tongnip Munhwasa, 1966), p. 137. For the Japanese viewpoint, see Nagata, Akifumi, *Nihon no Chōsen tōchi to kokusai kankei: Chōsen dokuritsu undō to Amerika, 1910–1922* (Korea Rule and International Relations: Korean Independence Movement and the United States, 1910–1922) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Kuksa P’yŏnch’an Wiwŏnhoe (National History Compilation Committee) (comp.), *Han’guk tongnip undongsa* (History of the Korean Independence Movement), (1965–70) vol. 2, p. 966.

was therefore influenced by the development and ending of World War I, by the postwar arrangements for which President Wilson's Fourteen Points paved the way, and especially by the principle of self-determination.

The response of the foreign powers to the Korean uprising is of greatest significance to this book. The powers' reactions to the movement no doubt reflected the new idealism in international relations following World War I, and included sympathy for the people of colonized lands and for their calls for independence, as well as humanitarian representations against instances of ruthless suppression by Japan. It was, however, the powers' relations in East Asia that were most powerfully reflected in their reactions. Even though the independence movement of a colony was generally considered a domestic issue for the attention of the suzerain alone, such long-lasting resistance as the Korean movement, especially when it reached far beyond Korean frontiers, inevitably came to the attention of the powers that were interested in the region. Japan's expansionist policy in Manchuria and China had been turning its relations with Western powers from friendship to estrangement and conflict since the earlier part of the 1910s. Under the circumstances, the powers saw the Korean nationalist movement as a sign of the failure of Japan's colonial policy, at least in terms of its "moral" aspects. It was therefore judged to be almost certain to influence international relations in East Asia in one way or another.

#### THE EAST ASIAN SITUATION AND KOREA

The international politics of this period revolved around the Paris Peace Conference (January to June 1919), and its attendant issues. The conference, led by the United States, Britain, France, Italy and Japan, concerned itself with the defeated Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey, along with their colonies, and created the League of Nations, mainly according to the Fourteen Points initiated by President Wilson.<sup>11</sup> More important than such outward details was the emerging public awareness of the new international order, with its subsequent changes in traditional international views. A new concept, commonly called "utopianism" or "idealism" in international politics, seemed poised to overwhelm the traditional realism, and to control postwar international relations. Since some pressing matters among nations were still handled from a "realist" viewpoint, the replacement of this realism by idealism was only partial, and the two ideas

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<sup>11</sup> For this subject, see Elcock, Howard, *Portrait of a Decision: the Council of Four and the Treaty of Versailles* (Birkenhead, Cheshire: Eyre Methuen, 1972).

coexisted. Ostensibly, however, no nation dared openly challenge the common yearnings of humankind that had been brought to the fore by this new sea of feeling.<sup>12</sup>

This idealism originated from complex factors in world politics before and after World War I, as well as from social changes, the growing influence of the United States, the personal leadership of President Wilson, and the Russian Revolution. While the revolution in Russia undeniably facilitated the growth of this new ideology, so far as the Korean movement was concerned its influence must be assessed with a certain degree of caution. From a long-term perspective, the revolution had an impact on national liberation movements in China and India, since Lenin encouraged anti-imperialism movements in colonies at the second Congress of the Communist International in July 1919.<sup>13</sup> Yet, in the short term, its impact was insubstantial during the period in which the Bolsheviks took control of the government in November 1917 in the midst of the Great War, and then compromised with Germany the following March to break away from the Allied camp, after which the Allies tried to suffocate the new regime with military interventions. As for the Korean question, the newly established socialist government could not dare to stimulate Korea's independence movement, lest Japan should meddle in its revolution and civil wars under the pretext of protecting the peninsula from Bolshevik influence. Nonetheless, Moscow showed interest in the development of the March First uprising when it declared the liberation of colonies at the Comintern Congress. The Soviet interest in, and its influence on, the Korean question thus became more evident *after* the March First demonstrations. Naturally, national leaders of weaker nations, who were very alert to the development of the war and the postwar peace proceedings, did not place much expectation on the Soviet Union as a savior of colonies, at least between November 1918 and June 1919; that is, the period of the Paris Conference. Meanwhile, as the self-determination of peoples had been acknowledged as the guideline for postwar settlements, and as Wilson was expected to take leadership in the Paris Conference, these weaker nations considered

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<sup>12</sup> For idealism and realism in international politics, see Carr, E. H., *Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964); Mayer, Arno J., *Political Origins of the New Diplomacy 1917-1918* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), pp. 2ff. For a recent Korean study on the subject, see Choi, Ajin, "Power of Ideas or Ideas of Power: Wilson's Idea, U.S. Power, and a New World Order after World War I," *Korean Political Science Review*, 39-4, (2005).

<sup>13</sup> d'Encausse, Hélène Carrère and Schram, Stuart R., *Marxism and Asia* (London: Allen Lane Penguin Press, 1969), pp. 26-45.

independence with support from the American president as their best and foremost goal.<sup>14</sup>

Consequently, independence movements developed with unprecedented vigor all over the world, especially in British colonies including India, Egypt and Ireland.<sup>15</sup> In East Asia, the Korean independence movement also started with great expectations amid this new trend, displayed in such expressions as “the unfolding of a new era” and “the extinction of the age of violence,” which were included in the March First Declaration of Independence. Postwar settlements for East Asia were limited, however, and headed in a different direction from Europe, largely because postwar action for the region was at best restricted to the disposal among the Allies of the Asian and Pacific possessions of a defeated Germany. Indeed, the utopianism that was so strong a force in international politics over the globe did not reap many benefits in this part of the world

The core issue that dominated the international politics of East Asia was how to resolve conflicts among the Allied powers. Taking advantage of the power vacuum originating from the war, Japan had expanded its sphere of influence. But could Japan’s expansionist policy continue, and could Japan maintain the interests that it had acquired in wartime against the backdrop of renewed Anglo-American pressure? The United States pushed Japan to prepare to deal with the Shandong issue “in a liberal spirit” that would be just to China.<sup>16</sup> Britain, too, as soon as the war was over, began pursuing an “adverse verdict” by inviting Japan to return Chinese territory to the legitimate owner.<sup>17</sup> The United States had, in addition, marred Japan’s national pride when Wilson himself rejected Japan’s proposal of a racial equality clause in the League of Nations Covenant. The *amour propre*, national interest and honor of Japan were badly hurt.<sup>18</sup> Roland

<sup>14</sup> The American delegation at the time had an official to deal with “all those strange people who swarmed over Paris” to ask for the support of Wilson and the United States.” See Bonsal, Stephen, *Suitors and Supplicants – Little Nations at Versailles* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1946), p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> For a survey of nationalist movements in the postwar period, see Porter, Bernard, *The Lion’s Share – a Short History of British Imperialism 1850–1983* (2nd ed.) (London: Longman, 1975), chapter 7. Of particular note are the events that took place in Amritsar on April 13, 1919, when Indians made demonstrations demanding its independence and the release of their leaders, and British General Reginald Dyer ordered troops to fire on the crowd, officially killing 379 and wounding 1,200, though other estimates suggest much higher casualties.

<sup>16</sup> Memo by SS of a Conversation with the Japanese Ambassador, August 18, 1921, *FRUS, 1921*, vol. 1, p. 616; SS to Schurman, September 19, 1921, pp. 619–621.

<sup>17</sup> Curzon to Alston, July 22, 1919, *DBFP*, first series, vol. 6, p. 634.

<sup>18</sup> “The dignity, honour, and interests of such-and-such a crown” was the older expression of “vital interest” in the language of international relations. See Wight,

Morris, the U.S. ambassador in Tokyo, commented that anti-American feelings in Japan were “unfathomable.” Rumor had it, moreover, that President Wilson had met with some Koreans in Paris.<sup>19</sup>

Lastly, the political atmosphere of Japan strongly affected how the powers reacted to the Korean movement. Japanese society was undergoing radical socio-political change in the years of so-called “Taishō Democracy,” as the impact of economic affluence and of all the social shifts that had occurred during wartime were combined. The social status and popularity of the military had hit rock bottom, and in 1918 Hara Kei (Takashi) was elected the first-ever “commoner prime minister.”<sup>20</sup> It is disputable, however, whether Hara, as some Western scholars assume, could have made the form of governance in Korea and Taiwan vastly different from what it actually was in the 1920s, had he not been assassinated in 1921.<sup>21</sup> Hara could not break away from Japan’s traditional political system, which was centered on the *genrō* and its expansionist foreign policy, as supported by the military. Hara’s diary shows that his reform policy, favoring civilian administration in Korea, had been thwarted, and finally distorted, in the form of “a non-civilian, still military administration,” reflecting a compromise between the prime minister and the military headed by Yamagata Aritomo and Tanaka Giichi. Nor was Hara able to understand the impact and significance of the great social revolutions many East Asian countries were experiencing at the time.<sup>22</sup> He strove, however, for overall institutional changes, including an altered colonial government system for the postwar era. In this environment, intellectuals began to criticize military rule and the harsh suppression of the Korean movement, and the Hara cabinet put forward its reform, even if limited, of colonial government. Under these circumstances, the attitude of the United States and

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Martin, *Power Politics*, ed. by Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1978), p. 96.

<sup>19</sup> MacMurray to SS, March 5, 1919, M341, R.27 (793.94/770); Morris to SS, March 19, 1919 (793.94/787).

<sup>20</sup> For Taishō Democracy and Japan’s political situation of the times, see Scalapino, Robert A., *Democracy and the Party Movement in Prewar Japan – the Failure of the First Attempt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 211–213; Matsuo, Takayoshi, “The Development of Democracy in Japan – Taishō Democracy: Its Flowering and Breakdown,” *Developing Economies*, 4–4 (Dec 1966), pp. 628–630.

<sup>21</sup> Myers, Ramon H., and Peattie, Mark R. (eds.), *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 21.

<sup>22</sup> Regarding the revolution in China as chaos, Hara complained that the Chinese were unreasonably and purposely raising troubles about the Shandong problem. [Masuda, Tsuyoshi, “Takashi Hara and China, II,” *Kobe University Law Review*, 8 (1971), p. 31]. However, John Jordan wrote: “This great nation [China] is rousing herself from sleep ... I trust that our country will not play a halting part.” (Jordan to Balfour, December 23, 1918, *DBFP*, first series, vol. 6, p. 582.)

Britain toward the Korean uprising revealed a more ardent concern about Korean matters than at any other time during the period of the Japanese administration.

#### REACTION FROM BRITAIN<sup>23</sup>

Britain's reaction to the March First Movement was the most enthusiastic and interesting of the colonial period until the outbreak of the Pacific War, when the Korean question came to the fore on the Allies' conference table. At governmental level, the response was complicated, as it reflected the ostensible friendship with Japan as an ally, even if the two countries' interests clashed. Its first reaction to the Korean affair was, unsurprisingly, to follow the established policies of the Anglo-Japanese relationship and of a leading colonial power. Britain, in short, did not show any sympathy and support for Korean claims to independence. At the same time, the Foreign Office instructed John Jordan, the British minister in Beijing, to warn the Chinese government to disarm the Koreans in Manchuria, since Japan would "not be slow to make claims against China" for allowing Manchuria to be used for raids into Korea.<sup>24</sup>

The attitude of the British officials in East Asia displayed a decidedly anti-Japanese bias, though no one advocated the independence of Korea. William M. Royds, the British acting consul-general in Seoul, took from the beginning a very critical view of Japanese colonial policy as a whole, and of Japan's methods in handling the uprising in particular, while he showed sympathy for the Korean cause. As early as mid-March, 1919, he viewed the root causes of the uprising as the total assimilation of the Koreans by Japan, depriving them even of their own language and customs.<sup>25</sup> The next day, Royds enclosed a memorandum written on the Korean situation by Dr. James Gale, a Canadian scholar-missionary and well-known writer on Korean subjects, in which Gale tried to convince the Foreign Office that the Korean people had attained the capacity to rule themselves. In the past, Dr. Gale had written that Korea, as a country of hunger and poverty, was doomed to be subjected to a hated foreign nation, whether it be Japan or Russia.<sup>26</sup> Now, Gale wondered whether the League of

<sup>23</sup> This discussion is based on my previous researches including Ku (1985) and "The Chientao Incident (1920) and Britain," *Transactions*, (Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society-KB), 55 (1980).

<sup>24</sup> Curzon to Jordan, April 12, 1919, 3817 (54904/7293).

<sup>25</sup> Royds to Greene, March 12, 1919, 3817 (61582/7293); March 14, 1919, 3817 (61582/7293). Royds had been consul in Dansui (Tamsui), Formosa, before he was transferred to Seoul in December 1918.

<sup>26</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, January 20, 1904, FO/17/1659(17) and its enclosures.

Nations could not consider Korea's case, because the Koreans were superior to nationalities like the Turks, Bulgarians and Mexicans, who were to be free to rule over their own kind.<sup>27</sup> The analysis of the uprising and the readjustment of British policy on Korea were, retrospectively speaking, largely formulated on the basis of these dispatches of Royds in the early days, although British officials did not support Korea's independence.

This nonchalance was to change by early May, when the massacres carried out by the Japanese army on the 15th April at Che'am in Kyōnggi Province were reported to London.<sup>28</sup> Bailby F. Alston, the British chargé d'affaires in Tokyo, raised the issue at least twice with Shidehara Kijūrō, the Japanese vice foreign minister, urging the latter to take measures to put a stop to the atrocities. Alston told Shidehara in unequivocal terms how the world was shocked by the atrocities committed in Korea, where the Japanese soldiers seemed to be "outhunning the Huns" and "outrivalling Germans in war."<sup>29</sup> Alston recommended to the Foreign Office that it take positive action to impress on the Japanese embassy in London the feeling of "intense horror with which these barbarities had been received by the civilized world."<sup>30</sup>

In London, William G. Max Muller, the head of the Far Eastern Department, wrote a memorandum on the Korean uprising. This memorandum, entitled "On the Japanese Policy in Corea," was full of detailed indictments of Japan's policy in Korea. The most significant aspect of the memorandum, however, seemed to lie in the fact that the Foreign Office was now formulating for the first time its recommendations to Japan for the improvement of the Korean situation. Max Muller was highly critical of Japan's actions in Korea, commenting that "the real source of the present trouble is to be found in the Japanese policy of 'Japanizing' Corea completely," and that "the share allowed to the Koreans in the administration of the country

<sup>27</sup> Enclosure in Royds to Greene, March 14, 1919, 3817 (61582/7293). An American report also referred to Gale's view, and the DFEA was very much interested in this report. (Sammons to SS, July 22, 1919, M426, R.3, 895.00/653 and minute.) Gale was the first scholar to inform the West of the history and culture of Korea, making it known, for example that "metallography," or the use of movable type, was invented in Korea fifty years before Gutenberg. (Scidmore to SS, October 11, 1913, M426, R.6. 895.403.) For a more recent discussion of Gale, see Rutt, Richard, *A Biography of James Scarth Gale and a New Edition of his History of Korean People* (Seoul: RAS-KB, 1972).

<sup>28</sup> For the Japanese reaction and suppression of the movement, see Ku(1985), chapter 4; Nagata, Akifumi, "Chōsen san ichi undō no tenkai to Nihon ni yoru chin'atsu no jittai ni tsuite- Nichibei no shiryō ni ikyo shite"(Korean March First Movement and the Suppression by Japan), *Sophia History*, 47, (November, 2002).

<sup>29</sup> Alston to Curzon, May 5, 1919, 3817 (71169, 90423/7293).

<sup>30</sup> Alston to Curzon, May 5, 1919; May 30, 1919, 3818 (81876/7293).

are consistently diminished, while the military element was always in the foreground.”<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, the memorandum ruled out advocating for the independence of Korea, since this was “outside the sphere of practical politics.” After World War I, East Asian relations were concentrated on China, where Japan challenged the Western powers for supremacy. Max Muller had simply reflected the London government’s realism. What Britain wanted was to mitigate the extreme harshness of the military regime in Korea, and thus improve the lot of the people “without any way weakening the hold of Japan on the country.” Although progress in this direction had to be gradual, Max Muller suggested that, as a next step, a Korean Ministry should be formed with Japanese advisors, somewhat on the lines of the system that Britain operated in Egypt.

Britain seemed to consider “some form of self-government” as the ultimate solution to the Korean problem. For this purpose, the assimilation policy had to be stopped, the study of the Korean language encouraged, and some measures taken to ensure freedom of speech and assembly, and to allow for a free press that permit the venting of popular grievances. These measures had, in fact, been adopted by the British government in Egypt and India, and were the fundamental difference between British colonial policy and that of Japan. It should be remembered, however, that “the British example in Egypt” had been a favorite theme during the Japanese protectorate regime, before the annexation. The Japanese concluded that under this kind of dual government system it was very difficult to achieve anything, and that, in most cases apart from Britain, it had ended in failure. The experience of the protectorate regime in Korea had shown just this result, and had, the Japanese claimed, precipitated the annexation.<sup>32</sup>

Lord George N. Curzon presided over the Foreign Office from 1919, first as acting foreign secretary, before he succeeded Arthur J. Balfour, who had been in Paris for the Peace Conference, in October of that year. Having served as ex-vice-roy of India, and having had various experiences in colonial government, he was an authority on colonial issues, both by his own estimation and that of the public. Yet Curzon’s views on colonies all boiled down to gradual reforms, based on his magisterial personality and paternalistic attitude toward Asian peoples. Curzon believed his knowledge of Korea was incomparable because he had been received by King Kojong on a visit to East Asia in the 1890s, and because he had written a comprehensive book on Far Eastern lands based largely on this trip. His understanding

<sup>31</sup> Memorandum on Japanese Policy in Corea, July 5, 1919, 3818 (106971/7293).

<sup>32</sup> MacDonald to Grey, September 2, 1910, 878 (35479/988); October 27, 1910, 878 (39118/988). Lewther to Grey, January 2, 1907, 237 (5314/5314) and supplements.



of modern Korea was, however, governed by two pivotal ideas: the corruption of the old Korean government, and reform by the Japanese administration.<sup>33</sup> Curzon's stance, along with his imperious temperament, had a decisive effect on how the Foreign Office managed the Korean question.

Curzon talked about Korea with Viscount Chinda Sutemi, the Japanese ambassador, twice within a week, on July 18 and 22. The talks mainly dealt with Japan's policy on China, an issue "of capital importance" for Britain, and yet Curzon brought up the Korean situation in "very frank and unequivocal terms." Using mostly Max Muller's memorandum, he discussed "the most barbarous and revolting atrocities," and the assault on a British missionary by the Japanese police in Korea. Surprisingly, Ambassador Chinda not only accepted the allegations of the acting foreign secretary but also asked whether he had any suggestions to make. Curzon replied by suggesting "The Remedies" in Max Muller's memorandum, which included the self-government of Korea.<sup>34</sup>

The British judged that situation had slightly progressed when Admiral Saitō Makoto was appointed governor-general of Korea in August, and ushered in the reform of the Korean government.<sup>35</sup> Yet their optimism did not last long. Alston, in Tokyo, accused the new Seoul government of retaining the practice of flogging suspected dissidents and other offenders as late as September. This was most disappointing to London, as the abolition of flogging could be stopped "by a stroke of the pen."<sup>36</sup> Flogging of native offenders had been retained by the Government-General at the time of the annexation, under the pretext that it had long been one of the traditional forms of punishment in Korea. But the Japanese soon found it more effective as a punishment for trifling offences than short imprisonment or small fines, since it avoided unnecessary delay by ordinary judicial procedure. As the popular demonstrations progressed in 1919, this type of punishment became a way of "demonstrating force to the Koreans," through which the government tried to discourage the people from taking part in the disturbances. According to Royds, Japanese police and gendarmes were "practically all brutal bullies with no humanity or restraint in the exercise of their authorities," resulting in many cases of death and maiming.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> For further views on Korea, see Curzon, N. George, *Problems of the Far East* (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1894), pp. 189–190, 165–167. See also Nish (1972), pp. 263–264.

<sup>34</sup> Curzon to Alston, July 22, 1919, 3818 (100885/7293).

<sup>35</sup> Curzon to Alston, September 1, 1919, 3818 (125092/7293).

<sup>36</sup> Alston to Curzon, November 27, 1919, 3818 (166709/7293).

<sup>37</sup> Royds to Alston, May 13, 1919, 3818 (100168/7293).

This was the background that made flogging the most contentious issue as far as Britain was concerned. In London, Curzon mentioned this matter to the Japanese ambassador two times within a month. When he raised the question again in November, the Japanese ambassador told him that his government was considering the total prohibition of the practice. In Tokyo, Alston suggested at the end of October that a general amnesty for those engaged in independence activities would be the best step in assisting the Japanese to restore calm in the peninsula.<sup>38</sup> The Seoul government rejected this idea, however, on the grounds that it was still being confronted by a large number of agitators of violent bent.<sup>39</sup> Although the situation in Korea did not improve in any way, in Tokyo Alston became more optimistic with the coming of the new year, largely because the Korean budget estimates for 1920–1921 included expenditures connected with the abolition of flogging, the reform of the police system, and an expansion of education. From this, he concluded that the British representations to the Japanese ambassador in London had “not been without good result.” Following this, the Korean question faded from the attention of the British government, and the Foreign Office expressed in August its hope that stories of torture would remain “a thing of the past.”<sup>40</sup>

In contrast to the diminished interest in Korea among official circles, the Korean issue began to attract attention elsewhere in Britain. One reason was the abrogation of the Korean customs tariff, which meant that British shipping would be excluded from Korean trade from then on.<sup>41</sup> This, although agreed upon with the British government ten years before, stimulated anti-Japanese feelings among merchants in East Asia. It was in this context that George Shaw, a wealthy British merchant in Andong (present-day Dandong), the main city on the Manchurian side at the mouth of the Yalu, was arrested on July 11, 1920, on charges of assisting the Korean independence movement.<sup>42</sup> Shaw, who was to be given praise and reward for his aid to Korean nationalists in China and Manchuria by the South Korean government after the liberation, was a highly respected figure all along the China coast, and had been one of the most generous donors to British patriotic funds throughout World War I. Shaw’s arrest, therefore, triggered hatreds pent up for a decade, uniting British opinion in East Asia under the banner of commercial jealousy, which evolved

<sup>38</sup> Curzon to Alston, November 20, 1919, 3818 (155374/7293); Alston to Curzon, October 30, 1919, 3818 (147840;158393/7293) and minutes on *ibid.*.

<sup>39</sup> Alston to Curzon, December 19, 1919, 3818 (177943/7293).

<sup>40</sup> Foreign Office to Buxton, August 12, 1920, 5252 (1753/56/23).

<sup>41</sup> Eliot to Curzon, August 6, 1920, 5352 (1759/56/23).

<sup>42</sup> Eliot to Curzon, July 18, 1920, 5352 (1531/56/23).

into criticism of Japanese policy in Korea, and further into opposition to the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.<sup>43</sup> As the arrest had assumed a political nature, and the House of Commons was urging British merchants in East Asia to support Shaw, the Japanese Foreign Ministry had to persuade the Seoul government to release the arrestee in April 1921.

Second, Japan created a crisis over the Korean border in October 1920. The “Jiandao Incident,” started by the large-scale dispatch of Japanese troops under the pretext of sweeping up members of the Korean Independence Army and brigands in the region, was a far more serious matter for the powers concerned, and completely overshadowed Shaw’s case. For Koreans, the occasion was a revival and extension of the March First independence fight, but on foreign soil. The Japanese army showed its brutality in the “Norubawi (Deer Rock) Massacre” near the village of Longjing (“Yongjŏng” in Korean) in Jiandao, and these atrocities were disclosed by foreigners, namely Canadian missionaries in the area. One major difference was that the movement here was an armed struggle, as opposed to the nonviolence in Korea.<sup>44</sup>

The Japanese dispatch of troops to the Korean-Manchurian frontier was significant on an international level since, whatever the cause of the conflict, Japan was perceived as striving for political and territorial expansion through these very explicit means. The powers’ response to the Jiandao Incident, however, was polarized between Britain’s positivism and the United States’ timidity. While the British government left substantial records and reacted quickly to the incident, the U.S. government did not show much enthusiasm, and its records on the incident were sparse. The reasons for such different reactions were manifold. First, some Canadian missionaries were working in missionary and educational activities in Jiandao, and, since Canada was part of the British Commonwealth, these missionaries reported what they had seen to the British offices in Seoul, Tokyo or Beijing, and asked for protection. When the relationship between the Japanese expedition and these missionaries became extremely sour, the British Foreign Office started to intervene. Second, the inaction of the United States reflected its stance throughout the 1910s; that is, its virtual disregard of the Korean question. The American government delegated the whole matter to the British, and even obtained most of its information on the matter through the British embassy in Tokyo.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Clive to Curzon, August 21, 1920, 5352 (1933/56/23).

<sup>44</sup> On the Jiandao Incident, see my article, “The Chientao Incident (1920) and Britain.” See also *NGB*, 1922, pp. 521–596.

<sup>45</sup> Ruddock to SS, October 18, 1920, M341, R.29 (793.94/1132).

Britain, in its first official announcement, tried to contain Japan's territorial ambitions by reminding all concerned that the expedition to Jiandao should not result in Japan's indefinite occupation of the region, and that the Japanese government had officially declared its intention to withdraw the troops immediately upon quelling the lawless situation.<sup>46</sup> However, by late October, Miles W. Lampson, the acting minister in Beijing from February to December, 1920, pointed out that:

The Jiandao district stretches from the Korean frontier (N.E. corner) right up to the Chinese Eastern Railway, and its occupation by Japanese troops may conceivably be part of a pre-arranged plan. We know that brigands can be created by Japan when she wishes to.<sup>47</sup>

The British government believed that Jiandao belonged to China, and that such a move in a foreign territory could not be allowed. This was repeatedly stressed by British officials in China, including Alston, promoted to minister in Beijing by December 1920, and Frederick Wilkinson, the consul-general in Mukden. The Foreign Office instructed Ambassador Sir Charles Eliot in Tokyo, a well-known personality with a pro-Japanese penchant, to inform the Tokyo government of the grave impact of the delayed withdrawal of Japanese troops.<sup>48</sup> Another measure, namely that a British consulate be established in the Jiandao region, was suggested by Victor Wellesley, the assistant secretary of the Far Eastern Department. However, the issue was closed with a compromise, by which a consul of the consulate-general in Mukden would occasionally visit Jiandao and other regions in Manchuria, when it was deemed necessary. The inspection trip made to Jiandao in May 1921 by Wilfred Cunningham, a consul in Dalian, only confirmed the fact that Japan's political and economic penetration was greatly aided by the expedition, and that, even if the troops were withdrawn, Japan could attempt to seize the area whenever it was given the opportunity.<sup>49</sup>

It was, perhaps, the activities of Frederick McKenzie, an anti-Japanese and pro-Korean journalist, who gave the most immediate reason for the Korean question to be discussed once again in Britain in late 1920. McKenzie visited interior regions of Korea where the Righteous Army had fought, the first time that a foreigner had done so, not

<sup>46</sup> Curzon to Hayashi, October 21, 1920, 5346 (2471/2358/10).

<sup>47</sup> Minute on Clive to Curzon, October 22, 1920, 5346 (2567/2358/10).

<sup>48</sup> Curzon to Eliot, February 14, 1921, 6585 (303/3/10) and December 30, 1920, 5346 (3395/2358/10).

<sup>49</sup> Cunningham to Wilkinson, June 7, 1921, 6586 (2771/3/10).

long before he wrote *The Tragedy of Korea* in 1908. In mid-1920, he published *Korea's Fight for Freedom*, and distributed it to major British institutions, including the House of the Commons. In this book, McKenzie listed the various forms that Japanese atrocities had taken during the March First Movement, and discussed Korean aspirations for independence, mainly using information provided by the KPG in Shanghai. In this way, he had a considerable influence on how the Korean question was seen in Britain. This anti-Japanese mood eventually led to the birth of a pro-Korean organization, called "Friends of Korea," in October, whose approximately thirty members included professors, journalists, clergymen, and members of the House of Commons. Members passed a resolution to improve Korea's political, social and religious circumstances, to collect and spread information on Korea, including on the suppression of the nationalist movement, and to support those involved in the independence movement, along with their families.<sup>50</sup> Thus the "Korea Commission," which had been created during the Peace Conference, moved the center of the Korean independence movement in Europe from Paris to London, albeit temporarily.<sup>51</sup>

In such complex circumstances as Japan's expansion in Manchuria, the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and the Korean uprising, the Foreign Office was required once again to direct its attention to this "thing of the past." Wellesley instructed Frank Ashton-Gwatkin, who had begun his service in the Far Eastern Department in August 1919, to compile a memorandum that would provide a comprehensive record of the countless cases in which Japan had treated the subjects of its colonies or its Allies "with signal brutality, truculence and arrogance."<sup>52</sup> Ashton-Gwatkin's memorandum was, in short, a compilation of Japanese brutalities in East Asia, especially in Korea, during the March First uprising. What was significant was that, unlike the July 1919 memorandum by Max Muller, this did not suggest any policy recommendations to the Japanese government, but focused instead on compiling specific cases of brutality directed against the indigenous populations of Japan's colonies, based on anti-Japanese reports from Tokyo and Seoul.<sup>53</sup> In this sense, the British embassy in

<sup>50</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, November 3, 1920, 5352 (1753/56/23); Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe (comp.), *Han'guk tongnip undongsa* (History of the Korean Independence Movement) (Seoul, 1965-70), vol. 3, pp. 243-245.

<sup>51</sup> Lee, Chong-sik, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), pp. 145-146.

<sup>52</sup> Minute on Eliot to Crowe, March 10, 1921, 6699 (1823/1823/23).

<sup>53</sup> Memorandum respecting Japanese Atrocities in Korea and Elsewhere, December 8, 1920, 5354 (3199/56/23). Ashton-Gwatkin, a diplomat and novelist whose expertise lay in East Asian affairs, left four novels on Japanese society. [Nish, Ian H., "'In One

Tokyo commented that the memorandum was biased and unfriendly to Japan. Yet the Foreign Office wholeheartedly supported Ashton-Gwatkin's stance, while disapproving of the views held by its representative in Tokyo.<sup>54</sup> Ashton-Gwatkin's report gave a new political significance to the Korean question by relating Japanese brutalities to the negotiation of another Anglo-Japanese Alliance. He argued that, as the annexation of Korea by Japan was the principal visible achievement of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Britain could not flee from its responsibility for the situation in Korea. Japan was an ally, and "alliance" meant a partnership in which a partner should bear a certain responsibility for the other's actions.

The memorandum, however, did not produce any tangible results. On the one hand, it did not include any specific measures to be suggested to Japan by the British government. On the other, since the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was regarded as being on too high a plane to be used as a lever – unlike the minor political occasions of Japanese atrocities or other aftermaths of the Korean uprising – the memorandum could not be used to constrain the alliance itself.<sup>55</sup> The Anglo-Japanese relationship, in fact, already under pressure due to Japan's expansion in East Asia, was rapidly approaching its formal end, in 1922, partly as a result of the March First Movement and the series of other developments that followed from it.

#### THE AMERICAN RESPONSES

The British response to the March First Movement came mostly from the government, behind closed doors. On a nongovernmental level, reactions surfaced as late as the 1920s, when the British community in East Asia heard their voice echoed in Parliament. In the United States, however, the responses appeared in varied and open ways through the government, the Congress, the press, and missionaries. Some responses had to be immediate and public, since Korean leaders approached the American government in high expectation of support from the president and the nation. On the other hand, they seem to have been reluctant to approach Britain, considering it an ally of Japan, and bound by the alliance.<sup>56</sup>

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Day Have I Lived Many Lives': Frank Ashton-Gwatkin, Novelist and Diplomat, 1889–1976," Nish (ed.), *Britain & Japan – Biographical Portraits* (Kent: Japan Library, 1994).]

<sup>54</sup> Eliot to Crowe, March 10, 1921, 6699 (1823/1823/23); Parlett to Wellesley, April 5, 1921, 6673 (1772/63/23).

<sup>55</sup> Hayashi to Curzon, February 10, 1921, 6677 (543/78/23).

<sup>56</sup> Yet some Koreans in China perceived the deteriorating relationship between the two countries and hoped for Britain's support. [Military Headquarters (Singapore) to War Office, March 7, 1919, 3817 (64039/7293).]

There were two aspects to the official U.S. response to the anti-Japanese movement in Korea. First was the government's reaction to the efforts of Korean nationalists in the United States, who tried to attend the Paris Peace Conference. Second was the official response from the State Department, including the American consulate-general in Seoul and the Tokyo embassy. Regarding the first aspect, a more fundamental review, something more than a mere reiteration of relatively well-known material, is needed. Was the self-determination of peoples a mere manifestation of idealistic purpose, in total disregard of the international order of the times? And were Korean nationalists, therefore, wrong in expecting anything from it? Pondering such questions will help us to understand how accurately or adequately Koreans perceived and responded to the new world.

President Wilson was devoted to idealistic goals, and believed it was his god-given mission to make the world a better place by reordering the relations of its nations so that "never again the plain people of this earth be afflicted with war."<sup>57</sup> The Paris Peace Conference was envisioned as a means not simply of terminating the war but of founding a new order in Europe, preparing the way not just for peace but an eternal peace.<sup>58</sup> The fifth of the Fourteen Points put forward in January 1918 – that is, the doctrine of self-determination – was defined as an impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based on the principle that the interests of the population concerned must have equal weight with the claims of government. This idealistic self-determination was not a mere "abstract political principle," as Wilson put it. It was also an undeniable fact that the Fourteen Points provided a neat summation of the Anglo-American purpose in fighting the War. In other words, while the principles might stimulate the yearning for independence among the many peoples absorbed by Austro-Hungary, thus militarily weakening this declining empire, they also reflected the two Anglophone powers' judgment that only consistent liberal and anti-imperialistic policy statements could keep Russia in the Allied camp. Wilson, moreover, did not limit the doctrine to Europe. From this perspective, national leaders in Korea, as well as those in regions directly related to the European war, such as the Middle East, had a positive perception of the idea. As an editorial in *The Peking Leader* pointed out after the March First uprising, it was totally unconvincing for Japan to distinguish what was European or non-European in

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<sup>57</sup> George, Alexander L. and Juliette, *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House – a Personality Study* (New York: John Day Co., 1956), pp. 195–196. See also, Link, Arthur S., *Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era 1910–1917* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1954).

<sup>58</sup> Elcock, Howard, *Portrait of a Decision – the Council of Four and the Treaty of Versailles* (Birkenhead, Cheshire: Eyre Methuen, 1972), p. 17.

the application of this principle, when “European concepts were to have universal meaning,” and Japan wanted equal “racial treatment” with its counterparts in the West.<sup>59</sup> Such interpretations by colonial leaders were further reinforced when Wilson began revealing his practical leadership at the Paris Conference in early 1919.

The activities of Korean nationalists seeking the support of the United States and the president have been substantially covered in many studies. In short, immediately after the Fourteen Points were declared, the Korean National Association opened a gathering in San Francisco, which resolved to present the Korean question at the Peace Conference, and elected Syngman Rhee and Henry Chung (Chŏng Han’gyŏng) as representatives. In Shanghai, the New Korean Youth Party was created under the leadership of Yŏ Unhyŏng (Woonhyung Lyuh), and sent Kim Kyusik (John Kuisic S. Kim) to Paris as its delegate. Koreans in Jiandao and the Russian Far East met at Nikolsk around late 1918 or early 1919, and decided to send Yun Hae and Ko Ch’ang’il to Paris.<sup>60</sup> In addition, those in Beijing organized the Korean Independence Committee under the leadership of “Chao Yu-fu” and “Chi T’ien-fu”, whose Korean names remain undisclosed, and submitted an appeal for Korean independence to American Minister Paul Reinsch before February 1919. Although this committee is lesser known than the New Korean Youth Party, which had successfully sent Kim Kyusik to Paris and was to play a leading role in the creation of the KPG in April, the issue was given full-page coverage in the *North China Herald*, an influential British-owned paper in Chinese coastal areas. On March 1, an editorial appeared in the same paper on this “Korean Independence Committee” issue. Its activities must after all have drawn more attention in Chinese coastal regions than Yŏ’s party alone.<sup>61</sup> Minister Reinsch reported that they belonged to the Korean Revolutionary Party, and Carl Crow, a member of the Committee on Public Information of the U.S. legation in Beijing, added that a personage representing Koreans in both China and Russia had left for Paris in early February to publicize Korea’s claim to independence. This Korean traveled under the Chinese name “Chung Chun-wen” with a Chinese passport, enjoyed considerable support, and carried with him a number of letters of introduction from Americans and Britons in East Asia.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, as the contents of the draft for the appeal for independence that was written

<sup>59</sup> Editorial by Putnam Weale, in *The Peking Leader*, April 13, 1919, enclosure in Reinsch to SS, May 11, 1919, M426, R.3, 895.00/634.

<sup>60</sup> Kang, Tŏksang (ed.), *Gendaishi shiryō, Chōsen* (Materials of Modern History, Korea), (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 1965–67), vol. 26, pp. 82–87.

<sup>61</sup> *North China Herald*, February 22, 1919, and March 1, 1919.

<sup>62</sup> Reinsch to SS, February 16, 1919, M426, R.2, 895.00/581 and supplements.



by Kim Kyusik en route to Europe were rather different from those of the Revolutionary Party “appeal” that had been delivered to the U.S. minister in Beijing, we may well be talking about quite separate Korean groups working in China.

The Koreans in the United States were refused visas by the Department of State, and so failed to get to Paris. Yun Hae and Ko Ch’ang’il, the two men dispatched by the Koreans in Russia to go to Paris, managed to reach Moscow in July, forging a desperate path through the chaos of the Russian civil war. They discussed the possibility of assisting the Korean independence movement with Russian leaders. In August, however, they called on the British consulate in the northern port city of Archangel to obtain visas, and had a conversation with Reginald H. Hoare, the British consul, at the latter’s request.<sup>63</sup> Yet by then the Paris Conference was already over. It was only Kim Kyusik who arrived in Paris on March 13, and started several activities as a national representative. However, like his colleagues in the United States, he failed to obtain support for his country, and finally left for America in August after four months of fruitless effort.<sup>64</sup>

The policy of the United States had already been established during the war. Despite his passionate devotion to the self-determination of peoples, and despite the American capacity to take leadership on world issues, Wilson realized that colonial problems evaded easy solutions once he set about looking into specific issues of the postwar settlement. Other Allies were particularly insistent that these fourteen principles should not be applied to problems relating to their own interests. Georges Clemenceau, the French prime minister, pointedly said: “He exasperates me with his fourteen Commandments when the good god had only ten.”<sup>65</sup> Even Lansing and other working-level U.S. officials were afraid that an indiscriminate application of the Fourteen Points could result in modification of borderlines in about 50 countries, and that this would tend to destroy, rather than fortify, the world peace system. The State Department therefore added some caveats to each of Wilson’s points. Point Five, demanding an impartial distribution of colonies based on the principle of self-determination, would be applied only to claims arising from the war. This made the Fourteen Points more acceptable to the European Allies, but at the

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<sup>63</sup> Hoare to Balfour, August 12, 1919, 3818 (120998/7293). Perhaps this referred to the only occasion where a study representing an official British stance had ever mentioned Korea in relation to World War I: “Even so distant a ‘nationality’ as the Koreans in Siberia attempted to obtain representation.” [Temperley, H.W.V. (ed.), *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), vol. 1, p. 246.]

<sup>64</sup> Kim Kyusik to Lloyd George, 3817 (89555/7293). See also Bonsal, *Unfinished Business* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1944), preface and chapters 1 and 15.

<sup>65</sup> Elcock, p. 33.

cost of making compromises that were, in fact, a betrayal of Wilson's ideals.<sup>66</sup> It was in this context that Secretary of State Robert Lansing rejected the Korean request, as Korea was not a war-related issue.<sup>67</sup>

The next question concerns the American response and countermeasures after the outbreak of the March First uprising. Several questions might be raised: did the United States criticize Japan's harsh measures in Korea as much as Britain did and, if so, what was the method it chose to make its views known? Was there any possibility that the United States might cooperate with Britain over the issue, and, if they had cooperated, could they have discussed the international status of Korea? To come to some conclusions, it must be remembered that, far from following Britain's outlook on the subject, the United States approached the Korean situation from a completely different angle.

The Americans undeniably produced a good deal of solid, analytical documentation on the Korean situation. It is bulky but does not contain the same sorts of fascinating narratives as that of the British. On the 5<sup>th</sup> March, Leo A. Bergholz, the U.S. consul-general in Seoul, submitted a report to highlight the peaceful and nonviolent nature of the Korean demonstrations, with no critical indictment of the Government-General's reactions:

Last Saturday demonstrations wholly of a non-revolutionary and pacific character and sensibly handled by the authorities, took place at Seoul and throughout the peninsula, but unfortunately inflammatory circulars [were distributed in the] city, accusing the government of having poisoned [the] Emperor and a document was presented the governor-general containing attacks upon Japan and declaring that Korea is independent.... Crowds [were] attacked by police and troops with some loss of life in [sic] further north. Native Christian preachers and converts actively engaged in the movement. Wholesale arrests of Christians throughout Korea. ... Martial law not likely. The missionaries have not countenanced the movement and as a body are carefully refraining from displaying sympathy with it.<sup>68</sup>

From this cool appraisal of the uprising in its early stage, U.S. interpretations of, and responses to, the Korean situation were slowly

<sup>66</sup> For the original commentary, see Baldwin, p. 132. See also Elcock, pp. 32, 38.

<sup>67</sup> Korean frustration to the Paris Peace Conference, see Kim, Sungbae, "pan-berūsaiyu: gukgejōk minjokjagyōlnon kwa hangukjōk bunhwa ūi yōngyesōng(Anti-Versailles: National Self-determination in Western Sense and its Adaptation in Korea)", *Korean Political Science Review*, 59–2 (2019).

<sup>68</sup> Bergholz to SS, March 5, 1919 M426, R.2, 895.00/569. The original text is a telegraphic report.

changing to an indictment of Japanese methods of suppression. Like their British counterparts, American officials first emphasized the nonviolence of the Koreans' demonstrations, as opposed to the cruel responses shown by the Japanese police. It was during this time that an American woman in Pyongyang was attacked, and the safety of other American citizens was said to be in danger. As the crackdown by Japan grew more severe, the underlying capacities of the Koreans were emphasized: "The movement of the Koreans was a remarkable example that showed possibilities [of] passive resistance, revelation of organization and action of people supposedly extremely individualistic."<sup>69</sup> However, this theme did not develop into any recommendation for Korea's self-rule, such as appeared in the dispatches of the British representatives in Tokyo and Seoul. When the Che'am massacre (on April 15) was revealed, chiefly through the efforts of American missionaries, including Horace H. Underwood, Consul-General Bergholz strongly criticized the police for the use of unnecessary force, while he mentioned that the Koreans had been without firearms of any description.<sup>70</sup>

The Korean uprising was an opportunity for U.S. officials in East Asia to review Japanese colonial policy over the preceding nine years. As for the immediate causes of the demonstrations, Morris had to reckon with various rumors about the decease of Kojong, with Japan's insistence on a Shintō-style funeral for the former Korean emperor, and the unsympathetic attitude of Japan's rulers toward the people of the peninsula.<sup>71</sup> Bergholz, in Seoul, also considered the Japanese policy as a whole to be the real source of Korean discontent, as did his British counterpart.<sup>72</sup> His suggestions to correct the situation, such as the gaining of freedom of speech and a free press, non-interference with the use of the Korean language, and making modifications in Japan's assimilation policy, were also similar to those put forward by Royds.<sup>73</sup>

American officials in Seoul seem to have perceived that the situation in Korea was departing from normality as early as late 1918, when Korean nationalists abroad were beginning active movements. In the peninsula itself, the death of Korea's last independent ruler, the ex-emperor, had revived a strong feeling of loyalty toward the royal house. An article published in the American-owned

<sup>69</sup> Morris to SS, March 12, 1919, M426, R.2, 895.00/570; March 15, 1919, 895.00/572.

<sup>70</sup> Bergholz to Morris, April 17, 1919, M426, R.3, 895.00/628; Bergholz to SS, April 23, 1919, M426, R.3, 895.00/624.

<sup>71</sup> Morris to SS, March 21, 1919, M426, R.2, 895.00/586.

<sup>72</sup> Bergholz to SS, March 16, 1919, M426, R.2, 895.00/589.

<sup>73</sup> Bergholz to SS, March 12, 1919, M426, R.2, 895.00/571; Morris to SS, March 15, 1919, 895.00/572.

*Japan Advertiser* on January 7, 1919, on the reported campaigning of certain Koreans in the United States, stated that “there can be little doubt that American missionaries are behind the independence movement of the Koreans.” It was in this context that the American consulate-general issued a warning to its citizens in the peninsula not to involve themselves in Korean domestic issues. On January 24, 1919, Bergholz reissued a communication, intended for their guidance, to the secretaries of the several mission stations in Korea; one which had originally been sent in 1897 by Minister John M.B. Sill to all Americans in Korea, at the insistence of the State Department, enjoining upon them the necessity of “scrupulously abstaining from participating in the domestic affairs of the country.” Sill had warned American citizens that if they meddled in political questions in Korea by expressing opinions or giving advice, it was at their own risk and peril.<sup>74</sup> These measures by Bergholz and his predecessor exemplified the non-interventionist stance of the United States toward Korea’s domestic politics, and also symbolized American passivity towards the March First Movement. For the Washington government, the action of its consul-general was an insightful preventive measure in view of the developing situation. The Government-General naturally gave more weight to the potential blow to Japan’s image abroad than to the suppression of demonstrations *per se*. In this respect, the role of American missionaries was potentially most serious, as they were not only alleged agitators behind the scenes, but almost the only channels that were relaying a true picture of the uprising to the outside world.<sup>75</sup>

Since the outbreak of the demonstrations, the Government-General had insisted that the American president and his self-determination principle were behind the commotion; that there were large numbers of Christians involved; that Koreans lacked the ability to organize a movement of such scale on their own; and that they tended to toady up to the Western powers. As Morris pointed out, being “characteristically Japanese”, the Seoul government would rather criticize the missionaries’ maneuvers and any American intervention than admit their own misgovernment.<sup>76</sup> A police report even claimed that Bergholz went around the demonstration sites in his official vehicle and encouraged the public.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Bergholz to SS, January 29, 1919, *FRUS, 1919*, vol. 2, pp. 458–459.

<sup>75</sup> On the missionaries’ relationship with the Government-General during this period, see Ku (1985), pp. 27–36, chapter 6; Moffett, Samuel H., “The Independence Movement and the Missionaries,” *Transactions*, 54 (1979).

<sup>76</sup> Morris to SS, March 21, 1919, M426, R.2, 895.00/586.

<sup>77</sup> *Gendaishi shiryō, Chōsen*, vol. 25, p. 284.

It was more than natural, therefore, that the Government-General tried, among other things, to curb the Korean situation through the mediation of the missionaries. It arranged meetings of high-ranking government officials with senior missionaries three times, in which the Japanese asked the missionaries to exert their influence among their Korean converts. Missionary representatives claimed neutrality in political matters, thus denying any involvement in the Korean movement, much less having had anything to do with the uprising, as any known involvement might have weakened their position vis-à-vis the government, and thus prejudiced their evangelical activities in Korea. At the same time, they conveyed their stance of continued neutrality to American officials in Seoul and Tokyo, while demanding protection from the Seoul government. The situation in the peninsula was, however, getting worse, and Japanese newspapers encouraged verbal attacks on American missionaries; all the more so when the confrontation with the United States became more intense over the Shandong question at the Paris Conference.<sup>78</sup>

Under these circumstances, the State Department hurriedly instructed Ambassador Morris to “publicly” reiterate the aforementioned official note, which had been sent by Bergholz to the various missionary organizations on January 24. Washington believed that mistrust between the United States and Japan should not be allowed to develop further, precisely because of the situation in Korea.<sup>79</sup> It was amid this hostile atmosphere that the arrest of Eli Miller Mowry, an American missionary, took place in Pyongyang. The State Department made it clear that the consulate at Seoul should “jealously guard American interests but at the same time exercise the greatest precaution and restraint in dealing with the general situation in Korea and with specific cases involving Americans as they may arise.”<sup>80</sup>

If American diplomats were cautious in their actions, their views on Japan and its policies in Korea grew much more critical. Hence Ambassador Morris commented:

It is safe to say that ninety per cent of the American missionaries in Korea while recognizing the material benefits of Japanese rule are at heart antagonistic to the Japanese methods of military government in Korea. Here lies one of the chief causes for charging the foreign mis-

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<sup>78</sup> Morris to SS, March 15, 1919, M426, R.2, 895.00/572. For this subject, see Ku (1985), chapter 6.

<sup>79</sup> SS to Morris, March 13, 1919, M426, R.2, 895.00/568; March 17, 1919, 895.00/572.

<sup>80</sup> For Mowry case, see Bergholz to Morris, April 4, 1919, M426, R.2, 895.00/613 and 895.00/614 files; Bergholz to Morris, April 17, 1919, M426, R.2, 895.00/623; SS to Morris, April 12, 1919, M426, R.2, 895.00/595; *FRUS, 1919*, vol. 2, p. 462.

sionaries with responsibility, who have the closest possible relations with their native converts and in many cases deep sympathy and affection for them.<sup>81</sup>

When *The Seoul Press*, the government's bulletin, commented that the Che'am massacre was a result of the excessive zeal shown by soldiers in doing their duty, the American ambassador wrote to the State Department that this comment represented a level of cynical callousness, official sophistry and impiety that had not been achieved even by the attempted exculpations of the savage acts the German military had committed in Belgium and France. American policy in the Philippines was essentially and fundamentally based on the doctrine of "sympathy," something which Japan's policy in the peninsula obviously lacked.<sup>82</sup> Consul-General Bergholz maintained the same stance in reviewing the Korean situation after Admiral Saitō Makoto was appointed governor-general in August 1919. It was hard to fathom how Japan, during the administrations of Terauchi and Hasegawa, had failed to understand the psychology of the Koreans, a race that was kindred to the Japanese, and that did not have, in Bergholz's view, any religious differences with them; all the more so when considering the Koreans' docility, their ready obedience to the law, and their "chicken-like simplicity." Bergholz believed that although most Koreans did not know what the independence movement was, the uprising could truly be considered a general nationwide revolt against repressive alien rulers.<sup>83</sup>

Ramsford Miller, who succeeded Bergholz in December 1919, reported on the general situation in Korea to Morris, in Tokyo, through a personally addressed letter. In this letter, officially documented by the State Department to be "of interest," this expert on Korean affairs, who had decades' worth of experience, expressed his surprise to see the depth and strength of the new movement in Korea, something that went beyond the knowledge he had gained while working on Korean affairs at the State Department in Washington. He expected that Korean peasants, despite the high level of sentiment among students and intellectuals, would be ignorant of, and uninterested in, the independence movement. And yet he found "a new national sentiment" that was deeply rooted in peoples' lives. He predicted that, unless the Seoul government was quick to reform the brutal police institutions, the situation would be seriously aggra-

<sup>81</sup> *FRUS, 1919*, vol. 2, p. 461; Morris to SS, March 15, 1919, M426, R.2, 895.00/572.

<sup>82</sup> Bergholz to SS, July 17, 1919, M426, R.3, 895.00/649; Morris to SS, May 29, 1919, M426, R.3, 895.00/643.

<sup>83</sup> Bergholz to SS, September 23, 1919, M426, R.4, 895.01/12 and DFED minute on October 31, 1919.

vated, with the rise of the more militant groups in the Korean nationalist movement abroad.<sup>84</sup> Along with other American officials, however, Miller lacked strong reform policy suggestions, especially when compared to his British counterparts. At the time of the special amnesty on the occasion of Crown Prince Hirohito's marriage in May 1920, Miller commented that it was the most far-sighted and effective step yet taken to improve relations between the government and the people, while the British stressed that this action alone was very far from enough.<sup>85</sup>

The Americans talked with Japanese officials about the Korean question in Washington; not by their own request but due to a visit to the Far Eastern Division by Chargé d'Affaires Debuchi Katsuji (who was to be the Japanese ambassador to Washington during the Manchurian Crisis in the early 1930s). His visit coincided with Senate demands, in the form of the June 1919 "Spencer Resolution," that the State Department submit government records on Korea, amid the mounting anti-Japanese tide in American society over the Shandong question. Debuchi asked about the Department's stance with grave concern. Breckinridge Long, the third assistant secretary of the Far Eastern Division, replied that the Korean situation was Japan's domestic problem, and, should the Spencer Resolution be passed, the Department would be very hesitant to provide information on Korea. Remembering, however, how German atrocities in Belgium and Serbia had raised humanitarian questions, and how the U. S. government had received relevant opinions and resolutions from all over the country, the Department was indeed concerned about the Korean question in a somewhat similar way. The Japanese chargé was "personally, very, very sorry" about the Che'am incident, and added that he was against the constant oppression of the military. Long replied that the Japanese government's denunciation of military suppression, and a simple expression of regret over the atrocities in Korea, would do a great deal to improve public opinion on Japan.<sup>86</sup>

This was all the United States did on a government level with regard to the situation in Korea. One notable concern is that the United States was quite aware of the strong British representations

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<sup>84</sup> Miller to Morris, December 26, 1910, M426, R.3, 895.00/673.

<sup>85</sup> Miller to SS, May 5, 1920, M426, R.3, 895.00/681.

<sup>86</sup> Memo of conversation with the Japanese Chargé d'Affaires, July 3, 1919, M426, R.2, 895.00/ (film page 406-407). In 1942, William Langdon drafted a memorandum saying that the suppression by Japan was so revolting that the State Department could not help but advise the Japanese government that any media coverage on the issue would have a deleterious effect on the bilateral relationship. (Langdon Memo, February 20, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/79.) The American advice Langdon referred to would seem to indicate this interview.

being made in Tokyo and London. Nevertheless, it refrained from taking any initiative to keep pace with Britain in political, or even humanitarian, questions, and did not make official responses to any but a few of the incessant petitions from American missionaries in Korea. A report from Bergholz substantiated this. On August 20, he commented that the appointment of Saitō, a retired naval officer, meant the complete control of Korea by military elites in Tokyo, which would be a breach of promises of reform in Korea, “especially the one made with British embassy in Japan.” He was informed from a “most authoritative source,” which meant Royds, his British colleague in Seoul, that the Japanese Foreign Ministry had given solemn assurances that no officer from the army or navy would be appointed governor-general in Seoul.<sup>87</sup>

Korean nationalists, having failed to secure official support from the American government, turned their campaign toward the public. It proved to be a winning strategy. First of all, Korean nationalists made enormous efforts. By this time, the Korean community was well equipped with gifted people such as Philip Jaisohn (Sō Chaep’il), Syngman Rhee and Henry Chung, whose American education allowed them to explain the Korean situation effectively. They understood American attitudes to Korea since the time of President Theodore Roosevelt, and had learned the best ways to make appeals on the Korean question. The unchanging subjects of their appeals included the illegitimacy of the annexation, the presence of talented, educated people in Korea, who were aware of the importance of reform, and the threat which Japanese expansionism posed to the United States.

In brief, Korean nationalists set out on a campaign aimed at the media and the public, and organized the First Korean Congress, held in Philadelphia between April 14 and 16, 1919. They invited Americans from the fields of business, education, the press and religion to inform them of the realities of the independence movement in Korea, and to denounce Japanese oppression. On the last day of the congress, Syngman Rhee led demonstrators, who marched to Independence Hall and recited the Declaration of Independence.<sup>88</sup> Philip Jaisohn and others had organized the “Friends of Korea,” which had seventeen branches in the United States. Their efforts helped the Korean question win continued media coverage in major newspapers and press agencies. Various publications were issued, which denounced Japanese atrocities in Korea, including Henry Chung’s *The Case of Korea* (1920) and *The Oriental Policy of Japan* (1920); Nathaniel Peiffer’s *The Truth*

<sup>87</sup> Bergholz to SS, September 23, 1919, M426, R.4, 895.01/12 and minute on *ibid.*.

<sup>88</sup> For a record of the occasion and of the “*First Korean Congress, held in the Little Theatre, Philadelphia*,” see M426, R.3, 895.00/647.



about Korea (1920); Sidney L. Gulick's *The Korean Situation* (1919); J.E. Moore's *Korea's Appeal for Self-Determination* (1919); Arthur MacLennan's *Japanese Diplomacy and Force in Korea* (1919); and Fred A. Dolph's *Japanese Stewardship of Korea – Economic and Financial* (1920).<sup>89</sup> Henry Chung's *The Case of Korea* was based on a systematic critique of Japan's colonial policy, as well as data on Japan's high-handed actions during the uprising, largely collected by the KPG in Shanghai. Along with McKenzie's *Korea's Fight for Freedom*, it was an "official report" from the Korean perspective, which summarized the realities of the March First Movement and the activities of the KPG.

Then there were the missionaries, whose activities, under the slogan of "no neutrality for brutality," have been fairly well covered by other studies, including that of Baldwin (1969). It should not be ignored, however, that their actions were also motivated by a desire to restore the privileges that had taken away from them by Japanese rule after the annexation.<sup>90</sup> Besides asking for relief for Christian Koreans, missionaries often visited the Government-General in Seoul, or government offices in Tokyo, to expose atrocities committed by the Japanese police and military, and to urge that the situation be changed. They also informed officials in their homeland of what they had witnessed. Many, furthermore, made records of the brutal suppressions in Korea, which they sent to their church headquarters in the United States, in the hope of fostering the sort of public opinion that would oblige Washington to make official representations. At the same time, the missionaries published articles on the Korean situation in major newspapers, both in their native land and in East Asia. The list includes *The Japan Advertiser*, *The Japan Chronicle*, *The North China Herald*, *The Peking Daily News*, and *The Peking Leader*. Those engaged in medical services at Severance Hospital in Seoul sent pictures of Korean victims who had been subjected to torture, providing definite evidence for their claims. (Many such photographs are preserved in British and American official archives on foreign relations.) Churches and missionary headquarters in the United States accordingly sent letters to the President, the State Department, and members of Congress to draw attention to the cruel and deplorable methods employed by the Japanese in Korea.

Reports from the missionaries must have been more effective than the campaigns of Korean nationalists, in that they were Americans/Westerners, and thus a third party with a more objective stance. The aforementioned First Korean Congress in Philadelphia was successful partly because of the attendance of Americans who were interested

<sup>89</sup> The last three pamphlets are included in M426, R.2, 895.00/596 and R.3, 895.00/682.

<sup>90</sup> Bergholz to SS, October 27, 1919, 895.00/667 and *FRUS, 1919*, vol. 2, pp. 462–463.

in Korea in relation to evangelical and medical activities. In July 1919, what might be defined as the culmination of missionary-led international efforts came with the publication of *The Case of Korea*, a 119-page booklet released by a New York-based body, by the Commission on Relations with the Orient of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. Japan tried to prevent its publication on the grounds that it was not the result of just and impartial observations of the facts. Yet as the Commission was very confident of the truthfulness of its contents, it went ahead and published the booklet, adding a hopeful note: "The contemplated reform can now be introduced and will be carried into effect."<sup>91</sup> When anti-Japanese sentiment was at its peak in the United States, *The New York Times* published an abridged version of the booklet (July 13, 1919), which was recorded in its entirety in *The Congressional Record* of the U.S. Congress.<sup>92</sup> Upon Bergholz's request, furthermore, missionaries prepared a comprehensive, 73-page report called "The Present Movement for Korean Independence," which discussed Korean-Japanese relations before the time of the uprising, the history of independence movement, the church and the independence movement, and the impact on missionary projects.<sup>93</sup>

Despite their contributions to efforts to persuade Japan to improve the Government-General's policy, the missionaries never went so far as to demand the independence of Korea. Except for a small minority, such as James Gale and Frank Schofield, a Canadian medical missionary, they were doubtful of the capacity of the Koreans for independence. As far as they were concerned, Korea was not yet qualified to become a member of civilized society on its own, while Japan's rule was at least resulting in reform and economic wealth.

Finally, there was a still more influential element that made no bones about its campaign being one for independence. Korean nationalists could ride the bandwagon of opposition to the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles, and of the tendency toward isolationism and an anti-Japanese atmosphere. Both American liberals and conservatives were opposed to Wilson's initiatives, if for different reasons. To many liberals it seemed that the League of Nations, with its commitment to defend its members against "aggression," would be more likely to preserve the unjust aspects of peace rather than correct them, as shown in the case of Japan's occupation of Shandong. Conservatives believed that if America were to intervene abroad, it

<sup>91</sup> Gulick to Miller, June 4, 1919, M426, R.3, 895.00/633 and enclosures. On the circumstances of its publication, see M426, R.3, 895.00/633.

<sup>92</sup> *Congressional Record, Senate*, vol. 58–3, July 17, 1919, pp. 2697–2717.

<sup>93</sup> Bergholz to SS, May 22, 1919, supplement of M426, R.3, 895.00/639.

should do so more unilaterally, in pursuit of substantial American interests, not hazy idealistic internationalism.<sup>94</sup>

The antagonism toward the League and the Treaty was significant for Korean nationalists, as it reflected and stimulated the anti-Japanese sentiment latent in American society. This prevalent hostility against Japan, however, also proved something of a dilemma for Korean nationalists. If the Korean question were to be given any opportunity for serious international discussion, it would have to be through the new international body of the League of Nations. The anti-Versailles coalition, with its anti-imperialistic stance, had, however, gained support from various ethnic groups, including the Irish.<sup>95</sup> Overwhelmed by such a complex and gigantic tide of antagonism to the Treaty, Korean nationalists decided to focus on the anti-Japanese movement, putting aside the longer-term issue of the formation of the League as a gateway to their country's independence.

In the U.S. Congress, discussions on the Korean question became relatively serious at the end of June 1919, after the conclusion of the Versailles Treaty. As the British chargé d'affaires in Washington commented, Koreans were able to set in motion a campaign of quite considerable dimensions, owing to the anti-Japanese feeling over the so-called betrayal of China in the peace treaty.<sup>96</sup> Following a Congressional resolution of support for Irish independence on June 6, 1919, the question of Korea surfaced on several occasions through speeches in Congress by Senators Selden P. Spencer of Missouri, George W. Norris of Nebraska, and others.<sup>97</sup> However, the U.S. Congress, despite its condemnation of Japan's suppression of the Korean uprising, did not connect the affair to demands for Korean independence. American members of Congress judged it useful to point out that Japan's oppression of Korea showed Japan's lack of skill in ruling a colony, which should serve as a warning lest something similar happen in Shandong. As Baldwin points out, such American Congressmen were not necessarily "pro-Korea," but they were definitely anti-Wilson or anti-Treaty, and in this sense very wary of Japan. The widespread publication of reports of Japanese atrocities in Korea discredited Japan, but did little to advance Korean independence.<sup>98</sup> A tabled

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<sup>94</sup> Combs, Jerald A., *American Diplomatic History – Two Centuries of Changing Interpretations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 118–122.

<sup>95</sup> Combs, p. 122.

<sup>96</sup> Linsay to Curzon, June 20, 1919, 3818 (102956/7293).

<sup>97</sup> *Congressional Record, Senate*, vol. 58–1, p. 733; June 30, 1919, vol. 58–2, p. 2050; July 15, 1919, vol. 58–3, p. 2595. For draft resolutions expressing sympathy for the Koreans submitted to the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate, see *Congressional Record Index*, p. 9432.

<sup>98</sup> Baldwin (1969), p.153.

resolution for the support of Korean independence was rejected by the Senate on March 18, 1920, although on that day another resolution supporting Irish independence was accepted.

### CONCLUSION

If the March First Movement failed to achieve its initial goal, it still reaped considerable rewards. In this sense, it may be considered “a victory for the Korean people and a defeat for the Government-General,” as suggested by a contemporary Japanese intellectual,<sup>99</sup> It was also significant in terms of Korean international relations, since the movement helped to draw attention to “the Korean question,” and ensure that the matter did not totally disappear in the realm of “real politics.”

It can certainly be said that, at least to a certain extent, the March First demonstrations succeeded in changing the powers’ perceptions of Koreans’ capacities. The old prejudices against the Korean people, including images of disorder, chaos, indolence, cowardice, and lack of a spirit of self-sacrifice, were changing, and there were now more positive ideas. Koreans could definitely now be seen as capable of organizing a systematic movement, of sacrificing themselves for the sake of their people, and of maintaining their movement by peaceful means. Visiting Korea during the movement, one diplomat from the American embassy in Tokyo observed that the Korean participants were showing a surprising spirit of “martyrdom,” even if all they were really doing was refusing to obey certain directives from the government authorities.<sup>100</sup> It was through this movement that they succeeded in forcing out Hasegawa, who was, according to Bergholz and many others, a most unpopular administrator.<sup>101</sup> Such a significant transformation in perceptions must have percolated through as an influence, even if not a decisive one, on the discussions of Korean independence that were held among the powers in 1945.

Yet British and American policies toward the Korean situation were often inconsistent. London approached it from somewhat more engaged political and humanitarian considerations. Although reluctant to get involved in the colonial affairs of other powers, after the Che’am massacre British diplomats started to bring up major issues such as “autonomy” for Korea, and Japan’s assimilation policy.

<sup>99</sup> Townsend, Susan, C., “Yanaihara Tadao’s Comparative Critique of Japanese and British Colonial Policy,” *Japanese Perspectives on Imperialism in Asia* (London: LSE-STICERD, 1995), p. 39.

<sup>100</sup> Morris to SS, April 11, 1919, M426, R.2, 895.00/594.

<sup>101</sup> Bergholz to SS, September 23, 1919, M426, R.4, 895.01/12.

At continuing reports of atrocities by the Japanese military, however, the British government's attention was devoted solely to humanitarian affairs, which by early 1920 led them to conclude that British diplomacy had "not been without good result."

It is interesting to note that the Koreans themselves paid relatively little attention to measures like flogging. In police and gendarmerie reports on the demonstrations, and in reports on interrogations of the movement's leaders, the main points of the Korean discontent emerged as being the assimilation policy and various discriminatory measures. According to Lay, the Koreans were not so concerned as foreigners about harsh or inhumane treatment, and tended to take it as a matter of course because they had been thoroughly accustomed to torture and other corporal punishments under the old regime.<sup>102</sup> The United States, moreover, did not take serious steps to protest officially against Japanese atrocities, out of its general consideration for U.S.-Japan relations. The abolition of flogging after long hesitation was, in this respect, Japanese submission not to the demands of the Koreans but to foreign pressure, including representations from London. In this sense, it is also out of step with reality to accept the official explanation that the abolition of flogging was made possible by a "remarkable awakening and progress of the Korean people."<sup>103</sup> What was more important here, it can be confidently concluded, was the Japanese sensitivity, in that era of imperialism, to certain well-meant criticisms from the Western powers, lest Japan not be counted among the members of the "civilized world." On the other hand, most of the political improvements suggested by Britain faded from the agenda, indicating the limits of the British government's influence in East Asia's regional politics.

Lastly, British policy toward Korea clearly showed that humanitarian matters could take on political significance, depending on the direction of East Asian international politics. In the realm of "realist" international theory, utopian assumptions about human rights are, at best, only a veneer. Britain's humanitarian diplomacy during the March First Movement is a case in point. As its relationship with Japan degenerated over the China issue, Britain felt it had no choice but to take careful consideration of Japan's inhumanity in Korea and Manchuria, along with hostile public opinion toward it. But it still judged negotiations over the continuation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance to be on too high a plane to be used as a lever for such "minor" indiscretions as Japanese misconduct in Korea; as Hayashi, the Japanese ambassador in London, himself argued. Nonetheless, the new

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<sup>102</sup> Lay to Eliot, November 3, 1920, 5354 (3295/56/23).

<sup>103</sup> Shin and Robinson (eds.), p. 34.

conditions that were developing in the aftermath of the uprising did, at least, present the possibility that the peninsula, although remaining under Japanese rule, might be making some significant new impacts on East Asian diplomacy. Given all these limits on British diplomatic approaches to the Korean situation, their stance during this period, and especially their efforts to improve the well-being of the Koreans via human rights diplomacy, might, from Britain's standpoint, be one of the proudest chapters in its imperial history.

Not unexpectedly, the response from the American government was disappointing. I say "not unexpectedly" because the *FRUS* records show that the State Department instructed its residents, including missionaries in Korea, to maintain "strict neutrality about the Korean situation," and because there is no evidence that direct discussions on Korea between the United States and Japanese officials ever took place. Indeed, we can state with certainty that the noninterventionist American policy did not undergo any sudden change in 1919. From another perspective, however, the relative inertia of the United States is significant in its own right, since "inaction" is always one of the policy options in international politics. At least the U.S. archives contain a great deal of recorded "observations" concerning the development of the Korean movement. Such records were left not only by the State Department but also by the missionaries, and Korean scholars have not yet managed to study them, especially those retained by missionary headquarters. They are essential materials for the study of the Korean independence movement, and the matter of access needs to be resolved in the future.

## Changes in Peacetime: The 1920s



### THE EAST ASIAN SITUATION

EAST ASIA REGAINED political stability in the 1920s as the so-called Washington Conference system “settled in.” With the Washington Conference (November 1921 – February 1922), the two-decades-old Anglo-Japanese Alliance was dissolved. The Four-Power Pacific Treaty, the Five-Power Naval Limitations Treaty, and the Nine-Power Treaty on China were established as an alternative, in the hope of eliminating potential conflicts among the Western powers and Japan. Ostensibly, at least, Japan’s expansion into the continent was contained, and peace was successfully maintained in East Asia in the 1920s.<sup>1</sup>

From its very beginning, however, the new system had too many loopholes, both ideologically and realistically. The United States believed that it had replaced the old, imperialistic control over East Asia with a new, American system, even if Britain regarded it as the maintenance of the *status quo*.<sup>2</sup> There was, however, no realistic foundation that guaranteed the endurance of this new peace system. The Four-Power Pacific Treaty allowed the United States to remain complacent, even though the Treaty merely stipulated that the signatories had agreed “to settle by a special conference any disputes which might arise between them.” The naval treaty also restrained the United States and Britain from attacking Japan, since it recognized Japan’s naval supremacy in the East Asian region. All of this indicated that, beyond moral counsel, there was no specific means to prevent Japan from pursuing an expansionist policy.

<sup>1</sup> For major studies on international relations in East Asia in the 1920s and the Washington System, see Iriye, Akira, *After Imperialism – The Search for a New Order in the Far East 1921–1931* (New York: Atheneum, 1973); Griswold, A. W., *The Far Eastern Policy of the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938); Wm. Roger Louis, *British Strategy in the Far East 1919–1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

<sup>2</sup> Trotter, Ann, *Britain and East Asia 1933–1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 12.

If any system is to function smoothly, it must be fully equipped with appropriate ideological underpinnings so that is able to absorb all the related forces and counterforces. The Washington system failed to properly respond to some essential elements in East Asian politics; namely, the “new forces” of China’s radical nationalism, and the Soviet Union after World War I. In the end, China became a radical force with anti-Western and anti-Japanese tendencies, and the system lost its function. The Washington system also could not cope properly with Japan’s policies toward China, which were described under the rubrics of the moderate “Shidehara diplomacy” and the more aggressive “Tanaka diplomacy.” Tanaka diplomacy is generally understood to have emerged to promote forward expansion into China, as anxiety grew that a “peacetime diplomacy” would leave Japanese ambitions unrealized. The diplomacies of Shidehara and Tanaka, however, differed not so much in their ultimate goal as in their methods, and in the nuances of what was, for both, their ultimate aim of controlling Manchuria, and separating it from the rest of the mainland.<sup>3</sup> The revolutionary government of Lenin, moreover, paid careful attention to the East, and intervened in Chinese affairs. The Soviet Union played a pivotal part in the collaboration between the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1924, and in the “northern expedition.”<sup>4</sup> The Bolsheviks dealt with the KMT government in Guangzhou by helping revamp the KMT in the style of the Soviet Communist Party, and successfully mediated its cooperation with the fledgling CCP. The powers remained mere onlookers to this great shift.

It was under these circumstances that the Korean situation developed, as Japan’s continued economic and political advances into China altered the powers’ perception of Japanese rule over Korea; as, subsequently, the importance of Koreans in Manchuria and of the peninsula’s strategic value were further recognized; and as new elements, such as socialist ideology, emerged in Korean society under Bolshevik influence.

#### JAPAN AND CHANGES OF PERCEPTION

During the 1920s, there was an element in East Asian politics that, though it went totally unnoticed, would have an important bearing

<sup>3</sup> On this subject, see Bamba, Nobuya, *Japanese Diplomacy in a Dilemma – New Light on Japan’s China Policy, 1924–1929* (Kyoto: Minerva Press, 1972), chapters 4–7; Iriye (1973), part two and particularly pp.169–172, 183, 191.

<sup>4</sup> For this subject, refer to Meisner, Maurice, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (New York: Atheneum, 1970); D’Encausse, Hélène Carrère, & Schram, Stuart R., *Marxism and Asia* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1969).



on the future of Korea: the powers, most notably Britain, were experiencing certain changes in their approach to the Korean question. Certainly, the British government did not go so far as to deny Japan's rule. Yet it did reexamine and modify the logical process from which it had drawn this conclusion. This process of review took place in the early 1920s, when Britain was trying to reestablish its relationship with Japan, and the Korean question, if only secondary, deserved another look.

In the British Foreign Office, a controversy over Japan's Korea and East Asia policies began in late 1920, when the Korean question was frequently discussed among members of Parliament and those engaged in trade with East Asia. The controversy started when Sir Charles Eliot, the British ambassador to Tokyo, brought attention to "Japanese Atrocities in Korea and Elsewhere," a memorandum sent to him by Frank Ashton-Gwatkin that severely criticized Japan's policies in Korea, Manchuria, China and Siberia.<sup>5</sup> Eliot, however, who was noted for being "an Oriental scholar with a brilliant intellect but rather aloof manner," complained about "the bitter animus against Japan displayed by certain memoranda prepared in the Foreign Office." In his letter to Sir Eyre Crowe, Eliot recalled that, under the old regime, the administration of justice and the state of prisons in Korea had been a notorious scandal, adding approvingly that the material improvements that the Japanese had introduced in Korea were little less than marvelous. Most interestingly, he believed that when the Japanese read about the anti-Japanese attitude of the British government in the Anglo-Chinese press, they would be very angry, and, instead of trying to mend their ways, would rather insist that their behavior was correct in every particular. In his various claims, Eliot was tacitly admitting that Britain had lost the ability to contain Japan's overseas initiatives in East Asia, and that it was therefore best, in the interests of protecting British interests, not to provoke Japan. This was one of the most important elements in British policy toward Japan in the 1930s. In London, however, Ashton-Gwatkin flatly rejected these claims. The memorandum that he had written was compiled from reports, mostly of an official nature, which existed in the archives of the Foreign Office. He did not believe that the idea of justice was any baser in Japan than it was in Western countries, especially in Britain. He argued, furthermore, that the use of torture was prevalent in Korea, and that Japanese rule in Korea and elsewhere had been oppressive and brutal; that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was to some extent responsible for Japan's current position

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<sup>5</sup> For Ashton-Gwatkin's memo, see chapter 4.

of authority in all these areas; and that Britain was, therefore, to be regarded with disfavor by Koreans and Chinese.<sup>6</sup>

The point of this argument lies not in judging who was right and who was wrong in evaluating the nature of Japanese foreign policy, but in the attitude of the Far Eastern Department. After all, the perception of another nation's foreign policy is, by nature, subjective. What is important is how that change affected British assessments of Japan and its Korea policy, and consequently how the government came to decide on its stance on these issues. Victor Wellesley, the assistant secretary of the Far Eastern Department, who had instructed Ashton-Gwatkin to draft the memorandum, faithfully stood up for him. In the case of Eliot's questioning of the Ashton-Gwatkin memorandum's objectivity, the memorandum was based on official reports from his predecessors in Tokyo, and there was little room to doubt their truthfulness. Finally, Wellesley referred to the policy aspect of the memorandum. He strongly protested against any belief that the Far Eastern Department was anti-Japanese in sentiment. He emphasized that no one was better aware than himself how dangerous, unprofitable and futile it was to embark on an "atrocious campaign." Ashton-Gwatkin's report provided some precise and objective research on Japan's actions, and British East Asian policy should take into account all its contents, along with other factors. The Foreign Office conveyed this opinion to Eliot through a private communication from Crowe.

A similar "pro-Japan versus anti-Japan controversy" resumed in 1924, when James Ramsay MacDonald, the prime minister in the first Labour government, asked Ambassador Eliot for his opinions on East Asia, in order to examine volatile situations in the region and establish an appropriate policy. It was possible that this could have had some impact on policy, if a range of views on Japan and its policies had been conveyed to cabinet members, especially given that previous discussions had been limited to the "working level" of the Far Eastern Department and the embassy in Tokyo. However, the substance of the opinions expressed remained more or less unchanged. The ambassador still presented pro-Japanese ideas. He deplored the fact that British communities in Asia and the Pacific, particularly many naval officers, believed it advantageous to weaken Japan now that it was no longer a bilateral alliance partner. Eliot therefore felt that the new government should follow a policy of friendship toward the Japanese, based on an understanding of their respective aims. In particular, Eliot highlighted that Japanese policy was not tenaciously pursuing

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<sup>6</sup> Eliot to Crowe, March 10, 1921, 6699 (1823/1823/23) (private) and minutes. See also Eliot to Curzon, September 23, 1921, 6694 (3907/611/23).

a detailed plan, nor show any sign of expansion to the south where British interests were concentrated. In Manchuria, the Japanese had grave fears of the Bolsheviks, who might instigate revolts in Korea, and wished to extend their influence beyond the Korean borders to keep the peninsula safe.<sup>7</sup>

The Foreign Office once again disregarded Eliot's analysis and policy suggestions. Wellesley and Ashton-Gwatkin outright rejected Eliot's interpretations. They argued that the ambassador's frequent suggestions that Japan's past policy had not been aggressive, whereas British policy had been to thwart Japan at every turn without rhyme or reason, were misleading. By the end of World War I, Japan's China policy was, according to the Far Eastern Department, of the "mailed fist order," aiming at the establishment of a Japanese hegemony. As a result, while Britain was engaged in Europe, Japan had created a very dangerous situation in East Asia, including the notorious Twenty-One Demands and the Shandong question. Such attempts to browbeat the Chinese, accompanied by modes of peaceful penetration, could ultimately become an even more dangerous and difficult thing to deal with than an openly militarist policy, because it was more subtle and less tangible in its *modus operandi*. If the ambassador had in mind some form of recognition of Japan's "special position" in China, amid the considerable anti-Japanese atmosphere in the British community in East Asia, it would be to the neglect of the interests of British merchants and entrepreneurs, and thus ill-suited to be taken on as government policy.<sup>8</sup>

The dispute between the Foreign Office and its embassy in Tokyo indicated that London was decisively anti-Japanese, as long as the issue concerned Japan's policy of expansion into Manchuria and China, and rule over Korea. Eliot had the aloof demeanor of a scholar rather than that of a policy-maker,<sup>9</sup> and he represented the prudent realism of avoiding any conflict that would entail any great loss to Britain. Conventionally, an ambassador was not only esteemed as a national representative, but also as an authority on the political situations and foreign policies of his resident country. That was why the Foreign Office had distinguished reports and views from British ambassadors as "official," and kept them separate from the numerous other sources – information, for instance, from missionaries and the media – that it received, and it based its policy decisions on the former. In other words, the Foreign Office and its embassies abroad were supposedly of the same view on relevant regional issues, through a constant

<sup>7</sup> Eliot to MacDonald, May 3, 1924 (private and confidential), 10319 (1968/1968/23).

<sup>8</sup> Minutes on *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Nish, Ian H., *Alliance in Decline – a Study in Anglo – Japanese Relations 1908–23* (London: Athlone, 1972), p. 294.

exchange of information. Nonetheless, Ambassador Eliot could have failed to grasp, or been too removed from, what was going on in the Far Eastern Department.

If there were conflicts of interest with Japan, and if the British community in the region were turning anti-Japanese, Eliot, as an ambassador, was expected to secure the maximum national interest under such circumstances. Eliot, however, argued that Japan, discontented with the established order, was pursuing change, and that the *status quo* powers of Britain and the United States should not repress this new power but learn to accept its right to modify the international order, and to contribute to the maintenance of peace. For a scholar, this might be a reasoned judgment; but, for a diplomat, the idea was too altruistic to “protect national interest.” Eliot commented that no sane Japanese would dream of using force against Australia or Singapore, or of annexing the Philippines or Dutch Indies.<sup>10</sup> However, the change of view in the Foreign Office, as represented by this dispute, was symbolic. The old adage that Japan would transform backward Korea into a modern, prosperous colony had worn too thin wholly to screen “the dark side of the picture” in Japan’s policy in Korea. The Japanese were viewed more and more as pursuing selfish goals, exploiting the peninsula rather than satisfying the political, social and economic needs of its people.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the bitter memories of the Paris Conference, Korean nationalists continued to approach international conferences in which East Asia was discussed, in the expectation that Korea might be placed on the agenda. The first of these in the 1920s was the Washington Conference, which took place from November 1921 until February of the following year. Besides this, before the Washington Conference the London government had called a meeting, dubbed the Imperial Conference, to discuss with its dominions the future of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.<sup>12</sup> The Imperial Conference naturally provided a golden opportunity for Korean nationalists, as the British colonies, who were not favorable toward Japan, would express their views on Japan-related issues. Koreans in the United States had vigorously prepared for the occasion from the spring of 1921. Korean leaders, including Syngman Rhee, Philip Jaisohn and Henry Chung, incessantly submitted petitions to Secretary of State Charles E. Hughes, the White House and delegates from other countries. Amongst their efforts was “Korea’s Appeal,” a full account of the relations between

<sup>10</sup> Eliot to MacDonald, May 3, 1924.

<sup>11</sup> Minute on Economic History of Chōsen, July 2, 1921, 6679 (190/190/23).

<sup>12</sup> On this issue, see Nish, Ian H., *Alliance in Decline – a Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations 1908–23* (London: Athlone, 1972), chapters 19–20.

Japan and Korea leading up to the annexation, which the Foreign Office regarded as “accurate and useful” for reference.<sup>13</sup>

Britain and the United States ignored the Korean move, following the precedent of its past policy. However, in a reply to a letter of Sir Robert Newman, the president of Friends of Korea, who had also sent a similar letter to the Office of Prime Minister, the British Foreign Office revealed some of its unpublicized ideas on Japan’s policy in Korea. For the British government, it was a delicate matter to intervene between Japan and its subjects, the Koreans. Nevertheless, at the time of the Korean independence riots in 1919, when it became known that the Japanese were treating the Koreans in a most inhumane manner, Lord Curzon had spoken to the Japanese ambassador “in the strongest terms.” Subsequent reforms in the administration of Korea were, to some extent, due to these protests, and therefore the Foreign Office argued that the British could not justly be accused of indifference to Korea’s fate. Yet the “pseudo-government” set up by the Korean nationalists in Shanghai was believed to be in sympathetic communication with the Russian Bolsheviks, and considered to be a disruptive rather than a progressive influence. The conclusion was therefore reached that, whilst the British might sympathize with the Koreans and their desire for independence, the Koreans were not yet fit for self-government. Any encouragement given by British citizens to Rhee and his followers would merely serve as an excuse for Japan to encourage anti-British movements in India and elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> There were thus clear indications that, although there had been no essential shift in the British stance, a hint of change was emerging in the move from a categorical rejection of the Korean claim to a slight ambivalence or hesitancy in British support for Japan.

#### JAPAN’S CONTINENTAL POLICY AND THE KOREAN PENINSULA

Even in the peaceful 1920s, the Korean peninsula attracted the attention of the powers in the context of Japan’s policy toward the continent. The KMT government unified China at least nominally in 1928 through its successful Northern Expedition, and the Soviet Union began to turn its attention to East Asia, and especially to

<sup>13</sup> Friends of Korea to FO, January 31, 1922, 8047 (485/485/23); Korean Commission to SS, September 14, 1921, M426, R.3, 895.00/696. For the activities of Rhee and other Korean nationalists, see Kim, Myōngsōp & Kim, Chōngmin, “Syngman Rhee’s Diplomacy and Press Clippings at the time of the Washington Conference”, 1921–1922, *Korean Political Science Review*, 51–2 (2017).

<sup>14</sup> FO to Newman, June 16, 1922, 8046 (1944/205/23).

China. Japan believed that, to protect the Korean peninsula, Japan had to be watchful regarding moves beyond its northern borders. Taking for granted the axiom that the gist of a nation's foreign policy never changes, whatever the form of government in power, Japan reasoned that Soviet Russia was in a position to resume the policy of *Drang nach Osten* ("Drive or Advance to the East") that had inspired the Tsarist regime, and that China would compete with Japan once the chaos in its domestic politics had been resolved. Accordingly, Japan needed complete control of Korea to prepare for possible threats from these two continental powers, and especially from the influence of Bolshevism.<sup>15</sup>

Japan vehemently pursued such ideas from the early 1920s. The regions of South Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia were close to Korea, and were thought to have a very intimate and special relationship to Japan's national defense and its economy. Furthermore, conditions in Siberia, which had been developing in an alarming way, were by no means far from creating a most serious situation, which might at any time take a turn that would threaten Japan's safety. South Manchuria and Inner Mongolia were also a gate by which such direful influences might penetrate into Japan.<sup>16</sup> In April 1920, the United States withdrew the troops that it had dispatched to Siberia to intervene in Russian affairs, and asked Japan to follow suit. Japan refused because, due to geographical propinquity, Vladivostok and Nikolsk had long been bases for the Korean independence movement against Japan. Now they were under the effective control of Japanese troops stationed in the Russian Maritime Province, but they would no doubt renew their attempts to penetrate into Korea at the first favorable opportunity.<sup>17</sup> The Japanese claimed that Koreans were involved in the assault on its consulate at Hunchun (Jilin Province) by Chinese mounted bandits, or *hunghutzu*, an incident which encouraged the Japanese expedition to Jiandao in October 1920. Koreans were also thought, at the time, to have been partially

<sup>15</sup> Paton to Tilley, January 9, 1928, 13247 (1008/189/23).

<sup>16</sup> Memo left with Earl Curzon by Japanese Ambassador, March 16, 1920, 5298 (179/2/10). This argument seemed to be well received in Western countries, especially the United States. In a memorandum, compiled just a year before the outbreak of the Pacific War, a staff member of the Council on Foreign Relations indicated that it was not in America's interest to destroy Japan, but to keep it powerful enough to act as a counterpoise to an unpredictable Russia. [T-A9 Alternatives of American Policy toward Russia, December 7, 1940, *Yi and Chông*, vol. 1, p. 39.] In the same vein, Iriye notes that this ambiguity in American policy, being simultaneously belligerent toward Japan and unwilling to go to war in the Pacific, remained in 1941. [Iriye, Akira, *The Cold War in Asia – A Historical Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974), p. 51.]

<sup>17</sup> Japanese Embassy to DS, July 8, 1921, *FRUS, 1921*, vol. 2, pp. 707–710, 714.

responsible for the Nikolaevsk Incident near the mouth of the Amur River, in which the Bolsheviks massacred, in March 1920, seven hundred Japanese, including army personnel, officials at the consulate, and civilians.<sup>18</sup>

By the late 1920s, such reasoning on the part of the Japanese had been bolstered all the more by the KMT government's supposed unification of China. In 1928, Jiang Jieshi's KMT tried to regain rights the country had lost, and the United States stated that it would not recognize the existence of any additional special Japanese rights in Manchuria. The Koreans welcomed the fact that the KMT had successfully expelled Marshal Zhang Zuolin from Beijing, and that the Japanese position in Manchuria was expected to weaken in time. Above all, there were a number of Korean officers in the KMT armies, and the sympathies of the Koreans would naturally be with the Chinese Nationalists. Koreans were sanguine enough to imagine that Japan's position in Korea itself would come in for attack next. As far as Japan was concerned, any weakening of its influence and power in Manchuria would seriously add to its difficulties in administering Korea. Naturally, then, the Japanese concluded that they had to gain complete control over Manchuria to cut off the peninsula from KMT influence.<sup>19</sup>

During this period, Japan's economic penetration into Manchuria proceeded in conjunction with its Korea policy. Railways were connected, tariffs were integrated, and there was growing interdependence in trade.<sup>20</sup> As US Consul-General Ramsford Miller in Seoul reported, the Seoul government was making prodigious efforts at railway construction. Miller kept track of the railway construction, focusing on its strategic importance, for which Washington rated him highly. At a ceremony to celebrate the 1928 completion of the Hamkyōng Line (connecting Wōnsan and Hoeryōng), the construction of which had begun in 1914, the Governor-General highlighted its significance not only as a means of advancing civilization and developing local industries, but also as a great asset for national defense. This line would form another link in the chain of railways that ultimately connected with the South Manchurian Railway system, thus bringing Korea and Japan, via northern Korea, into direct touch with the markets and economic resources of Manchuria, Mongolia, and the "regions beyond." For the SMR, the Jilin-Hoeryōng Railway (on the Korean border) was no profitable undertaking, but the decision had

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<sup>18</sup> Young, A. Morgan, *Japan in Recent Times 1912–1926* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1929), pp. 177, 182.

<sup>19</sup> Dormer to Cushendun, September 19, 1928. 13171 (5673/7/10).

<sup>20</sup> *Economic History of Chōsen*, 6679 (190/190/23).

been taken to complete it as soon as possible from a political standpoint. It was also very important to ensure that the terminal port on the coast of the peninsula had harbor equipment that enabled ships of above 10,000 tons to dock alongside the pier, as this would be necessary for efficient connections with western Japan.<sup>21</sup>

Another feature of the economic penetration into Manchuria could be found in the leading role of the Bank of Chōsen. This bank resembled the Bank of Formosa – both being colonial banks – in its lines of business, and in its right to issue convertible notes. In 1917, Minobe Suzuki, the governor of the Bank of Chōsen, declared that the scope of the bank should be extended as far as Manchuria and North China.<sup>22</sup> Naturally, the Bank of Chōsen was inclined to interpret Korea's economic situation in terms of Japan's political needs rather than the actual needs of the country. Bergholz, the U.S. consul-general, criticized the economic policy of the Government-General, based on a detailed account published in *The Bank of Chōsen Semi-Annual Report* in 1919. The American consul-general wrote that Korea was being drained of its rice crop to feed Japan, and was required to import enormous quantities of millet and other rice substitutes from Manchuria. Bergholz believed that much of the hatred shown toward Japan by Koreans was due to their being deprived of rice grown in their own country, and being compelled to live largely on millet, which they detested. He concluded that Korea had no food to spare.<sup>23</sup>

In 1923, the Bank of Chōsen published an annual report, which defined Manchuria and Eastern Siberia, along with Korea, as being within its scope of business. With its immense natural resources, Manchuria had already developed an inseparable relationship with Japan. This relationship was likely to continue growing as Manchuria developed, but the development of its natural resources was only possible through banking activity, and by the extension of communication facilities. As of 1919, Manchuria already had 72 Japanese banks and branch banks established in its cities, including 18 offices of the Bank of Chōsen. Around this time, the bank was requested to act as the fiscal agent for the Japanese expeditionary forces in Siberia.<sup>24</sup>

The United States believed that, under the circumstances, Manchuria was being turned into a zone of special interests for Japan,

<sup>21</sup> Miller to SS, October 5, 1928, M426, R.9, 895.77/17.

<sup>22</sup> O'Brien to SS, July 1, 1911, M426, R.7, 895.516/6. *Seoul Press*, May 2, 1917, enclosure in Miller to SS, May 2, 1917, M426, R.7, 895.516/11.

<sup>23</sup> Bergholz to SS, October 1, 1919, M426, R.7, 895.516/15.

<sup>24</sup> The Bank of Chōsen, Report for the Half-Year ended December 31, 1923, Miller to SS, May 8, 1924, M.426, R.7, 895.516/19 and enclosures; Bergholz to SS, October 1, 1919, M426, R.7, 895.516/15; Miller to SS, February 28, 1929, M426, R.7, 895.516/23.



which made commercial activities by other foreign merchants almost impossible. The State Department issued a special directive to observe the Bank of Chōsen's activities carefully.<sup>25</sup> According to Consul-General Nelson T. Johnson at Harbin, this central bank of Korea had been heavily involved in the government's economic policy. By the mid-1920s, it had become a "general bank," and had proceeded with the ordinary business of an exchange bank, with interests in various commercial activities, and branches in New York, Shanghai, Beijing, and elsewhere. But investments of some 80 million yen in essentially worthless enterprises in Manchuria had ended in disaster, and many of the branches abroad were closed in its campaign of retrenchment and reconstruction in the coming years.<sup>26</sup>

Another vanguard of Japan's economic advances in Manchuria was the emigration of Koreans. In 1920s Shandong, Zhili (Chihli) and other Chinese regions were already considered to be more overpopulated than Japan. This added credence to the view that the continued emigration of Japanese and Koreans to Manchuria and other Chinese regions revealed a desire to keep as much Chinese territory out of Chinese control as possible.<sup>27</sup> A study by the South Manchurian Railway described Korean immigration into the region in three periods; namely, the pre-annexation period (prior to 1910), the post-annexation period up to 1916, and from 1917 to what was then the present day. According to this 1928 article, entitled "Korean Immigrants in Manchuria as Studied by Period of Immigration," the immigrants in the first period came largely from northeastern Korea and settled chiefly in Jilin Province. Many of these early settlers had become assimilated with the native population, and gained an established position in the communities where they resided. During the second phase, from the annexation to 1916, emigrants were motivated both by discontent with Japan's rule in Korea, and by the desire to leave their native land for other reasons. These new arrivals in Manchuria lived mostly in towns and cities, mainly in the Jiandao region, and in other parts of Jilin Province, and created a problem of "undesirable Koreans." In the third period, emigration was apparently on a larger scale. The estimated real number of Korean emigrants for the years 1917–1926 was given as between 400,000 and 500,000, while the official statistics showed only about 200,000. These newcomers were mostly farmers who

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<sup>25</sup> Bergholz to SS, October 1, 1919, M426, R.7, 895.516/15; Miller to SS, February 28, 1929, M426, R.7, 895.516/23.

<sup>26</sup> Johnson to J.V.A. MacMurray, September 29, 1924, M426, R.7, 895.516/20; Bank of Chōsen to National City Bank, September 3, 1925, 895.516/22.

<sup>27</sup> Memorandum regarding Chino-Japanese-American Relations at the Pacific Conference, Schurman to SS, December 13, 1921, M341, R.29 (793.94/1268).

came to Manchuria for economic reasons, and settled in Jilin and Fengtian (modern Liaoning) Provinces. However, by the 1920s, cultivable wastelands were fast disappearing, and the Chinese authorities no longer wanted Koreans to become naturalized. Although this report did not mention it, the immigration of the period, which had reached one million by 1922, was greatly encouraged by the continually developing Japanese interest in Manchuria, something which had been reflected in the “Twenty-One Demands.” These Koreans included young men with some education, who were readily critical of the Japanese governance of their homeland, and susceptible to joining the independence movement.<sup>28</sup>

As Koreans were scattered throughout the vast land of Manchuria, they were not subject to formulaic categorization as anti-Japanese/pro-Chinese or pro-Japanese. The Koreans who resided in the South Manchurian Railway zones did not take kindly to the idea of Chinese naturalization, as they were in need of Japanese protection. Meanwhile, those who lived farther inland desired naturalization, as Chinese nationality gave them advantages in the cultivation of rice fields. Chinese authorities, however, would not always permit such naturalization, generally assuming the presence of Japanese behind the Koreans. The whole problem involved issues pertaining to legislation and economics, as well as diplomacy.<sup>29</sup>

Japanese reports notably evaded an essential aspect of the problem, i.e., the political background of Korean emigration, which was mentioned only in a vague manner. An American report also noted that the migration of Koreans across the border had been a “ground movement” for centuries, governed primarily by natural laws, and having relatively little to do with political conditions.<sup>30</sup> American officials in Manchuria, however, pointed out Japan’s double motive in getting Koreans to settle in Manchuria. First, the Japanese authorities hoped to buy cheaper land in Korea by thinning out the population. Second, the Japanese also wanted to have additional “nationals” representing Japanese interests in Manchuria. To attribute Korean emigration to purely economic purposes would therefore only be self-deceiving for Japan.<sup>31</sup> One Japanese report, compiled during the March First period, admitted that this emigration was designed to disperse Koreans beyond the northern border region, so that Japan would have an excuse to intervene there on the pretext of “protecting” Korean nationals, whenever it judged it was necessary to do so in

<sup>28</sup> Meyers (Mukden) to MacMurray, April 19, 1928, M426, R.7, 895.5593/1; Military Report on Korea by Captain Bennett, December 10, 1920, 6680 (197/23).

<sup>29</sup> Meyers (Mukden) to MacMurray, April 19, 1928, M426, R.7, 895.5593/1.

<sup>30</sup> Miller to SS, November 26, 1923, M329, R.182 (893.5595/10).

<sup>31</sup> Consul-General (Mukden) to SS, March 10, 1919, M426, R.2, 895.00/608.

the future.<sup>32</sup> The Japanese authorities in Seoul therefore did not stop these migrations to Jiandao, even though they knew that the Koreans made the area a hotbed of anti-Japanese activities. In late March 1919, when the uprising reached its height, the number of Koreans who headed for Jiandao was estimated at about six or seven hundred a day, and during that year the total number of Koreans leaving for Manchuria was over 45,000.<sup>33</sup>

Koreans in Manchuria caused complex and practical problems, nonetheless. In addition to malcontent Koreans, Manchuria was infested with lawless elements, such as Chinese bandits. Some of them even attempted to cross the border into the peninsula. During the year 1922, which had been comparatively quiet, over 300 raids by armed men in various numbers had been reported, some even having penetrated as far as the American-owned mines in the Unsan district. Japan also insisted that there had been a considerable increase in Communist ideas among the Koreans due to Bolshevik influence.<sup>34</sup>

The central government of China and provincial authorities in Manchuria were poised to halt immigration from Korea. According to the American consul-general in Mukden, there were many who believed in an ancient legend that when the “white-coats” (Koreans) came back to Manchuria the Chinese would have to leave. Local governments would not allow land ownership by Koreans, and instructed Chinese not to lease lands to them, keeping the rights of Koreans as limited as possible. Ethnic Chinese, on their part, vigorously supported such measures. Assistance provided by the Japanese authorities to the Koreans only increased their unpopularity with their Chinese neighbors, and became the cause of serious complications.<sup>35</sup> It should also be noted that, while the Chinese refrained from any public support for the Koreans, so as not to give Japan added excuses to intervene in Manchuria, Japan had every reason and need to protect “good Koreans.” Of course, Japan’s control risked creating another international issue; namely, interference with Chinese sovereignty. Yet Japan doggedly pursued an agreement with Zhang Zuolin, the Manchurian warlord, to crack down on Korean nationalists, eventually achieving

<sup>32</sup> Kuksa P’yŏnch’an Wiwŏhoe (National History Compilation Committee) (comp.), *Han’guk tongnip undongsa* (History of the Korean Independence Movement), (Seoul, 1965–70), vol. 2, pp. 542–544. Miller noted: “It is obvious that this body of Koreans, living outside the borders, constitutes at once a serious responsibility for the Japanese government and a valuable political asset.” [Miller to SS, November 26, 1923, M329, R.182 (893.5595/10).]

<sup>33</sup> Government-General of Korea, *Annual Report 1921–22* (Seoul, 1923), p.16; Kang, Tōksang (ed.), *Gendaishi shiryō, Chōsen* (Materials of Modern History, Korea), (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 1965–67), vol. 27, viii.

<sup>34</sup> Miller to SS, November 26, 1923, M329, R.182 (893.5595/10).

<sup>35</sup> Consul General (Mukden) to SS, March 10, 1919, M426, R.2, 895.00/608.

this goal. It was through this “Agreement on Joint Suppression between China and Japan” in 1920 that China took part in repressing the Korean Independence Army. By 1925, Miyamatsu Miya, the director of the Police Bureau of the Government-General, entered into the so-called Miya Agreement with the Fengtian authorities, which included guidelines and regulations for controlling Koreans. Through this agreement, China was forced to cooperate with Japan’s control over Koreans.<sup>36</sup>

#### JAPAN’S COLONIAL POLICY AND THE POWERS

The 1920s context within which the powers reacted to Japan’s policy in Korea was completely different from that in the 1910s, when Japan’s rule was, at least in appearance, perfect. In the 1920s, and especially in the decade’s early years, the aftermath of the March First uprising was still being felt. Consulates-general of the Western powers in Seoul frequently compiled comprehensive reports on Korea under titles like “Japanese Policy in Korea,” something which they had not bothered to write about in the 1910s. By the 1920s, the economic interests of the Western powers in Korea had been mostly wiped out. In 1924 Miller thus reported that circumstances for foreigners conducting economic or commercial activities in Korea were quite difficult. Business at the time was “deadly dull,” and conditions for foreign trade would not be rendered any more favorable for the next half year by the new luxury tariff that had just come into effect.<sup>37</sup>

The greatest source of profit for American interests, the Unsan mines operated by the Oriental Consolidated Mining Company, was still producing the highest amount of gold in the whole Japanese empire. Yet since 1923 they had had to mine as deep as 2,600 feet underground, while timbers were brought from forests 3,000 feet above the mine entrance. In addition to the growing production costs necessitated by these circumstances, in 1924 the Japanese government stopped the company from accessing gold bullion on the world markets, by placing an embargo on gold exports under the name of wartime national policy. As a result, the Americans were forced to sell in Japan at a loss of approximately seven yen on each ounce, amounting to 600,000 yen a year. Eventually, discussions between the American embassy in Tokyo and the Japanese Foreign Ministry resolved the

<sup>36</sup> On the Miya Agreement, see Ch’u, Hōnsu, “Isimnyōndae chaeman hanin e taehan chung-il ūi chōngch’aek” (Chinese and Japanese Policies toward Koreans in Manchuria in the 1920s), in Tong’a Ilbo (comp.), *Samil undong osip chunhyōn kinyōn nonjip* (Collected Essays on the March First Movement in Commemoration of its Fiftieth Anniversary), (Seoul, 1969), pp. 597–590.

<sup>37</sup> Miller to SS, June 30, 1924, M426, R.7, 895.50/3.

embargo problem.<sup>38</sup> When the Suan mines, operated by the Seoul Mining Company, closed down in 1924 on account of the exhaustion of its ores, Miller commented that this marked the passing of one of the few large American industrial enterprises in Korea.<sup>39</sup>

Except for a two-year period from 1927 to 1929, Korea in the 1920s was under the direct authority of Governor-General Saitō Makoto (1858–1936), well known for his so-called “cultural policy.” In contrast to his predecessors, Terauchi Masatake (1852–1919) and Hasegawa Yoshimichi (1850–1924), he implemented a series of liberal policies intended to mitigate oppressive rule. By both Japanese and Western standards, Saitō was one of the most successful governors-general, who stabilized the situation in Korea and improved the government relationship with the missionaries in the peninsula. When he was reappointed to the post in November 1929, it was humorously commented in a British consular report that the Koreans would not like Saitō’s reappointment because they would no longer have any cause for complaint.<sup>40</sup> The Americans also agreed that Saitō had gained confidence and respect from all classes. He had not preserved his rule by stooping to cheap blandishments, but neither did he take any steps to weaken Japan’s hold on the peninsula.<sup>41</sup>

Yet, however fervently foreigners might have lauded Saitō’s policies, they knew perfectly well that it was a different question for the Koreans. Saitō’s “cultural policy” opened up many opportunities for Koreans, who largely diverted their attention and interest from political to economic and cultural fields, thus relieving their pent-up emotion by channeling their energies into new enterprises.<sup>42</sup> In this atmosphere, the number of organizations of a cultural, educational and economic nature, which also had some nationalist tinge, mushroomed. In 1920, after the Government-General had strictly circumscribed Korean organizations for a decade, there were 986 organizations of all types registered with the colonial police; by September 1922, the number had swelled to 5,728.<sup>43</sup> Korean vernacular newspapers made their appearance in March 1920, and the desire among the Koreans for education was, according to the British consul-general, then universal, with even remote villages making every effort to obtain it for their children.<sup>44</sup>

The most outstanding, if ultimately unsuccessful, campaign in this effort was for the establishment of a Korean university. The fundraising

<sup>38</sup> Miller to SS, April 8, 1924, M426, R.8, 895.63 or 4/6.

<sup>39</sup> Miller to SS, September 24, 1924, M426, R.8, 895.6341/2.

<sup>40</sup> Korea, Annual Report, 1929, 14755 (1538/1534/23).

<sup>41</sup> MacVeagh to SS, December 21, 1927, M426, R.3, 895.001/8.

<sup>42</sup> Miller to SS, June 12, 1926, M426, R.6, 895.44Yi/1.

<sup>43</sup> Robinson, Michael, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920–1925* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), pp. 49–50.

<sup>44</sup> Report on Affairs in Korea during 1922, January 6, 1923, 9226 (665/154/23).

campaign for this purpose was thwarted by the government, which suggested the alternative of establishing a “government university,” which opened in May 1924 under the name of Keijō Imperial University, the predecessor of today’s Seoul National University. In the economic sector, with the abolition in 1920 of the Company Law, which since the annexation had hindered the progress of colonial industry and even of investments by Japanese capital in the peninsula, a textile company, the Kyōngsōng Pangjik (founded in October 1920) became a pioneer, and four banks operating on a nationwide scale started business the following year. Saitō’s new policy, together with the Koreans’ response, ushered in a new era of tremendous efflorescence in the cultural, intellectual and economic activities of the colonial society.<sup>45</sup> Cultural instruments, such as newspapers and magazines, awakened and spread “Korean consciousness,” enabling their readers to resist the Japanese colonizers by nonviolent and subtle means; something which was becoming one of the hallmarks of “colonial modernity.”

Western diplomats were inclined to underestimate these new phenomena in Korean society, probably because the Korean activities were thoroughly under the supervision of the colonial government. If there was one consistent refrain echoing throughout the 1920s, it was the idea that “hope of independence should never vanish despite the seeming peace and quiet.” In this regard, it might be accurate to say that the Western powers were concerned about possible confrontations, lurking beneath the surface, between the governed and governing. In 1929, Miller described this sort of indifference on the part of the Koreans with the following remark: “Some sections of the Korean people and press were apathetic about the reappointment of Saitō, not because they were lacking in trust and respect for Saitō personally but because of their conviction that no great good to their country could be expected from any Japanese administration.”<sup>46</sup> British records were, in this regard, almost identical, and sometimes complementary to, those of the United States.

British Consul-General Arthur Lay spent more than two decades (1902–1927) of his diplomatic career in Korea, and professed deep affection for the country.<sup>47</sup> When the March First Movement and its aftermath subsided, Lay resumed his job in late 1919 after a ten-month break. In September 1921, he reported that all was quiet in

<sup>45</sup> For the establishment of Kyōngsōng Pangjik and the rise of Korean capitalism, see Eckert, Carter J., *Offspring of Empire: The Koch'ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism, 1876–1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), especially chapters 1–2.

<sup>46</sup> Underlining is in the original. (Miller to SS, August 20, 1929, M426, R.3, 895.001/15.)

<sup>47</sup> A.C. Hyde Lay, *Four Generations in China, Japan and Korea* (Edinburgh, 1952), pp. 24–25.

Korea, even if bomb outrages, which had continued after an attempt on the life of Saitō himself upon his arrival at the Seoul railway station in September 1919, might have been a sign that things were not exactly what they seemed. The Koreans had not given up hope for independence, as evidenced by the bombings of government buildings, constant demonstrations by nationalists in and outside the country, sabotage, investigations by the Japanese police (who still resorted to torture), and the suppression and censorship of Korean newspapers, if they were deemed to be publishing matters detrimental to public order.<sup>48</sup> Lay interpreted such quiet as resignation rather than reconciliation, since he felt Koreans had come to understand that outward exhibitions of hatred and contempt for their rulers would be self-defeating, and only have the effect of increasing the severity of the administration. He placed importance on the fact that the Korean Provisional Government at Shanghai had issued instructions for the abandonment of open hostility, and for the concentration of popular energies on education, with a view to raising the national standard.<sup>49</sup>

As evidence of their continued hope for freedom, Lay pointed out the sensitivity with which Koreans reacted to any actions that damaged their aspirations to independence. For example, the *Kungmin Hyōphoe* (National Association), created to promote understanding between Koreans and Japanese, was considered to be a pro-Japanese organization. In February 1921, its president, Min Wōnsik, was assassinated in Tokyo, while trying to petition the central government to grant Koreans an equal franchise as subjects of the Japanese empire. Lay saw the assassination as an illustration of how bitter the Korean question remained, and of how likely it was to cause Japan trouble whenever the opportunity arose.<sup>50</sup> In the same spirit, a students' uprising in Kwangju in 1929 aimed to "let the wound be opened up and a little salt rubbed in lest the Korean forget he was oppressed." In his annual report of 1928, Lay also criticized the fact that whilst "in theory there is freedom of speech and of the press; in practice the censorship is extremely strict; there is no discrimination, but Japanese is the national language."<sup>51</sup> The governor-general had never given up doggedly pursuing the "assimilation policy," making it the ultimate goal of the Japanese with no spectacular success. In 1923, the number

<sup>48</sup> Memorandum respecting Condition in Korea at the end of September, 1921, October 7, 1921, 6694 (4280/611/23).

<sup>49</sup> Korea, Annual Report, 1921, 8046 (2399/205/23); Report on Affairs in Korea during 1922, January 6, 1923, 9226 (665/154/23).

<sup>50</sup> Gurney to Curzon, March 12, 1921, 6698 (1642/1642/23) and minute.

<sup>51</sup> Korea, Annual Report, 1929, 14755 (1538/1534/23); Annual Report, 1928, 13967 (6787/994/23).

of marriages between Japanese and Koreans was only forty-three, of which fourteen were between Japanese men and Korean women, and twenty-nine between Korean men and Japanese women. These figures seemed almost incredibly low in view of the close connection between the two peoples, and demonstrated that the policy of assimilation was making little real progress.<sup>52</sup>

During Saitō's term, a large Shintō shrine, known as the *Chosŏn Sin'gung*, was built to symbolize the permanent occupation by Japan and the assimilation policy. The shrine stood on a spur of Namsan, overlooking downtown Seoul and its surroundings, and was approached via imposing granite steps and gateways. Miller commented that it seemed even more significant than the raising of the national flag, since while the flag was the emblem of the constituted government and might be raised or lowered according to the political expediencies of the time, the shrine would stand as the symbol of the politico-religious ideals upon which the state itself had been built, and of the spirit which permeated all of its institutions and animated all of its activities.<sup>53</sup>

While the American consul-general's analysis of the Korean situation bore several original aspects, Miller judged that the Koreans would never find true satisfaction in the rule of the governor-general. The chief breeding grounds of "the divine discontent" with this alien ruler were gradually shifting from the political to the economic and social spheres. Ideas concerning the form of independence that should be sought also began to be divided into various groups, which favored, respectively, absolute independence; a "contingent independence," corresponding to that of Canada; or local self-government combined with representation in the Japanese Diet, as an integral part of the Japanese empire, similar to the status of the American states and territories, or, to a certain extent, the colonies of France. Another significant point in Miller's analysis was that, while Korea had stabilized both politically and socially, the growing pressure on economic conditions would undoubtedly come to jeopardize Korea's "domestic peace." It could scarcely be a mere coincidence that the political excitement inspired by ideals of self-determination subsided at same the time that the postwar era of prosperity ended in Japan, and harder times set in. Business depression, financial retrenchment, the increased difficulty of making a living, as well as drought and

<sup>52</sup> Lay to Eliot, April 1, 1924, 10309 (1556/269/23). However, certain long-term results were achieved: "The number of Koreans able to speak Japanese at the end of 1922 was more than 77,000 out of which number about 28,000 especially among the younger generations had a thorough knowledge of the language." [Cunningham to Palairet, October 27, 1923, 9227 (3662/154/23); May 2, 1923, 9226 (1792/154/23).]

<sup>53</sup> Miller to SS, October 19, 1925, M426, R.6, 895.413.



famine, brought to the fore issues more vital and pressing than vain political aspirations.<sup>54</sup>

Yamanashi Hanzō (1864–1944), who replaced Saitō as governor-general during the period from December 1927 to August 1929, was widely considered to be unfit in both training and temperament to carry on the work of conciliating the Korean people, which required qualities such as tactics, patience and restraint. As far as Korean foreign relations were concerned, he faithfully followed traditional views on Japan's security with regard to the Korean peninsula, and perceived threats as coming from the outside, especially in relation to the spread of Communist ideas and revolutionary movements in China. As the KMT established a unified government in 1928, it was set to exert some influence on the situation in the Korean peninsula. Yamanashi warned that, despite domestic stability, factors such as the prevailing economic depression among the farming class, the tendency toward "immoderate thoughts" (i.e., the idea of independence), Communist ideas and activities, and the East Asian international situation, were all having an increasing effect in unsettling the minds of the people. The attention of the public had become sharply focused on China in 1927, when the Japanese army in Korea was dispatched to play a part in military operations in Shandong. It was no longer "a fire across the river" in which they had no concern. Although the "Chōsen Army" was only sent as a "support force," it created concerns by provoking the Korean Independence Army to raid across the border, and precipitated the killing of Japanese officers by Chinese mounted bandits. Miller reported that the Chinese situation also attracted attention from religious, educational and business groups, which showed an increasing desire and determination for self-rule in the conduct of their church, school or business affairs.<sup>55</sup> Miller's statement might have seemed to some an unwarranted jump in logic, by relating the establishment of the KMT government to increased autonomy in Korean society. However, the "reunification" of China, and the KMT regime's yearning to extend its effective control to Manchuria, surely gave some people hope that China might bring up "the Korean question" as an item on its agenda.

Throughout the 1920s, Britain and the United States, who considered Saitō Makoto the most capable Japanese administrator to have ever served in Korea, even ventured to expect that he would improve the political situation in the peninsula by satisfying Korean aspirations

<sup>54</sup> Miller to SS, May 12, 1925, M426, R.3, 895.00/705. See also Lay to Eliot, May 18, 1925, 10964 (2749/1277/23).

<sup>55</sup> Miller to SS, June 8, 1928, M426, R.3, 895.00/711. During World War I, Japan had dispatched a portion of the Chōsen Army to Qingdao under the pretext of a shift of forces, thus doubling its military forces in Shandong. (*FRUS*, 1915, p. 104.)

for independence, at least to a certain extent. Such a perception was closely related to the general condition of international politics. When World War I was over, colonies developed greater political awareness and, in most cases, began to participate more widely in politics. As Lay commented, the independence of Egypt, Afghanistan and Persia, in the wake of a great, worldwide movement toward national self-determination, had had such a tremendous effect on Korea that the cry for self-determination was spreading like wildfire among its people.<sup>56</sup> It was in such an atmosphere that the two powers suggested the granting of Korean self-government. Of course, neither of the two powers believed that complete and absolute independence would be possible for Korea. Britain, itself a colonizer, judged that Korean independence would not correspond to its own national interest. Both powers, moreover, believed that Korean aspirations should not be automatically accepted and developed; and that it was, in any case, up to Japan to grasp the conditions under which the Korean people were to be given ways to express their aspirations. The conflict between the governing and the governed should be eased by gratifying the nationalistic desires of the ruled through a certain amount of autonomy.<sup>57</sup>

For the Koreans, however, this approach was tantamount to the abandonment of independence, and those who advocated it were nothing more than puppets of the Government-General. Perhaps naturally, this movement was pursued by pro-Japanese organizations, which had periodically petitioned the Tokyo government and Diet for the autonomy of Korea, under conditions of complete harmony and equal rights between the two countries. Yet the reaction from the people was so cold and apathetic that, as we have seen, the leader of the most prominent pro-Japanese group, Min Wönsik, was assassinated in February 1921. For Japan, it was also true that calls for autonomy or self-government were only “episodes” or “fiascos,” which occasionally appeared while Saitō was in office, and subsequently vanished with the reemergence of military rule in the 1930s. Yet when the Allied powers officially discussed the independence of Korea in the closing days of World War II, this lack of experience in self-government was interpreted as political inexperience, and provided a good excuse to justify their proposal of “trusteeship.”

The Korean attitude towards Saito’s formula of self-government must be understood using a historical perception of modern Korean history. With the protectorate treaty in 1905, Japan nominally

<sup>56</sup> Lay to Eliot, February 27, 1923, 9226 (1113/154/23).

<sup>57</sup> On the wider participation of Koreans in administration and local self-government, see Kim, Unt’ae, *Ilbon chegukjuūi ūi Han’guk t’ongch’i* (The Rule of Korea by Japanese Imperialism) (Seoul: Pakyōngsa], 1986.

intended to keep the Korean monarch, while seizing control of Korean governmental functions, including foreign affairs. In practice, however, Koreans witnessed this Japanese promise end in the absorption of the country after five years, during which time the Japanese protectorate had kept increasing its grip over the peninsula. To the Koreans, therefore, any sort of limited sovereignty by foreign powers was nothing but deception, and they totally rejected any idea which would limit their full sovereignty and independence. This included the mandate formula, self-rule within the Japanese Empire, and even the notion of “appealing” to the great powers for Korean independence, instead of “demanding” immediate independence. It also extended to the trusteeship of the post-liberation period.<sup>58</sup>

In mid-1920, Saitō had announced the implementation of “self-government,” if only in an elementary form. The British and the American governments were very expectant, even if reserved in making predictions. In the first place, the main form that this self-government was to take, as insisted on by Japan, was not a representative and administrative body but only an advisory one. It was, in addition, purely appointive in the selection of its members. A recent study argues that Saitō felt Japan’s control of the peninsula was not as solid as outward appearances suggested, despite the decade-long, high-handed militaristic rule; and that, as a result, he moved in the direction of an “actual, not formal” autonomy with the collaboration of pro-Japanese Koreans.<sup>59</sup> It is worth pointing out the new body was partially “representative,” in the sense that some of the members from *to* (provinces), *pu* (urban prefectures or municipal districts), and *li* (villages) were directly elected by the residents. It might also represent the first step toward the granting of self-government to Korea, in that popular wishes might be faithfully reflected in financial and educational measures.<sup>60</sup>

There was a varied reaction to the first elections to the newly-created municipal and village councils in December 1920. Considerable interest was in Seoul and elsewhere. The older and more representative members of the communities, while exercising their right of franchise,

<sup>58</sup> As for the notion of sovereignty, see D’Entreves, Alexander Passerin, *The Notion of the State – an Introduction to Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp.100–102. A recent study on modern Korean historiography from this perspective, see Em, Henry H., *The Great Enterprise-Sovereignty and Historiography in Modern Korea* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013).

<sup>59</sup> Kim, Tongmyōng, “Isimnyōndae Chosŏn esō ūi Ilbon chekukjuūi ūi chibae ch’ėje ūi tong’yō,” (Shaking of Japanese Imperialist Governance System in Korea in the 1920s), *Ilbon yōksa yōn’gu* (Japanese History Studies) 8, (October 1998), pp. 65–67.

<sup>60</sup> Miller to SS, June 19, 1920, M426, R.3, 895.00/685; August 2, 1920, 895.00/687; Lay to Eliot, August 9, 1920, 5366 (2235/2235/23); Gurney to Curzon, March 25, 1921, 6694 (1668/611/23).

generally refused to stand for election – influenced in part by their natural conservatism, and in part by their fear that, by accepting office, they would be laying themselves open to the opprobrium of becoming “pro-Japanese.” As a result, most of the successful Korean candidates were from the younger generation. The right to vote was limited, and given only to those who had paid a certain amount of municipal tax (five yen in the case of Seoul). The results showed that, in the twelve municipal districts, including Seoul, Inch’ön, Pyongyang, Pusan, Taegu and Wönsan, 134 Japanese and 56 Korean members were elected. In twenty *kun* (local districts), 111 Korean and 101 Japanese members were chosen. Miller presumed that the Japanese would hold a substantial majority in the municipal councils for some time to come, since they had constructed or controlled practically all the modern improvements, such as roads, lighting, water and street-cars, and were also responsible for the predominant financial and commercial interests in the municipalities. The underlying situation was, however, by no means simple. The real test of the efficacy of the new measures was, Miller believed, in the operation of the district councils, in which the Korean members predominated, with a clear majority in seven, and equality in five, of the district councils.<sup>61</sup>

In late 1923, Miller again raised the issue of self-government. Most notably, there had been a marked change in the attitude of the Korean voters toward these councils after three years. Whereas, in the beginning, the new step had been received with no great enthusiasm, and the more experienced elements in the electorate were disinclined to stand for the elective office of “councilor” or to exercise their franchise, elections were now marked by an intelligent and active interest in both. Of a total of 4,360 Japanese and 4,950 Korean eligible voters in Seoul, 3,400 of the former and 3,200 of the latter cast their votes in 1923. Miller viewed this progress with optimistic eyes. The powers of the provincial councils had been enlarged, and the scope of the questions submitted to them for consideration had been broadened, so that it seemed that the avowed object of the new political institution was gradually to be realized in a fair way.<sup>62</sup>

In 1925, the American consul-general made a long comment on an essay on self-government by Count Soejima (Soyejima) Michimasa, the former proprietor of the *Keijō Nippō*, and a member of the House of Peers. Soejima insisted that self-government of some kind for Korea, either local self-government with representation in the Japanese Diet, or “home rule,” would provide a solution to the Korean question. Their political education and institutions should

<sup>61</sup> Miller to SS, December 3, 1920, M426, R.3, 895.00/688.

<sup>62</sup> Miller to SS, November 22, 1923, M426, R.3, 895.00/700.

proceed along those lines, rather than through “amalgamation” with those of Japan. He was opposed to the prevalent idea of eventually granting Korea some form of local self-government with representation in the Japanese Diet, pointing to the history of Ireland as a warning against such an ill-advised course. Instead, self-government in the form of “home rule” within the Japanese empire should be the ultimate goal. Miller agreed with this idea. What Soejima advocated was the British policy of “making willows green and flowers red,” rather than the French or Roman system of incorporating all into one body politic. His views, however, aroused considerable criticism from Japanese officials, who saw them as inconsistent with the principle of “non-discrimination,” as enunciated by the late Emperor Meiji in the rescript he issued at the time of the annexation.<sup>63</sup>

While American interest in the self-government issue had been enormous, a more fervid response came from Britain in terms of practical action. The Foreign Office arranged an unofficial conversation on self-government in Korea with Admiral Saitō Makoto when he (no longer governor-general in Seoul) visited London in mid-1927, just prior to the Geneva conference on naval arms reduction. It is not certain in what circumstances the exchange took place, or who his British counterpart was. However, W. Selby, an official at the Foreign Office, commented that the British side told the admiral that, for Japan, the Korea problem seemed broadly similar to issues with which Britain had had to deal, notably in India and Egypt, and suggested that Japan give the Koreans a few departments in the Government-General, to train them to take control of their own affairs. Saitō agreed in principle. He had indeed contrived to achieve some progress in connecting the Koreans with local administration. Yet, Saitō continued, it must be remembered that the Koreans were a very backward people, possibly more backward than other Eastern races, and it was for this reason that things had not yet progressed so far in Korea. The Foreign Office had the record of this meeting circulated to the cabinet and to British officials in East Asia.<sup>64</sup>

British officials in East Asia, however, in light of their own observations, did not place much significance on Saitō’s comments. The embassy in Tokyo commented that Saitō’s view, able and delightful as he was personally, must not be taken too literally. Self-government in Korea was not a feasible short-term future. A comparison of Japanese policy in Korea with British policy in India or Egypt, a theme which

<sup>63</sup> Miller to SS, December 18, 1925, M426, R.4, 895.01/22; December 23, 1925, 895.01/23. Soejima’s essay also drew a lengthy comment from Lay who regarded the feasibility of these views as “doubtful.” (Lay to Eliot, December 17, 1925, 11706 (657/642/23).

<sup>64</sup> Japanese Policy in Corea, June 6, 1927, 12522 (6115/1324/23).

the British government had referred to frequently during the colonial period, was necessarily unfavorable to the Japanese. It was hardly to be expected that the Japanese should contemplate any real relaxation of their hold on the peninsula at such an early stage, in the guise of self-government. If an increasing number of Koreans were being given appointments in the administration, five out of the thirteen governors of the provinces being Korean, they were Korean in name only. Loans were offered freely on the mortgage of Korean farmers' land, but in southern Korea 79% of the farms had already passed into Japanese ownership. The Japanese were proving themselves to be very competent Shylocks.<sup>65</sup>

Saitō seemed to have ruminated over the issue more seriously by the time of his second appointment to Seoul in 1929, under the Hamaguchi cabinet in Tokyo. He sought to secure the consent of the Tokyo government to a draft scheme, prepared by himself, for granting a certain amount of local autonomy to the Koreans in the future. Saitō was also said to cherish the hope of one day establishing a separate parliament for Korea. If this was not to be done, he believed it necessary to give the Koreans the right to send representatives, who might number over 100, to the Japanese Diet. This, in turn, would mean that, as citizens of the Japanese empire, the Koreans would have to become more adaptable to military service under Japan's conscription law. The fact that Japan was itself still in the early stages of "self-government" was, however, a problem. Prefectural assemblies had been established in 1878, but they were purely advisory bodies with no power of initiative. As usual, conservatives in Japan were strongly opposed to Saitō's idea, on the grounds that the plan, if put into practice, would encourage the independence movement among the Koreans. Such problems made the plan unfeasible, and Saitō proceeded in late 1929 to his post in Seoul without any clear details.<sup>66</sup>

Meanwhile, a new issue came to the fore in Korea's domestic situation during the 1920s: the spread of Communist ideology, commonly called "Bolshevism." The spread of Bolshevism in East Asia had a double implication. First, the economic interests of the Western powers in China were expected to be badly hurt by it. Lenin incited the people of India and China to an anti-British and anti-colonial liberation movement, while entering into an alliance with the nationalist forces of the KMT. In China, British and Japanese goods were boycotted, and serious antipathy grew against these two countries. It is in this context that some scholars call power relations

<sup>65</sup> Tilly to Chamberlain, November 23, 1927, 12522 (9582/1324/23).

<sup>66</sup> Tilly to Henderson, March 17, 1930, 14755 (2187/1534/23) and minutes.

in the mid-1920s, especially in China, the era of “Soviet initiatives.”<sup>67</sup> The Japanese related the Chinese situation to the expansion of Bolshevism in Korea, and increased their efforts to suppress it, while trying to reinforce their control over Manchuria to stop the spread of Bolshevism in the region. (France insisted on the establishment of a *cordon sanitaire* so that Bolshevism might not “contaminate” Europe).<sup>68</sup>

Japan’s efforts to connect the Korean independence movement to Bolshevism could be detected even during the initial stages of the March First Movement. Surprisingly enough, the earliest set of information that the British Foreign Office received on the outbreak of the Korean uprising was a Reuters dispatch from Shanghai, which said, quoting a semi-official Japanese source, that the disturbances were due to Bolshevik propaganda in the city.<sup>69</sup> Bolshevism was conveniently used by the Seoul government for the suppression of the Korean movement under various names, such as “radical elements” or “dangerous thoughts.” Since the Bolsheviks had already appeared in Korea, a new regulation in April 1919 required all people to report the name and nationality of every guest spending the night in their village to the nearest police station.<sup>70</sup> Yet, on reviewing the reports of the police and the gendarmerie, this claim of Bolshevik influence on the Korean demonstrators proves to have been highly exaggerated. The United States had defined the Korean movement to be “nationalistic” from its inception, and, over time, Britain concluded that it was “purely national in its aspiration.”<sup>71</sup>

Nevertheless, Communism had its impact on the domestic situation in the 1920s. The Western powers had a relatively precise understanding of the spread of Communist ideology in Korea. Many Koreans, left frustrated and disillusioned by the failure of the March First Movement, and by the lack of discussions on Korea at the conferences in Paris and Washington, resorted to extreme measures, including assassinations and bombings, while at the same time seeking salvation from a Soviet Russia that professed to be the messiah of oppressed peoples. The younger generation was divided into two schools, one anti-foreign and independent, the other frankly Bolshevik, and

<sup>67</sup> Iriye (1973), chapters 4–6.

<sup>68</sup> Albrecht-Carrié, René, *A Diplomatic History of Europe since the Congress of Vienna*, revised edition (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 426. The term *cordon sanitaire* was originally used in connection with efforts to prevent the spread of Communist ideology. After the end of World War II and the start of the Cold War, this idea developed into something that became the origin of the “containment policy” for stopping an expanding sphere of control by the Soviet Union.

<sup>69</sup> *The Times*, 10 April 1919.

<sup>70</sup> Bergholz to SS, April 4, 1919, M426, R.2, 895.00/612.

<sup>71</sup> Ku (1985), pp. 227–234.

both strongly, though secretly, anti-Japanese.<sup>72</sup> In Manchuria, many of the Korean teachers at educational institutions had been instilling Communist ideas into the minds of Korean students, and the Chinese authorities threatened to close all such schools in Chinese territory. Special classes were held for Koreans at a university in Vladivostok, where Marxism was one of the major items on the curriculum.<sup>73</sup>

The Soviet propaganda and support for Korea was enthusiastic during this period, and is a subject that has been fairly well covered by several authors.<sup>74</sup> It may, however, be worth referring to a few, long-forgotten records in British and American archives. A pamphlet, entitled “The Koreans who are being trampled under foot by the Imperialist party of Japan,” was published in English in late July 1919, under the name of Lev Karakhan, the Soviet acting commissar for foreign affairs. It appealed to the Korean people to cooperate with the Soviet government, and to provoke a revolution throughout the peninsula.<sup>75</sup> Publications of a similar nature had been distributed to the Japanese military in Siberia, including leaflets in Japanese that bore signs of having been translated by a Korean in Russian. These got into the hands of university students and lecturers, who professed “advanced” political ideas.<sup>76</sup> In 1922, a British journalist, covering the Conference of Toilers of the Far East in Moscow, reported that there were 52 Koreans in attendance, who represented various organizations and classes. The “Korean Army,” i.e., the irregular partisan troops based in Siberia, was estimated to be several thousands’ strong, and had fought steadily with the Russians against Japanese intervention.<sup>77</sup>

During the early 1920s, as the Government-General in Seoul correctly grasped, more organizations in the Korean independence movement were leaning toward the left. In early 1923, according to a rumor, an agreement had been entered into between Soviet Russia and a certain group of Koreans, who intended to declare an Autonomous Korean State along the Russian Maritime Province border, under the protection of Soviet Russia. This agreement was said to

<sup>72</sup> Korea, Annual Report, 1924, January 6, 1925, 10965 (1873/1873/23).

<sup>73</sup> Tilly to Chamberlain, May 21, 1926, 11709 (2471/2471/23) and its enclosure.

<sup>74</sup> Scalapino, Robert and Lee, Chong-sik, *Communism in Korea, Part I: The Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Suh, Dae-sook, *The Korean Communist Movement, 1918–1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967); Weathersby, Kathryn, “Soviet Policy toward Korea: 1944–1946,” Ph.D. dissertation (Indiana University, 1990), chapter 2.

<sup>75</sup> FO to Lampson, March 12, 1920, 5351 (138/56/23). The Foreign Office requested Lampson, the British minister in Beijing, to make discreet and confidential inquiries and report any information which he might be able to acquire on the subject.

<sup>76</sup> Eliot to Curzon, May 28, 1920, 5352 (1353/56/23) and its enclosure.

<sup>77</sup> Evans, Ernestine, “Looking East from Moscow,” *Asia* (December 1922), pp. 976, 1011.



bind both parties to render mutual assistance if either Korea or Soviet Russia became engaged in any military adventure. Koreans were taking part in these alleged mysterious preparations, approximately 600 having reached Grodekovo.<sup>78</sup> A British annual report on Japan claimed that the “Korean Nationalist Association” formed at Vladivostok was more powerful than the KPG, and that it had, according to a Japanese report, been recognized by the Soviet authorities as an autonomous body.<sup>79</sup> Several bombing attempts, including of the Government-General building in Seoul and the police office in Pusan in 1921, as well as an attempt on the life of War Minister Tanaka at Shanghai, were all the work of the *Ŭiyōdan* or “Heroic Corps,” which was suspected of having been supplied with funds by Russian Communists.<sup>80</sup>

Soviet propaganda in Korea decreased substantially with the treaty for the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and the USSR, which was concluded on January 25, 1925, in commemoration of the first anniversary of Lenin’s death. One article specifically prohibited the establishment on Russian territory of any bodies similar to the KPG, and also banned any associations that might be formed by anti-Bolshevik “white Russians” in Japan. With this treaty, branches of the Korean independence movement that had been under the auspices of the Bolsheviks started to decline.<sup>81</sup> Retrospectively speaking, the relationship between Korea and the Soviet Union in the 1920s had some important bearings on the Korean independence movement. Proposals for the establishment of self-government, creation of an independent state and military government, and a treaty for mutual aid were, however unfeasible in the immediate future, linked directly to questions of how Korea’s status in the international arena might eventually change. These were the very objectives that the Korean nationalists overseas tried to secure as a first step to independence, especially during the war against Japan in the 1940s. The fact that these issues were related to the Soviet Union, were under active discussion in the 1920s, and that they were affected by the normalizing of Russian-Japanese relations, was a significant, albeit futile, development in Korean international relations during the colonial

<sup>78</sup> G. C. Hanson to SS, April 5, 1923, M.426, R.5, 895.20293.

<sup>79</sup> Japan, Annual Report 1924, 10965 (1871/1871/23). See also Sokobin (Mukden) to SS, December 15, 1924, M.426, R.3, 895.00/703.

<sup>80</sup> Cunningham to Palairt, May 2, 1923, 9226 (1792/154/23); Cunningham to Palairt, November 9, 1923, 9227 (2296/154/23).

<sup>81</sup> Eliot to Chamberlain, January 29, 1925, 10963 (775/273/23). For the Soviet view on the 1925 treaty, see Degras, Jane (selected and edited), *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), vol. 2, pp. 5–7, 524–528.

period, and heralded the involvement of the Soviet Union in the Korean question after World War II.

Another matter that frustrated the hopes of Western powers was the steady but clear emergence of generalized xenophobic feeling in Korean society. In May 1924, Lay reported on a conspiracy to assassinate the British and American consuls-general, and to bomb their official establishments. The aim, reportedly, was to cause conflict and estrangement between the Western powers and Japan, and at the same time to draw international attention to the Korean independence movement. This tendency soon became apparent in the relationship between Koreans and the Western missionaries. Korean Christians had once almost all looked up to the missionaries with affection, and with a respect “bordering upon veneration.”<sup>82</sup> Yet amid the extreme tension between the government and the governed, the missionaries showed neutral and sometimes pro-Japanese attitudes, which incurred criticism from Korean Christians. By 1924, things had developed to the point that some missionaries who would not recognize Korean claims to independence received death threats, and had to petition their consulates-general for protection. Small incidents of anti-foreign nature kept occurring, through which it was possible to gauge the extent of enmity toward the missionaries and the West.<sup>83</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Compared to the previous decade, the 1920s was a time when peace and quiet tended to prevail, while the competition among the powers increased with Japan’s “expansionist” policies. Conflict and cooperation, however, can coexist in international politics. Britain and the United States kept up cooperative relations with Japan, making it difficult to expect any major change over the back-burner issue of “Korean independence.” As discussed above, however, the question kept resurfacing, and in the process certain signs of change in the powers’ positions could be perceived. The best example is the controversy in the Foreign Office over Japan’s expansionist policy and its colonial governance in the peninsula. In addition, Japan’s continental policy, and its relationship to the peninsula, kept drawing the

<sup>82</sup> Brown, Arthur J., *The Mastery of the Far East* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1921), p. 574.

<sup>83</sup> Lay to Eliot, May 19, 1924; May 19, 1924, 10319 (2198/2198/23) and minute; Korea, Annual Report, 1924, January 6, 1925, 10965 (1873/1873/23). See also an article by a North Korean scholar, Ch’oe, T’aejin, “Ilje kangjöm sigi Chosön e taehan mije üi chonggyo ch’imyak” (The Religious Invasion of Korea by U.S. Imperialists during the Occupation by Japanese Imperialists), *Yöksa kwahak* (Historical Science), (Pyongyang, 1965), 1, p. 54.

attention of such experts as Miller, who pointed out its significance for his country.

Even after the Anglo-Japanese Alliance ended in early 1922, Britain was more active than the United States in expressing interest in “the Korean question.” While the self-government issue was widely discussed, the official American interest in the issue was nothing more than a rather aloof hope. Yet Britain actually requested that Japan boldly implement the aforementioned ideas for encouraging a degree of Korean autonomy, using to their advantage Saitō’s friendship with British officials during his visit to London in mid-1927. Westerners, however, found it hard to get beyond the old belief that Korea was “quite unfit in its present stage of development to govern itself.”<sup>84</sup> Such views were occasionally expressed in the 1920s by their diplomatic representatives. This included Lay, who wrote in 1924 that if the Japanese had not taken charge of affairs, the state of Korea would still be the same as at the time of the annexation.<sup>85</sup> His views hardly differed in his valedictory dispatch on his retirement in 1926.<sup>86</sup> The Foreign Office in London tended to agree. In 1928, a British official commented in this way on the issue of Korean self-government: “The general verdict is that the Japanese have introduced a great number of successful external improvements in Korea. But they had not won, and have not made great efforts to win, the sympathy of the Koreans.”<sup>87</sup>

By this time, Korean nationalists were realizing that they would never be able to gain support from the West if “Korean independence” was the only card they could put on the table when “the Korean question” was discussed. It was, after all, generally seen as a very minor problem in the international relations of East Asia. The many petitions submitted to the United States government, which had requested that the U.S. pay attention to the legitimacy of Korea’s independence, on the basis, for example, of the “good offices” expressed in the U.S.-Korean Treaty of 1882, could not easily appeal to later readers. Korean nationalists nevertheless endeavored to draw the attention of the powers to, and to relate the Korean question to, Japan’s “continental policy.” Their argument was that the independence of Korea would naturally remove the foundation of Japanese expansion, since Japan could only expand into the continent from a foothold in the Korean peninsula. The powers refused to accept this argument, and Koreans were to wait another decade for the war in the Pacific to break out.

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<sup>84</sup> Ward to FO, November 16, 1921, 6706 (4215/2905/23) and minutes.

<sup>85</sup> Korea, Annual Report, 1924, 10965 (1873/1873/23).

<sup>86</sup> Lay to Tilly, September 30, 1926, 11706 (5030/462/23).

<sup>87</sup> White to Dormer, May 26, 1928, 13247 (3491/189/23) and minutes.

It is often said that the tactics of Korean nationalists in Western countries were mainly diplomatic. Yet the differences between their “diplomatic” actions in the United States and in Britain have often been overlooked. In the United States, efforts were directed toward the American government and public with help from pro-Korean, mostly civilian, people. In Britain, the Friends of Korea organization played a pivotal role, and consisted mainly of members of Parliament. The scale of the efforts was greater in the United States. Yet supposing the ultimate goal of these efforts to be positive governmental responses, the efforts in Britain proved more effective. As members of Parliament played the role of mediators and communicators, some governmental response to the Korean question was indeed likely. In Britain, the Foreign Office revealed, even if only marginally, its views on the Korean question in a manner different from the past. The Foreign Office made it “public,” albeit mainly in its replies to MPs’ letters, that Japan’s rule in Korea was not wholly legitimate and that the British government was becoming slightly sympathetic toward Korean aspirations for “independence,” a subject to which it had never referred in the past in this way. Yet, realistically, the Foreign Office concluded that advocacy or action on Korea’s behalf should be restrained, as far as was possible, in consideration of independence movements in British colonies and Britain’s relations with Japan.

## Bridge Between Japan and Manchuria: The 1930s



### ISSUES

THE OSTENSIBLE CALM of the 1920s suddenly disappeared, and the stability that seemed to have been achieved in East Asia was lost with the onset of the new decade. In the 1930s, the international system and its supporting ideology, utopianism, entirely collapsed with the rise of the three “revisionist powers,” namely Nazi Germany and Italy in Europe, and Japan in East Asia. These powers’ policies were now more disposed to confrontation than to compromise with the “status quo powers” of Great Britain, France and the United States. Japan became deeply involved in this process, and, as a result, the East Asian international system rapidly merged into a revised global framework.

The 1930s were crucial in terms of the great powers’ changing perceptions of Korea. These Western perceptions went relatively unnoticed when the relationships between Japan and the Western powers were friendly and cooperative, or when Japan’s foreign policy at least remained “limitedly expansionist” in a milieu of cooperation with the West, or when Japan’s relations with the powers were overwhelmingly important compared with their interests in the peninsula. In the 1930s, East Asian politics took a sudden and complete turn as Japan’s foreign policy became more openly expansionist, seeking to modify the existing regional system. It was in the light of such changes that the powers came to a new understanding of the importance of the Korean peninsula in Japan’s empire and foreign policy. The powers’ guarantee of Korean independence after World War II was founded upon this awakening.

This chapter will briefly cover the shifts in East Asia caused by Japan’s initiatives. It will review the era’s significant pivots, focusing on the Western powers’ assessment of the political, strategic and economic value of the peninsula in relation to Japan’s continental policy, followed by problems of Japan’s governance in Korea, and the reac-

tions of the Korean people. Lastly, the altered attitudes of the powers toward the people and society of Korea will form a starting point for studying the Korean question in the 1940s.

#### THE EAST ASIAN SITUATION AND KOREA

East Asia was caught up *en bloc* in a series of regional disputes called “the Far Eastern Crisis.” This crisis developed out of the so-called Manchurian Incident of September 18, 1931, the subsequent creation of “Manzhouguo” (Manchukuo) in 1932, and then the so-called “Marco Polo Bridge Incident” of July 1937, which unleashed the Sino-Japanese War caused by Japan’s continuing military actions in China proper. At the same time, China’s nationalism, gaining radical momentum, started to hit back powerfully, and the Western powers demonstrated that they were unable to control Japan. The result was that conflicts at local and regional levels were allowed to develop, and even to influence the international order at the global level.

The two “incidents” on Chinese territory remained largely independent, as there was a clear difference in terms of Japan’s motives, the two countries’ policies, their impact upon the global system of international relations, and the powers’ responses. To understand “the Far Eastern Crisis,” it is necessary to review the changes in Japan’s domestic politics; the developments in Chinese nationalism that focused internally on reform, and externally on restoration of sovereignty; and the Western powers’ interests and attendant limitations in East Asia. As these issues have been substantially covered in other studies,<sup>1</sup> this chapter will only cover significant aspects of the Sino-Japanese military conflicts insofar as they related to the Korean question.

The Manchurian Incident was little more than a “local” conflict that exacerbated the latent power struggle between Japan and China. Japan had steadily expanded its political and economic base in Manchuria, and became its *de facto* master after the assassination of Zhang Zuolin (Chang Tso-lin) in 1928. As a result of the Manchurian Incident, Japan successfully ousted Zhang’s son Xueliang (Hsüeh-liang, 1898–2001), known to Westerners as “the Young Marshal,” and made the region independent from the rest of China so that they could establish the Manzhouguo puppet regime and claim to be its special

<sup>1</sup> In reference to “the Far Eastern Crisis,” there are many volumes of studies including: Thorne, Christopher, *The Limits of Foreign Policy – The West, The League and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1931–1933* (London: Macmillan, 1972); Boyle, John Hunter, *China and Japan at War 1937–1945 – The Politics of Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972); Louis, William Roger, *British Strategy in the Far East 1919–1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

guardian.<sup>2</sup> The United States and Britain did not recognize Japan's puppet state, and the League of Nations dispatched a group to investigate it. Yet Japan had already attained a firm grip on the region, and nothing proved to be a truly effective means of applying sanctions. In addition, the KMT government granted *de facto* recognition of Japan's status in Manchuria with the Tanggu (T'angku) Truce of 1933.<sup>3</sup> In any case, in terms of international politics, the outcome of the Manchurian Incident can be said to have merely reconfirmed the existing reality in Manchuria.

The Sino-Japanese War, by contrast, began in 1937 when Japan invaded North China, traditionally the political center of the country. In the initial stage, neither side wanted the conflict to spread. Yet, in the spirit of nationalism, the KMT-CCP collaboration brought about a strong nationwide resistance, and this in turn strengthened Japan's determination to crush it. Japan did not limit the front to North China but attempted to extend it across a wide area, attacking Shanghai, Nanjing and Hankou in the Yangzi River basin. This was a direct infringement upon the interests of the West, and the powers that had interests in China became, in effect, involved in the war. In September 1939, another war started in Europe and the two wars, geographically separate for quite a while, fused to become the Second World War when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

The two East Asian conflicts of the 1930s had an impact on the Korean peninsula in various ways. First, the Manchurian Incident was closely related to the question of whether the global framework of international relations, instituted by the Treaty of Versailles, could last, or would change with the emergence of the revisionist powers in Europe and Asia. The Manchurian Incident was the first test of this question, and it is in this sense that the first battles in World War II are sometimes said to have been fought in remote Manchuria.<sup>4</sup> It was, nevertheless, the first blow toward destroying the international order and its founding ideology, utopianism, as established at the end of World War I. This destructive process opened the way to the next global war.

<sup>2</sup> McCormack, Gavan, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China, 1911-1928* (Folkestone, Kent: Wm Dawson & Sons, 1977).

<sup>3</sup> Mao Zedong complained that Jiang Jieshi only wanted to restore the *status quo* before the Lugouqiao (Marco Polo Bridge) Incident, an interpretation that would have meant abandoning Manchuria. Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1965), vol. 2, pp. 252, 255.

<sup>4</sup> MacNair, H.F. and Lach, D.F. *Modern Far Eastern International Relations* (New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1955), p. 297. In a similar context, it has been pointed out that "the pathway to the beaches of Dunkirk lay through the wastes of Manchuria." (Louis, p. 177.) Secretary of State Hull said rhetorically: "The [Pacific] war began in 1931 when Japan invaded China." (*Department of State Bulletin*, 7, no. 161, p. 641.)

The liberation of Korea could not have been achieved by that country's efforts alone, or even by the League of the Nations. If it could only be made feasible by a great shift in global international relations, the destruction of the status quo in the 1930s was paradoxically led by Japan in East Asia. The Korean peninsula was inextricably related to the Far Eastern crisis due to its strategic position in Japan's continental policy. It should also be noted that in the 1930s Japan accepted the sorts of geopolitical theories that were gaining momentum in Nazi Germany, and decorated itself with the ideology of "East Asian Co-Prosperity." The establishment of Manzhouguo was justified by these ideas.<sup>5</sup>

Japan believed that conflicts were inevitable in relations with powers such as the United States and the Soviet Union. As a provision against such emergencies, it was necessary to occupy a vast region like Manchuria as a strategic base, as a source of natural resources, and as a market. For Japan, China was like a theater, with some form of play every evening, but without a set schedule of what the following play would be. The Soviet Union, Japan's greatest hypothetical enemy, was reinforcing its military power and actively spreading Bolshevism in the 1930s. If a war with this enemy was inescapable, it would surely occur to the west of Harbin.<sup>6</sup>

If the Manchurian occupation were a success, it could help Japan transform its domestic political scene into a self-sustaining war economy for a coming "total war." In May 1932, Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi, who had hesitated to recognize the establishment of Manzhouguo, was assassinated, and a fascist-like system was established. Japan was headed for "general mobilization" within and expansion without after withdrawing from the League of Nations, which wished to apply economic sanctions against its invasion into Manchuria. If, however, the Japanese goal was to use the Japan-Korea-Manchuria economic bloc to provide strategic resources that would empower Japan in a potential struggle against the United States or the Soviet Union, it could not possibly achieve this in a short time. Japan also had to bear additional burdens by expanding "northward." The occupation of Manchuria did not put an end to Japan's expansionist or security-minded impulse; rather, it required another and far greater step.

A crucial factor in Japan's continental policy was Japan's relations with the Soviet Union. This deserves some consideration in relation to the Korean question. Japan's expansion, in the form of

<sup>5</sup> On geopolitical theories in international relations, especially the theory of *Lebensraum*, see Dougherty, James E. and Pfaltzgraff, Robert L., *Contending Theories of International Relations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), pp. 66–68; Weigert, Hans W., "Haushofer and the Pacific," *Foreign Affairs*, 20–4, (July 1942), pp. 739–742.

<sup>6</sup> Badham-Thornhill to Lampson, May 28, 1931, 15522 (4480/4480/23).



the annexation of Korea and the occupation of Manchuria, put considerable pressure on Soviet Russia. Chronic security problems in the Maritime Province, moreover, had not improved over the preceding decades. Such problems resulted from sparseness of population, and a consequent lack of defensive capacity in the region. The whole of the Russian Far East had a population of less than 2,500,000, as opposed to the 20 million-strong population of Korea, and the 30 million people who lived in Manchuria.<sup>7</sup> For all its vulnerability, the Soviet Union continued to be the other outside power, together with Japan, with large economic and political interests in Manchuria, and it was the general belief of the times that a serious effort would be made by Japan to come to some understanding with Moscow before anything serious in a military way was undertaken by the Japanese in southern Manchuria.<sup>8</sup>

The strained situation along the border inevitably produced frequent clashes. The Zhanggufeng (Changkufeng) Incident (called the “Lake Khasan Incident” by the Russians) in July 1938, and the Nomonhan Incident in May 1939, were the best known cases. The hill near Posiet Bay, known in Chinese as “Zhanggufeng,” was a strategic place from which the Japanese forces could keep the bay, as well as the nearby area, under observation. Provoked by the Soviet construction of a submarine and air base at Posiet Bay, both sides engaged in a battle that could “hardly be termed a border incident,” since border guards were not usually equipped with heavy artillery. Despite the dispatch of the 19th Division of the Japanese Chōsen Army, which numbered almost 10,000 men, Japan failed to attain victory. Japan was again defeated at Nomonhan (also called Khalkhiin Gol), along the ethnically Mongolian northwestern Soviet-Manchurian border, only to realize the magnitude of the military forces Stalin had established in the Far East.<sup>9</sup> This forced Japan to regard the situation as a national crisis, and to make greater efforts toward an economic “bloc” comprising Manchuria, Korea and mainland Japan.

The Far Eastern Crisis of the 1930s had a profound impact on Korean society as a whole, as Japan launched a “national mobilization.” Japan’s expansionist policy can be understood, in part, as a demonstration of overall changes in Japanese society that had been taking place over a long period. With the prosperity before, during and after World War I, Japan made considerable improvements in economic

<sup>7</sup> Dallin, David, J., *Soviet Russia and the Far East* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1971), p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Lindley to Marquess of Reading, September 17, 1931, *DBFP*, 2nd series, vol. 8, p. 658.

<sup>9</sup> Dallin, pp. 38–39; Moore, Harriet I., *Soviet Far Eastern Policy 1931–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945), pp. 98–101.

growth and standards of living, which accompanied the political democratization of the Taishō era (1912–1926), and the rise of various radical ideas.<sup>10</sup> The point is that fascism in Japan emerged as a complex of expedients aimed at controlling perceived domestic and international perils. This overall change in Japanese society exerted its power over the Korean peninsula under the catchy slogan *nai-sen ittai* (“the Japanese home and Korea as a single body”). Colonial policy in the peninsula accordingly became coercive and oppressive, and the Western powers’ criticisms of Japan’s colonial governance grew harsher.

### THE KOREAN PENINSULA AND MANCHURIA

In the 1930s, geopolitical evaluations of the peninsula were given a fresh look as East Asian international relations became more chaotic. Three specific issues can be singled out with regard to developments in Manchuria and the rest of China. The first involved Korea’s geographical propinquity to Manchuria. This would make the peninsula an indispensable bridge connecting the Japanese islands and Manchuria, so that the latter might be developed as Japan’s *Lebensraum* and strategic base. The second was the Koreans resident in Manchuria. The third concerned “Jiandao,” historically an object of territorial dispute between Korea and China, and a major base of the Korean independence movement after the annexation.

The Wanbaoshan (Manbosan in Korean) Incident in 1931 was a sort of prelude to all these developments. On July 2, 1931, two and a half months before the outbreak of the Manchurian Incident, a dispute arose between Korean and Chinese farmers at Wanbaoshan, near Changchun in Jilin Province, over an irrigation canal.<sup>11</sup> When these works had progressed to a considerable extent, Chinese farmers living nearby began to approach the local authorities with complaints about the irrigation work, insisting that their own fields were in danger of being flooded, and an injunction to discontinue the work was promptly issued by the local Chinese *xian* (*hsien*, county) government. As the Koreans refused to obey, the Chinese residents and police demolished the irrigation canal on July 2, and arrested the Koreans. There were some violent clashes between the two parties, and Japanese consular officers in Manchuria intervened under the pretext of protecting the Koreans. It thus immediately became

<sup>10</sup> Beasley, W.G., *The Modern History of Japan* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973), chapter 13–14.

<sup>11</sup> On the Wanbaoshan Incident, see Pak, Yōngsōk, *Manbosan saqōn yōn’gu* (A Study on the Wanbaoshan Incident) (Seoul: Asia Munhwasa, 1978).

a diplomatic issue. A conspiracy theory claims that Japan plotted the incident to establish a large farm in Changchun for food production. There is, however, also a fair possibility that the Chinese deliberately provoked it, with the intention of expelling the Koreans from the area.<sup>12</sup>

The Wanbaoshan Incident grew from the issue of “Manchurian Koreans.” As the Japanese Foreign Ministry commented, racially and socially the Korean immigrants, estimated at about a million, had become “a factor” in Manchuria that was impossible to ignore.<sup>13</sup> Taking a sudden new tack in 1927, China had started intensive regulation of Korean immigration to the region. The national unification by the KMT, and hostility toward Japan’s expansion into the area, were behind such actions. The United States, however, provided a different interpretation. At first, China’s position had been that of *laissez faire*, or a stance of minimum resistance, since the new Korean settlers would cultivate otherwise uncultivated lands and increase tax revenues. Yet the construction of railways in Manchuria, especially new ones that would run parallel to the South Manchurian Railway, were bringing increasing numbers of Chinese immigrants from Hebei and Shandong Provinces. It was now believed to be more advantageous to fill the area with Chinese people. Besides, Chinese nationalism was on the rise from the late 1920s, and in the international arena a favorable atmosphere prevailed for the restoration of Chinese rights. Accordingly, China turned from the defensive to the offensive in dealing with Koreans.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, the nature of the conflicts was changing. Early on, most of the issues had been local, related to lands and estates. After the Japanese annexation of Korea, they became more political. As a British report pointed out, the Koreans became pawns in an international game in which Japan, China and Russia were trying to establish vested rights or advantageous precedents in Northeast Asia. Japan publicly claimed that it was the only country that was able to protect the Koreans, while disclosing cases of mistreatment of Koreans by Chinese authorities and landlords. Given the Chinese situation at the time, there was indeed an unusual level of cooperation between

<sup>12</sup> The first British report on the matter commented that “the incident might have been brought about deliberately by the Chinese.” [Lindley to Henderson, July 6, 1931, 15522 (3793/3793/23).]

<sup>13</sup> After the Manchurian Incident, the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo prepared a 39-page document entitled “Question of Koreans in Manchuria.” [Lindley to Simon, May 21, 1932, 16248 (4914/2931/23)]. *Annual Report on Reforms and Progress in Chosen (Korea) 1937–1938* puts the number of Koreans in the whole of Manzhouguo at about 1,200,000. (p. 16.)

<sup>14</sup> Davis to SS, February 9, 1931, LM78, R. 2, 895. 56/org; Question of Koreans in Manchuria; White to Snow, January 10, 1931, 15517 (1382/14/23) and its enclosures.

central and local governments and ordinary Chinese citizens, in the course of which the Koreans were effectively mistreated.<sup>15</sup>

Since 1928, the revolutionary foreign policy of the Nanjing KMT government had been mirrored immediately in its stance towards Korean immigrants, and the movement directed against the latter became ever more obtrusive. The Nanjing government frequently issued instructions to local authorities, urging them to deal with Korean immigrants with an iron hand. The means varied: individuals were deported, expelled and arrested; Korean schools were closed on the grounds that Japan was using Koreans as advance guards for their encroachment on Manchuria; and people who sold paddy fields or other land to Koreans, or permitted them to manage such property, were liable to severe punishment. In the four years from 1928 to 1931, the KMT government issued 27 directives related to Korean immigrants. Combined with those from local governments, the number was 322. In some extreme cases, Chinese mobs led by police constables attacked Korean communities.<sup>16</sup> The incident at Wanbaoshan was, therefore, not an isolated one, but represented only one of the many incidents of hardship faced by Korean *émigrés* in Manchuria.

As news of the Wanbaoshan Incident spread through Korea, anti-Chinese riots swept the peninsula, with more than one hundred Chinese being killed and injured in major Korean cities.<sup>17</sup> The Manchurian Incident immediately followed. The incident also quickly developed into a quarrel between the two central governments of China and Japan. From the beginning, China was more interested in containing Japan's expansionist drive than in dealing with the dispute itself. The English-language *Manchuria Daily News* in Dalian reported that the Japanese police had been secretly assisting the Korean farmers in their dispute with the Chinese at Wanbaoshan, and that several tens of policemen had recently been sent there as reinforcements. General Ugaki Kazushige, the newly appointed governor-general of Korea, who during his term of office as minister of war had been regarded as one of the leading protagonists of the forward policy, was behind the scheme. Accordingly, the paper urged, the Chinese in Manchuria should demand that Russia return the Chinese Eastern Railway to Chinese control as soon as was practicable, after which

<sup>15</sup> Van H. Engert (first secretary) to Johnson, July 23, 1931, LM78, R. 1, 895. 4016/24.

<sup>16</sup> The Question of Koreans in Manchuria. [Lindley to Simon, May 21, 1932, 16248 (4914/2931/23).]

<sup>17</sup> On the anti-Chinese movement arising from the incident, see, Pak, Yöngsök, chapter 3. Apart from those killed and injured in Korea, about 35,000 of the 91,466 Chinese residents in Korea in 1930 left the country to avoid possible maltreatment. [Lindley to Henderson, July 10, 1931, 15522 (4304/3793/23); Royds to Lindley, July 28, 1931, 15522 (4797/3793/23).]

the recovery of the South Manchurian Railway should be negotiated with Japan. The exclusion of Korean immigrants from the region was also on the paper's editorial agenda.<sup>18</sup>

The Nanjing government saw the Wanbaoshan Incident as revealing "a long-cherished, ever-dreaming design" by Japan with respect to Manchuria and Mongolia. But as the Japanese were "bad colonists," the Korean settlers in Manchuria were being utilized as their "cat's paw." At the same time, a semi-official pamphlet, entitled *Wanpaoshan Incident and the Anti-Chinese Riots in Korea*, demonstrated sympathy toward Koreans, stating that the Wanbaoshan massacre had not succeeded in making the Chinese hostile to Koreans, although the Japanese authorities had deliberately instigated the anti-Chinese outbreaks in Korea through the fabrication of false reports.<sup>19</sup> Some Western diplomatic commentaries likewise recorded the ill feelings the Chinese harbored toward the Japanese, rather than toward the Koreans, and suggested that Japan could exploit this discord in such a way as to be in a better position to start a war with Soviet Russia.<sup>20</sup>

The incidents in Manchuria and Korea, however, posed an insoluble dilemma for the KMT government. In principle, the KMT government approached them in two separate ways: the Wanbaoshan Incident as a minor local issue, and the anti-Chinese riots in Korea as a major international issue. It could hardly afford to aggravate its relations with Japan over a trifling incident in Manchuria; yet, simultaneously, it had to appease the much-aroused Chinese people, who were demanding protection for their compatriots in Korea. The Nanjing government tried to resolve the situation by taking what was ostensibly a strong position, while dealing with the incident locally. It can be said, indeed, that it "spoke with two voices." In any case, the Nanjing government viewed the Wanbaoshan Incident, in which only four or five Koreans were injured, as sufficiently trifling that the incident could be settled by the Jilin provincial government.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, after the attacks on the Chinese in Korea became known, maltreatment of the Koreans began all over Manchuria. A large number of Chinese businessmen in Shanghai organized an

<sup>18</sup> Eastes to Lampson, July 6, 1931, 15522 (4481/3793/23). The *Manchuria Daily News*, the only English-language paper in Dalian, once having been recognized as pro-Japanese, became consistently anti-Japanese in covering the Wanbaoshan Incident. [Report on the Kwantung Leased Territory and Japanese Activities in Manchuria for the Year 1931, 15520 (1389/1389/23).]

<sup>19</sup> Wang, Whitewall [sic] (ed.), *Wanpaoshan Incident and the Anti-Chinese Riots in Korea* (Nanjing: International Relations Committee, 1931), in LM78, R. 1, 895. 4016/36.

<sup>20</sup> Davis to SS, July 11, 1931, LM78, R. 1, 895. 4016/19; Peck (Nanjing) to SS, August 18, 1931, LM78, R. 1, 895. 4016/33.

<sup>21</sup> Johnson to SS, July 10, 1931, LM78, R. 1, 895. 4016/5; 895. 4016/6; Lindley to Henderson, July 16, 1931, *DBFP*, 2nd series, vol. 8, p. 635.

anti-Japanese association for the protection of Chinese in Korea, and threatened to boycott Japanese goods. To spread an openly anti-Japanese atmosphere was, perhaps, too much for the Nanjing government, however. The Chinese *Waijiaobu* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) expressed its determination to have four demands met by the Japanese government; namely, official apologies, adequate indemnities, punishment of those responsible for the outrages in Korea, and guarantees against the recurrence of similar outrages in the future. Yet the Nanjing government was, in reality, still taking an ambivalent stance. Forceful notes had been presented to the Japanese government, and, at the same time, assurances had been given that nothing in the nature of a boycott of Japanese goods would occur. Without strong support from the central government, the regional authorities in Manchuria could do little more than make representations.<sup>22</sup>

Japan's attitude was complex. The Tokyo government was inclined to be optimistic, and definitely minimized the gravity of the conditions. The Foreign Ministry claimed that the lease of land by Koreans (who were Japanese in international law) was legitimate, and therefore China had to make compensation for the damages the Koreans had suffered. The Japanese government had no intention of accepting responsibility or compensating the Chinese victims of the subsequent riots in Korea because, it claimed, the disturbances had arisen as a direct result of the Wanbaoshan Incident. The money that had been given to the injured and to the families of those killed in Korea was in no sense governmental compensation, but a purely voluntary solatium.<sup>23</sup> The Japanese reiterated that they would hold further discussions with the Nanjing government about the anti-Chinese movement in Korea, while they would approach the Mukden authorities about the anti-Korean movement in Manchuria;<sup>24</sup> a scheme purposely designed to exclude the KMT government from Manchurian affairs. Meanwhile, those parties most deeply related to Manchuria, e.g., the Kwantung Army, the South Manchurian Railway, the Government-General in Korea, and Japanese residents and opinion leaders in Manchuria and in Korea, who had been far from happy with conditions in Manchuria, tried to use these incidents to bolster Japan's expansionist activities there. Japanese newspapers in Korea, reflecting the position of the Seoul government, blamed the weakness of Tokyo's

<sup>22</sup> Johnson to SS, July 16, 1931, LM78, R. 1, 895. 4016/12; July 18, 1931, 895. 4016. 14; July 23, 1931, 895. 4016/23; Peck to SS, August 18, 1931, LM78, R. 1, 895. 4016/33; Royds to Lindley, September 17, 1931, 15522 (6249/3793/23).

<sup>23</sup> On diplomatic negotiations regarding the Wanbaoshan Incident, see Pak, Yōngsōk, chapter 6.

<sup>24</sup> Lindley to Henderson, July 16, 1931, 15522 (4548/3793/23); July 24, 1931, (4556/3793/23).

policy vis-à-vis China.<sup>25</sup> The Japanese community in Manchuria insisted that the “quadruple administration” in Manchuria should be abolished, and a powerful central administration set up in its stead.<sup>26</sup>

The Government-General gave the strong impression that it had been a mere spectator on the sidelines of the anti-Chinese riots in Korea. The Chinese consulate-general in Seoul claimed that police protection was insufficient to deal with the situation, and accused the authorities of connivance. Royds, who had returned to Seoul in 1931 as Britain’s consul-general, expressed the view that many Chinese lives would have been saved if the authorities had adopted sterner measures to control the murderous mobs in the first place. Some influential Korean organizations had started an initiative to calm the people, and to send a deputation to the Chinese consulate-general to apologize, in the name of the Korean people, for the outrages. There was, without doubt, great suspicion among both Chinese and Koreans that the whole thing was the result of some clandestine agitator’s plot, using Koreans as dupes and tools to hide Japan’s ongoing policy in Manchuria.<sup>27</sup>

Western diplomats in Seoul viewed the Wanbaoshan Incident and the subsequent riots in Korea simply as spontaneous outbursts, without political significance. Royds did not believe that Japan was manipulating or politically taking advantage of the incidents in Manchuria and Korea, even though Japan’s expansion and the issue of Korean emigration to Manchuria underlay them. Only with the outbreak of the Manchurian Incident in September did some British diplomats belatedly suspect that the anti-Chinese riots in Korea might have been staged by Japan to hide its policy, which was becoming more hostile to China.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, the Americans, reflecting their interest in Manchuria, were definitely sympathetic to the Chinese. One American report stated that the whole trouble had been purposely stirred up by Japanese officials in connection with

<sup>25</sup> White to Snow, January 10, 1930, 15517 (1382/14/23); Lindley to Henderson, July 10, 1931, 15522 (4304/3793/23); Dening to Lindley, July 9, 1931, 15522 (4548/3793/23).

<sup>26</sup> Dening to Lindley, July 9, 1931, 15522 (4548/3793/23); Eastes to Lampson, April 6, 1932, 16248 (3603/2931/23).

<sup>27</sup> Pak, *Yōngsōk*, pp. 101–106. The Chinese authorities thought it expedient to win the Koreans over to their side and asked to stop abusing Koreans. [Question of Koreans in Manchuria, Lindley to Simon, May 21, 1932, 16248 (4914/2931/23)]

<sup>28</sup> Royds to Lindley, July 15, 1931; Lindley to Henderson, July 20, 1931, 15522 (4522/3793/23); Memorandum respecting Sino-Japanese Relations, September 19, 1931, 15489 (5032/1391/10). The Wanbaoshan Incident was the only case that was given a review as a separate item in *DBFP*. (Correspondence Regarding the Situation in Manchuria and Korea before the Japanese Occupation of Mukden, *DBFP*, 1919–1939, 2nd series, vol. 8.)

their policies in Manchuria. Considering the promptness and rigor with which Korean demonstrations were usually repressed, it was surprising that, following the first anti-Chinese riots of mid-1931, later ones were permitted to occur in all major cities, and that no adequate precautionary measures had apparently been taken. Consul-General John E. Davis commented that in these outbreaks the police were comparatively very gentle, and the majority of those arrested were released after a warning.<sup>29</sup> But the American consul-general did not agree to make strong representations to the Government-General in Seoul, which his Chinese counterpart had insisted upon, saying that such a course would only offend the Japanese authorities without producing any positive result.<sup>30</sup>

Two months later, the Wanbaoshan Incident was engulfed by the enormity of the “Manchurian Incident.” Despite everything that had taken place, Koreans in rural areas of Manchuria were still subject to great and continuous hardships. Terrorism was freely directed at the Koreans, as Chinese local administrations became paralyzed, and as Zhang Xueliang’s scattered army became bandits or anti-Japanese resisters after the Incident. According to Japanese documents, during the period immediately after the Incident, 148 Koreans were murdered, 226 were wounded, and 48 women and girls were raped, whilst 76 houses were burned, 98 otherwise destroyed, and 1,121 looted. The number of Koreans who sought the protection of the Japanese consulates alone reached 35,000. Japan openly publicized the sufferings of the Koreans, and the relief given by Japanese authorities. However, as the British Foreign Office commented, the Western powers now felt that the accounts of the aid offered to Koreans had been exaggerated. “Manzhouguo” was already on the way to being brought under Japanese control, and the Koreans planned to cultivate about 600 acres of land in the Wanbaoshan area in 1932; a number that would increase to 1,000 acres the following year.<sup>31</sup>

On a different level, the Korean emigration to Manchuria was related to Japanese immigration to the Korean peninsula. U. S. consular officials were fairly systematic in their critique of the issue. In 1934, Japan limited Korean emigration to Japan. Japan had been

<sup>29</sup> Davis to SS, July 7, 1931, LM78, R. 1, 895. 4016/17. For a similar report, see Johnson to SS, September 15, 1931, LM78, R. 1, 895. 4016/30.

<sup>30</sup> Davis to SS, July 9, 1931, 895. 4016/18. Soviet authorities commented on the Wanbaoshan Incident in reference to the Manchurian Incident. The Koreans in Manchuria were used by the Japanese imperialists “both as a weapon and as an excuse for [their] political-administrative as well as economic penetration in Manchuria.” (Japanese Intervention in Manchuria, *Izvestiya*, September 21, 1931. Original text is in Moore, pp. 211–214.)

<sup>31</sup> Lindley to Simon, May 21, 1932, 16248 (4914/2931/23) and minutes; M.S. Myers to SS, March 9, 1932, LM78, R. 1, 895. 4016/37.



in need of a great number of unskilled laborers since the 1920s, and about 400,000 Koreans left for Japan as a result. Once there, however, they caused serious economic and social problems related to housing, labor, and other matters. Out of the 33,424 Communists arrested in Japan during this period, moreover, 7,263 were Korean. From the mid-1930s, the development of northern Korea was intensified, and surplus labor in the south had to go north.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, Korean emigration to Manchuria and Japanese immigration to Korea were steadily rising. Governor-General Minami Jirō announced a plan to settle 5,000,000 pioneers (constituting 1,000,000 emigrant families) in Manchuria, while 10,000 Japanese immigrants were arriving every year in Korea.<sup>33</sup> As the British noted, Japan's adventures in Korea, Manchuria and northern China had done little to solve its population problem. Japanese colonizing ventures had, however, met with greater success in warmer latitudes, including the Philippines, Brazil, Peru, and the "South Seas." Indeed, William Langdon pointed out that the population density of Korea already equaled that of less crowded European countries, and that the birth rate had exceeded that of Japan. Other conditions in Korea made it difficult to promote Japanese immigration there.<sup>34</sup>

The second issue relating to the Korean peninsula concerned the Jiandao region in Jilin Province. The light-gauge railway that connected the port of Ch'ōngjin to Jiandao was now described as a "dagger pointed at the Chinese heart." The Japanese were extremely anxious to convert it into a proper track, and thus fill the missing link from Dunhua (Tunhua) to Yanji (Yenki), one of the main cities in Jiandao. The Chinese feared that this project was mainly strategic, designed to allow Japan to bring police reinforcements to Jiandao, and to pour troops into Jilin Province, in case of trouble.<sup>35</sup> The line that was to come to Jiandao, moreover, had previously ended at Dunhua, on its northwest border. As a result, Jiandao did not have strong connections with the city of Jilin, the administrative center of the province, but tended to be an isolated unit. The area had thus become well-known as a base for anti-Japanese activities by Korean nationalists, and for Chinese mounted bandits. In January 1930, Korean students in Jiandao led demonstrations inspired by the Kwangju student demonstration of the previous year. A band of Korean "undesirables" set fire to a number of buildings on the night of May 30th, including

<sup>32</sup> Langdon to SS, June 8, 1934, LM78, R. 2, 895. 504/2.

<sup>33</sup> Enclosure in Kermode to Craigie, May 23, 1939, 23566 (7895/817/23).

<sup>34</sup> Japan, Annual Report, 1936, 21042 (1235/1235/23); Langdon to SS, August 30, 1935, LM78, R. 2, 895. 5011/23.

<sup>35</sup> Sino-Japanese Relations in Manchuria and the Mukden Negotiations on Manchurian Railway Problems, July 27, 1931, *DBFP*, second series, vol. 8, p. 648.

the pro-Japanese Korean Settlement Council, houses and residences belonging to Japanese, the electric light station, and the Tumen-Hoeryong Light Railway Line. Order was speedily restored by police dispatched by the Seoul government.<sup>36</sup>

In these circumstances, Japan began openly to talk about the administrative integration of Jiandao and Korea. Japan's ambitions were aired by a new "Jiandao independence movement," organized by Koreans, whose president demanded a "statement of policy" from the new Chinese district magistrate at Yanji.<sup>37</sup> The Seoul government, prior to the Manchurian Incident, also planned to move consular policing in Jiandao under the control of the Police Bureau of the Government-General. After the creation of the Manzhouguo puppet state in March 1932, the Seoul government may have felt it necessary to gauge international response to this scheme of administrative union, as it would have meant a *de facto* territorial expansion.<sup>38</sup> Yet the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo had its hands full coping with the avalanche of criticism that followed the Manchurian Incident and the establishment of Manzhouguo; it certainly did not want to give the international community another chance to criticize it. The foreign minister therefore denied the fact that Japan had ever contemplated incorporating Jiandao into Korea. The powers, by now well aware of the duality in Japan's attitude, did not entirely believe such assurances. In the face of growing international pressure, and with the press reporting on the Manzhouguo authorities' intention to make Jiandao into a special district, independent of the Province of Jilin, Japan resolved the issue by having a couple of Koreans become part of the administration of the four *xian* (counties) of the district.<sup>39</sup>

In April 1932, the Seoul government sent two battalions of the Chōsen Army to Longjing via the light railway line, stating that this move was to eliminate the imminent danger of attacks by bands of insurgents, of whom there were a total of between four and five thousand, and "to protect 400,000 Korean residents in Jiandao." This measure was to create another international issue. In the past, the Government-General had dispatched police forces for crackdowns on Korean independence fighters. While these past examples were clearly an abuse of power, the Seoul government could still justify the sending of police forces to Longjing by saying that it was only meant

<sup>36</sup> Meyers (Mukden) to SS, March 8, 1930, LM78, R. 1, 895. 00/714; July 9, 1930, 895. 00/715; Korea, Annual Report, 1930, 15520 (1387/1387/23).

<sup>37</sup> Korea, Annual Report, 1930; Eastes to Lampson, December 12 1931, 15522 (7774/3793/23).

<sup>38</sup> Royds to Lindley, February 29, 1932, 16163 (3369/1/23).

<sup>39</sup> Lindley to Simon, April 20, 1932, 16165 (3554/1/23) and minutes; Eastes to Ingram, November 14, 1932, 16183 (8407/1/10?).

to reinforce the consular police in the area, a right that was secured by the treaty with China. In this case, as Japan had failed to obtain recognition of the new state by the international community, it was nothing short of an encroachment on Chinese territory. Although Japan insisted that the troops would be withdrawn as soon as they had accomplished their mission, newspapers in Manchuria reported that the dispatch was intended to be permanent.<sup>40</sup> The Manchurian Incident eliminated practically all the problems related to Koreans in Manchuria. When Japan established the region's puppet government, the points that had previously been raised in negotiations with China were automatically resolved, and the issue of incorporating Jiandao no longer had any significance.

The Chōsen Army was deeply involved in, and shared responsibility for, the Manchurian Incident, even though the incident was planned and led by the Kwantung Army, which was based near Dalian. Should an urgent call for military forces come from Manchuria, the Korean peninsula would prove to be an alternative, and in some cases more convenient, base for a dispatch of troops. The Chōsen Army assured Japan that its troops in Korea would lend assistance as necessary, and that Japan would attract less attention and criticism if troops were simply moved up from Korea, rather than being sent from Japan proper.<sup>41</sup> For this and other purposes on the continent, a plan was proposed to station an extra army division at Taejōn, south of Seoul, by the new Governor-General, Ugaki Kazushige, who replaced Saitō Makoto in 1931, during his term of office as minister of war.<sup>42</sup>

The strategic value of the Korean peninsula now went far beyond the role it had played in the Manchurian Incident. This new interpretation matured as Japan tried to expand its *Lebensraum* and strategic base, connecting Manchuria, the Korean peninsula, and the Japanese islands. Such an approach had already been present before the 1930s. In the previous decade, Japan expected the northern part of Korea to become a new transportation channel that would link Japan and Manchuria, and set out to develop the region. The idea, however, was not activated in both theory and practice until governors-general Ugaki (served July 1931–July 1936) and Minami Jirō (August 1936–May 1942) held office in Seoul. Ugaki wanted to have an additional

<sup>40</sup> Eastes to Lampson, April 5, 1932, 16165 (3607/1/23) and minutes. Germany, though it became an ally of Japan, long delayed its recognition of the puppet government. [Japan, Annual Report, 1936, 21042 (1235/1235/23).] It was not until May 1939, immediately before the outbreak of World War II, that Germany recognized Manzhouguo.

<sup>41</sup> David Bergamini, *Japan's Imperial Conspiracy* (London: Panther Books, 1972), p. 426.

<sup>42</sup> Memorandum respecting Sino-Japanese Relations, September 19, 1931, 15489 (5032/1391/23); Korea, Annual Report, 1931, 16245, (739/202/23).

division of troops stationed in Korea, and allegedly suggested bringing the Kwantung Leased Territory under the control of the governor-general of Korea. He decided that the port of Najin on the eastern coast of the peninsula would be the railway terminal for the Jilin-Hoeryŏng line, and hastened its development. Everything seemed to indicate that Ugaki would probably depart in several respects from the policies of his predecessor, Saitō.<sup>43</sup>

The United States showed a great interest in this issue. Ramsford Miller, who had been very interested in the development of northern Korea, now retired, and John E. Davis took his place as consul-general in Seoul in 1931. Like his predecessor, Davis, who had previously served in Manchurian cities, carefully observed the development of northern Korea and its connections with the other side of the Tumen River. In July 1932, Japan's projects in that region were officially declared as coming within the scope of military matters requiring secrecy, owing to the political developments in Manchuria, and Ch'ŏngjin and its vicinity were designated a strategic area near international boundaries. Davis reported that there had been great differences of opinion in the government as to which of three cities (Najin, Unggi, present Sŏnbong, and Ch'ŏngjin) was to be selected for this project. Whereas Dalian was 615 miles from Shimonoseki, and 563 from Nagasaki, Ch'ŏngjin was only 469 miles from Tsuruga. Accordingly Ch'ŏngjin and Unggi, ice-free ports, were to become the front door to Manchuria for Japan. Since the railway through Jilin paralleled the Chinese Eastern Line between Vladivostok and Harbin, it was plausible that much of the European trade would be deflected from Vladivostok. According to Davis, the military advantages were too evident to require comment. During the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05, Japanese troops landed at Ch'ŏngjin, where 35 warships, each more than 6,000 tons, anchored at the same time. The port capacity of Ch'ŏngjin was 1,800,000 tons a year, and that of Unggi 300,000 tons, which were sufficient for the time being.<sup>44</sup>

When it was finally decided in August 1932 that the main terminal port for the Jilin-Hoeryŏng Railway would be developed at Najin, Davis covered virtually all of the issues regarding this move in a detailed report:

The bay at Najin was quite large and was protected by a long peninsula extending to the south and by two large islands situating in its entrance. It was strategically well situated and can be more easily defended and it offers a more adequate anchorage for large ocean

<sup>43</sup> Davis to SS, July 10, 1931, LM78, R. 1, 895. 001/21.

<sup>44</sup> Davis to SS, July 7, 1932, LM78, R. 1, 895. 156/1.

steamers. ... The new sea route to Manchuria would be much more readily guarded in the event of war than the one to Dalian, since the former lay entirely within the Japan Sea whereas the latter necessitated going through the China Sea.<sup>45</sup>

Bearing in mind the negotiations for the sale of the East Manchurian Railway, the domestic situation in Soviet Russia, and the national policy envisaging the supremacy of Najin over Vladivostok, the day was not far off when Najin would completely eclipse Vladivostok. Yet Dalian had a history of 26 years as the terminal port of the South Manchurian trunk railway, and the Japanese had been advancing into Manchuria through it. It had carried most of the Manchurian trade with Japan and other foreign countries. Dalian thus had an advantage over Vladivostok and Najin, and shared its prosperity with the South Manchurian Railway. Dalian and Najin had their respective spheres of influence due to their geographical position, and it was most likely that a policy of cooperation would follow, inasmuch as they both were now under the management of the South Manchurian Railway Company.<sup>46</sup> When this port was formally opened to foreign commerce in November 1935, the State Department commented that it was unquestionably the Japanese aim that Najin should supplant Vladivostok as the region's chief port of the region.<sup>47</sup> Development at Najin was delayed due to shortages of labor and construction materials caused by the China war. Yet Najin had still further increased its share of Manchurian soya bean exports, and by 1938 looked set to displace Dalian as the principal outlet for Manchurian beans.<sup>48</sup>

General Minami Jirō, appointed governor-general of Korea in 1936, had filled the triple post of ambassador to Manzhouguo, commander-in-chief of the Kwantung Army, and governor of the Kwantung Leased Territory from December 1934 to March 1936. As a protagonist of "forward movement," Minami insisted that, although Manzhouguo was "needless to say an independent country," the frontiers of Japan had now been moved from the Yalu and Tumen to the banks of the Amur and the Ussuri, as a result of which Japan and Manzhouguo now virtually formed one economic unit.

<sup>45</sup> Davis to SS, September 2, 1932, LM78, R. 1, 895. 156/3. *The Annual Report on Administration of Chosen* by the Government-General mentioned briefly this project in the section on "Harbour Improvements." (See issues of the year 1936–37, p. 148 and 1937–38, p. 152.)

<sup>46</sup> Langdon to SS, April 21, 1934, LM78, R. 1, 895. 156/7. The railway was handed over to Japan in March 1935. [Dallin (1971), pp. 19–21.]

<sup>47</sup> Minutes on Langdon to SS, November 22, 1935, LM78, R. 1, 895. 156/9.

<sup>48</sup> Kermode to Craigie, May 23, 1939, 23566 (7895/817/23); Korea, Annual Report, 1938, 23570 (2143/2143/23).

He emphasized the need for “coalescence” between Japanese and Koreans, and stressed the inseparability of Korea and Manzhouguo from the standpoint of national defense. Minami further believed that, since the ports in northern Korea lay on the shortest route between Japan and Manzhouguo, they would come to play important military roles as land and sea bases for combined operations against Vladivostok, given the increasingly strained nature of relations between Japan and the Soviet Union.<sup>49</sup>

Minami pointed out, moreover, that Korea, as a source of food supplies, had hitherto been considered particularly suitable for agricultural and forestry enterprises. Now conditions had changed, both at home and abroad, and Korea must become industrialized. The worldwide tendency was toward economic nationalism, and it behoved Japan to establish a definite economic policy to bind the ties between its empire and Manzhouguo ever closer. Korea must play an increasingly important part in carrying out this mission. The peninsula possessed rich mining resources, cheap and abundant labor, plentiful electrical power, and an ample supply of raw materials, while its geographical position made it the bridge between the two allies. Hamgyōng and P’yōng’an Provinces in northern Korea would be completely transformed by mining (gold, coal, iron, silver, copper, tungsten and graphite), a large hydroelectric installation, and various factories of the Chōsen Nitrogenous Fertilizer Company.<sup>50</sup> The result was that, during the Pacific War years, industrial production accounted for almost 40 percent of Korea’s total economic output, compared with 15 percent in 1921.<sup>51</sup>

Britain warned that a policy of controlled and centralized industrial and economic expansion might become a direct threat to British and other foreign interests in the areas concerned. The United States judged that Japan had started the business of coal liquefaction in Korea for defense, rather than economic, purposes, Japan having constructed a factory in Aoji with the aim of producing 30,000 kl of gasoline, 21,000 kl of heavy oil of creosol, and 25,000 kl of coalite annually. If this project succeeded, production would exceed consumption within Korea, enabling exports to Japan.<sup>52</sup> The nitrogenous

<sup>49</sup> Weckerling to War Department, July 15, 1936, LM78, R. 1 (895. 156/10); Kermode to Craigie, May 23, 1939, 23566 (7895/817/23) and enclosures.

<sup>50</sup> Phipps to Clive, November 5, 1936, 20264 (7883/616/10). The Foreign Office commented on these “steps being laid on ‘strategic’ rather than on ‘colonial’ considerations.” [Minute on Korea, Annual Report, 1936, 21042 (1241/1241/23).]

<sup>51</sup> Eckert, Carter J., “Total War, Industrialization, and Social Change in Late Colonial Korea,” in Duus, Myers, and Peattie (eds.), *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931–1945*, p. 13.

<sup>52</sup> Marsh to SS, January 26, 1938, LM78, R. 2, 895. 6363/13.

fertilizer company in Hŭngnam, despite its secrecy, was regarded as one of the largest in the world. Japan had succeeded in becoming self-sufficient in chemical fertilizer, as well as in gunpowder manufacture, and the factory would make great economic contributions to the Japanese economy by increasing agricultural output, producing edible and industrial oil from sardines and Manchurian soya beans, and manufacturing artificial fabrics (rayon), using timber from the Yalu and Tumen river basins, and from further inland in Jilin Province.<sup>53</sup>

At the same time, the Government-General embarked on a number of long-term strategies that would bind Manchuria and Korea more closely together. First, it greatly encouraged more emigration to Manzhouguo, euphemistically termed the “land of paradise.” Upwards of one million settlers were expected to take up residence there during the next 15 years. Owing to this plan, the immigration of Koreans to Manzhouguo increased to 15,655 during the first six months of 1936. This was the greatest number since the Manchurian Incident in 1931.<sup>54</sup> Second, an agreement between Japan and Manzhouguo was signed in May 1935, which simplified customs formalities in connection with railway services across the Tumen frontier. Third, the Seoul government established a branch office in Manzhouguo. Accordingly, about 50 additional secretaries, engineers, technical experts, assistants and interpreters would have to be appointed to Manzhouguo for economic, educational, public health and police work among the Koreans there. London expressed concerns that the establishment of a branch office would hardly be compatible with the idea of an “independent” Manzhouguo, and that it might be used as a tool for further encroachment.<sup>55</sup> Lastly, a series of projects had commenced by 1937, including reinforced control of the financial system with

<sup>53</sup> Langdon to SS, January 21, 1935, LM78, R. 2, 895. 6463/3; Langdon to Grew, March 12, 1935, 895. 6463/4.

<sup>54</sup> Korea, Annual Report, 1935, 20289 (900/900/23); Korea, Annual Report, 1936, 21042 (1241/1241/23); Edson to Grew, August 27, 1936, LM78, R. 2, 895. 5034/5. The shift of Soviet policy in regard to Korean immigration deserves some mention. From the time of Tsarist Russia, the Koreans were welcomed as cultivators of wastelands and then after the Soviet Revolution, as potential “red missionaries.” (Davis to SS, February 9, 1931, LM78, R. 2, 895. 56/org.) Yet in 1938 some 200,000 Koreans were forcefully uprooted from the Soviet Far Eastern territories to Central Asia to work on cotton plantations. The Soviet government was not convinced that the Koreans living on its territory would prove reliable in the event of a war with Japan. The Japanese embassy in Moscow protested to the Soviet Foreign Ministry about this removal of the Koreans, but the Russians rejected the protest on the ground that these Koreans were mostly “Soviet citizens.” [Chilston (Moscow) to Eden, November 29, 1937, 21041 (28/92/37)].

<sup>55</sup> Korea, Annual Report, 1935, 20289 (900/900/23); Roysds to Lindley, March 11, 1932, 16248 (3520/2931/23).

the aim of establishing a single currency, joint construction of a Yalu hydroelectric plant, the joint development of northern Korea and eastern Manchuria, and efforts to integrate “mind and culture” to bring together “Korea and Manchuria as a single body.”<sup>56</sup>

#### JAPAN’S COLONIAL POLICY AND THE POWERS

The 1930s provided a new and different backdrop to the powers’ perceptions of the situation in Korea. First, American and British documents of the period show that Korean society had experienced an enormous transformation over the past three decades of Japanese rule. By the 1930s, the contents of the reports would cover issues that reflected how modern a society Korea had become. In addition to the items mentioned previously, they talked of banking, insurance, shortwave transmitter regulations, airports, steel plants, cinemas, radio programs, baseball games, express air mail service, and income taxes, to cite a few reports.<sup>57</sup> As far as Westerners were concerned, Korean society was no longer a pre-modern state, in which people suffered the corruption, exploitation and incapacity of the worst political system in history. In a period when colonial enterprise was universally accepted, for a disinterested Western observer who took no particular issue with colonial rule, these changes could certainly be attributed to the remarkable achievements of Japan. It is, however, worth considering how the officials and diplomats involved in international politics

<sup>56</sup> Marsh to SS, May 14, 1937, LM78, R. 2, 895. 60/1. Although Manzhouguo, a Japanese puppet state, was a short-lived passing phenomenon in East Asian history, it left a great deal of legacy in modern Korean history. During the colonial period, many Koreans with higher education had been blocked from advancing to high positions in the Government-General due to Japan’s discriminatory policies, and therefore their pent-up discontent reached the point of explosion, a great burden for the Japanese rulers. The creation of Manzhouguo provided these Koreans with opportunities which they could never even dream of in the peninsula, and this facilitated Japanese rule in the peninsula. Another point of importance is that it managed to achieve what, in modern terms, we might call “an economic miracle.” Manzhouguo was a great success in terms of its economic development, through the combined efforts of the Kwantung Army, which maintained a peaceful environment domestically, and prevented conflict with China and the Soviet Union, and the able bureaucrats who carried out efficient economic development plans. Its achievement was spectacular, and this formula of peace on a domestic and international level, along with vigorous economic development, made a deep impression on the Koreans with experience there, including Park Chunghee and others, who tried to emulate this pattern in the 1960s and the 70s. See Han Sökjöng, *Manjūguk Könguk üi Jaehasök* (Reinterpretation on the Establishment of Manzhouguo) (Busan: Dong’a University Press, 1999) and Han Sökjöng, *Manju modön* (Manchuria Modern) (Seoul: Munhak gwa Chisöngsa, 2016).

<sup>57</sup> Robinson, Michael, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920–1925* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), p. 53



observed and evaluated the outward changes in Korean society, and the fundamental elements of the whole Korean question.

The immediate economic interests of the powers had by now largely vanished. The marketability of Western products, especially British woollen goods, had been extinguished due to Japan's industrial development, Korean customs unification with Japan, and high tariffs imposed on foreign goods. With the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, foreign trade, except with Manzhouguo, became even more rigidly controlled. By 1934, it was already estimated that Japan and Manzhouguo combined represented 96.5 percent of Korea's external commerce – 98 percent of the exports and 95 percent of the imports.<sup>58</sup> In 1936, foreign/non-Japanese vessels were excluded from the coasting trade between Dalian and Korean ports.<sup>59</sup> Two years later, petroleum, which represented the largest single category of American export to Korea, was eliminated as well, as Japan demanded that American companies based in China deposit the equivalent of six months' worth of petroleum in Korea to prepare for a possible national emergency.<sup>60</sup> In addition, with the signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany and Italy in November 1936, Britain and the United States were increasingly considered to be irrelevant, with the result that English language education in Korean schools was shut down, "because it was too great a burden for the students if compared with the benefits they derived from that language." American motion pictures constituted approximately 62 percent of those shown in Korea, until a government regulation of March 1934, entitled "the Motion Picture Control Ordinance," which specified that in both Japan and Korea domestic films should account for 70 percent of showings, and foreign films 30 percent.<sup>61</sup> The Unsan gold mines, the last major economic interest held by the powers, were sold and transferred to a Japanese company, Nihon Kōgyō Kabushiki Kaisha (Nippon Mining Company) in 1939, an event that as good as put an end to all American industrial and commercial enterprise in Japan.<sup>62</sup>

A decade of Saitō's rule in the name of "cultural policy" was now at an end. After serving a second, though nonconsecutive, term of office, Saitō returned to Japan in June 1931, at the age of 72, and was succeeded by Ugaki and then Minami. The Western powers bestowed much praise upon Saitō as the ideal colonial ruler, who had gained

<sup>58</sup> Korea, Annual Report, 1937, 22190 (2314/2314/23); MacBride to Kimberland, April 12, 1934, LM78, R. 1, 895. 00/719.

<sup>59</sup> Grummon to Grew, February 18, 1936, LM78, R. 2, 895. 801/2.

<sup>60</sup> Marsh to SS, January 26, 1938, LM78, R. 2, 895. 6363/13.

<sup>61</sup> Marsh to SS, December 3, 1937, ML78, R. 1, 895. 402/2; Ralph Cory to SS, September, 1934, 895. 4061/motion pictures/2.

<sup>62</sup> For this issue, see LM78, R. 2, 895. 63 or 4/15–71.

the greatest confidence from every class of Korean society.<sup>63</sup> The way Saitō's two successors governed Korea was very different, partly due to the tenuous political atmosphere in Japan, and partly according to their personal characters. Yet with the emergence of fascism in their country, the "limitedly liberal era" in the peninsula ended, and the tendencies of militarist governance, taken to an extreme under the rule of Minami in the late 1930s, brought a new, total dark age. In 1931, there was at first some mistrust about the appointment of an army general, but Ugaki lived down this reputation. A British report in 1936, when Minami succeeded him, noted: "He came in as a general, but left a civilian." During his tenure, Ugaki seemed to provide great assurance of a successful period of administration, at a time when statecraft and political knowledge were particularly called for in the government of Korea.

In contrast to Ugaki, Minami would always be seen in a uniform, and seemed more at home in the camp than in the council-chamber. He called in Koiso Kuniaki, a general who had distinguished himself in the Manchurian Incident, to serve as the commander of the Chōsen Army, thus suggesting that the clock would be turned back to the unadulterated repression of Terauchi's and Hasegawa's military rule.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps by coincidence, the *Tong'a Ilbo*, an influential Korean daily in Seoul, published a surprisingly outspoken editorial on August 23, 1936, discussing important problems, including "too strict control of speech and public meetings," which needed to be dealt with by the incoming administration. The paper was promptly shut down for an indefinite period because of this article, and because of a retouched photograph of the Korean winner of the Berlin Olympic marathon, from which the Rising Sun emblem on the athlete's uniform had been removed by the paper's staff. Some of the Western diplomats were taken aback since, so far as was known, no newspapers had been suppressed during Ugaki's regime.<sup>65</sup> Minami also established a special section for foreign affairs in the police headquarters of the Government-General, which bolstered surveillance of foreigners, as well as bringing in legislation that restricted foreigners' acquisition of land in strategic zones, including seacoasts, frontier railway zones, and railway tunnels and bridges.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Davis to SS, June 20, 1931, LM78, R. 1, 895. 001/19; Korea, Annual Report, 1930, 15520 (1387/1387/23).

<sup>64</sup> Korea, Annual Report, 1935, 20289 (900/900/23); Annual Report, 1936, 21042 (1241/1241/23).

<sup>65</sup> Edson to Neville, September 11, 1936, LM78, R. 1, 895. 001/23.

<sup>66</sup> Edson to Erle R. Dickover (Chargé, Tokyo Embassy), September 29, 1936, LM78, R. 1, 895. 01/45. The Foreign Affairs "Section" of the Government-General was elevated to the Foreign Affairs "Department" on July 16, 1937. See Ralph Cory to SS, July 16, 1937, LM78, R. 1, 895. 02/2.

A new phase of militarist rule was ushered in on November 7, 1934 with an official “patriotic propaganda week” campaign throughout Korea. Newspapers had published almost daily references to the current “emergency,” or “the coming years of crisis” (1935 and 1936), doubtless with the object of arousing public sentiment in support of government policies. There was, in addition, an intensive campaign for the collection of a patriotic fund to provide airplanes, anti-aircraft guns, and other modern paraphernalia for the defense of the state.<sup>67</sup> Minami went a step further. In a statement upon his arrival in Seoul, he emphasized the need for “coalescence” between Japanese and Koreans, and the inseparability of Korea and Manzhouguo, for the sake of national defense.<sup>68</sup> Two years later, he ordered that the entire society be armed with “Oriental spirit;” that is, be militarized. Under the pretext of the “plan for national living in serious times,” after the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 Minami initiated a sort of “cultural revolution.” He instructed the people to make their clothing with dyed stuffs (thereby prohibiting the wearing of traditional white Korean clothing), to desist from making new clothing, to keep houses as clean as possible, to economize as far as practicable on everyday necessary articles, to break up “vicious customs of old;” to moderate drinking and smoking, to cultivate the idea of patriotic service, and to accumulate savings. The largest increase in revenue was to be made through the “China Emergency special tax.”<sup>69</sup>

Invariably for the Western powers, the positive aspects of Japanese rule were marked by economic development. In 1935, when the twenty-fifth anniversary of the annexation was marked, the British diplomat William Royds, who had served in East Asia for more than two decades, and had criticized Japanese policies during the March First Movement, recorded that Korea had been so transformed as to be virtually unrecognizable by one who knew the country as it was only thirty years ago.<sup>70</sup> The State Department added that, although the educational policy of the government had a decidedly political complexion, much credit must be given to it for the remarkable progress that was being made in Korean education, which was characterized by a growth in literacy and an increase in educational facilities.<sup>71</sup> Such positive opinions, however, were mainly limited to

<sup>67</sup> Cowley to Clive, November 13, 1934, 18185 (7554/640/23); Korea, Annual Report, 1934, 19361 (1110/1110/23).

<sup>68</sup> Edson to Neville, September 11, 1936, LM78, R. 1, 895. 001/23.

<sup>69</sup> Edson to SS, July 30, 1936, LM78, R. 2, 895. 51/48; Marsh to SS, April 15, 1938, 895. 51/50; May 6, 1938, LM78, R. 1, 895. 00/724; August 25, 1938, LM78, R. 2, 895. 5017/1.

<sup>70</sup> Korea, Annual Report, 1935, 20289 (900/900/23).

<sup>71</sup> Minutes from DFEA, December 26, 1935, LM78, R. 1, 895. 42/37.

material aspects. The administration, though benevolent, was still believed to be an “unbridled despotism.” But as political liberty for the masses had not existed at all under the former Korean monarchy, its continued absence might not cause a great deal of heartache for the majority of people. Unrest had been entirely driven underground, and the Koreans, crushed and unarmed, seemed to have accepted their fate with apathy. Some of the Western diplomats, however, commented that discontent still persisted in Korea among certain sections of the people, and that it was more than likely that Communist ideas were prevalent, at least to some extent, among the student class, just as they were in Japan.<sup>72</sup>

“Self-government” in Korea made a sporadic appearance during the Saitō and Ugaki administrations in the early 1930s, as a means of resolving the unavoidable tensions between Japan’s policy and Korea’s resistance. Unlike in the previous decade, rather large numbers of Koreans began to show interest in this matter. Saitō cautiously approached the issue in his second term, while maintaining the basic principle of his assimilation policy. Colonial Affairs Minister Matsuda Genji, after frequent consultations with Saitō, had drawn up a plan for local autonomy for Korea, which was approved at a cabinet meeting in Tokyo. It was promulgated in December 1930. Saitō believed the experiences of the 1920s had brought good results, and allowed for the establishment of a Korean “Diet.” The salient feature of the plan was to provide the consultative “Provincial Councils” with legislative functions. There were, however, many restrictions, including the right of supervision over local councils, and the right of veto by the authorities concerned, which were to be increased further. Saitō’s plan was eventually frustrated once he left Korea, even if his successor briefly intended to implement it.<sup>73</sup>

After the election in May 1931, American Consul-General Davis made a 45-page report on this issue. According to Davis, in spite of the fact that more Japanese had been elected than Koreans, the percentage of Koreans elected had, with the exception of the 1929 election, steadily increased. Yet the minimum tax payment by which the franchise had been limited had purposely been placed at a level that ensured a Japanese majority in more important “Prefectural Councils.” The prefectures (*pu*) included twelve major cities and open ports where a large number of Japanese resided, and which

<sup>72</sup> These critiques were made on the occasion of assessing the first twenty-five years of the Japanese administration. See Korea, Annual Report, 1935, 20289 (900/900/23)

<sup>73</sup> Dutko to SS, November 5, 1930, LM78, R. 1, 985. 01/30. Son, Pongsuk, *Han’guk chibang chach’i yōn’gu* (A Study of Local Self-Government in Korea) (Seoul: Samyōngsa, 1985), pp. 64–67.

thus were vital elements in Japan's colonial rule in the peninsula. The ratio of Koreans and Japanese elected to prefectural councils was 18:30 in Seoul, 8:22 in Inch'ŏn, 9:24 in Pusan, 10:23 in Taegu, and 6:18 in Kunsan. Throughout the peninsula, there were 255 Japanese, as opposed to 155 Koreans. In conclusion, despite these facts and considerations, Saitō and some sectors of the Japanese government seemed genuinely to believe that one of the most effective means of making Korea a profitable and secure member of the empire was gradually to give the Koreans an increased share in the administration of their own country, in an incremental and controlled way.<sup>74</sup>

Ugaki recognized the importance of self-government with regard to the situation in East Asia. When military campaigns were extended to northern China, it was highly desirable to keep the population of those territories already incorporated into the empire quiet and contented. Naturally, one of the best ways of doing this was to give a larger outlet to the political aspirations of the more politically minded members of the native population. At the same time, Ugaki also considered the establishment of a Korean Diet, which Saitō had planned but given up on due to the strong opposition of the Ministry of Overseas Affairs in Tokyo. Such a Diet would have control over the budget, and would have about 80 members, including seven or eight Japanese, all of whom would be elected. If this plan had come into effect in April 1934, the self-government system would have been completed, and a pyramid of elected councils would have been given its crowning apex.<sup>75</sup> Yet the plan was regarded as too far-fetched even within the Government-General, and was put on hold indefinitely.

However, as the extension of self-government would have starkly contradicted the assimilation policy, which was the cornerstone of Japan's colonial rule, such plans would lose substance by the latter part of the 1930s. In principle, since Japan had made the Korean peninsula a part of its empire for good in 1910, neither independence nor independent government could be allowed, nor could "dominion status" be given to the country. On the other hand, it would have been impossible to treat Korea on an equal footing with Japan unless these two peoples, who had lived different histories for more than 2,000 years, were "assimilated." Herein lies another theoretical loophole. If the Koreans were to pass this test successfully, they were to be given self-government, and there would subsequently be equal political rights for both peoples. However, the rulers of Korea,

<sup>74</sup> Davis to SS, July 30, 1931, LM78, R. 1, 895. 01/31. See also Korea, Annual Report, 1931, 16245 (739/202/23). Westerners commented optimistically its future. [Snow to Henderson, January 31, 1931, 15517 (284/14/23); February 24, 1931, (1687/14/23)]

<sup>75</sup> Davis to Grew, August 29, 1933, LM78, R. 1, 895. 01/40.

including Saitō, allegedly the most generous governor, denied that such a future was feasible. Later, Minami, a leading figure of the assimilation policy, warned Koreans who entertained notions of equality of social (and any other) status that such claims should be abandoned, even while he introduced conscription for Korean youth under the name of “equality” with the Japanese. The equality that the Koreans hoped to gain had become more than ever a will-o’-the-wisp, receding continuously before their pursuit.<sup>76</sup> Retrospectively speaking, if colonial modernity had possessed liberating forces and a raw, transformative power, as Shin and Robinson argue, the successful implementation and institutionalization of self-government should have been the most effective means by which Korean society, as a whole, would have achieved a certain degree of self-regulatory capacity in the political field.<sup>77</sup> This was one of the crucial issues when Korean independence was deliberated by the powers after the outbreak of World War II.

Recognizing Japan’s rule over Korea, the United States and Britain were very critical of Japan’s discrimination against the Korean people. Japanese was the “national language,” and the medium of school instruction. Korean history was taught only in officially approved tidbits, and certain historical facts were wholly omitted. Korean students never constituted more than one-third of the total enrollment in the higher institutions – colleges and the Keijō (Seoul) Imperial University. It was considered unsafe to make the university predominantly Korean. Discrimination was especially evident in the matter of wages, and the bonuses and living quarters given to employees of the government. There were three grades for the high offices of the Government-General: *chokumin* (*ch’in’im* in Korean, of two classes, appointed directly by the throne), *sōnin* (*ch’ik’im*, of seven classes, appointed by the governor-general), and *hannin* (*chuim*, of four classes, appointed by provincial governors). A report in 1936 stated that the appointments of Koreans to these offices were few— 366 out of 2031— and that the ratio of Korean appointments had declined since 1926. The relative compensation, or salaries, of Japanese and Koreans in all levels of government service totaled 46 million yen for 44,210 Japanese, and 15.5 million yen for 29,735 Koreans. As of 1931, the ratio of Japanese and Korean provincial governors was 8:5. Nevertheless, the ratio fell

<sup>76</sup> Japan, Annual Report, 1932, 17158 (694/694/23); Korea, Annual Report, 1930, 14755 (1538/1534/23); Kermode to Craigie, May 17, 1939, 23566 (7895/817/23). It was estimated that if universal male suffrage were introduced to Korea, 150 representatives from Korea would have seats in the House of Representatives of the Imperial Diet, alongside 460 from Japan. The Japanese were not prepared to cope with such a drastic consequence. [Shin and Robinson (eds.), p. 30.]

<sup>77</sup> Shin and Robinson (eds.), p. 11.

to 13:1 in the case of prefects, and 198:31 in the case of district magistrates. The disparity in compensation for Korean and Japanese officials, and the apparent favoring of Japanese in government service, were sources of discontent, which gave rise to more frequent and more vehement expression. In this respect, a U.S. report concluded, "Koreans were the victims of Japanese insularity of character and their own inherited national weakness."<sup>78</sup>

The Western powers also pointed out that there had been no example in history in which an assimilation policy of a colonizer had succeeded. Leaders in Japanese society were well aware of the fact. The British observed that, until 1934, Japanese officials had been very cautious in engaging with this issue, although they outwardly advocated assimilation. These officials stated that Korean unification with Japan would have to be "undertaken cautiously," and that "those who advocate principles of political assimilation with Koreans on ethnological and historical grounds left the actual ideas and life of Koreans entirely out of consideration."<sup>79</sup> Yanihara Tadao, a contemporary Japanese intellectual, wrote that a real process of assimilation "may take thousands of years and cannot be realized through policy."<sup>80</sup> One British report supported this view by saying that the process of assimilation, which the Seoul government claimed to have been completed in 1938, had really hardly begun, and that it must proceed from "within."<sup>81</sup>

The situation took a complete turn after the appointment of Minami, since the cornerstone of his colonial policy was nothing other than "assimilation." The governor-general insisted that Korea was fundamentally different from colonies of the Western powers. Western countries had been utterly selfish in their colonial policy, looking on their Eastern possessions merely as milk cows, "squeezing them dry in order to enrich the mother country," while opposing and hindering, instead of promoting, the diffusion of education. Korea, on the other hand, embodied the slogan "*nai-sen ittai*." It was, Minami continued, the moral principle of Japan's continental policy to protect the Oriental peoples from the aggression of scheming countries, and to lead them to enjoy happiness as one family, hence achieving an "Orient for Orientals."<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Dutko to SS, November 5, 1930, LM78, R. 1, 895. 01/30; Davis to SS, July 30, 1931, 895. 01/31; Langdon to SS, March 26, 1936, 895. 01/43.

<sup>79</sup> Craigie to Scott, May 21, 1941, 27992 (6206/2007/23).

<sup>80</sup> Townsend, Susan, C., "Yanaihara Tadao's Comparative Critique of Japanese and British Colonial Policy," *Japanese Perspectives on Imperialism in Asia* (London: LSE-STICERD monograph, 1995), pp. 38, 41.

<sup>81</sup> Kernode to Craigie, December 7, 1938, 23566 (817/817/23); May 17, 1939, 23566 (7895/817/23).

<sup>82</sup> Phipps to Clive, March 26, 1936, 20289 (2482/1236/23); Phipps to Craigie, January 24, 1938, 22191 (2833/2833/23); Marsh to SS, May 6, 1938, LM78, R. 1, 895. 00/724.

In practice, the assimilation policy proceeded by means of social mobilization and various control systems. Troop trains were greeted by school children and adults of all classes, carrying Japanese flags; large donations were made by wealthy Koreans to patriotic funds; and Korean youths were conscripted into the military. All the teachers and students in schools were ordered, in a manner that was much more forceful than in Japan, to perform obeisance at Shintō shrines. These are examples of the destructive assimilation that was taking place, by means of intervention in an indigenous society's legal system, language, customs and religion; interventions that even necessitated the use of military force. This caused conflict between the government and the foreign missionaries that were running schools in Korea. Eventually, the Australian Presbyterian Mission closed their schools.<sup>83</sup>

To outsiders, the assimilation policy of the Minami government appeared to be reaping considerable results. In fact, the governor-general publicly declared in 1938 that assimilation had already been achieved. After the United States declared war on Japan, one of America's pre-war consul-generals in Seoul, William Langdon (November 1933 – October 1935), put together a report in 1942 that made some interesting remarks on the issue. According to Langdon, when the Koreans saw in 1931–32 that Japan was able not only to wrest Manchuria from China, but also to defy the Western powers in this seizure, a feeling began to take root among the Koreans that they were “a component element of a great nation.” But what was more to the point was that important material benefits began to accrue to Koreans after the Manchurian Incident. With the boom in Japanese economic life that began in 1932, prices of Korean rice, paddy-land and mined gold soared, and a period of general prosperity set in. In addition, in many cases the Japanese appointed Koreans to higher official positions than they could ever hope to achieve in Korea. Then, in 1938 and 1939, came the Zhanggufeng and Nomonhan military engagements with the Soviet forces, and Koreans looked with increasing amazement and admiration at the military prowess and political daring of their masters. Langdon commented that, for reasons of material interest and because all hope of deliverance from Japanese bondage seemed dead, the mass of Koreans had found it to their advantage since 1931 to join the Japanese parade. Even the collapse of much of the great Christian mission structure in Korea had not been entirely due to Japanese pressure. A missionary of thirty years' experience in Korea stated in 1940 that the prevalent feeling

<sup>83</sup> Townsend, pp. 41–42; Korea, Annual Report, 1936, 21042 (1241/1241/23); Korea, Annual Report, 1937, 22190 (2314/2314/23); Korea, Annual Report, 1939, 24742 (1559/1559/23); Marsh to Grew, March 4, 1938, LM78, R. 1, 895. 20/1.



of the Korean people toward the Japanese had undergone a profound change in the past three years, and had become one of “hero worship.” Among the younger generation, a growing lack of sympathy with American missionaries was noticeable.<sup>84</sup>

Yet Langdon further stated that the outward sympathy for, and even cooperation with, Japan by most Koreans were only the natural results of conditions and circumstances. This sympathy and cooperation were “only skin deep,” and at bottom there was no love for the Japanese but rather bitterness and resentment. He was confident that if Koreans were given the choice between being independent once more or remaining subjects of Japan, even with the full civil rights of Japanese citizens, they would unanimously choose independence. The Japanese, for their part, fundamentally mistrusted and looked down upon the Koreans. As illustrations of the abiding Japanese mistrust of Koreans, Langdon cited: (1) the consistent failure to allow Koreans to serve in the Japanese army except as volunteers in severely restricted numbers; (2) the denial to Koreans of firearms, even for hunting; (3) the vast internal espionage system and police terror tactics used to stamp out so-called Korean “malcontentism.”<sup>85</sup> Official numbers of intermarriages between Japanese and Koreans, one of the indices of assimilation, amounted to only 1,029 for the eleven years from 1923–33.<sup>86</sup>

In the process of implementing the assimilation policy, the case of conscription involved long-term policy contradictions. Moves toward conscription first started in November 1936, when a group of pro-Japanese Koreans submitted a petition to the governor-general and commander-in-chief of the Chōsen Army. They insisted, using the slogan “the Japanese homeland and Korea as a single body,” that Koreans be given the opportunity of becoming Japanese soldiers. At the time, even the Japanese military believed such a move would be too rash, as it was still unable to trust the Korean people. Yet as the war with China dragged on during 1938, the government decided to start conscription in the form of “voluntary service,” enlisting no more than 400 Koreans annually. For Minami, this symbolized the achievement of his long-cherished dream of assimilation. In reality, however, the Koreans were generally not greatly enthused by the

<sup>84</sup> Memo by Langdon. February 20, 1942, LM79, R. 1, 895. 01/79.

<sup>85</sup> Memo by Langdon, February 20, 1942, LM79, R. 1, 895. 01/79. British reports agreed. See Cowley to Clive, November 13, 1934, 18185 (7554/640/23); Korea, Annual Report, 1934, 19361 (1110/1110/23); Badham-Thornhill to Lampson, May 28, 1931, 15522 (4480/4480/23); Korea, Annual Report, 1932, 17158 (764/744/23); Phipps to Craigie, January 24, 1938, 22191 (2833/2833/23).

<sup>86</sup> Langdon to SS, June 22, 1934, LM78, R. 1, 895. 4054/2. Statistics show the Korean population was 19,685,587 and the Japanese 501,861 in 1931. (Davis to SS, October 14, 1931, LM78, R. 2, 895. 5011/22.)

prospect. O. Gaylord Marsh, the American consul-general, reported that applications had been received from 3,500 would-be Korean volunteers, a figure that by any estimation was not large for a population of 21 million people, which included an estimated 825,000 young men of eligible age.<sup>87</sup> The Western powers were suspicious of this conscription of Koreans, because it might increase Japan's capacity for military mobilization. When the process of assimilation was well-advanced, the peninsula would become not so much a benefit to itself as an instrument for the realization of Japan's greater ambitions, and of greater goals beyond even those.<sup>88</sup>

On the other hand, the Koreans' anti-Japanese impulses continued to develop, adapting to changing circumstances. A movement that had originally been passive in nature, began to rebel actively against the assimilation policy, though outspoken anti-Japanese actions were subsiding. One British report of 1931 pointed out that "a growing nation of 20 million souls," with strong and deeply-rooted nationalistic feelings, was hardly likely to give up the idea of regaining independence. Gravely concerned, Japanese authorities surveyed the leading classes of Korean society in 1933 with the following question: "How many Koreans would remain loyal to Japan in a time of real crisis?" The answer was that many of the younger generation of Koreans would probably cooperate as they did at present, so long as Japan's power and fortunes seemed to be in the ascendant; but at the first sign of weakness, or rumor of defeat, they might be expected to fall away. Discontent and unrest would be allayed only so long as material prosperity persisted. Three years later, the British annual report made the same point: "There is nowhere any unrest or apparent disaffection, but times are good and the people have money in their pocket. A return of the lean years may spoil the picture."<sup>89</sup>

In the 1930s, the Korean nationalist movement, which had been regarded as a hopelessly lost cause that had become ever more pathetic, showed some signs of revival with the advent of crises on the military fronts in China. The first of these took the form of terrorism, and the assassination of high-placed Japanese or members of the League of Nations. The failed attempts to assassinate the Japanese emperor in Tokyo January 1932, or to kill members of the Lytton party when the League of Nations investigative commission arrived at Dalian station in May 1932, were in line with this trend.<sup>90</sup> In Korea, student strikes and disturbances continued to occur under such influences, and there seemed to be great difficulty in preventing "these acts of indiscipline and insubordination."<sup>91</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Marsh to SS, March 4, 1938, LM78, R. 1, 895. 20/1.

<sup>88</sup> Phipps to Craigie, January 24, 1938, 22191 (2833/2833/23).

<sup>89</sup> Korea, Annual Report, 1937, 22190 (2314/2314/23).

<sup>90</sup> Austin to Lindley, July 18, 1932, 16245 (6509/202/23).

<sup>91</sup> Korea, Annual Report, 1931, 16245 (739/202/23).

This coincided with increasing preparations for armed resistance in China and Siberia, and the rise of Communist ideas in Korea. Even in the early 1930s, an American missionary took note that, along with the desire for education, socialism was attracting young students. In 1932, a group of students were asked to write anonymously about their attitudes on this subject. The results showed that 67 percent considered themselves to be “socialists,” 4 percent defined themselves as “communists,” and 4 percent believed themselves to be “capitalists,” with 25 percent taking an intermediate position. This corresponded exactly with what the missionary had observed up to that point. The Communist movement certainly penetrated into every class of Korean society, taking advantage of the economic troubles of the early 1930s. As a result, a fundamental shift was noted from a “nationalist independence movement” to an “anti-imperialist proletariat movement,” faithfully following the precepts of Lenin<sup>92</sup>

One point deserves to be mentioned in regard to what may be called the “diplomatic activities” by Koreans abroad. In early 1933, Syngman Rhee succeeded in having a petition circulated by the League of Nations. He did this by having it officially transmitted to the secretary-general by the Chinese delegation, which had been at odds with the Japanese since the Manchurian Incident. (It was the practice that only communications formally received by recognized governments could be acted upon by Secretariat authorities.) In the “Statement of the Koreans in Manchuria,” Syngman Rhee, representing Koreans in Korea, Manchuria and elsewhere, asked the Lytton Commission to consider the Korean independence question before the League on an appropriate occasion in the future, in view of the importance attached to the interests of Koreans in Manchuria. However, just managing to have this petition submitted was about the best that Rhee could expect. He further approached Prentiss B. Gilbert, an American consul in Geneva, to state that the Korean people were hopeful that some turn of affairs might bring Japan into conflict with some of the great powers, which would eventually present Korea with an opportunity to regain its independence. The Korean residents in Siberia, whom he estimated at approximately a million, were secretly organizing themselves, and were being drilled by Russian officers.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Korea, Annual Report, 1932, 17158 (764/744/23). However, it seemed doubtful whether most of the students could see much ideological difference between “socialism” and “communism.”

<sup>93</sup> Gilbert to SS, April 28, 1933, LM78, R. 1, 895, 00/718. See also February 9, 1933, 895, 01/36. For a recent study on this subject, see, Kim, Chŏngmin & Kim, Myŏngsŏp, “Manjusabyŏn palbal ihu daehanminguk imsijŏngbu ūi gukjeoyŏnmaeng oegyo” (The Diplomacy of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea towards the League of Nations after the Manchurian Incident), *Korean Political Science Review* 53-1(2019).

## CONCLUSION

It is obvious that the Korean question attracted considerable attention from the powers in the 1930s, given the turbulent situation in East Asia. By that time, the powers' economic and other immediate interests in Korea had almost disappeared. Outwardly, Korea had been transformed into a modern society after thirty years of Japan's rule. Even though their direct interests had been made null and void, the United States and Britain were still very much interested in the peninsula. They were concerned mainly with the role of the Korean peninsula in Japan's expansion policy, and the implications of domestic developments, such as the self-government issue and the assimilation policy. The development of northern Korea was of particular interest to them, as it would provide the shortest and the safest route between the industrial centers of the Japanese islands and the continent. The assimilation policy made the powers realize that Koreans could be reduced to instruments of Japan through conscription and other means. Perhaps it was for this reason that the illegitimacy of the assimilation policy was singled out for blame, while milder criticism was directed toward the work of the Oriental Development Company, which had been instrumental in exploiting Koreans and in driving them out into Manchuria in the previous decades.

Such criticism, however, is not unique in view of the overall colonial history of Korea. The 1930s may have been more oppressive than the 1910s. Yet Britain, once critical of Japan's militarist rule in the 1910s, was unwilling in the 1930s to bother the Japanese about mitigating their harsh treatment of Korea. This reflects changes in Anglo-Japanese relations, and the two countries' relative positions. A senior partner before, Britain now had to remain comparatively passive, protecting interests in East Asia through compromise, rather than confrontation, with Japan. The United States, as its relationship with Japan worsened, could only maintain a non-intervention policy.

Under these circumstances, criticism of Japan could not be turned into support for Korean independence. The negative images of the past, and skepticism about Koreans' capacity to run an independent state, were still prominent in their thinking. After an incident involving Yun Ponggil, who killed several Japanese military and civilian leaders during a victory parade in Shanghai in 1932, twelve Korean nationalists, including An Ch'angho, were arrested by the Japanese police, with the approval of the French consulate in Shanghai. When an appeal was sent to British Foreign Minister, John Simon, the Foreign Office commented that An's arrest was "fortunate," otherwise they

might have been more tiresome agitation of a similar type. For the Westerners, Koreans in the 1930s were still a “backward, backboneless, venal, hopeless people.”<sup>94</sup>

In terms of managing an independent modern country, foreign observers particularly singled out Koreans’ inability to unite for a national purpose. In a report on Communism, it was stated that the number of Korean Communist parties was so great because the tendency to split into groups had always been a weakness of political parties in Korea. At a conference in Moscow in 1927, strife between the different Korean parties developed into an unseemly quarrel, which impressed the conference so unfavorably that they were all refused recognition. The Koreans seemed “unable to sink their private differences in the common weal and parties were no sooner formed than they were rent by internal dissensions.”<sup>95</sup>

Negative images of Korea were amplified as Communism and anti-Western sentiment heightened in Korea. Western powers were well aware that “Communism” was a useful term in Korea to disguise any kind of anti-Japanese activity. It was therefore difficult to gauge the extent to which Communism, as a political doctrine, was really making headway, and the statistics on arrests could not afford a reliable guide.<sup>96</sup> The friction between the Christian missions and the Government-General over the Shintō shrine obeisance issue added another detail to this complex picture. The government became loath to allow Koreans to remain under the influence of the foreigners’ educational institutions. The inflow of American funds to the discontented Koreans was especially subject to surveillance. An anti-British meeting was held in Seoul’s Chōsen Hotel in November 1936, which passed a resolution virtually demanding an instant war with Britain. There were forceful efforts by the Government-General to stir up support in the peninsula for its war efforts but, in any case, it was obvious to foreign observers that Korean society as a whole was far from enthused by such ideas.<sup>97</sup>

Some trends apparent in the 1930s could not develop further until Japan became involved in World War II. With the outbreak of this wider war, however, the powers started approaching the Korean ques-

<sup>94</sup> Earl K. Paik to Simon, May 31, 1932, 16245 (4865/202/23), and minutes; minutes of Tilley to Henderson, March 17, 1930, 14755 (2187/1534/23).

<sup>95</sup> White to Snow, January 6, 1931, 15517 (889/14/23). On the factional disputes among Korean Communists and the reaction of the Comintern, see Weathersby, Kathryn, “Soviet Policy toward Korea: 1944–1946” (Ph. D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1990), pp. 87–93.

<sup>96</sup> Minutes of Phipps to Clive, May 5, 1937, 21043 (3538/1554/23).

<sup>97</sup> Korea, Annual Report, 1937, 22190 (2314/2314/23); Phipps to Charge d’Affaires (Tokyo), August 7, 1937, 21043 (5245/1845/23).

tion from an entirely different angle. The point is that the powers' thinking on, and discussion of, the Korean question were influenced by all of these issues. These wartime deliberations were affected by a range of factors, including the perceived geopolitical and strategic value of the peninsula, controversies over Japan's colonial policies in Korea, and how the powers judged the political and organizational talents of Korea's society and people.

RETROSPECTIVE:  
Korea Through a  
Western Looking Glass



FOR KOREANS, THE term “colonial Korea” connotes all the hell of its history. This study may, by looking at colonized Korea largely through a Western looking glass, add another blow to Koreans’ *amour propre*. The Western powers, especially Britain and the United States, not only approved Japan’s occupation of the peninsula, but blessed Japan as a conveyor of civilization to backward Koreans. For the Koreans, it was like rubbing salt into an open wound. The views of the Western powers are, however, undeniable “historical realities,” and are one of the means by which today’s liberated, divided and economically successful Korea has evolved.

The powers’ interests in Korea were primarily geopolitical. Economic, cultural and prestige-related elements, such as educational and religious/missionary concerns, were also involved, yet played a secondary role. For the Western powers, Korea’s geopolitical value was related to their interests in East Asia as a whole. Their priority “practical” stakes in East Asia were economic, in essence, and they placed the greatest importance on China. Political and strategic issues revolved around the protection of these economic interests. For the United States, strategic interest in the Pacific was growing as naval competition with Japan became more acute. The Korean peninsula was considered in this context, and hence valued according to its impact on such strategic concerns. In short, Korea was only a minor factor in their East Asia policy, and an issue on which they were prepared to compromise with other powers in the region. After the Russo-Japanese War, Japan (who considered its own interests in the peninsula to be “vital”) and Russia resolved “the Manchurian question” between themselves, which became the focal point in the balance of power in East Asia. At the moment in history when Japan and Russia were making terms and achieving a sort of power equilibrium, Korea was annexed as part of the Japanese Empire. Yet in the early stages of the Pacific War, a U.S. State Department report noted that the settlement of the Korean question would still depend mainly on the “Manchurian question.” Here, Korea was described as

an “appendix” to Manchuria. (See Part II, Chapter 2). This illustrates how international discussions of the Korean question remained, in essence, much the same throughout the period from the annexation to the liberation.

Nonetheless, when a great power (Japan) occupied Korea in 1910, the latter’s geopolitical value changed in line with the rapid development in Japan’s political and expansionist activities. After the Russo-Japanese War, Japan gained economic interests in southern Manchuria, over which Chinese sovereignty was nominal. Capitalizing on “geographic propinquity,” Japan made Korea the stepping-stone for its economic and quasi-political expansion into Manchuria and its neighboring regions. Even before the Korean annexation, a project was launched to build a railway bridge over the Yalu River, which made possible uninterrupted rail traffic from Üju (on the Korean side of the river), through Andong (present Dandong), to Mukden. A narrow-gauged railway was also built to connect the northeastern tip of the peninsula over the Tumen River to Jiandao (a territory that had been disputed by the Chosŏn and Qing dynasties), and then further on by rail into the heart of central and northern Manchuria. The idea of unifying the administrations of the South Manchurian Railway, the Kwantung Leased Territory and the Government-General in Korea was frequently talked about, and even attempted, and Koreans in Manchuria were utilized for Japan’s political ambitions in the region.

In the 1930s, as Japan endeavored to consolidate its strategic position, vis-à-vis the other great powers, under the standard of the “Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere,” the Korean peninsula became an indispensable communications and transport link between the Japanese islands and the heart of Manchuria. The northeastern part of the peninsula, especially, could provide the shortest and most secure route to the continent via the East/Japan Sea. The geopolitical value of Korea should thus be understood in terms of the role and influence of the “Korean elements” in Japan’s expansion, rather than in terms of any simple formula stating “the next target after Korea was Manchuria.”

In spite of a few farsighted reports from diplomats in East Asia, such as Bonar and Sammons, who served respectively as the British and American consuls-general in Seoul, the powers were at first not greatly concerned by Japanese political initiatives in connection with the Korean annexation. However, when Japanese economic interests had taken on a sort of monopoly position in Manchuria, and other types of Japanese advances there continued, the powers began to try to curb them, and started to speak in disappointed tones about their own “experiences in Korea and Manchuria.” Such reactions became prominent in a number of different contexts,



including the unrealized “Korea clause” in the third Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1911; Japan’s “Twenty-One Demands,” presented to China in 1915; the Shandong question during and after World War I; the Japanese military dispatch to Jiandao in 1920; the Wanbaoshan Incident in 1931; and the Manchurian Incident, which came soon after and led to the establishment of Manzhouguo in the following year. By the mid-1930s, Japan’s hegemony in East Asia appeared fairly well realized. If resolving the Korean question was not an immediate objective for the Allies of World War II, the powers frustrated Japan’s hopes of continuing its rule over the peninsula after the war. One reason for the Allies’ success here was no doubt the opposition to Japanese rule shown by the Korean people. Yet another (and perhaps the major) reason was that the powers were well aware of the significant role that the Korean peninsula had played in Japan’s expansion.

When the powers recognized the annexation of Korea to Japan, they had judged that the peninsula was only a minor factor in their East Asia policies. In their view, Korea passed into the possession of Japan, by annexation, after having first been dependant on China, and then on a worrisome level of Russian influence. They assumed confidently that their extraterritorial and economic rights would always be protected. Yet the powers were disappointed in these expectations, even from the time of the 1905–1910 protectorate regime. Japan immediately set out to reduce and restrict the other powers’ interests as soon as its hegemony in Korea was recognized by the powers in 1905. After the annexation, laws and regulations were enacted or amended to further reduce the powers’ economic interests, and to interfere with their educational and missionary activities, virtually extinguishing within a few years a great portion of their “stakes.” This was a potent factor in the deteriorating relationship between the powers and Japan, if not to the extent that power relations in East Asia should be influenced. The sale of the Unsan Gold Mine, and the disputes over obeisance at Shintō shrines and ceremonies, remained issues into the 1930s, but the Japanese easily won the day. As the powers were mainly concerned with the erosion of their interests in the peninsula, Japan’s continental expansion, the overall relationship between the ruler and the ruled, and other aspects of Japan’s policy, such as its everyday impact on Korean society and metro-colonial relations, seem to have been quite ignored. The Company Law, for instance, had been mainly crafted to protect Japanese business enterprises by eliminating any source of competition from within the peninsula, yet it was viewed by the Western powers almost wholly in the light of how it might limit Western participation in Korean trade and mining enterprises.

The powers simultaneously praised and criticized Japan's rule over Korea. The upside was that Japan introduced modern civilization and wealth. The downside was that Japan tried completely to destroy the national identity of the Korean people. Such high opinions of Korea's economic prosperity remained the same throughout the Japanese occupation, even if some criticisms were made of Japan's monopoly of many of the economic benefits. Positive opinions, however, of the legitimacy and morality of governing Korea began losing ground immediately after the annexation. The powers had believed, at first, in the moral justification for Japan's control of Korea, comparing it with the corruption, incompetence and conservatism of the old Chosŏn government.

Yet when the alleged attempt to assassinate Governor-General Terauchi took place in 1911 shortly after the annexation, along with the related trials, the use of torture and fabrication of the facts were made known to the outside world as a "grotesque irregularity;" or, even worse, as "the most gigantic miscarriage of justice in history," and the powers' belief in the legitimacy of Japan's rule was damaged. Ruthless suppression of the March First Movement, the exclusion of Koreans from significant policy-making roles, and the assimilation policy, all branded the Japanese Government-General as militaristic, chauvinistic and iron-fisted, although the period of Saitō's tenure as governor-general may be seen as an exception. Such images remained latent even during periods when the relationship between the powers and Japan was relatively friendly. Then, as World War II unfolded, these images provided a very good point of departure for the powers to contradict Japan's claims to legitimate rule over Korea.

This does not necessarily mean that the powers' perception of the Korean people improved. Disillusioned by the political and social realities of the late Chosŏn period, their idea of Korea fundamentally remained unchanged, even if there had been some improvements after events like the March First Movement. On the one hand, such perceptions resulted in approval of many of the measures taken by the government-general after the annexation; while, on the other, it led to a cynical reaction to the Korean demand for independence. These perceptions had a potent influence on the powers' disparagement of Korea's capacity for independence, when they started discussing the liberation and independence of the country after World War II. In their matrix of criteria for evaluating Korea, terms like "capacity for independence" and "capacity to establish and govern a modern state" now replaced terms like "civilization versus backwardness." Yet the image of Korea was still deeply smeared by such unfavorable ideas. In the eyes of Western observers, Koreans were still a backward people in need of education. The Koreans had been deprived of the political and technical training necessary

for modern administration, and this circumstance, even if caused by Japanese policy, seemed, in the eyes of many Westerners, to provide a good reason for not allowing Korea complete independence. This study concludes, therefore, that the idea of a trusteeship for Korea was decided upon as a result of universalized principles for the postwar settlement of colonial issues; a strategic compromise among the powers; and, still more importantly, a “negative image of the country.” (These points are discussed in more detail in Part II.)

These perceptions held by the Western powers explain why they were relatively blind to various aspects of the changes that had taken place in Korean society. They did pay a great deal of attention to Japanese policies, and to the material improvements that such policies brought about, but they thoroughly ignored the rise of a new generation, including intellectuals and students, who resisted colonial rule by subtle literary and “cultural means,” as Robinson and others have demonstrated. Except for a few cases in which vernacular newspapers were suspended in the 1920s, and their complete closure in the 1930s, the diplomats of the powers did not mention these new phenomena in Korean society. Likewise, contrary to their energetic coverage of the new laws and ordinances that the Government-General had showered on Korea in the early days of the annexation, Western diplomats did not report to their governments on the numerous amendments of ordinances on civil matters that had been vigorously carried out during the heyday of assimilation in the 1930s, with the aim of both enforcing adherence to the Japanese legal system and suffocating Korean traditions and customs.

The concept of “colonial modernity” is, in any case, very complex. Japan, the purveyor of civilization to Korea, was itself, as Ashton-Gawtkin commented, still largely living in a medieval way; that is, Japan had succeeded in adopting Western institutions, science and techniques, and military expertise, but still maintained a traditional mentality. What, then, would be the content of the “modernization” brought about in Korea by the Japanese? Would it be a combination of Western “modern forms” and a traditional Japanese-like mentality? The majority of Koreans, moreover, had no idea what constituted modernity in the political, economic and cultural fields. They had no concept or experience of democratic practices, nor of a capitalist and competitive market economy, nor of a pluralistic system. However, in their day-to-day lives, the Koreans fully enjoyed the modernized, convenient facilities granted to them by the colonizers, a new situation that made some profound transformations in Korean society, however unintentionally. It is nonetheless undeniable that the Koreans were not content to have alien masters. This was Korea’s situation throughout the colonial period.

As for the limited degree during the colonial period to which the powers may have tried to intervene with Japan at the diplomatic level, to spur changes in Korea-related Japanese policy, in the 1920s all such initiatives were taken by the British. From the 1930s, however, the United States played a greater, though still subdued, role. Britain's behavior can certainly be viewed as "imperial," given that it exercised, even if nominally, a certain leadership under the terms of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance until 1922. The alliance, however, cannot fully explain Britain's actions. Britain and the United States had disagreements with Japan in East Asia from the period immediately following the Russo-Japanese War. These continued to surface in the period before the outbreak of World War I. As the world's greatest controller of colonies, Britain packaged its colony-related experiences with such ideas as welfare of the "natives", the fostering of civilization, and other ideologies of the imperialist period. To the degree that the British government may have suggested diplomatic interventions in regard to Japan's policies on Korea, it was under the pretext that it was only giving a piece of advice as an ally. In a sense, British advice, recommendations and suggestions were hypocritical, in the light of the 1919 massacre at Amritsar, India. It was natural that Britain did not intervene to the extent of trying to deny or reverse Japan's rule of the peninsula. The contributions it made were, in fact, limited to trivial matters, such as the abolition of police flogging, which hardly sufficed to change the overall policy of the Government-General. In the late 1920s, Britain urged Japan to expand political participation by the Koreans, and to preserve their culture and traditions through autonomy-oriented measures. Japan refused to accept these suggestions on various pretexts. On the one hand, they rejected them because Britain's principles of colonial rule essentially contradicted Japan's assimilation project. On the other, the Japanese refusal demonstrated the reduced status of Britain in the politics of East Asia.

Meanwhile, the United States kept a surprising silence regarding the Korean question until the 1930s. I say "surprising" because this great power had the second largest stake (next to Japan's) in Korea, and one which probably surpassed all of the other powers' interests combined. Japan, however, turned first all to Britain when it wanted to discuss any urgent issues that ensued from the annexation, since the country was its major partner in political affairs. It also used British support to help silence any opposing voices from the United States, Russia or Germany. The United States neither cooperated with Britain to secure its interests nor made joint representations with any other powers. Japan therefore found it easy to ignore American opinions. After the annexation, while the British ambassador in Tokyo traveled in and out of Korea and Manchuria,

having interviews with the highest of Japanese officials and making speeches to Korean audiences (often in the presence of American missionaries), the acting U.S. ambassador had to pretend that his official missions to Korea were only informal visits. At the time of the March First Movement, the British government, using British officials both at home and abroad, made a concerted effort to intervene in Korea-related affairs. Meanwhile, the American government remained silent, only sending letters of warning to prevent the resident Americans from becoming involved. Up to the 1920s, British officials in London, as well as in Tokyo and Seoul, were eager to discuss measures for Korean autonomy, as when Saitō Makoto visited London before arms-cut negotiations in Geneva in 1927. The American government, although it agreed with the British stance, would not make any specific suggestions to the Japanese.

By the 1930s, however, any initiative in regard to “the Korean question” seemed most likely to come from the United States, although it still remained in the realm of intense “observations.” During this period, Japan focused on the industrialization of northern parts of Korea, with the purpose of transforming the peninsula into a bridge, as well as an advance base for expansion into the continent. It was at this juncture that the geopolitical and strategic value of Korea began drawing more attention from the powers. In addition, the advent of the National Socialist regime in Germany, the founding of Manzhouguo, and another Sino-Japanese war all pointed toward the links between the regional politics of Asia and European considerations.

With these new turns of events, the British government, whose priorities remained within Europe, was willing to compromise with Japan to secure its interests in the region. The only power capable of resistance against Japan was the United States. American interests in Japan’s development activities in northern Korea illustrated this change. While Britain drafted a mediocre report on the potential for Japan’s turning the peninsula into a supply base, the United States collected detailed and sometimes unconfirmed information on the issue. When, after World War II, the Americans had to face the issue of disposing of munitions and other industrial facilities in northern Korea, they likely based their arguments on such information.

With the outbreak of war in the Pacific, the powers’ thinking and discussions regarding the Korean question developed in the shadow of this historical background. The development of these wartime deliberations was influenced by a range of factors, including the perceived geopolitical and strategic value of the peninsula, controversies over Japan’s colonial policies in Korea, and whether the powers judged the political and organizational talents of Korea’s society and people to be sufficient to build a new, independent nation.



## **PART 2**

### **ROLE OF THE US AND OTHER POWERS**





## Problems in Previous Studies on Liberation and Division



BY THE 1940s, the nature of the Korean question had completely changed. East Asia's Sino-Japanese War in 1937 and Europe's second Great War in 1939, combined with the war in the Pacific between the United States and Japan, following Japan's strike on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, in December 1942, became an overarching global conflagration. The Pacific War represented a struggle to redefine the international order in the Asian-Pacific region. On one side was an overly self-serving Japanese design to establish a "new order" in East Asia, and on the other was what ultimately became an American determination to eliminate Japan as a first-rate power.<sup>1</sup> The whole world was now a campaign theater, and all the great powers joined the struggle based on their alliances. Two days after the outbreak of the war in the Pacific, Syngman Rhee rejoiced, in a letter to the State Department, that "the inevitable clash has at last come."<sup>2</sup> The Korean peninsula had never been an immediate object of this struggle. However, its international status could drastically change with the war's conclusion, especially with Japan's defeat, which would give Korea an opportunity for liberation and independence. Meanwhile, reports on the situation in Korea had become unavailable as consulates in Seoul were closed down, and foreign diplomats were evacuated. The Korean question was now a matter of interest, though a secondary one, to all the war-related agencies that would have to deliberate on the reorganization of world order for a postwar era.

<sup>1</sup> Iriye, Akira, *The Cold War in Asia – A Historical Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974), p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Syngman Rhee to Hornbeck, December 9, 1941, LM79, R.1, 895.01/54. The State Department referred to Rhee's words in its *United States Policy Regarding Korea 1834–1950*, compiled by the Division of Historical Policy Research, the State Department in May 1947– December 1951. It was collected and reprinted by the Institute of Asian Culture, Hallim University (Ch'unch'ŏn), 1987, p. 56.

Save North Korea, which continues to insist that Korea was principally liberated by Kim Il-sung (Il-sŏng) and his partisan army,<sup>3</sup> few would disagree that the liberation was a byproduct of the Allied victory over Japan in World War II. Advocates of Korean independence, including Frederick McKenzie in the 1920s and Syngman Rhee in the 1930s, had hoped for a clash between the United States and Japan for a long time, as they believed that such an event would best resolve the Korean question.<sup>4</sup> As far as Korean nationalists were concerned, therefore, the Pacific was a prelude to independence. Their sphere of action was accordingly widened and energized.

The United States, for its part, came to adopt an attitude that was quite different from those that it had held in the past. The United States had consistently avoided any kind of intervention in the Korean question after Korea's annexation by Japan. But on entering the war in the Pacific, the United States now became the power that would be in charge of the postwar settlement of Korea. Until this point, American officials had refused to even acknowledge Korean petitions for independence; now, they were seeing nationalists to hear their opinions, and were reviewing the Korean question from various angles. For the State Department, Korean nationalists were no longer the unwelcome "ugly ducklings" that they had once been. Although they were not given full official recognition, they could contact officials in American government agencies as Allied colleagues. Such contacts did not happen in Britain as there was no Korean organization in the 1940s, even if Britain kept its door ajar to the Koreans through its embassy at Chongqing.

For people who had struggled for decades, ever since the annexation, the division of the country was not a satisfactory solution of the Korean question. Despite certain ideological differences, all Korean nationalists hoped for one thing: a unified and independent nation. They all agreed that their newly liberated nation should be free from control by other powers, reflect national consensus, and promote the

<sup>3</sup> Kim Il-sung claimed that his partisan army liberated the northeastern tip of the peninsula, along with other parts including Najin and the Pyongyang area, when it entered northern Korea as the vanguard of the Soviet Army in August 1945. [Kim, Il-sung, *Kim Il-sung tongji hoegorok – segi wa tōburō* (Memoir of Comrade Kim Il-sung - Together with the Century), (Pyongyang: Chosŏn Nodongdang Ch'ulp'ansa, 1998), vol. 8, pp. 460–463.]. On the other hand, Kim notes in an early memoir that his guerrilla achievements were more political and spiritual than practical in that they proclaimed to the world the indomitable spirit of Korean independence. For instance, the battle of Poch'ŏnbo, one of the greatest battles under his command, amounted to "killing a few Japanese and snatching a few machine guns." Han, Chaedŏk (ed.), *Kim Il-sung changgun kaesŏn'gi* (Record of Military Victories of General Kim Il-sung) (Pyongyang: Minjok Chosŏnsa, 1947), pp. 40–42.

<sup>4</sup> Comments of McKenzie and Rhee on this subject, see chapter 5, 6.

welfare of its people. Yet Korea still remained a pawn in the game of international politics. The problem now was not that of liberation and independence, but that of division. This provides clear evidence that the much-overused formula of Japanese oppression and Korean resistance could not have fully addressed the Korean question during the Japanese colonial period.

Previous studies on this subject may prove to be problematic in certain respects. They generally assume two perspectives: one concerns the relevance of global or East Asian international politics to the Korean question; the other looks solely to "Korea" itself. The starting point of the first perspective has admittedly been the outbreak of the war in the Pacific. Yet that particular war alone did not guarantee a satisfactory resolution of the Korean question, i.e., the restoration of a unified, independent Korean state. Indeed, war might be called the "highest" form of conflict, as well as the "greatest agent" of change in international politics, occurring when rationalist and idealist concepts of cooperation, international law and humanitarianism are overwhelmed by "realist" concepts of national interest, security, alliances and power. Large numbers of studies and reviews of possible postwar settlements were made as part of wartime diplomatic efforts. However, one well-known study on the Cold War concludes that "efforts to work out tripartite policies for Germany failed, largely because of conflict and confusion within the United States government.... The lack of a clear-cut American position precluded meaningful discussions with Great Britain and the Soviet Union prior to the end of the war, thus making divergent occupation policies in Germany virtually inevitable." Victory, not postwar settlement, remained the primary goal of the American military effort to the bitter end. President Franklin D. Roosevelt did persuade Churchill and Stalin to sign a "Declaration on Liberated Europe," which only reaffirmed the principles of the Atlantic Charter, and called for the formation of "broadly representative and democratic governments in the liberated areas."<sup>5</sup> When the European sphere, which had priority in the Allies' wartime diplomacy, was being addressed with only such very generalized formulations of postwar objectives, Asia and Japan could hardly expect a more detailed or special treatment, at least whilst the war dragged on.

What kind of status did Korea have in this global war, then? The United States were clearly baffled to find so many complicated elements entangled in the Korean problem. The first dilemma was that the so-called Korean question had, for the Americans, previously been non-existent, for all practical purposes, and they therefore

<sup>5</sup> Gaddis, John Lewis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), pp. 95-97, 163, 206-215.

struggled to include it as a factor relevant to the immediate goals of victory. Japan did not indicate any intention of abandoning Korea, rather seeming intent on retaining economic control, even if relinquishing political overlordship, when its defeat was impending.<sup>6</sup> It is not an exaggeration to say that a resolution of “the Korean question” might have been placed somewhere among the lowest priorities of the Allies’ war objectives. If this was indeed the case, the absence of a clear policy for the postwar settlement of Korea might have been a matter of course. The destiny of Korea could not be decided solely by the defeat of Japan. It was to be influenced and determined by the processes of the war, by the wartime objectives of each belligerent, by the negotiation procedures of the powers, by the postwar realignment of world order, and, last but not least, by the settlement of other problems in East Asia.

All these factors were amply significant for Korea. The postwar settlement planned by the Allies was bound up in several crucial issues, including not just victory in the war, but also creation of the United Nations, four-power cooperation, and the settlement of territorial issues. If, in wartime negotiations, the Soviet Union insisted on imposing a puppet government in Poland, Americans would interpret this as a regression to power politics, and would thus be tempted, for their part, to return toward isolationism. Any postwar arrangement without the participation and recognition of the United States could not have lasted, which was not at all desirable for the Soviet Union either. Concomitantly, if the Soviet Union did not achieve satisfactory results in Eastern Europe, this would likely impede the progress of negotiations on other issues. The postwar settlements, therefore, would be most effective if in the form of package deals, as found in certain types of “gambling.”<sup>7</sup>

The Korean question had emerged as a potential object of such “bargaining” among negotiators, something which happened more frequently as the war drew to a close. This may provide us with some clues to understand how the Korean question was addressed in the powers’ tug of war, as each sought optimum benefits. The chaotic inconsistency in how the powers actually dealt with the Korean question resulted from the obscure status of the country in international politics. To identify the “status” and realities of “the Korean question,” it is necessary to examine comprehensively the great shifts

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<sup>6</sup> Tōgō, Shigenori, *The Cause of Japan* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), p. 287; Butow, Robert J. C., *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954), pp. 21–22, 108; See also Sigal, Leon V., *Fighting to a Finish – The Politics of War Termination in the United States and Japan, 1945* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 60–62.

<sup>7</sup> Gaddis, pp. 150–153.

of World War II, the forces that brought about these shifts, and each power's policies. One must also look at issues in the development of the war and in the postwar settlements that are only indirectly related to Korea. "The Korean question" was subject to being sacrificed or de-prioritized in deference to issues that were not at all related to the Korean nation itself, or which became objects of great power bargaining.

The relatively obscure status of Korea in World War II also meant that the factors that brought about the final resolution of the question were far from simple. It is difficult to find definite lines of causation. It may be futile to introduce an "if" to history, yet we can probably say that if the Korean question had been resolved as the leaders of the independence movement, along with most Koreans, had wished it be in 1945, great determination and effort would have been required, both nationally and internationally. As we shall see, the terms "nationally" and "internationally" are also quite complex. It is not possible simply to lay the blame for the division of Korea on any particular party or parties- the United States, say, and/or the Soviet Union- or on the ambitions of their leaders, nor can we hold policy blunders or mere ignorance fully responsible. We also cannot solely blame the shallow world views or blind ambitions of Korean political leaders. The idea, however, of perfectly coordinating these elements and building one united nation would have been something akin to human fate in Greek tragedy, where human beings reach for something that is beyond the limits of their mortal abilities, and are ultimately defeated. Perhaps it might be more accurate to say that the division was "inevitable." If the roots of the division were indeed that profound, the resolution of the division and of the various problems that it entails will only be possible when grounded in an accurate understanding of the dilemmas that Koreans faced in the 1940s.

The second problem in existing studies is that they are too strongly inclined to view the Korean question in terms of the U.S.-Soviet conflict of the Cold War, or in terms of a framework created *ex post facto*. Such a tendency has been especially pronounced among American historians. They have generally perceived World War II diplomacy in combination with, and not separately from, the origins of the Cold War.<sup>8</sup> The main points of this early postwar historical criticism were the supposed blunders and naiveté of President Roosevelt and other U.S. policy-makers, vis-à-vis wartime Soviet relations, which were believed to have resulted in massive and unnecessary extensions of

<sup>8</sup> For a summary of debates on diplomacy during World War II, see Stoler, Mark A., "A Half Century of Conflict: Interpretations of US World War II Diplomacy," *Diplomatic History*, 18-3 (Summer 1994), pp. 376-403.

Soviet power. For these critics, Korea was further evidence of policy blunders, such as the “unreasonable yielding” of Roosevelt before Stalin.

On the other hand, Roosevelt’s supporters believed that the framework of 1941–1945 had been the upshot of military necessity rather than of the Cold War, along with the need to maintain the Grand Alliance to defeat the Axis. Military realities, most notably those created by the advancing Red Army, were what had led unavoidably to an enormous increase in Soviet power, rather than blunders. Wartime diplomacy deserves to be evaluated on its own, rather than in combination with the Cold War. The United States and the Soviet Union, in fact, distrusted each other, yet cooperated “to fight alongside the devil himself to win the war.”<sup>9</sup> The policy blunder argument thus holds no great validity in regard to the Korean division, if one looks carefully at the wartime diplomacy of the powers, and at the wartime status of the Korean question in the broader scheme of the postwar settlements.

The United States, its military especially, anticipated that changes in national military strengths in the postwar era would be “more comparable indeed with that occasioned by the fall of Rome than with any other change occurring during the succeeding fifteen hundred years,” and that this should be “a fact of fundamental importance in its bearing upon future international political settlements and all discussions leading thereto.” More specifically, aside from the elimination of Germany and Japan as military powers, the United States and Russia were expected to become the strongest military powers in the world, while Britain would be in a lower category.<sup>10</sup> It was, therefore, more than natural that the United States should try to amplify its national interest, if given an opportunity. On the other hand, scholars of the revisionist school, including Bruce Cumings, have classified U.S. wartime policies into the “internationalism” of Roosevelt and the “nationalism” of Truman, pointing out that it was only the latter that showed a strong hegemonic tendency.<sup>11</sup>

Historically, it is hard to deny that a hegemonic position had already been laid out for the United States in the postwar world order. Even before World War I, U.S. industrial output was twice that

<sup>9</sup> Gaddis, p. 42.

<sup>10</sup> Memo by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 3, 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 1, pp. 699–703.

<sup>11</sup> Cumings, Bruce, *The Origins of the Korean War – Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes 1945–1947* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 129–130, 101–117. For internationalism and nationalism in international relations, see “Introduction: The Course of Korean-American Relations, 1943–1953,” in Cumings (ed.), *Child of Conflict – the Korean-American Relationship, 1943–1953* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983), pp. 4–11.

of Germany, the most powerful country in Europe. It represented 35% of global industrial output in 1935, and 45% by 1945. This economic supremacy far surpassed the one Britain had relished over other great powers during the years of "Pax Britannica."<sup>12</sup> Such a trend became unmistakable in the course of World War I. Nevertheless, the United States still did not exercise its full influence, leaning as it did toward political isolationism until World War II. At the outbreak of this second global war, the United States started actively to examine postwar problems, acutely aware that it had mismanaged those left by the previous war. One important fact here is that, compared to British and Soviet policies in pursuit of their own national interests, U.S. wartime policy assumed a more universalistic character, including such considerations as a realignment of the world order and the establishment of a peace mechanism.<sup>13</sup>

It was in this context that the Korean question came to the fore. The United States, while assuming the main burden in Korean affairs, insisted on having a "common" Allied policy, and, more specifically, a trusteeship by the four powers. If the trusteeship policy was an idealistic vision, it would also function to further U.S. hegemony in the world, as Britain rightly suspected. Yet it was a passive approach in that the United States could not completely cast off the inactive attitude toward "Korea policy" that it had maintained before the war. Any common policy inherently had to develop on the premise of a "concert system," something quite different from the active pursuit of hegemony. The United States assumed that any settlement of the Korean question without Soviet participation was unfeasible. Realistically, it was difficult for the United States to obtain an exclusive position in postwar Korea, and the Soviet Union seemed to have more chance of bringing the liberation of Korea into reality. In these circumstances, American policy was far from an ambitious *démarche* aimed at exclusive control over the Korean peninsula. At least during the war, no such plan for American hegemony was formulated. Of course, when the war was approaching its final stages, and after the Cold War began, the containment of Soviet expansion emerged as a major diplomatic and military goal, and U.S. Korea policy did face a turning point.

The next question is how better to elucidate the changing balance of power in East Asia at the end of the war, and the subsequent division of Korea. Since the wartime efforts of the Allies

<sup>12</sup> In 1860 Great Britain had 25 percent of the world's industrial production. See Taylor, A.J.P., *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), xxxi.

<sup>13</sup> Stoler, p. 381.

were predominantly focused on Germany, their arch-enemy, the postwar settlement was accordingly negotiated by all of the Allies. In most of the other regions, those countries that had played major parts in the war took care of the problems of occupation and surrender, often solely and exclusively. The United States and Britain excluded the Soviet Union when they accepted the surrender of Italy, which resulted in a vehement protest by the Soviets. The issue of Italy, indeed, would ultimately have an indirect effect on the Korean question. Nonetheless, the cardinal principle was that the United States should resolve European problems through cooperation with Britain and the USSR. Yet, subsequently, territorial settlements began to be split between British and Soviet “spheres of influence.” The United States’ response was negative since, in light of traditional American idealism, this was practically equivalent to the immoral alliances and balance of power doctrines of the past, and could sow the seeds of another war.<sup>14</sup> In a similar vein, when Stalin tried to include all the Kurile Islands and Hokkaido in the region that Japanese armed forces would surrender to Soviet troops, and expressed his interest in having a hand in their postwar settlement, the United States completely blocked these suggestions.<sup>15</sup>

Why, then, did the United States, the decisive party in the war against Japan, seek a common resolution by the four powers, instead of an “exclusive” settlement, in Korea? It is true that neither U.S. military nor civilian officials took a sufficiently serious look at Korea in terms of wartime strategy. Yet they both recognized its importance *to a certain extent* in terms of Northeast Asian politics. They also anticipated that the United States and the Soviet Union would remain the only great powers in the postwar world. Yet this by itself does not explain the emphasis on a common policy, or overturn the argument that the United States should have gone it alone in dealing with Korea. It might therefore be assumed that Korea was a rather typical case among the Allies’ postwar settlements. On the other hand, one might also posit that the postwar settlement of East Asia, including the Korean question, illustrated the “power relationships” of the parties involved, which eventually worked as a sort of catalyst in precipitating the division of the Korean peninsula. If this latter hypothesis should show itself to be valid, then the division was inevitable, at least in terms of international politics.

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<sup>14</sup> The Necessity of the Three Principal Allies Arriving at a Common Political Program for Liberated Countries, MacLeish (Assistant SS) to Grew (Under SS), January 24, 1945, *FRUS, Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, pp. 102–108.

<sup>15</sup> Stalin to Truman, August 16, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, pp. 667–668; Truman to Stalin, August 17, 1945, p. 670; Harriman to SS, August 14, 1945, pp. 665–666, 689.



Finally, narrowing down the frame of analysis to the Korean question, the most distinct characteristic of the 1940s is that the period shows discontinuity and continuity at the same time. By discontinuity, I mean that the Korean question now developed on a level that was completely different from those seen in the past. Most studies until now have been built upon the premise of discontinuity. Korea owed its liberation and independence to the victory of the Allies. Moreover, Korea, just liberated from Japan's rule and very soon divided, was not equal to overcoming the overwhelming tide of the Cold War. The Cold War mixed characteristics of hostility, confrontation and competition in its ideological aspects, as well as in its political/military ones. What is more, as the U.S. containment policy against the Soviet Union geographically differentiated allies and potential "enemies," Korea, astride separate domains of the two superpowers, could hardly remain undamaged. In this sense, we should look for the origins of Korean independence and division in the divided rule of the peninsula by the two superpowers, and in the formation of the global Cold War system.

Any approach that assumes a basic discontinuity will necessarily have some serious loopholes, as I discussed earlier in the "Preface." In the case of Korean liberation and independence in the 1940s, in fact, continuities would come to play especially significant roles. Such "continuities" would bring into play all of the following: the history and limitations of the powers' East Asia and Korea policies; the nature of international politics under great power domination; diplomatic practices, whereby the powers secured, compensated and mutually recognized their interests in the name of "legitimate rights," some of which had become established conventions in the Western tradition of international relations; and, in particular, the backgrounds behind the policies that the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union and China applied in the postwar settlements. These issues will be covered in individual reviews of the four powers' Korea policy.

Continuities are manifest even if the problems of liberation, independence and division did not necessarily develop in chronological order. If "the Korean question" had begun only from 1945, the powers in rather strict sequence would have first liberated Korea from Japan, then agreed on the establishment of an independent nation. Only at that point would the question of division have been brought forward, entailing as it did various conflicts among the powers. Their stance toward Korea, however, was often rather different. As they started to mention Korea at the beginning of the Pacific War, the powers heartily supported Koreans in their yearning for liberation, but were reluctant to establish Korea firmly as a single independent nation. The suggested solution was "trusteeship," of which the concept of

division was perhaps tacitly a part. Apparently, the powers reached an agreement that such a system would be the most suited for securing their ultimate goals of security and peace. There is no doubt, however, that they consented to the option of trusteeship too readily. They would find logical or specific grounds to justify this decision based on issues in the international relations of Korea that had continuously emerged from, Lord had even appeared before, the annexation in 1910, and which were still apparent in the 1940s. To gain an accurate understanding of the division, it is therefore essential to explore the continuities in Korea's history, especially in its "international relations." This will be the main theme of my examination of the trusteeship in Chapter 6.

If we assume that the powers' perceptions and knowledge of colonial Korea were reflected in their consultations on the division, one might raise the following conundrum. The concept of trusteeship, which the powers suggested as a solution to the Korean question, was a universalistic measure for the postwar settlement of colonies. Formally, at least, the colonies of the defeated nations, along with most of the territories that the powers had administered under the League of Nations "mandate" after World War I, were expected to be absorbed into the post-World War II trusteeship system. The Korean question was obviously part of this category. Yet in the process of making postwar arrangements for these areas, there were considerable frictions among the Allies, especially between the United States and Britain, and the postwar settlement did not proceed in a consistent manner. Britain maintained its colonies, but when it felt unable to handle a situation by itself, as in the case of Palestine, it referred the case to the United Nations. The United Nations, by then, had become a pawn in the Cold War, and lacked the ability to coordinate matters that needed all the powers' cooperation. France adopted a retrogressive policy after the war, and reoccupied Indochina, a region for which President Roosevelt had ardently advocated a "trusteeship." This means that neither universalistic principles nor strategic military points of view (which will be discussed later) can satisfactorily elucidate the problem of trusteeship in Korea.

We must look, therefore, to the domestic situation in Korea, especially the reaction of Korean political leaders to the powers' policies. This entails two problems. The first is the attitude toward the powers of Korean leaders in the independence movement abroad. This is more a subject for the history of the Korean independence movement, and it will not be covered in this study unless directly related to Korea's foreign relations. One thing must be clarified, however. So far, studies of the history of the non-Communist independence movement have mainly focused on the Korean Provisional Govern-

ment (KPG) in Shanghai and Chongqing. Although it was a leading Korean organization during the period, the powers were skeptical of its role and capacity for various reasons. For example, the KPG trained the “Korean Restoration Army” of about 200 men, with the support of the United States, just before the liberation. Some suggest that as the army never had the chance to take the offensive, due to Japan’s abrupt surrender, the KPG thus missed the opportunity to establish its legitimacy vis-à-vis the powers.<sup>16</sup> Yet such a claim fails to consider one important factor. If the Allies had actually invaded the Korean peninsula, war operations on the ground would have been conducted by China and the Soviet Union, more likely by the latter, and thus the Communist Korean army of one or two divisions, under Soviet control, would have occupied the peninsula in advance.

The second question concerns the role of Korean political leaders after the liberation. This issue revolves around the part that the leaders played in the social and economic sectors during the colonial period, the underground organizations, which were mostly Communist, and what happened when the independence movement groups abroad returned home. At the time of the liberation, all these were partners in the Korea policies of the powers. How did these leaders accept, and what were their reactions to, the power relations among the great powers, and the powers’ perceptions of Korea and the Koreans? If their reactions had been “appropriate,” it might be assumed that the history of the division could have advanced in a different direction. In any case, these leaders’ activities in liberated Korea had an influence on the permanence of the division.<sup>17</sup>

In this book, certain points overlap with existing studies, e.g., the international situation before and after the liberation in August 1945, and the process of the division advanced by the United States and the Soviet Union. Such problems are only briefly remarked upon here unless they deserve detailed examination. After the system of trusteeship was decided by the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, Kim, Ku, *Paekpōm ilchi* (Diary of Kim Ku), first published in 1947 (Seoul: Pōm’usa, 1984), pp. 338–340; Yi, Hyōnhŭi, *Taehanmin’guk insi chōngbusa* (History of Korean Provisional Government), (Seoul: Chimmundang, 1982), pp. 352–353.

<sup>17</sup> It might be said that Germany’s division was strongly influenced by the powers’ admitted policy of weakening the country. The case of Austria provides a better comparison with that of Korea since under the same system of the Cold War, Austria managed, through the efforts of its political leaders, to avoid a lasting division. Yet the case of Korea greatly differed from this European counterpart. Many aspects -- their status, role, political experiences, and the policies and periods of occupation by the powers -- cannot be easily compared. See Kim, Hakjun, *Han’guk munje wa kukje chōngch’i* (The Korean Question and International Politics), (Seoul, Pakyōngsa, 1982), pp. 24–25.

during the Foreign Ministers' Conference at Moscow in December 1945, the following period might as well form a separate subject of study on, say, "post-liberation politics." This study, therefore, does not go beyond August 1945, and refers to the period up to the Moscow Conference in December only when relevant.

Some points must be added regarding the issue of the division. First, we cannot accept the claim that the division of the Korean peninsula was "inevitable" just because the powers' interests clashed in the region. There had been some earlier attempts to divide the peninsula when the interests of the powers diverged. These plans for division, although not realized, nevertheless might well seem of particular relevance in light of the division that did occur in the 1940s.<sup>18</sup> Yet in some cases, these earlier "plans" represented only the thoughts of an individual diplomat, without due support from his government, or a less advantaged country that was merely pursuing a temporary maintenance of the *status quo*. It would therefore be inappropriate to make analogies that give too great a significance to this series of historical episodes, especially without considering the "practical feasibility" of such schemes. While the earlier "plans" for division did not materialize due to the proposing power's lack of ability to implement them, the division finally sanctioned by the United States and the Soviet Union was possible due to their leadership in international politics, and the long-term stability of the power balance that was asserting itself as the Cold War system developed.

We can also dismiss as unconvincing the claim that the division was inevitable because the ideologically separate independence movements of the colonial period had not been integrated under a solid leadership. According to this line of thinking, the Communist circles of the 1930s approached Korea's problems in light of the Comintern idea of national liberation movements in colonies. Since this entailed severe criticism of "rightist bourgeoisie" nationalist tendencies, the overall independence movement could neither be united ideologically nor form an effective "front." It has often been said that this, in turn, helped bring about the division of Korea through the intervention of the United States and the Soviet Union. This might make some sense as one among several historical factors related to the division. It is not valid, however, to give it *too much* emphasis. Factional struggles have been ever-present in Korean history, and in the development of the Korean Communist movement. It should also be noted that ideologically oriented factional-

<sup>18</sup> No, Kye-hyŏn, *Han'guk oegyosa yŏn'gu* (A Study of Korean Diplomatic History) (Seoul: Haemunsa, 1967), pp. 152–179; Cho, Soon Sung, *Korea in World Politics, 1940–1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), pp. 47–50.

ism did not necessarily lead to the division of a country in many Third World countries in the post-1945 era. As we will see later, the factionalism of Korean organizations in the independence movement was aggravated by deliberate actions made by China, which influenced the Allies' settlement of the Korean question when they decided upon immediate liberation and subsequent trusteeship. We can therefore state that the disunited independence movement does not qualify as the sole or major cause of the division.

I will examine the problem of the 1940s by placing the greatest emphasis on American policies, as the United States was, in effect, the country in charge of Korean liberation and independence. The discussion will also focus on the vexed issue of diplomatic recognition of Korean independence, and the problems of the KPG in Chongqing. The U.S. wartime approach toward the Korean peninsula can be described, in brief, as securing an Allied common policy. The United States consulted Britain and China on the Korean question, and started to implement its policy when it had their agreement and cooperation. Even though China and Britain missed an opportunity to intervene for their own interests, they sustained their position as "parties concerned" in the Korean question, as is evidenced by the decision taken on trusteeship by all four powers at the December 1945 Foreign Ministers' Conference in Moscow. The two countries, accordingly, exercised a substantial influence as the Allies were forming their Korea policies. British and Chinese policies are important in this regard.

Nonetheless, to review their policies in isolation will serve no purpose. The analysis should be focused on how the two countries defined and established their interests and roles with regard to the peninsula in conjunction with U.S. policy on Korea. China, relying absolutely on the United States in the war, tried to reinstate the position it had enjoyed in the past as a great power. It was the Chinese intention that they would exert a predominant influence on the peninsula, while containing the Soviet Union; or, if this was not feasible, that they would reduce Soviet influence to a minimum. On the one hand, this policy received the blessing of the United States; on the other, it altogether contradicted the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union. Britain, too, established the "return to the empire" as the keynote of its Asian policy. The Korean question provided one means of achieving this intention. British policy was in open contradiction of the U.S. plan of trusteeship, and clashed unavoidably with China. These powers' policy objectives, with regard to the possible political and strategic value of the peninsula, started to materialize in the process.

Third, the Soviet Union's part in the liberation and division of Korea was indeed very important. The Soviet Union joined the war

against Japan just before the latter's surrender. It was amply rewarded, in other words, for little sacrifice. One of the benefits included the right to intervene in the Korean question. The Soviet Union was not a formal partner of the United States, in that it was not formally engaged in the Asian war until the last moment. Nevertheless, the United States recognized that Soviet interests in the Korean peninsula were absolute, reflected them in policy decisions, and tried to gauge the Soviet perspective during the wartime conferences at Tehran and Yalta. What, then, was the nature of Soviet interest in the peninsula? And to what extent did the United States recognize and accommodate it? Did it have a bearing on the division of Korea? Was the U.S. judgment a policy blunder or was it justifiable? If the latter is the case, in what sense was it justifiable? Such questions are the major concerns of this study.

These questions, naturally, cannot be divided into clear, separate themes. Nor do they accept an easy chronological division. U.S. policy, as it developed in regard to such issues as Korea's liberation, the recognition of its independence, and the KPG, will be examined in the broader framework of U.S. Korea policy. The question of recognition will also be a focal theme in our discussions of China's policy toward Korea. The watershed moment in the question of recognition was the Cairo Conference. After this conference, the United States began to study the Korean question in much greater detail, first making Britain its partner, and subsequently including China. Yet liberation came "too early" for Korea, in the sense that these three powers had not still not reached a concrete "action plan" for the Korean question when it happened. Simultaneously, post-1944, when the European front became more favorable, the once-trifling factor of the Soviet Union assumed a very serious importance in the war in East Asia. Accordingly, problems after 1944 will be covered with a particular focus on U.S.-Soviet relations, which moved from diplomatic to military issues as the war ended. Some overlapping has been unavoidable, as these issues are all interconnected.

## U.S. Policy Toward Korea: Recognition of Independence and the Provisional Government



### THE UNITED STATES AND THE KOREAN QUESTION

THE UNITED STATES bore the burden of defeating Japan in the war, and therefore became the party primarily concerned with the handling of the Korean question. For the Korean people, “the Korean question” meant liberation and independence from Japan’s colonial rule. For the United States, however, it did not have a true place in its East Asian relations until the outbreak of the war in the Pacific. After the war began, various political and strategic goals with regard to the Korean peninsula, at both the global and East Asian levels, became subsumed into “the Korean question.” Yet, after the war’s end, the Korean question followed a trajectory that was the total opposite of American intentions, and was also at complete odds with Korean hopes.

With the outbreak of the war in the Pacific, Korean nationalists in the United States and elsewhere immediately raised the matter of independence, believing that Japan’s defeat would equal a sure guarantee of their country’s independent destiny. Before the war started, Korean organizations in China had already launched a campaign in this regard, promising cooperation with the United States, and at the same time demanding that the American government, for its part, should make a public commitment to the independence of Korea. The Korean Provisional Government (KPG) in Chongqing sent a letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull, in the name of Executive Chief Kim Ku and Foreign Minister Cho Soang (Tjo Soang), requesting formal recognition by the United States of this

“government.”<sup>1</sup> The two claimed that they were “determined to fight Japan in cooperation with China and the United States.”

At least in terms of its rhetoric, the United States included the liberation and independence of Korea as one of its general war objectives. In August 1941, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill announced a joint statement, promising to restore the sovereignty and self-government of weaker nations.<sup>2</sup> Later, the United States promised several times that it would expel Japan from all the territories that it had taken by “violence and greed.”<sup>3</sup> Korea’s eventual liberation seemed, therefore, to be almost a *fait accompli*.

The American government had to make some quick decisions on the matter for other reasons. There was a strong movement to petition for Korea’s independence, organized by both Korean nationalists and pro-Korea Americans, and it had gained a considerable amount of publicity.<sup>4</sup> By late 1942, such an atmosphere had gained so much force that these pro-Korean elements ventured to criticize certain officials in the State Department for being “unwilling to take any steps which might arouse resentment on the part of the Japanese government.”<sup>5</sup> The State Department had to spend much time making explanations or excuses.<sup>6</sup> Hull tried to appease the

<sup>1</sup> Kim Ku to Roosevelt, June 6, 1941; Tjo Soang to Hull, June 6, 1941, LM79, R.1, 895.00/729. Also see the aforementioned telegram by Syngman Rhee. The KPG’s main objects of such diplomatic efforts were China and the United States. It sent an official letter to the British government but the absence of Korean organizations in that country made it difficult for Koreans to campaign in an active manner. Toward the Soviet Union, the KPG did not take any concrete action since it was still a neutral power in the war against Japan; no member of the KPG was resident in Moscow where in any case the ideological penchant was very different. (Gauss to SS, December 11, 1942, LM79, supplement to R.2, 895.01/200).

<sup>2</sup> Joint Statement by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill, August 14, 1941, *FRUS, 1941*, vol. 1, pp. 367–369. Article 3 of the Atlantic Charter, which is interpreted as including the independence of Korea, stipulates “the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and wish to see sovereign rights and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.”

<sup>3</sup> SWNCC-150, Summary of US Initial Post-Defeat Policy Relating to Japan, June 11, 1945, LM54, R.14 See also *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, pp. 549–556. For Final Text of Communiqué, December 1, 1943, *FRUS, Conferences at Cairo and Teheran, 1943*, pp. 448–449.

<sup>4</sup> SS to Gauss, March 2, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/56.

<sup>5</sup> Cromwell to Hull, May 5, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/123. James J. R. Cromwell was the President of the Korean-American Council that supported Syngman Rhee.

<sup>6</sup> Upon the outbreak of the war, Syngman Rhee sensed that a much more favorable atmosphere was being created in the State Department toward the Korean question, and he accordingly submitted his credentials as the official representative of the KPG in the United States. However, the State Department advised deferring any definitive decisions until the subject of the restoration of Korean independence could be thoroughly studied, and the U.S. government had adopted a definite policy on Korea. (DFEA Memo. December 20, 1941, LM79, R.1, 895.01/54.)



many organizations that were sending petitions by stressing “various difficult and complicated factors.”<sup>7</sup> Yet when Syngman Rhee and his associates stepped up their criticism of the American government, the Department called it “disrespectful, childish and ridiculous,” warning that deliberate smear campaigns against the State Department were not in the best interests of the Koreans’ struggle for freedom. When we consider, however, the influence of public opinion on American foreign policy-making, and especially of mounting anti-Japanese sentiment, the State Department must have been at quite a loss.<sup>8</sup> On top of such concerns, with the State Department’s recognition that it was necessary to have the Koreans join the war against Japan, it became imperative to respond promptly to their demands for independence.

From the Korean perspective, each and every action of those in the independence campaign helped build the history of the movement. The impact of these efforts, however, should not be overstated, given that they did not produce any visible results. This is why the activities of Korean nationalists will not be examined in detail in this book.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, their activities provide, if only indirectly, some clues for understanding how U.S. Korea policy, and Korea’s international status, had changed over time. Surprisingly, the United States was examining these issues rather closely. An internal report published by the State Department minutely describes how the American government had contacted the KPG in Chongqing, and Korean nationalists in the United States. It must have been important, however, for the Americans to explain U.S. policy to the Koreans, frustrate or neutralize some of their demands, and try to coordinate and reconcile different opinions among organizations in conflict, since in this way they could collect the data necessary for establishing wartime and postwar Korean policy. These records would seem also to serve as evidence (or excuses) for how the United States justified its postwar policy on

<sup>7</sup> Hull to Cromwell, May 20, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/123. In regard to petitions of this kind, Hull wrote that recognition of the KPG would create confusion, misunderstanding and embarrassment in the conduct of foreign relations. (Hull to Bloom, April 13, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/232.) As petitions continued to be sent, the DFEA tried very hard to repress actions by pro-Korean Americans, advising that private individuals should restrain actions that might cause confusion in official policy implementation. (DFEA Memo. December 30, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/309.)

<sup>8</sup> MID Report 201, Bissell to Berle, October 26, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.01/205; Memo by Maxwell Hamilton at DFEA. October 10, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.00/840. Hull wrote to Cromwell to emphasize that such criticism was unjust. “Secretary Hull had always resented efforts by minority groups to influence U.S. foreign policy.” Gaddis, John Lewis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941–1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 141.

<sup>9</sup> One may profitably refer, however, to Park, Hong-kyu, “From Pearl Harbor to Cairo: America’s Korean Diplomacy, 1941–43,” *Diplomatic History*, 13–3 (Summer 1989), for a description of Korea–U.S. relations during the period with a focus on the activities of Korean nationalists in the United States.

Korea, considering the fact that they were published in 1947 (for the period until 1941), in 1950 (for the period 1941–1945), and in 1951 (for the period December 1945–June 1950).<sup>10</sup>

During the early stages of the war, the United States could have easily resolved the Korean question, had it promised Korea independence in the event of Japan's defeat and recognized the KPG in Chongqing. Yet the State Department was quick to grasp that this "significant step" would have become intimately entangled with other crucial considerations in its war strategy against Japan, and in the ensuing postwar settlement.<sup>11</sup> To understand this issue of recognition, it is essential to review a broad range of subjects, including the progress of military campaigns and wartime diplomacy, and American foreign policy traditions in East Asia. First of all, Korea's independence was only one of the overall goals of the United States, and not one of its basic objectives in the war against Japan. The American initiative in proclaiming the self-determination of peoples through the Atlantic Charter of August 1941, and in promising Korea's independence at the 1943 Cairo Conference, was only an act of stating universal principles.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the United States never included "Korea" among its immediate wartime goals in any of the wartime conferences.<sup>13</sup> Neither was Korea included in the strategic objectives of the Allies.<sup>14</sup> It could easily have been assumed that any reference to the independence of Korea would have had the practical effect of encouraging anti-Japanese resistance by Koreans in the peninsula, Manzhouguo, China and

<sup>10</sup> Department of State, *United States Policy Regarding Korea 1834–1950*, reprinted by Institute of Asian Studies, Hallim University (Ch'unch'ŏn, 1987) pp. 55ff.

<sup>11</sup> Memo for the President, April 23, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/96.

<sup>12</sup> Contrary to a general belief that the "Korea clause" of the Cairo Declaration was China's work, Britain believed "the prime mover in the Cairo Declaration as far as it related to Korea was the United States." [Future of Korea, 1945.9.8, 46468 (6733/1394/23).] Herbert Feis described the same clause as "an American initiative, scrutinized by the British, welcomed by the Chinese, and tacitly approved by the Russians." [Feis, Herbert, *Churchill Roosevelt Stalin – The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 251.]

<sup>13</sup> Wartime conferences comprise those held at Washington (the first, December 22, 1941–January 14, 1942; the second, June 19–25, 1942; the third, May 12–25, 1943; and the fourth, known as the Dumbarton Oaks talks, August 21–October 7, 1944), at Quebec (the first, August 14–24, 1943; and the second, August–September, 1944), at Casablanca (January 14–24, 1943), at Cairo (the first, November 22–26, 1943; and the second, December 2–7, 1943), at Tehran (November 27–December 2, 1943), at Malta (January 30–February 2, 1945), at Yalta (February 4–11, 1945), at Alexandria (February 15, 1945) and at Potsdam (June 15–August 1, 1945).

<sup>14</sup> Korea was not even included in the list of "other secondary areas" in the Allies' considerations of campaign strategy. Meeting of the U.S. and British Chiefs of Staff, December 24, 1941, *FRUS, Conferences at Washington, 1941–42, and Casablanca, 1943*, p. 86.

Japan. The American government, however, tried to evade any concrete or open discussion of the subject before the Cairo Declaration, which was only a general statement on the Korean question, and still did not elevate Korean independence to a main objective of the war. In short, the Korean question did not emerge as a matter for serious consideration until 1944, when victory in the war was visible and the postwar settlements became a pressing issue.<sup>15</sup>

Second, the United States continued to believe that Korea was not a region of absolute importance for American interests, even though the presence of other powers with strong interests in the peninsula lent it a certain geopolitical significance. This led the United States to seek for a balance of power, and a limited interest, in the region, rather than absolute hegemony over it. It was therefore prepared to make compromises with other powers. The strongest statement of American interest in the peninsula during the war years can be found in the following description: "As the security of the North Pacific will be of concern to the United States and as Korea's political development may affect this security, the United States would naturally be interested in 'active participation in any Korean administrative authority.'" Yet the last part of this memorandum emphatically stated that the United States would not be in charge of the Korean government on its own, and stressed that American interest in the issue was only limited.<sup>16</sup> The American policy on Korea was far from being "independent" or quick to materialize.

In this regard, despite its heavy burden in the war and China's dependency on American power in its struggle against Japan, the United States was quite ready to acknowledge that the peninsula was of greater importance to China than to itself, both geographically and historically. Although Britain was preoccupied with the war in Europe, and delegated the one against Japan entirely to the United States, it was loyally invited to every practical discussion on Korea. In addition, the interests of the Soviet Union, even if it had not joined

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<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the only instance in which Korea was related to "war objectives" may be found in a memorandum drafted by William Langdon in early 1942. He supposed that if organizations in the independence movement abroad should have connections and supporters in Korea, Korean leaders, in turn, should support these organizations and provide them with certain representative powers, and if the same organizations should support the objectives of the U.N., then the United States could consult Britain, China and the Soviet Union about recognizing the provisional government of Korea, and establishing Korean independence as "one of the war goals" of the U.N. Yet Langdon's idea remained at a theoretical level. (Langdon Memo, February 20, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/79.) Langdon played a vital role in the military administration of liberated Korea in later years.

<sup>16</sup> Korea: Political Problems: Provisional Government, 1944.5.4, *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 5, p. 1240.

the war, also had to be considered.<sup>17</sup> The U.S. was therefore inclined to find a common Allied approach in its policies on Korea. The clause on Korea in the Cairo Declaration was one of the major outcomes of this policy.

#### EARLY RESPONSES: COMMON APPROACH WITH CHINA AND BRITAIN

The Division of Far Eastern Affairs (DFEA) was in charge of reviewing the Korean question in the State Department. The DFEA's opinions were generally adopted as American government policy, despite the military occasionally expressing conflicting views. If there were differences between the State Department and the military over political objectives and military necessities, as more frequently became the case in the latter stages of the war, it was generally over short-term goals and priorities, and in such cases the military tended to prevail. As far as Korea was concerned, however, DFEA views were, on the whole, identical to those of the military. President Roosevelt implemented postwar designs based on the United Nations, collective security, and trusteeship. He occasionally held views that differed from those of working level officials, but in such cases he went ahead and discussed issues with the Allied leaders, with or without the prior agreement of State Department officials. It must be noted, however, that the officials generally agreed with the approach and conclusions of the president on the Korean question.

The first move that the DFEA took in regard to wartime Korea policy was to seek joint discussions with British and Chinese allies. As early as August 1941, before the United States had even entered the war against Japan, the State Department instructed Clarence E. Gauss, its ambassador to China, to make "very discreet inquiries" as to the extent of the "physical following," organization, and sphere of operations of the KPG's armed volunteers, as well as its contacts with any revolutionary forces in Korea and Manchuria, along with the attitude of the Kuomintang (KMT) government and its relations with the KPG.<sup>18</sup> The following February, the Department requested that the U.S. embassy in London sound out the British view of the Korean question, informing the British Foreign Office that the U.S. government had been approached by various Korean groups; that it was not, at that time, thinking of recognizing any Korean organization or making any commitment as to future recognition of Korea; and that it was giving thought to the possibility of issuing some general

<sup>17</sup> DFEA Memo, December 20, 1941, LM.79, R.1, 895.01/54.

<sup>18</sup> SS to Gauss, August 18, 1941, LM79, R.1, 895.01/54.

statement expressing U.S. interest in the efforts of the Koreans to end Japanese oppression.<sup>19</sup>

Responses from China and Britain concerning the issue of recognition were negative from the outset. In early 1942, Ambassador Gauss in Chongqing reported that the Chinese Foreign Ministry would decide its policy after investigating and reviewing the KPG, but was not enthusiastic at the present stage. Those Koreans in Chongqing who belonged to or supported the KPG numbered no more than two hundred. Gauss added that the organization itself was a small one, existing chiefly on paper, and was supported and kept alive by the Chinese government. The ambassador noted, however, that its potential might grow considerably as a result of the unrest and severe economic pressures in Korea, and the very large number of Koreans already resident in Japanese-occupied China.<sup>20</sup>

The Foreign Office in London, after exchanging ideas with the KMT government via the British ambassador in Chongqing, delivered its stance to the State Department in nine points. According to the British note, there was serious conflict among the Korean organizations in the independence movement in China; China had noticed this fact, and would not consider any kind of recognition, even if the Koreans' anti-Japanese activities proved to be useful; China, nevertheless, was trying to bring about unity among the organizations; anti-Japanese activities of the Koreans were possible in China and Manzhouguo, but not so much in Korea and Japan; the recognition of Korean independence, or a general statement, should be reserved for a time of more favorable developments in the war, since it would be meaningless so long as Japan's military victories continued; the Allies could only show sympathy with Korea's yearning for independence at the present stage; considering China's interest in the Korean question, a concerted action with China would be required; and, lastly, the British government would support the American policy. The Foreign Office also stated that it would be acceptable to encourage the Koreans' anti-Japanese actions, and declared that the history of the Korean people under Japanese rule, and of Japan's breaches of promises to the powers, could be extremely useful for newspaper and radio coverage.<sup>21</sup> The British note was, in fact, a reflection of British policy, which preferred deferring any in-depth discussion of colonial issues.

<sup>19</sup> SS to Winant, February 12, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/68a.

<sup>20</sup> Gauss to SS, January 3, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/56. There were two branches of the liberation army in 1942, whose number totaled less than 277. [Yi, Hyŏnhŭi, *Taehanmin'guk imsi chŏngbusa* (History of the Korean Provisional Government) (Seoul: Chimmundang, 1982), pp. 340, 346.]

<sup>21</sup> Matthews to SS, February 28, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/73.

The State Department believed that the British stance, on the whole, concurred with its own. Yet considering the strong public support for the movement, and the demands for the recognition of the KPG, it instructed Ambassador Gauss to resume discussions on the issue, and in particular to prepare a general statement with the Chinese government.<sup>22</sup> Holding fast to the former stance of the three powers, Gauss suggested another obstacle to the recognition of Korea's independence; namely, the notion that the Korean question should be handled in line with other colonial issues, especially with those of India. Furthermore, as China was sympathetic to the immediate independence of India, any general statement with reference to the independence of Korea would be inappropriate. Gauss demanded that the American government should enter into a prior agreement with China.<sup>23</sup> The DFEA thus felt that no further reference to Korea's independence should be made until it was time to discuss the Korean question as part of the issue of "Asian colonies." The recognition of the KPG should be delayed as well, since China was still resistant to it, and any recognition of one particular group could provoke its rivals to create another government. This coincided with the principle of the State Department that any "free movement" was entitled to fair treatment. The Department gave no further instruction to Gauss, and only requested him to communicate the American and British policies on Korea to the Chongqing government, thereby continuing a mutual exchange of information.<sup>24</sup>

The State Department, however, still had a lingering desire to use the Koreans in the war against Japan, especially to incite an anti-Japanese movement in the peninsula. The Department considered such a possibility from the outset of the war to its final moments. The Department reviewed the possibility with the former Seoul consulate-general staff members, and with the missionaries who had been evacuated from Korea with the outbreak of the Pacific War. It concluded, nevertheless, that anti-Japanese organizations could not be effectively organized and developed inside the Korean peninsula, since the people had never accumulated military experience, could only own a few dozen bird guns due to restrictions on weapon ownership, and were under intense surveillance by the Japanese. In view of such issues, the United States decided that it did not need

<sup>22</sup> SS to Gauss, March 12, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/56.

<sup>23</sup> Gauss to SS, February 28, 1942, LM78, R.1, 895.01/88. February 12, 1942, 895.01/81.

<sup>24</sup> DFEA Memo. 895.01/88, April 1, 1942. The establishment of a rival "government" was first mentioned by Han Kilsu, who was vying with Syngman Rhee. (Minutes of the talks between Han and Salisbury, March 31, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.00/49.) The U.S. military had the same opinion. (Discussion between DFEA and Colonel Bratton of MID. April 25, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/118-1/2)

to dampen the Koreans' aspiration for independence, but that, taking into consideration the attitudes of the other powers, it would come up with more specific plans when all the Korean organizations were united, and would have the authority to represent their country, hence contributing to Japan's defeat.<sup>25</sup> In retrospect, it seems undeniable that the Korean resistance could scarcely have made any practical impact on the Allied war efforts, and that Korean nationalists, such as the KPG, could hardly have organized and initiated any independent military activities, vis-à-vis Japan. From the KPG's point of view, however, the recognition of a Korean government, or at least some sort of encouragement in this direction by the powers, would probably have produced more positive activities by the Koreans abroad. It is another matter, however, whether the recognition of the KPG was of paramount importance to the Korean independence movement at the time.

The American attitude toward the Korean question had now been established. Although the United States held discussions with China and Britain, and accepted these Allies' opinions on important issues, such as the proposed "general statement," it still succeeded in deciding the Allies' Korea policy according to American intentions. The policy was formed in a very cooperative mood in the early stages of the war, even if certain differences were witnessed in the process. The first of these emerged when China suggested recognizing the KPG. In April 1942, Sun Ke (Sun Fo) demanded the immediate recognition of the KPG in the Supreme National Defense Council. After three hours of heated debate, the council decided to submit a report to Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi for his consideration, and a determination of the Chinese response.<sup>26</sup> On March 23, Chinese newspapers and *The Washington Post* let the incident be known to Korean nationalists and the U.S. government. The KPG expected jubilantly that, with China's recognition, the United States and Britain would soon follow suit. Gauss, however, reported that there was hardly a chance since Sun Ke did not have much practical influence, although he could speak out more freely than just about anyone else in the KMT over political issues, being the son of Sun Wen (Sun Yatsen).<sup>27</sup>

While preparing a report for Jiang, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concluded that immediate recognition of the KPG would be desirable, and, as Jiang had hoped, notified the American government

<sup>25</sup> Langdon Memo, February 20, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/79.

<sup>26</sup> Gauss to SS, April 10, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/96; 895.01/117.

<sup>27</sup> Gauss to SS, March 23, 1942, 895.01/97. Sun Ke believed that such recognition would be emulated by Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union. [Ch' u, Hōnsu, *Taehanmin'guk imsi chōngbusa*, (History of the Korean Provisional Government) (Seoul: Institute of the Korean Independence Movement, 1989), pp. 126–127.]

of this opinion, urging a prompt response from the United States. The Ministry suggested recognition, since such an act would dissipate suspicion regarding China's alleged territorial ambitions regarding Thailand and Burma, as well as Korea, therefore demonstrating China's support for the spirit of the Atlantic Charter.<sup>28</sup> When Gauss asked if the British government had been informed of such a decision, China responded that there was no need unless a definitely favorable American opinion of this Chinese initiative was made public. Yet, at this news of the impending recognition of the KPG by China, the British Foreign Office urged the State Department to express its views at the earliest possible opportunity, as it feared that the Chinese measure would press Britain and the United States into declaring their stance. Britain was sympathetic to the independence of Korea, but skeptical on the advisability of any early recognition of the KPG. Yet in light of the new situation, as brought about by the proposed Chinese move, the British government would make the cautious but forward move of stating that it would "encourage the Korean resistance against Japan," hence maintaining the basic stance of supporting the aspirations of the Korean people.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, upon hearing the same news, the State Department indirectly but effectively led the Chinese government to delay the act of recognition. The Department made an urgent demand for China to notify the American government when it reached a definite decision, stressing the cooperative spirit between their two nations, the desirability of parallel action with the Allies of the United Nations (specifically, the United States and Britain), and the impending meeting between Chinese Foreign Minister T.V. Soong (Song Ziwen) and President Roosevelt.<sup>30</sup> This amounted to pressure to postpone KPG recognition. It also reminded China, in its memorandum to China, that there were many organizations in the "free movement" that would like to be liberated from the shackles of Germany or Japan, and that the United States held to a principle of "fair treatment." The United States, in other words, must not, by acknowledging any given organization, deprive a region's people of the optimum degree of freedom in choosing and establishing their own government. The U.S. government would provide all practical support for the liberation of Korea in the spirit of this principle of fair treatment, but such support would not necessarily include the recognition of the KPG. It was then pointed out that the KPG did not have any connection

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<sup>28</sup> On China's territorial ambitions, see next Chapter.

<sup>29</sup> Matthews to SS, April 27, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/103; FO to U.S. Embassy (London), April 26, 1942, 31824 (3042/165/23).

<sup>30</sup> SS to Gauss, April 11, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/96.



with, or control over, the residents of Korea. Ambassador Gauss had been instructed by Washington that, in the event of the Chinese government's recognition, he should stress the KPG's "provisional" character, since the future development of the situation was unpredictable, and that the Korean people must have the right to choose their government when they acquired their independence. The State Department further connected the Korean question to negotiations regarding Indian independence, since these would also deal with broadly significant, long-term problems relating to the independence of colonies.<sup>31</sup>

The message was clear. First of all, the United States would not recognize the KPG under the current circumstances, and cautioned China that it should not make decisions in a "rash moment." Washington was willing, however, to give China a certain free hand, and to coordinate its policy in accordance with future developments that might result from China's independent actions. From a Korean standpoint, it was therefore regrettable that China did not, in fact, go on to take more positive measures aimed at Korean independence. This American memorandum also showed the significance of the Korean question in the overall postwar settlement. High officials in the State Department had expressed their opinions in the process of drafting the document, which was, in a sense, a comprehensive review of U.S. Korea policy during the early stages of the Pacific War. The final conclusion was that the Korean question was so complicated that no solution could satisfy the Koreans and the neighboring powers at the same time.

On the other hand, Harold B. Hoskins, the executive assistant for Foreign Activity Correlation, argued that, as the tide of the war was turning against China, Jiang Jieshi felt the necessity of every possible political and diplomatic offensive, and that it was therefore desirable for the United States to adopt a more aggressive diplomacy. China's taking up of the KPG issue was one example of the sort of diplomatic offensives necessary for the war against Japan, and the American government had to support it. It might be hard to hope for an anti-Japanese movement in Korea, but it was also unfair of the United States not to guarantee Korea's future independence, and only highlight the absence of such a movement. Britain's diplomacy in Asia aimed at maintaining its colonies, and was not producing any satisfactory results. Should China reinforce its aggressive policy to support the liberation of colonies (including those of Britain),

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<sup>31</sup> SS to Gauss, April 23, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/99. For references to equal treatment for the free movement groups and the self-determination of peoples, see Gaddis, pp. 12-13.

British opposition to that eventuality would diminish. Britain's stance would only change more willingly if the United States showed an intention to support Korean aspirations for independence. Hoskins believed that this approach to the Korean question, if adopted, would be useful as a precedent.<sup>32</sup>

Given the “many complicated and delicate aspects” of the Korean question, the State Department drafted a further memorandum for the President. In this memo by Secretary Hull, another new aspect of the situation emerged. China's plan to recognize the KPG was said to reflect a wish to nip in the bud the development of any Soviet-supported Korean groups. Approaching the Soviet government on the matter might be embarrassing, in light of the fact that the Soviet Union was not at war with Japan. As for China, it was doubtful whether the U.S. government should make strong objections to any course on which the Chinese government might decide. It seemed appropriate, however, for the United States to lay before the Chinese government a complete exposition of its views. Roosevelt read the report and approved this State Department stance.<sup>33</sup>

China quickly acceded to the American suggestion. Jiang Jieshi and Song Ziwen decided, after a talk, to reconsider the proposed recognition of the KPG, and delay any verdict until the situation was more favorable. China notified the American and British governments of its decision, pledging that it would continue its relationship with the KPG on a semi-official basis, and would urge cooperation among the Korean factions.<sup>34</sup> Gauss made a detailed report on China's stance after an interview with Fu Bingzhang, the vice foreign minister. According to Fu, although China strongly criticized the split among Korean organizations in the independence movement, and pressed Cho Soang, the KPG's foreign minister, to reconcile the different factions, this was not the reason for the postponement of recognition. He revealed that China's priority was its relationship with the Soviet Union. Ever since the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, many Koreans had regarded the KPG as their legitimate government.

<sup>32</sup> Memoranda by Harold Hoskins, Adolf Berle, and Stanley Hornbeck, April 23, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/99.

<sup>33</sup> Hull Memo for the President, April 29, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/99.

<sup>34</sup> Gauss to SS, May 7, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/112; Winant (London) to SS, May 8, 1942, 895.01/113. Britain, too, established a custom of acknowledging letters from the KPG only at embassy level. In 1945, the French government showed a sympathetic interest in efforts to liberate Korea, and yet made it very clear that it was the embassy in Chongqing, and not the French government, which unofficially would have *de facto* relations with the KPG. (Acheson (Chargé in China) to SS, April 9, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, p. 1025.) The KPG insisted that the Chinese and French governments had at least recognized its *de facto* status. (Rhee to Lockhart, June 25, 1945, *Ibid.*, p. 1034.)

If China should now grant it formal diplomatic recognition, the Soviet Union would probably follow suit, if not immediately. The Soviets, meanwhile, had two divisions of a Korean army in Siberia. (In other interviews, it was said to be two "brigades," and the number of men varied from 20,000 to 50,000.) In the event of a Soviet-Japanese war, these forces could immediately advance into the peninsula and establish an independent government. Although naturalized in the Soviet Union, they were still Koreans, and China's recognition of the KPG would raise elusive, delicate problems among the powers. China also gave consideration to those Allies who had colonies in Asia.<sup>35</sup> The United States concurred with the Chinese view that the West's recognition of the KPG could incite revolution-oriented rival Koreans to establish a government, which would embarrass the American government.<sup>36</sup> Britain, concerned with its own colonial problems, was very much relieved by Chongqing's decision.<sup>37</sup>

A second discussion on the Korean question occurred between Song Ziwen and President Roosevelt in April 1942, when the Chinese foreign minister visited Washington. Before the conference, China handed a memorandum to the State Department on measures that would involve the Koreans residing in China in the anti-Japanese struggle. According to this document, while the KMT provided limited support to a small unit of Koreans, who were operating with Chinese guerrillas in North China, the Soviet Union had organized and deployed a couple of Korean "regiments" within the Soviet Far Eastern Army. Competing organizations should be united, and this would be easily achieved by China's promise of support for the integrated entity. In the Chinese view, it should be possible to organize a unit of Korean guerrillas fifty thousand strong, and attach them to North China. The unit would be in charge of operations in Korea, at a time that was judged appropriate by the Allies. It could work as a headquarters to direct sabotage efforts by Korean workers in powder mills and communication centers in Korea and Japan, and it could also secure connections with low-level Korean civil servants and police, to collect information. This plan seemed very promising, since Japan had employed many Koreans, not only in the peninsula but also in Japan and Manzhouguo, to resolve labor shortages, especially in dangerous explosives plants. The second measure was of a political nature. The Pacific Council, under American leadership, would proclaim the independence of Korea at the end of the war, when it

<sup>35</sup> Gauss to SS, April 11, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/96; April 10, 1942, 895.01/117; Halifax to FO, April 17, 1942, 31824 (8330/165/23).

<sup>36</sup> DFEA Memo left by Salisbury after discussion with Han Kilsu, March 31, 1942, M79, R.1, 895.01/49.

<sup>37</sup> FO to U.S. Embassy (London), May 6, 1942, 31824 (3348/165/23).

decided that the time was right. The recognition of the KPG could be made simultaneously with, or after, this proclamation.<sup>38</sup>

President Roosevelt instructed the State Department to review these proposals, only part of which the Department accepted. Political measures were not realistic in 1942, for the reasons that have already been mentioned. In relation to the Korean question, Sumner Welles, the Deputy Secretary of State, focused especially on the failure of the negotiations on India's independence between Stafford Cripps and the Indian government.<sup>39</sup> From the American government's point of view, if the Cripps negotiations had proved successful, the Pacific Council would have been able to promise, after Japan's defeat, "a broad policy of general liberation" for Indonesia and Burma, as well as for Korea and the Philippines. However, the negotiations' failure had, for the time being, set back such a possibility, and the issue of Korean independence and the recognition of the KPG would have to wait for a more propitious time. The State Department nonetheless prepared a declaration in the name of the Pacific War Council, and judged it necessary to learn what the Soviet stance on it would be, were it to be publicly announced. The Department eagerly agreed, however, to the creation of Korean troop contingents, and, with the President's consent, let the military set up an operational plan, as well as consulting about such issues as the supply of equipment and weapons. Roosevelt read the two memoranda by China and the State Department on April 15, yet did not take any specific action.<sup>40</sup>

Discussions with China on the Korean question only helped the United States to convince itself of the soundness of the American stance. The United States realized that the complexity and elusiveness

<sup>38</sup> T.V. Soong Memo, April 8, 1942, LM79,R.1, 895.01/96 1/3. The Pacific War Council was established in Washington on March 30, 1942, following discussions among the Allied governments involved in the war effort against Japan. The Council, a consultative body, held its first meeting on April 1, 1942. It was composed of President Roosevelt (who presided at all meetings), and representatives of Britain, Australia, Canada, China, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the Philippines. (*FRUS, Washington and Casablanca*, editorial note on Meeting of the Pacific War Council, pp. 448–449.)

<sup>39</sup> Sir Stafford Cripps, the British Lord Privy Seal and leader of the House of Commons, visited India in March 1942, and discussed the issue of Indian independence. For Churchill's account of the issue, see Churchill, Winston S., *Winston S Churchill His Complete Speeches 1897–1963*, vol. 6 (1935–1942), (New York and London: Chelsea House Publishers, 1974), pp. 6601–6603. Yet the People's Parliament of India refused to accept the tentative results of the negotiations. (*FRUS, 1941*, vol. 1, pp. 619–653.) Jiang Jieshi was very much interested in this issue, in terms of the war against Japan and the independence of Asian countries. (Chiang Kai-shek to T. V. Soong, February 24, 1942, *Ibid.*, pp. 605–606.)

<sup>40</sup> Instruction from President Roosevelt and U.S. Comment by Welles, April 13, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/96 1/3; See also Memorandum handed to the President by Dr. T. V. Soong in regard to the Question of Korea, April 11, 1942, 895.01/96 2/3.

of the Korean question went beyond what had been discussed until that point. Stanley Hornbeck, the State Department's advisor on political relations, submitted to Welles an informal report that summarized the discussions that had taken place at a meeting of the semi-independent Council on Foreign Relations, which had reviewed the Korean question as a part of the postwar settlement. The main point was that the Korean question was even more complicated than the question of Manchuria, which was complex enough. Manchuria had remained a sort of Asian Alsace-Lorraine over the decades, a problem that defied a straightforward or satisfactory resolution by the powers concerned until the close of World War II. In the Council on Foreign Relations' discussions, five possibilities were suggested for the future of Korea: (1) it might continue as part of the Japanese empire; (2) it could be controlled by China; (3) it could be controlled by the Soviet Union; (4) it could be controlled by an international organization; or, (5) it could become independent. The discussants all agreed that Korea was not ready for autonomy, either politically or economically, and suggested the possibility of some sort of "dominion status," with a guarantee of ultimate independence. But, for the time being, promising anything more than mere attention to the urgency of Korean liberation from Japanese oppression might later prove a source of embarrassment in the postwar settlement. Since the peninsula was geographically an "appendix" to Manchuria, the solution of the Manchurian problem would be a key part of resolving Korea's future status.<sup>41</sup>

It is obvious that this approach to East Asian international relations was basically the same as it had been at the annexation of Korea thirty-two years before, when the final decision for annexation was based upon a resolution of matters in Manchuria by Japan and Russia. Reiterating the complexities and perplexities of the Korean question, the United States looked forward to resolving the issue in the larger framework of the establishment of a postwar peace system. As the war approached its end, the American stance became clearer and more resolute, but in a direction that went against the wishes of the Korean people.

The basic framework of the American policy on Korea was established in early 1942, and was consistently maintained throughout the war. It was from around this time that the United States cautiously started to make its "Korea policy" public. One of the first measures, taken by the Department of Justice on February 5, 1942, was to separate the Koreans from the Japanese. The Koreans were no longer considered

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<sup>41</sup> Memo by Hornbeck, April 15, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/96 2/3. This memorandum will be examined again in relation to the trusteeship plan in Chapter 6.

to be “enemy aliens.” As the American government had strengthened its surveillance over enemy aliens, Koreans who lived in American territory had often faced severe difficulties in their day-to-day lives. Korean organizations made forceful demands that their people should be distinguished from the Japanese, in view of their anti-Japanese struggle. Both the State and Justice Departments granted these requests, and gave the status of “friendly alien” to Koreans whose adoption of Japanese citizenship had not been voluntary. The American government stressed, however, that this rectification was not related either to *de jure* or *de facto* recognition of the KPG, or to Korea’s independence.<sup>42</sup>

Further and more specific reference to the future of Korea was included in President Roosevelt’s radio address on February 23, 1942. The State Department was still coordinating opinions with Britain and China at this time, and in this sense the radio address, though of a general nature, was “unilateral.” Roosevelt stated in his address, which commemorated Washington’s birthday, that “the peoples of Korea and Manchuria know in their flesh the harsh despotism of Japan,” and that the Atlantic Charter and Four Freedoms applied not only to the Atlantic region but to the whole world. His statement was in the spirit of the Atlantic Charter, except that he made specific reference to Korea, something which the State Department had apparently favored.<sup>43</sup> On March 2, Welles indirectly mentioned Korea when he gave answers to journalists, in regard to an assembly of Koreans who had gathered in Washington to petition for independence. He said that the United States had the utmost sympathy for all “free groups,” but since such organizations all had problems of their own, the government was considering them comprehensively, meaning that “occasional statements might be made at a propitious time.”<sup>44</sup> The third such example came in a speech by Secretary of State Hull, titled “War and Human Freedom,” on July 23, 1942, in which he gave a comprehensive account of the American stance toward peoples suppressed by warmongers.

We have always believed -- and we believe today -- that all people, without distinction of race, color, or religion, who are prepared and willing to accept the responsibilities of liberty, are entitled to its enjoyment.

<sup>42</sup> Earl Harrison (Director of Alien Registration, Department of Justice) to Han Kilsu, January 23, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/60–9/26. For the State Department’s statement, see Dooman to Lippold, August 15, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/7–1444.

<sup>43</sup> See the Memorandum handed to the President by Dr. T.V. Soong in regard to the Question of Korea, April 11, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/96. The original text is in *Department of State Bulletin*, 6, no. 140 (February 28, 1942); See also Hull to Tobey, May 7, 1942, 895.01/105, LM79, R.1. The Four Freedoms comprise the freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. (*Bulletin*, p.188.)

<sup>44</sup> Department of State, Division of Current Information, *Radio Bulletin*, no. 51, March 2, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/73.

We have always sought -- and we seek today -- to encourage and aid all who aspire to freedom to establish their right to it by preparing themselves to assume its obligations. We have striven to meet squarely our own responsibility in this respect -- in Cuba, in the Philippines, and wherever else it has developed [sic, devolved?] upon us.<sup>45</sup>

Since these were all extremely abstract expressions of the basic American stance, it might be hard to apply them specifically to the case of Korea, save the direct reference to the country made by President Roosevelt. If we are fully to understand how the United States handled the Korean question, however, it is, on careful reflection, easy enough to see that such speeches reflected the State Department's Korea policy. More importantly, these three speeches were continually used by the Department in reply to Koreans' petitions for independence. When Han Kilsu (Haan Kilsoo) demanded a written assurance of American support for Korean independence, the State Department quoted Hull's speech, together with a slightly reworded quotation from Hull's letter, stating that "the government was not able to reach a conclusion as easily as individuals or particular organizations, since it had to consider every aspect of the Korean question."

#### REVIEW OF THE KOREAN QUESTION BEFORE THE CAIRO DECLARATION

The United States let the Korean question lie until the war favored the Allies. The turning point came with the Battle of Midway in June 1942, at the same time as Japan's advance in China, using the practice of "kill all, burn all, mop up all," known as the "three annihilations" (*sanguang* in Chinese), began to meet resistance. Despite persistent pressure from within and without, however, the United States delayed making a public announcement of its stance on Korea until the time of the Cairo Declaration in December 1943. In the interim, when Anthony Eden, the British foreign secretary, visited Washington in March 1943, the United States and Britain had an opportunity to exchange ideas on the concept and application of trusteeship. It was in this context that discussion on the Korean question took a further step in a direction that was undesired by Koreans. In this meeting, President Roosevelt suggested that Korea might be placed under an international trusteeship, with China,

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<sup>45</sup> [George] Acheson to Han Kilsu (Haan Kilsoo), December 7, 1942. The original text is in *Department of State Bulletin*, 7, no. 161, p. 642. This speech by Hull is sometimes cited as showing the faith of American leaders in the liberation of colonies. See Louis, William Roger, *Imperialism at Bay – the United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire 1941–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 175–176.

the United States and one or two other countries participating. Eden approved of this idea, thus showing a willingness to act in concert toward a resolution of the Korean question.<sup>46</sup> The United States believed that the three powers (i.e., the U.S., Britain and China) would agree upon a tentative trusteeship of Korea after the war. China gave its consent.<sup>47</sup> The discussion among the three powers essentially ended here, until it was presented to the world in the Cairo Declaration.

This does not mean that the United States completely ignored the Korean question until the Cairo meeting. The United States prepared its stance at the Cairo Conference from two perspectives. First, the Council on Foreign Relations included Korea in the postwar settlement as a prospective candidate for trusteeship, when considering the realignment of political futures and territorial changes that would inevitably take place after the conclusion of hostilities. Second, the State Department's policy group made research reports from October 1943 onward, in which the Korean question was examined either independently or in relation to other East Asian matters. The opinions of the Council, which was an unofficial forum for preliminary policy discussions, mostly overlapped with the State Department's own review of the Korean question. To substantiate this tendency, we may note that it was the Japan specialist, Hugh Borton, draft officer in the State Department, who prepared the Council report and also reviewed and prepared the Korea paperwork that went to the Cairo Conference.<sup>48</sup>

Memoranda on the Korean question dealt with the problems of Korean independence, the Soviet attitude toward Far Eastern affairs, and Sino-Soviet issues in the postwar settlement. The policy group that drafted these included Joseph W. Ballantine (head of the DFEA), John Carter Vincent (former consul-general at Mukden and chargé at Chongqing), H. Merrill Benninghoff (political advisor to General Hodge after Korean liberation), Alger Hiss (advisor to Hornbeck at the DFEA), George H.B. Blakeslee, Hugh Borton and P.E. Moseley (the last three from the Division of Political Studies). There was a good balance between working level officials and experts in the

<sup>46</sup> Memo of Conversation by SS, March 27, 1943, *FRUS, 1943*, vol. 3, p. 37. The concept and application of trusteeship will be discussed in Chapter 6.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1090–1091. See also DFEA Memo, April 22, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/266.

<sup>48</sup> As for Borton, see Part I, Chapter 1, footnote 59. Borton, in his survey article of 1944, described Japanese policy as having made progress in such fields as public health and education, but pointed out that these programs had been designed to make Korea function more efficiently as a part of the Japanese empire, rather than to bring material benefit to the Koreans." (*Department of State Bulletin*, November 12, 1944, vol. 11, no. 281, p. 578.) See also Liu, Xiaoyuan, "Sino-American Diplomacy over Korea during World War II," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 1–2 (Summer 1992), p. 245.



research divisions, which sufficiently reflected the views expressed within the DFEA.<sup>49</sup>

The group started by defining the essence of the Korean question as how to establish an independent state, under the assumption that Korea should be separated from the Japanese empire. As the colonial status of the Korean people became more deeply entrenched, Japan's policy had made it impossible for them to gain adequate experience in running their own affairs. Korea, without support from one powerful nation or an international organization, might yield to unwholesome pressures or conspiracies. One solution might be the United Nations' prompt recognition of Korea's right to be a free and independent state, on the basis that *de facto* independence would only be granted after the establishment of an interim government under an international trusteeship. The United Nations was to guarantee the independence of Korea after the war, not recognizing any particular organization as its government. It would mean that the United Nations would have to take responsibility for Korean independence at some future date. Trusteeship could effectively develop the Koreans' capacity for autonomy, strengthen the government so that intervention from the powers might be minimized, secure the basic human rights and economic interests of all the people, and enable the Koreans to choose their own form of government. Its main disadvantage would be that, in placing the emphasis on the merits that would eventually arise from a period of trusteeship, rather than on the "early attainment of independence," the Koreans might regard it as the imposition of an "indefinite period of tutelage."<sup>50</sup>

The second and the third memoranda examined the risks of rule by a single great power, in terms of a confrontation between China and the Soviet Union. The first memorandum suggested the difficulty of selecting one nation, and the risk that the old issue of Korea's role as a "buffer state" could lead it to become a dependent country under some "suzerain state." China and the Soviet Union both had historical, ideological and strategic interests in Korea. Considering its particularly close relationship with Korea, China was the more logical choice. Yet China was unable to cope with such a responsibility, given all the postwar reconstruction that it faced, and there was also no certainty that the Koreans would accept any such decision.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Problems of Korean Independence, PG-32, October 2, 1943, RG59, Box 119; Possible Soviet Attitudes towards Far Eastern Questions, PG-28, October 2, 1943, RG59, Box 119; Sino-Russian Problems in the Post-War Settlement, October 4, 1943, PG-34, RG59, Box 119.

<sup>50</sup> Other studies by the Council may be found in the section on "The Council on Foreign Relations, Studies of American Interests in the War and the Peace, Far East," in *Yi and Chōng*, vol. 1..

<sup>51</sup> Problems of Korean Independence.

The idea of Soviet rule was vehemently opposed by China. If the Soviet Union was put in charge of the peninsula, China might lose confidence in the U.S.-led postwar settlement, and take equivocal actions in other regions. The Soviet Union, for its part, might have ambitions to use Korea to invigorate the economy of Far East Siberia, and to provide a strategic ice-free port.<sup>52</sup> If Korea should be entrusted to more than one power, it could place the United States in a difficult position, as it would very likely be forced into a position of mediator between them. The Soviet Union might also feel forced to intervene in Korean affairs if political anarchy should continue, or an unfriendly government should be set up. In addition, an even more complicated situation could arise if the Soviet Union joined the war against Japan and advanced militarily into Korea, with the result that two, possibly opposing, armies could be stationed on the peninsula.<sup>53</sup>

The most distinctive feature of these memoranda is the passive or negative American approach toward the Korean question. In short, the United States refused to take charge of Korea on its own. Many possibilities were raised, on the grounds that circumstances were developing unpredictably, but references to them were concluded without any policy suggestions. This was, in a sense, only a reaffirmation of the original position of taking a “common approach.” If these memoranda represented any change of position at all, it was that the “United Nations” was to be in charge of Korea. This was not, however, an alternation in American policy, but an effort to stress the spirit of joint policy. It was almost immediately after Pearl Harbor that the United States raised the idea of creating a “United Nations” to ensure unity between the countries fighting against Germany and Japan. A draft declaration was made by these countries so that it might bind them together until victory. They would not conclude an armistice or peace treaty except by mutual agreement. The United States, however, expanded the role of this organization in its later plans for the postwar system, which will be discussed in Chapter 6, together with the United Nations’ role in the Korean question.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Possible Soviet Attitudes towards Far Eastern Questions.

<sup>53</sup> Sino-Russian Problems in the Post-War Settlement.

<sup>54</sup> For the creation and development of the United Nations, see *FRUS, 1942*, vol. 1, pp. 1–38. Cited therein is *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*. At the proclamation of the U.N. Declaration on January 1, 1942, twenty-six nations participated, while many quasi-governmental groups, including the KPG, also asked to sign the Declaration. The United States and Britain decided it was fair to deny all such requests by “free groups,” with the exception of the Free French Committee under De Gaulle. On Syngman Rhee’s request that he be permitted to sign the Declaration on behalf of the Korean people, and the American-British response, see *Ibid.*, pp. 36–38.

## CAIRO AND AFTER

In late 1943, the Korean question was addressed in a joint statement of the Allied leaders, as it would have more practical weight than a declaration by a yet-to-be-formed “United Nations.” After the summit conferences at Cairo (November 22–26, 1943) and Tehran (November 28 – December 1, 1943), the Allied leaders officially proclaimed on December 1 the independence of Korea “in due course.” They do not appear, however, to have discussed the Korean question in detail, as part of an independent agenda. According to *Foreign Relations of the United States: Conferences at Cairo and Teheran, 1943*, the Korean question appeared in the initial and revised drafts of the declaration by the United States, and in the first draft of the declaration by Britain. In all, there were fewer than ten references to Korea, including these three. There is no substantiating material left by Britain. Churchill, despite his superb record of the Cairo Conference, does not provide us with specific information on the Korean question. Llewellyn Woodward, summarizing the official stance of Britain in World War II in his *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (five vols.), referred to Korea only once. Britain seems not to have considered the Korea question in its preparations for the conference, and was initially opposed to the inclusion of the Korean clause in the declaration.<sup>55</sup> When the United States published documents related to these two conferences in 1961, the Soviet Union, revealing additional relevant information, criticized it for distorting history. However, since Korea was not included in the list of “distortions,” there must have been no serious conflict concerning the issue.<sup>56</sup>

Indeed, the four powers of the United States, Britain, China and the Soviet Union did not find the Korean question to be a subject for argument. It was, as Heiferman mentioned, an addendum (appendix) to the conference.<sup>57</sup> On the issues they disagreed about, they left

<sup>55</sup> Woodward, Llewellyn, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1970–1976), vol. 5, p. 34. Britain gave more weight to the Teheran conference (Roosevelt-Churchill-Stalin) than to the Cairo conference (Roosevelt-Churchill-Jiang), hence referring to the series of talks held in Cairo and Teheran as “the Teheran Conference.” The main concern was naturally how to protect the British Empire against the postwar schemes of Roosevelt, in addition to military matters in Europe and Asia.

<sup>56</sup> Beitsell, Robert (ed.), *Teheran, Yalta, Potsdam: the Soviet Protocol* (Hattiesburg, Mississippi: Academic International, 1970). See especially the Preface. When criticism in Korea mounted against the trusteeship after the Moscow Conference of December 1945, the Soviet Union made some of the conference records public. See Chapter 6.

<sup>57</sup> Heiferman, Ronald Ian, *The Cairo Conference of 1943*, Roosevelt, Churchill, Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: 2011), p.112. Heiferman shows well roles of Madame Chiang as chief confidant, interpreter as well as personal secretary to her husband Generalissimo Chiang in Cairo.

detailed memoranda and records of the discussions. On the issues they agreed on, a leading nation prepared the first draft, and had it revised by working or high level officials. Poland and Italy belonged to the former cases, Korea to the latter.<sup>58</sup> The American draft of the communiqué said: “We are mindful of the treacherous enslavement of the people of Korea by Japan, and are determined that the country, at the earliest possible moment after the downfall of Japan, shall become a free and independent country.” Later, Harry L. Hopkins, who was Roosevelt’s private assistant, revised “at the earliest possible moment” to “at the proper moment.”<sup>59</sup> The first draft by Britain was perhaps based on this American version, and was changed to the following: “The three Great Powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent.” This was accepted as the final version in the end.<sup>60</sup>

Other than this, the Korean question was discussed as a part of the postwar settlement in East Asia, and this fact sheds more light on world leaders’ thinking on Korea. In a talk with Jiang Jieshi, Roosevelt expressed his view that their two countries had to reach a mutual agreement on the future status of Korea and Indonesia, as well as Taiwan, to which Jiang agreed, stressing the necessity of giving Korea independence. The words of Jiang’s verbal agreement are quoted in the Chinese record of the discussion, according to a footnote of the *FRUS*. The U.S side did not leave any record of the meeting, by order of Roosevelt to his staff, as the President worried that its publication would give the wrong impression to the outside world.<sup>61</sup> The dialogue, however, had an important bearing on the future of East Asia, as well as of Korea. The United States was wary of possible Chinese ambitions after the war, and demanded the independence

<sup>58</sup> “Other points on which agreement was easy were published to the world in the communiqué issued after the close of the conference.” McNeill, William Hardy, *America, Britain and Russia: Their Cooperation and Conflict 1941–1946* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 347–348.

<sup>59</sup> Hopkins acted as a special envoy for the president and left records of important international conferences. In early 1943, President Roosevelt suggested to Stalin a conference near the Bering Sea, and informed him that he would bring Hopkins only as an interpreter and shorthand writer. (Roosevelt to Stalin, May 5, 1943, *FRUS, Cairo and Teheran*, p. 4.) According to Feis, the first draft found in the American files was either dictated by Hopkins [in bed with maps on the floor beside him] or revised by his own hand. The President looked it over, adopting most of Hopkins’s suggestions. Churchill also examined it with care, retouching its language. (Feis, p. 252.) Accordingly, British records only appear to be a revision of the American draft.

<sup>60</sup> Draft of the Communiqué, with Amendments by Hopkins, *FRUS, Cairo and Teheran, 1943*, pp. 401–404.

<sup>61</sup> Liu, Xiaoyuan, *A Partnership for Disorder: China, the United States, and their Policies for the Postwar Disposition of the Japanese Empire, 1941–1945* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.127.

of these East Asian regions, at which juncture Jiang brought up the question of Korea, so as to leave a record that China did not hold such ambitions.<sup>62</sup>

For Stalin, who had not participated in the Cairo talks, the conference in Tehran was a ratification of the results from Cairo. Stalin replied that, although he could make no commitments, he thoroughly approved the communiqué and all its contents. He said it was right that Korea should be independent, and that Manchuria, Formosa and the Pescadores Islands should be returned to China.<sup>63</sup> As the Soviet Union was not at war in the Far East, the United States did not regard it as a full partner in the discussions, but still respected this Soviet stance, and considered it to be based on Soviet interests in East Asia. According to a memorandum prepared for the Tehran Conference, Moscow did not mention an ice-free port in Korea, and continued to agree to Korean independence under some type of trusteeship by the four powers. Roosevelt did not thus consider the Soviet Union to be an obstacle to Korea's political future. At the Pacific War Council meeting early the next year (1944), he expressed his satisfaction at the prospect of cooperation with the Soviet Union, since Stalin had specifically acknowledged the details of the Cairo Declaration.<sup>64</sup>

The formal statement of policy by the United States, so far as the wartime Korean question was concerned, ended here. Later procedures were no more than an epilogue. The United States produced detailed research papers for the postwar governance of Korea, and on the measures of the trusteeship. Although the United States, Britain, and China continued discussions on this subject, they failed to have any in-depth talks, or to come up with a specific plan. The Korean question did not advance beyond the Cairo Declaration, either in form or in substance. This why I call what followed an "epilogue." President Harry S. Truman statements on the subject, following Korea's liberation, confirm that this is correct.<sup>65</sup> Korean nationalists

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<sup>62</sup> Roosevelt-Chiang Dinner Meeting, November 23, 1943, *FRUS Cairo and Teheran*, pp. 323–325.

<sup>63</sup> Memo of Luncheon Conversation among Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, November 30, 1943, *FRUS Cairo and Teheran*, p. 566. According to a British record, however, Stalin replied that he thought it was a good declaration and that he had no comments to make, but that Russia would have something to add when she herself was active in that part of the world. [Future of Korea, July 24, 1945, 46468 (4702/1394/23).] Thus, Stalin at Tehran suggested the possibility of later intervening in the Korean question.

<sup>64</sup> Memo by the U.S. Delegation, November 23, 1943, *FRUS Cairo and Teheran*, p. 376; minute on Pacific War Council, January 12, 1944, p.869.

<sup>65</sup> "As to the question by Madame Chiang Kai-shek whether any further agreements had been made with regard to the future of Korea, President Truman said that nothing further had been done than the conversations which took place at Cairo." [Memo of Conversation by Assistant SS (Dunn), August 29, 1945, *FRUS 1945*, vol. 7, p. 540.]

had tried to push the United States to craft a better Korean policy, but their efforts had been in vain. In this regard, the Cairo Declaration was the only formal declaration by the Allies on their ideas for the future of Korea.

In one sense, the Cairo Declaration was not at all an advancement, but a mere restatement of previous stances taken by the United States or by the three Allies together. The situation in and around Korea had not changed. The Allies had not begun any fresh discussions on the issue, since they had agreed to close the issue after Eden's visit to Washington in March 1943. It was only a joint statement of a so-far-agreed-upon conclusion. Although Roosevelt had not previously consulted the DFEA, the Division commented that the declaration did not change the State Department's stance on the Korean question. It only added (to the previous statements on Korea by Roosevelt, Hull and Welles) another slightly more useful piece of material to be included in the volume of literature that demanded Korean independence.<sup>66</sup>

In another sense, though, it constituted the most important document on the future of Korea that emerged during World War II, in that the Allies officially recognized the Korean question as one of the postwar settlements that would have to be made, and agreed to adopt a "joint policy" on the issue. The latter point was what the United States emphasized the most. More important in terms of East Asian politics was that it encompassed, from a short-term perspective, the possibility of China taking unilateral action on Korea, which was the most serious concern of the United States at the time. From a long-term perspective, when China's ambition to expand its influence into Korea started to diminish, and that of the Soviet Union started to increase, the United States could interpret Stalin's support for the Declaration in such a context. In any event, a foundation for American policy had now been established, meaning that the Korean question could not be dealt with by any arbitrary decision made by a single power.

After Cairo, there were several opportunities for international discussion of the Korean question. Yet perhaps because of the "success" in Cairo, Roosevelt lacked consistency – and, some would say, sincerity – in dealing with the issue. At a January 1944 conference of the Pacific War Council, Roosevelt mentioned that he and Stalin had agreed to a "forty-year tutelage" for the Koreans, since Korea still lacked the capacity to run an independent government. But the editor of *FRUS* commented that no record had been found of any

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<sup>66</sup> DFEA Memo, December 2, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/301. See also Hull, Cordell, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), vol. 2, p. 1584.

agreement to this effect at Cairo or Tehran.<sup>67</sup> This shows that the president had only a vague plan on Korea within his grand designs for the postwar settlement. A similar attitude persisted at the Yalta Conference in February 1945. The Yalta Conference, based on the realities that were emerging toward the end of the war, was by far the most important occasion for deciding postwar issues, which is why the later Cold War confrontation was sometimes called the “Yalta system.” The State Department prepared a report for a discussion on the Korean question, but Roosevelt, excluding Churchill, closed the issue by means of an “oral understanding” with Stalin. He addressed the ice-free port problem first, and talked of his plan to place Korea under the joint trusteeship of the Soviet Union, the United States and China. He further explained that the American experience in governing colonies was limited to the Philippines, and it took fifty years to prepare the Filipinos to run an autonomous government. It would take twenty to thirty years in the case of Korea. Stalin replied that the shorter the period, the better. He also asked the American president if he would allow foreign military forces to be stationed in Korea. Roosevelt said there was no need for this, to which the Soviet leader agreed. He further stated that there was another subtle problem concerning Korea: personally, he did not think it necessary to include Britain in the trusteeship, which was sure to infuriate Britain. Stalin was sure that Britain would be angered if excluded, and that the prime minister would “kill them.” He therefore thought that they should invite Britain, too.<sup>68</sup>

This is all that is recorded of Roosevelt and Stalin’s discussion of Korea. Ominously, what Roosevelt said ran completely contrary to the concept of a four-power trusteeship, on which the American government had put such great emphasis. Conceivably, Roosevelt’s statement was indeed meant to exclude Britain, a long-time opponent when it came to resolving postwar colonial arrangements. It was true that, for the United States, either China or the Soviet Union was easier to deal with, as far as colonial issues were concerned.<sup>69</sup> Yet Weathersby’s argument—namely, that the lack of any mention of Korea in the final East Asia agreement was most likely due to Roosevelt’s purported desire to keep the arrangement solely under the control of the Soviet Union and

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<sup>67</sup> Minute on Pacific War Council, January 12, 1944, *FRUS Cairo and Teheran*, p. 869 and note 6.

<sup>68</sup> Post-War Status of Korea—Briefing Book Paper: Inter-Allied Consultation Regarding Korea, *FRUS, Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, pp. 358–361. For the oral understanding, see p. 770. For Britain’s doubts concerning U.S.–Soviet discussion of the Korean question in Yalta, see Chapter 4.

<sup>69</sup> Louis, William. Roger, *Imperialism at Bay—the United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire 1941–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 158.

the United States— seems far-fetched.<sup>70</sup> As we will see later, Churchill was ready to assign Korea to the United States, and even to withdraw from discussions of Korean matters when he felt they jeopardized Britain's interests in more important areas. In this sense, the oral agreement on Korea made at Yalta was more down to Korea's lowly position in the Allies' overall policy priorities, or to a lack of progress beyond the Cairo Declaration, than to policy conflicts between the United States and Britain. Following on from the Cairo Conference, the State Department had, between late 1944 and early 1945, prepared several inter-divisional memoranda on the Korean question. Although these proposals were in-depth studies of the Korean question, they failed to make any policy suggestions in a practical sense. Perhaps Roosevelt did not read these memoranda, and was more accustomed to dealing with leaders of other powers not through the State Department but through such private assistants as Hopkins. At any rate, Roosevelt's apparent suggestion at Yalta that Britain be left out of the deal did not improve the situation for Korea at Yalta, but only brought confusion.<sup>71</sup>

The Korean question surfaced again in May 1945, when Hopkins visited Moscow. After Roosevelt's death in April 1945, and the surrender of Germany in early May, President Truman worked on the possibility of holding a summit talk for the Allies, which took place that July in Potsdam. His chief motive for doing so was his concern to prevent any degeneration of Soviet-American relations. It was for this purpose that Truman sent Hopkins to Moscow. He also instructed W. Averell Harriman, the American ambassador in the Soviet Union, to make specific preparations on the issues of China and the trusteeship in Korea.<sup>72</sup> The State Department, too, saw the importance of Hopkins's mission, and prepared a well-written memorandum for him. The document was quite detailed, and included proposals for a trusteeship by the four powers that would run for a period of five years; equal representation in civil and military affairs; training of capable *local* Koreans for civil affairs; and, above all, the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea, except for 5,000 men from each power.<sup>73</sup> Yet Hopkins,

<sup>70</sup> Weathersby, Kathryn, "Soviet Policy toward Korea: 1944–1946" (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1990), p. 144.

<sup>71</sup> China was also trying to exclude Britain from the Korea trusteeship, but the President confirmed that the four countries had been mentioned as trustees. [Memorandum of Conversation by Assistant SS (Dunn), August 29, 1945, *FRUS 1945*, vol. 7, p. 540.]

<sup>72</sup> Memo by Grew (Acting SS), May 15, 1945, *FRUS, Conferences of Berlin, 1945*, vol. 1, p. 14.

<sup>73</sup> Grew to Forrestal (S of Navy), May 21, 1945, *FRUS 1945*, vol. 7, pp. 882–883. However, the War Department demanded that, except for a token force, the number of foreign armies in Korea should not exceed 10,000 men from each of the four powers. [Recommended Amendments, McCloy (Assistant S of War) to Grew, May 27, 1945, *Ibid.*, p. 887.] See also Chapter 5.



as well as Harriman, overlooked Korea-related issues, focusing instead on Soviet-American relations, i.e., the Soviet participation in the war against Japan, and East European issues.<sup>74</sup> Hopkins did urge the Soviet Union to fulfill the Yalta agreement, which included its consent to a four-power Korean trusteeship. Assuming that some informal discussions had taken place in Yalta on the Korean question, Hopkins told Stalin that the decisions reached there were made after careful study, and that the period of trusteeship, if not absolutely certain, could be of twenty-five years or fewer, but that it would definitely run for at least five or ten years. Stalin had given his full consent, as far as the issue was concerned.<sup>75</sup> It was based on this report by Hopkins that Truman notified Jiang's wife on June 15 that the four powers had agreed to a Korea trusteeship after the war.<sup>76</sup>

The third discussion on the Korean question was held in Potsdam, just south of Berlin, in July 1945. In this last wartime conference, following the surrender of Germany, the Soviet Union brought up the issue of the Italian colonies in North Africa, and also requested a discussion of Korea. Britain considered Soviet interest in North Africa as a pretext for it to advance into the Mediterranean, and adamantly refused any Soviet intervention in managing the former Italian colonies, thereby turning the conference into an endless debate on the issue.<sup>77</sup> James I. Matray writes that the conference was the last chance to add sufficient details to the orally-agreed-upon solution to the Korean question, while a friendly atmosphere among the Allies still prevailed, and that the chance was lost amid the traditional Anglo-Russian rivalry over the Mediterranean.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>74</sup> "In conclusion, I felt that Harry's visit has been more successful than I had hoped." (Harriman to President, June 6, 1945, *FRUS, Berlin*, vol. 1, p. 62.). See also Matray, James Irving, *The Reluctant Crusade - American Foreign Policy in Korea, 1941-1950* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), pp. 35-36. This book was translated by the author into Korean (Seoul: Ŭlyu munhwasa, 1989).

<sup>75</sup> Grew (Acting SS) to Forrestal (S of Navy), May 21, 1945, *FRUS 1945*, Vol. VII, pp. 882-883; Hopkins Mission to Moscow, Memo. by Bohlen (Assistant to SS), May 28, 1945, *FRUS Berlin*, vol. 1, p. 47.

<sup>76</sup> Memo by the Assistant to the President's Naval Aide (G. M. Elsey) (undated), *FRUS Berlin, 1945*, vol. 1, p. 310. There was no discussion concerning Korea in the tripartite meetings at Berlin. Korea was not discussed by Song Ziwen at his meetings in Moscow in July and August, and Korea was not a subject of the Sino-Soviet treaties of 14 August 1945. [Memo for Admiral Leahy by George M. Elsey, November 10, 1945, 740.00119 Control (Korea)/11-1045, RG59, Box 3823.] The Korean question was only briefly covered in Sino-Russian discussions, at which the United States was rather discontented. See Chapter 5.

<sup>77</sup> Discussion in the Foreign Ministers' Meeting Regarding Italian Colonies, July 22, 1945, *FRUS, Berlin*, vol. 2, pp. 238-239, 252-256, and many other pages in this volume.

<sup>78</sup> Matray, p. 60.

Yet the problem was still more complex. At that stage, neither the Soviet Union nor the United States gave much of an impression that it intended to bring up the Korean question at all. Britain, the leading contender in Mediterranean affairs, left very interesting records, according to which Vyacheslav M. Molotov, the Soviet foreign minister, “casually” raised the Korean question on July 22, saying that he would like to exchange ideas. Expecting that it would be discussed during the Foreign Ministers’ talk that was due to take place the following day, the British delegation put together a preliminary memorandum. Yet, in the event, no mention was made of Korea on July 23, with the debate being wholly dedicated to the issue of the trusteeship of the Italian colonies. Since any decisions were deferred until the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in September, the Korean question had to wait another two months.<sup>79</sup>

*FRUS* does not specifically mention the July 22 Soviet comment on the Korean question. It only quotes the biography of Henry L. Stimson, the U.S. war secretary, who was present during part of the conference, to the effect that since Britain refused a joint trusteeship in Hong Kong, as had France in Indochina, Stalin brought up the Korean question to take advantage of these precedents, hinting that he would like to withdraw his consent to a joint trusteeship in favor of exclusive Soviet control over Korea.<sup>80</sup> This interpretation, however, had initially been suggested by a British diplomat, L.W. Foulds, a working level officer from the British Foreign Office, who attended the Potsdam Conference, and had told Eugene Dooman, a former U.S. councilor at the Tokyo embassy, that the Russians might want to take charge of Korea. “Interestingly,” Foulds wrote, Dooman had reacted immediately. Foulds did not believe, however, that the Soviet Union would demand a right to Korea as a *quid pro quo*, vis-à-vis Italy, as that would raise the issue to the same level as the Italian colonies. Dooman also said that he would be surprised if such a *quid pro quo* was, in fact, the Russian intent. American public opinion would be far more sensitive to Russian encroachment in East Asia than in Europe, and Korea, in American eyes, was becoming a test case for the efficacy of the developing “United Nations” world

<sup>79</sup> Foulds to Bennett, July 24, 1945, 46468 (4702/1394/23). Based on Foulds’s memo on Korea, the Foreign Office drafted an internal memo, titled “Future of Korea” under the date September 8, 1945. (46468 (6733/1394/23). It said that “the prime mover in the Cairo Declaration as far as it related to Korea was the United States.”

<sup>80</sup> Summary of the Meeting of Foreign Ministers, July 22, 1945, *FRUS, Berlin*, vol. 2, pp. 239, 252–260. The matter has been described in detail in Handbook of Far Eastern Conference Discussions, Treatment of Political Questions Relating to the Far East at Multilateral Meetings of Foreign Ministers and Heads of Government 1943–1949, Research Project no.62, November 1949, in *Yi and Chông*, vol. 2, p. 236.

organization.<sup>81</sup> The Soviet reference to Korea might be considered as a passing episode, but it shows that each of the “Big Three” regarded Korea as a chip in their negotiations over the disposition of colonies of the defeated powers. In any event, the Korean question was given only the barest mention on the global level in Potsdam. The Soviet Union may have deliberately wanted to leave it unresolved for more advantageous postwar bargaining in the future, and the United States may have preferred delay for various reasons, including the development of the atomic bomb. As a result, when Korea was liberated, the United States took up the issue under the assumption that the “oral understanding” with Stalin at Yalta was the most recent international agreement.

The Korean nationalists were concerned that there was no specific international commitment for the independence of Korea, other than the obscure guarantee in the Cairo Declaration. The Koreans were particularly worried over the meaning of “in due course.” Two days after the declaration, the nationalists in Chongqing and Washington started demanding an explication of the phrase. Yet the State Department, academia and the press considered it to be in line with the policy heretofore taken by the American government, thus accepting the implication that a period of trusteeship was almost sure to commence. The State Department commented that the phrase was reasonable for any declaration considering the continuing war and the situation of Korea over the past thirty-five years.<sup>82</sup> As the war still continued, one should first defeat Japan, and then liberate Korea and establish a civil government, which would be the appropriate order of doing things. In the great task of defeating Japan, the most crucial issue of creating a postwar security system was laid out only in the broadest terms: the military phase of expelling the Japanese from Korea must come first, followed by preparations for civil government, and, “in due course,” independence. Given the circumstances, it was impossible to provide a precise blueprint delineating each issue in perfect detail.<sup>83</sup> “At the earliest possible moment” also seems to have been understood by the Americans as “at the earliest practical moment;” that is, when

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<sup>81</sup> Foulds to Bennett, July 30, 1945, 46468 (4802/1394/23) and minutes. Churchill opposed discussing trusteeship for the Italian colonies, and brushed aside a discussion of Korea because “their position had been settled secretly at Yalta and publicly stated at San Francisco and was not capable of being changed.” [*FRUS, Berlin*, vol. 2, pp. 252–256. The Soviet version mentions only Italian colonies and not Korea. [Gromyko, Andrei A., *Berlinskaia (Potsdamskaia) Konferentsiia*, pp. 193–143, quoted in Weathersby (1990), p. 179.]

<sup>82</sup> Salisbury to Shaw, December 27, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/304.

<sup>83</sup> Conversation between Gauss and Cho Soang, Gauss to SS, May 19, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/338; Ballantine to Han Kilsu, February 12, 1944, 895.01/315.

the powers judged Korea to be independent after implementing all the procedures for the trusteeship.

Two months before the close of the war, the United States, presuming an agreement on trusteeship by the Allies, outspokenly reiterated its stance towards Korea. On June 5, 1945, when Syngman Rhee published a denunciatory statement that there had been a secret agreement over the postwar status of Korea at Yalta, the State Department explained to him: “Korea will gain independence through in due course and this presumably means as soon as they are in a position to govern themselves.”<sup>84</sup>

#### REACTIVATING THE ALLIES’ COMMON POLICY

After the Cairo Conference, the United States began to implement its policy of common approaches by the Allies more vigorously, expanding its scope. The policy was meant to win the Soviet Union over to a “concert system.” The State Department ordered Ambassador Gaus to make unofficial contacts with the Soviet embassy in Chongqing, to ascertain its stance on Korean nationalist organizations in China, and the KMT government. As a matter of fact, however, the Soviet Union was at best a potential, unofficial party for cooperation, since it had maintained neutrality in the war against Japan.<sup>85</sup> The United States accordingly made Britain its primary partner in the Allied cooperation, and later made agreements with China based on discussions with Britain.

We might at this point raise the following question: why did the United States give up the previous practice of consulting China first, and then including Britain? This could have been a trifling matter of procedure with little significance, yet later developments indicate that

<sup>84</sup> Frank P. Lockhart to Rhee, June 5, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, p.1029. Rhee retorted that he wanted the U.S. government to be more specific about the word “presumably.” *Ibid.*, p. 1033. The “conspiracy at Yalta” which Rhee referred to involved a newspaper report, which alleged that the United States and Britain had agreed on placing Korea under strong Soviet influence after the war, and the “division” of Korea. (LM80, R.2, 895.01/6–2345 CS/LE.) However, these rumors later proved to be ungrounded. See “Mr. Grew: Statement on Policy Regarding Korea, June 8, 1945,” in Holborn, Louise W., and Fay, Sidney B. (comp. and ed.), *War and Peace Aims of the United Nations – From Casablanca to Tokyo Bay January 1, 1943- September 1, 1945* (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1948), pp. 344–345.

<sup>85</sup> SS to Gaus, May 12, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/340. One scholar has noted: “The existence of the Russo-Japanese non-aggression pact as a bar to such a program [to get an earlier agreement with Russia that would include much greater concessions on Russia’s part] is no excuse. When Russia declared war on August 8, the pact still had eight months to run.” [Meade, E. Grant, *American Military Government in Korea* (New York: King’s Crown Press, Columbia University, 1951), p. 45.]

this altered procedure had a fairly complex genesis. The United States and Britain had decided to prepare a review of the Korean question, and agreed on a first draft. The two powers had exchanged ideas on the matter from April to June 1944, a dialogue that took place primarily between experts. In addition to those previously mentioned, these included Harley A. Notter from the State Department's Division of International Organization, and Sir George Sansom and P.H. Gore-Booth, both in charge of Asian affairs at the British embassy in Washington. They agreed to put together a list of questions similar to the one created in the autumn of 1943, which had concerned the disposition of the Italian colonies. They set a limitation on the purpose of the paper, which was to get at the facts and to ascertain the merits of different possibilities, rather than to engage in any way in policy discussion at the negotiating level.<sup>86</sup> The ambassadors of both powers in Chongqing then separately contacted the Chinese Foreign Ministry and conveyed an oral statement, not a written document, to the Chinese government, stressing that exchange of information and ideas on Korea would be mutually beneficial, but that their governments would not consider the agreed ideas as a "commitment." In this process, contact between the Anglophone ambassadors was so close that they exchanged the reports that they had made for their governments. This having been done, the State Department and the Foreign Office called in the Chinese ambassadors in Washington and London, and expressed identical opinions.<sup>87</sup>

The primary reason for this development can be deduced from American documents. The two Western powers decided that, though the Chinese government would be invited to certain discussions, lists of questions that the two countries had agreed on would neither be necessarily approved by, or circulated among, the Chinese. They also agreed to have parallel bilateral discussions between the United States and China in Washington, on the one hand, and between Britain and China, on the other, while discussions between the United States and Britain were still taking place. They thus conspicuously avoided making Chongqing the sole venue for discussions. All these measures might seem designed effectively to prevent any Chinese objections to U.S. and British ideas about the disposition of Korean affairs.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Division of International Security and Organization, Box 19, Conversation on Korea between Britain and the United States, April 4, 1944, Records of Harley A. Notter, 1934-45, *Yi and Ch'ong*, vol. 1, p. 443.

<sup>87</sup> Memo of Conversation by Office of Far Eastern Affairs, July 31, 1944; July 17, 1944, LM79, R.2, FW 895.01/8-144; SS to (Chongqing) Embassy, August 24, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/8-1644.

<sup>88</sup> Box 19, Conversation on Korea between Britain and the United States, April 4, 1944, Records of Harley A. Notter, 1934-45, *Yi and Ch'ong*, vol. 1, pp. 449-450, 463.

Another clue to this question might be found in discussions in the British Foreign Office over a lengthy questionnaire put forward by the United States. Britain found Chapter One of the questionnaire, “Political Aspects of Liberation,” to be unrealistic, and demanded it should be eliminated from the discussion. It seemed premature to consider these issues when the direction of the battle to liberate Korea was completely unpredictable. Britain implied that these were inappropriate issues for consultation with China, because the contents of Chapter One of the questionnaire were matters of too direct an interest. Although it was desirable that their two countries discuss questions with China from the beginning, some issues would best be excluded.<sup>89</sup> This is where some of the differences between the two powers became conspicuous. In dealing with Germany, Britain initiated a “political approach,” including the division of Germany and the installation of an Advisory Commission, while the United States underscored a military perspective.<sup>90</sup> With Korea, the United States gave more weight to discussing the political issues, while Britain was eager to defer them. In Europe and East Asia, the two powers had different priorities for the political settlements that would determine the postwar regional order. The United States was on basically the same wavelength as Britain, insofar as it believed that resolution of the Korean question would rest upon a settlement for Asia as a whole, to which it was willing to give its consent.

Anglo-American cooperation in their Korea policies was ultimately associated with a peace system for the region. In postwar Asia, potential conflicts, such as Sino-Soviet or Sino-British disputes, would threaten peace. The essence of the Sino-Soviet feud was, from America’s point of view, that China was exaggerating the menace of Soviet expansion into the Korean peninsula and neighboring Chinese territories, thus stirring up dissension between the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States government believed that it must not become embroiled in such Chinese schemes. It was necessary for the United States to restrain this Asian power through cooperation with Britain. An extended Sino-British conflict of words could mean a potential clash between a Britain seeking the restoration of its empire, and a China seeking leadership of weaker nations in Asia. The Chinese policy to further its influence beyond a mere restoration of territories lost to Japan mirrored a strong revisionism, and possibly a return to the China-centered world order of ancient times. Both were undesirable from the American perspective. In terms of the establishment of a postwar

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<sup>89</sup> Minutes on questionnaire on Korea, May 4, 1944, 40798 (4320/4320/70).

<sup>90</sup> Gaddis, pp. 103–109.

peace system, China's policy seemed especially dangerous. There was a possibility that China might confront not only the Soviet Union in Korea, but also France, Britain and the Netherlands in Southeast Asia, all of whom might then be pushed to request, as victors in the war, *status quo ante bellum*, or at least some kind of compensation. From this perspective, the United States would do well to display a strong tie with Britain, which would work implicitly to restrain excessive ambitions on the part of China. This would prove useful in negotiation or confrontation with the Soviet Union, as was the case for Britain.<sup>91</sup>

Another intention of the United States may have been to involve Britain more intimately in the Korean aspect of the postwar settlement. Although Britain was a belligerent in the war against Japan, its real interest lay in India-Burma, Singapore-Malaya and Hong Kong. But Britain was entirely dependent on the United States in this Asian war, and did not have any special interest in Korea. In this context, some argued that there was simply no need for the United States to give Britain any special consideration or role in the Korean question. The methods of trusteeship, a major point of controversy between the two powers, were not a problem as far as Korea was concerned. Britain insisted on independent control over its colonies and the territories that it would occupy after the war, but had no objection to being just "one of the trustees" in Korea. As a great power that prioritized Europe both during and after the war, Britain should nonetheless have an obligation toward, or an interest in, Asian affairs, and such a sense of balance should contribute to an understanding of the American stance in coping with issues on the European continent.

In April 1944, when the tide of the war turned decisively in the Allies' favor, the State Department began serious talks with Britain over the Korean question. Submitted in the form of a questionnaire, the issues included a sort of virtual scenario of the military campaign that might be extended into the peninsula, as well as political and military situations in Korea after the war. The United States expected these questionnaires would create a foundation for the three powers' discussions of the peninsula. As mentioned previously, however,

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<sup>91</sup> "The Anglo-American cooperation in the post-war settlement negotiations would give the Russians the impression that we were 'ganging up' on them. This was very dangerous but it has a salutary effect and makes Stalin more reasonable." (Memorandum by the Acting SS, May 15, 1945, *FRUS, Berlin*, vol. 1, pp. 13-14.) Yet Britain believed that Roosevelt was always anxious to make it plain to Stalin that the United States was not 'ganging up' with Britain against Russia, creating confusion in Anglo-American relations, which profited the Soviets. [Eden, Anthony, *The Memoirs of Anthony Eden Earl of Avon - The Reckoning* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965), p. 593.]

the Foreign Office pointed out some of the “less realistic” aspects.<sup>92</sup> The United States accepted such British comments, and crossed out some of the items from the Anglo-American agenda. Still, their potential importance was considerable. The expression “less realistic” only meant that such issues were very extensive and unpredictable under the circumstances. President Roosevelt said to Secretary of State Hull in October 1944, “I dislike making detailed plans for a country we do not yet occupy.”<sup>93</sup> These issues had great political and military significance for the future of Korea, and hence were directly related to the interests of China. Britain preferred to postpone any kind of decision on issues of a political nature.

In brief, the questionnaire considered the trusteeship concept, emphasized its necessity, and included many questions that might bring about its implementation. Divided into the categories of politics, military problems, economics, and Koreans abroad, the first category probed Korea’s capacity for independence. The queries were sub-categorized to study the extent of illiteracy and education; participation in government, including central and local administrations; the military sector; and the political leadership of Koreans in China, Siberia and the United States, and the possibility of their working in some kind of harmony. The questionnaire also asked what factors should determine the length of time indicated by the phrase “in due course,” as used in the Cairo Declaration. The one question that concerned the Allies the most was: “which power or powers are to occupy and take the responsibility for the control of Korea and for how long?” “Military problems” concerned what special arrangements should be made, at the time of the establishment of Korean independence, for military, naval and air bases for the use of some or any one of the Allies. It was asked, for example, “If Korea is placed under the responsibility of one or more powers, is it expected that

<sup>92</sup> Questionnaire on Korea, April 18, 1944, 40798 (4320/4320/70). “Less realistic” aspects, in the British view, included queries like the following: “If combat operations in Korea were necessary prior to the capitulation of Japan, what should be the composition and command of the combat forces in and around Korea? Otherwise, what attitude should be taken toward any local Korean body which may have assumed political power? What attitude should be taken toward Korean troops which might enter Korea as separate units or as irregulars in the campaign to free Korea? If the military government of Korea was to be inter-Allied should it be by “zones” or should it be administered by a single Allied military government? Should the civil affairs administration contemplate the use of native personnel only or should some Japanese technical personnel be retained? Should any ‘provisional government,’ such as that already in existence in Chongqing, be consulted or used in connection with the occupation government?”

<sup>93</sup> Iriye, Akira, *The Cold War in Asia – A Historical Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974), p. 72.



military forces of these powers will be stationed in Korea in such period, and what size and what arrangements should be made?" Such queries included the matter of whether to place Korea under American influence in the name of the United Nations, or under an international guarantee. As to economic issues and the Koreans abroad, the questions included "Should Japanese technicians used in Korean industrial enterprises be retained provided they are willing to give allegiance?"

By March of the following year (1945), the British Foreign Office completed four reports, summing up the British stance toward the American questionnaire.<sup>94</sup> Britain delivered them to the State Department in April, hoping to receive corresponding American reports, which were not ready yet. By now, the Soviet Union had gained an advantage in East Asian affairs through the Yalta agreement, and China was starting strongly to support the KPG, to counterbalance the growing influence of Russia in Korean affairs. In addition, there was an avalanche of telegrams demanding recognition of the KPG, influenced by rumors of a secret agreement on Korea at Yalta, and of intimidation by the Korean Communist army trained in the Soviet Union. Despite such circumstances, the State Department was eager to sum up its stance based on the said questionnaire. The person in charge, however, could not devote himself to the task due to illness. This was George McAfee McCune, the chief of the Korea Section in the Office of Far Eastern Affairs, whose health had been poor throughout. The exchange of reports was thus delayed, but was made possible in early July, at the urging of Britain.<sup>95</sup> On July 4, a memorandum of the State Department commented on the situation, stating that research by the experts of the three powers was still not so advanced as to make policy suggestions to the Department regarding the precise structure of the interim government after military rule, or regarding the timing of complete independence.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> The reports are titled: The Achievements and Failures of the Japanese Administration in Korea; Korea's Capacity for Independence; Economic Conditions in Korea; and Future Problems, and Korean Committees Abroad. [Toynbee to Gore-Booth, April 19, 1945, 46471 (2760/1653/23).]

<sup>95</sup> Sansom to Toynbee, May 2, 1945, 46471 (2760/1653/23); Gore-Booth to Toynbee, July 6, 1945, 46471 (4371/1653/23). "The State Department has so far given us practically nothing in exchange for our papers." American reports sent to Britain included: "Literacy and Education," "Participation of Koreans in Government," "Potential Leadership of Koreans outside Korea," and "Possibility of Adequate Harmony," which were written under the main theme of "Korea: Capacity for Independence."

<sup>96</sup> Brief Book Paper – Interim Administration for Korea and Possible Soviet Attitude, July 4, 1945, *FRUS, Berlin*, vol. 1, p. 313; See also the same memo, *FRUS, Malta and Yalta*, p. 361.

The United States did not find the British reports satisfying. Above all, since the British did not deal with all the items in the questionnaire, they failed to provide a specific answer to each query. The British reports were, according to their author's own comments, purely "factual papers."<sup>97</sup> Arnold Toynbee, the head of the Korea Committee in the Foreign Office, explained that they had divided the questionnaire into "facts" and "policies," to facilitate the exchange of ideas with the State Department. The part concerned with policy would take considerable time for approval from superior authorities, and it was hard to tell when or how the British stance should be summed up, since such important issues as the administration and defense of Korea had been left unresolved at Potsdam. The British reports, therefore, were not more than a comprehensive summary of problems, which Toynbee believed answered the questions.<sup>98</sup> The Foreign Office, moreover, was of the opinion that Britain should not clarify its designs, even to an Ally, since British interest and participation in governing Korea would not be decided on before it resolved its commitment to other regions of the world, following the war.<sup>99</sup>

The Korea Committee sent the British embassy in Washington a comment on the American study results for reference during its talks with the State Department. The Committee remarked that the reports were, overall, a reasonable summary of the issues, but added reserved comments on some questions, including the "possibility of proper compromise among the Koreans," which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. Another point of interest was that a high intellectual level was not believed to be a guarantee of a democratic system of politics. As made manifest in the cases of Japan and Germany, the committee pointed out, a country with high levels of education and literacy would not necessarily be able to achieve democracy if it lacked sufficient democratic traditions and training. The American report cited seven or eight countries, Yugoslavia and Mexico among them, who all resembled Korea in their levels of education, but hardly any of them had attained democracy. As the war unexpectedly came to a close, however, the two Anglophone countries were not able to carry out further discussions on these matters.

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<sup>97</sup> Toynbee to Bennett, March 21, 1945, 46471 (1863/1653/23) and minutes; Toynbee to Gore-Booth, April 19, 1945 (760/1653/23).

<sup>98</sup> General Condition in Korea, August 20, 1945, 46471 (6531/1653/23), enclosures and minutes. In September 1944, Britain drafted a report on "Korea: Governance and Defence" upon the request of the United States. However, this was inappropriate as a policy suggestion since the Soviet Union had not yet participated in the Asian war and the report was full of hypothetical assumptions.

<sup>99</sup> Halifax to Eden, January 2, 1945, 50806 (189/189/70).

The United States and Britain separately contacted China, according to their previous agreement. China received them readily, believing that a common front would be formed if the three powers reached an agreement on the basis of common suggestions put forward by the United States and Britain.<sup>100</sup> Yet Britain feared that dealing with the Soviet Union by way of a common understanding of the three powers, i.e., via China's suggestion of an "A-B-C (America, Britain, China) entente," might be "the most dangerous" idea, and that it might be of benefit to Britain to withdraw from such an alliance on Korea.<sup>101</sup> Britain had no intention of getting involved in Korea, where Soviet influence might be paramount, when confrontation with the Soviet Union in Europe had already become exceedingly tough. In addition, Britain and the United States were very cautious about the reports, and were reluctant to convey them to China, as they contained sensitive issues related to China and/or the Soviet Union. When handing over the four reports to China in late June, Britain demanded that China should return similar reports.<sup>102</sup>

Informal talks between the United States and China were held eleven times in Washington, from January 24 to February 14, 1945. China, however, expected several more months to complete its report, in view of the progress made by the United States, and only asked about American intentions, rather than suggesting a plan.<sup>103</sup> This lack of authority, on the part of working level officers and research experts, to determine policy, combined with the early termination of the war, resulted in the underachievement of their considerable efforts. This was another factor that meant the United States could call the oral understanding between Roosevelt and Stalin at Yalta "the most recent guideline of action among the Allies."<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Sansom (British Embassy) to Ballantine, June 17, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/6-1644; Memo of Conversation by Gauss with T. V. Soong, September 26, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/8-1644; Memo of Conversation, November 29, 1944, 895.01/12-1344 and enclosures. China welcomed the Anglo-American initiatives and would suggest China's own policy after reviewing them. (Seymour to Eden, December 4, 1944 and enclosures.)

<sup>101</sup> Seymour to Eden, January 20, 1945, 50806 (482/189/70). "The Soviet government is going to be the most powerful factor in the future of Korea ... and it is questionable how far it is useful to discuss the matter in the absence of the Russians." (Minutes on Ibid.)

<sup>102</sup> British Embassy (Chongqing) to T. V. Soong, June 27, 1945, 46471 (4152/1653/23).

<sup>103</sup> Memo of Conversation by Ballantine, February 17, 1945, p. 1022; James C. Dunn (Acting SS) to Hurley, February 20, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, p. 1022-1023. For the Chinese attitude toward this consultation, see Chapter 3.

<sup>104</sup> SWNCC-176, Draft Memo to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, (undated, August 22, 1945), *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, pp. 1038, 1040. The United States did not draft the first version of the trusteeship agreement until November 1945. (Draft Trusteeship Agreement for Korea, November 8, 1945, PR-30, RG59, Box 119.)

Throughout this time, additionally, the State Department produced an ample quantity of internal research reports on the Korean question, which were referred to in the American record. Scores of reports were published under the categories of “H Papers,” “K Papers,” and “PWC Papers” by regional and inter-divisional committees, with participation by experts in Japanese affairs, territorial issues, security affairs, and international organization. Around ten reports on Korean relations were made by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC), some of which were recorded in *FRUS, 1944*.<sup>105</sup> The H Papers series even included some of those issues excluded from joint discussions.<sup>106</sup> This series was a review of possible problems that might arise if, and when, Korea was placed under the trusteeship.<sup>107</sup>

Matray insists that American research and reviews on the transitional period between Korean liberation and the trusteeship had been “completed” on March 19, 1945, through a paper prepared by the SWNCC, and that policy on the Soviet Union thenceforth became more hard-line. He notes that Edward R. Stettinius, the new secretary of state, consulted President Truman and agreed only to “the principle” of trusteeship with the Soviet Union, intentionally deferring a proposal to discuss specific plans.<sup>108</sup> Although this claim may be correct in terms of logic, it may not be correct in terms of chronology. Yet it remains a not inaccurate analysis of American policy on Korea. On the other hand, when Cumings insists that the American policymakers lacked knowledge of Korea before the time of the annexation, and that no careful or systematic policy analysis existed in the available record, this argument may have resulted from an insufficient review of what records do exist.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>105</sup> *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, p. 1023, note 11; SWNCC-76, 77, 78 (LM54, R.9), 101 (LM54, R.11), 115 (Use of Koreans in War Effort, LM54, R.12); Series 176 (Korean Occupation Directives and Policies).

<sup>106</sup> The H-Papers are in RG59, Box 117. The K Papers series were not compiled until March 1945. Several of these are scattered among documents on the U.S. military government (“Control Korea” series). Among them, Koreans outside Korea: Disposition of Koreans in Manchuria; Treatment of Koreans in Manchukuo (Manzhouguo) and Other Puppet Administrations; and Repatriation of Koreans in Japan were sent to the British Foreign Office for reference and their contents are quite detailed. [46468 (4703/1394/23).]

<sup>107</sup> The following is a perceptive report on Jiandao (Chientao): “[As to] the advisability of changes in the territorial frontiers of Korea including the inclusion of Chientao province in Korea, while the principle of self-determination would support this solution and while it would largely solve the Korean minority problem in Manchuria, China would object strenuously to the cession of territory which has long been part of China. If such a move were supported, it might also serve as an incentive for Soviet Russia to seek special privileges in Manchuria.” (PG-33, Korean-Chinese-Russian Frontier Problems, October 2, 1943, RG59, Box 119.)

<sup>108</sup> Matray, pp. 48–49.

<sup>109</sup> Cumings, Bruce, “American Policy and Korean Liberation,” in Baldwin, Frank (ed.), *Without Parallel: The American-Korean Relationship since 1945* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973), p. 40.

True, the American officials had not completed their Korea policy even by July 1945. Yet this imperfection resulted from the unique character of the foreign policy. Matray's understanding of the point seems too simplistic: a foreign policy assumes practice. It was necessary to suggest measures that could be implemented almost immediately, especially given the circumstances. In addition, since U.S. Korea policy was based on the common policy of the Allies, it would have been of no practical use for the State Department that a "policy" had been completed only at a research level, as indicated in Toynbee's aforementioned letter to the State Department. The research had to form a basis for a concrete action program, which in turn should be approved at a higher level, and then agreed upon by the nations involved. Then, and only then, could action take place. It may be added that, following the death of Roosevelt, the new president was totally reliant on experts, and this was another factor in creating the above-mentioned situation.

If U.S. Korea policy had been completed as an "action plan," the American response should have proceeded according to it, both before and after the war. Those who participated in the measures imposed by the military government in Korea were particularly critical of the fact that the preparation for such measures had been extremely insufficient.<sup>110</sup> It is utterly impossible, however, that the military should have prepared an adequate "action program" for the occupation of Korea, when the State Department had not achieved a diplomatic consensus among the Allies. As a result, influenced by the suddenness of the dropping of the atomic bombs, of the Soviet entry into the war, and of Japan's resultant surrender, the United States seemed, during later developments, to have often acted on an unsystematic, *ad hoc* basis. The Soviet Union seemed to admit as much. In July 1945, while discussing the Sino-Soviet pact, Stalin confirmed to Song Ziwen that Korea should be placed under a four-power trusteeship. Foreign Minister Molotov stressed, however, that this would be an unusual arrangement with no parallel, and that it would therefore be necessary to come to a detailed understanding.<sup>111</sup> It may be true enough to say that the oral understanding at Yalta was considered the only somewhat specific international agreement on Korea that had been made up to the time of Japan's surrender. Yet this is not, as Cumings puts it, the same as saying that information on Korea had been "systematically sorted out."

#### CONCLUSION

The Americans' attitudes toward the independence of Korea and non-recognition of the KPG were quite rational in the context of

<sup>110</sup> Meade, chapter 4, pp. 45–52.

<sup>111</sup> Harriman to Truman and SS, July 3, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 7, p. 914.

their East Asia policy. The State Department later described these attitudes as being “in the best American tradition.”<sup>112</sup> This reflected, among other things, what I have called the “passive stance” of the United States toward resolving the Korean question. The American government approached the issue from an inert and negative perspective, more concerned with how to evade responsibility in this thorny matter than with how to resolve it. The KPG experienced a different treatment than the governments-in-exile of Norway, Poland, and Belgium. When the war was near its end, the State Department sent a letter to Syngman Rhee to say that his KPG was not exercising administrative authority over any part of Korean territory, and was not representative of the people resident in the country.<sup>113</sup> As the United States saw it, the KPG could not be regarded as a “refugee government”; it could only be classified as an “independence movement,” like De Gaulle’s Free France. The United States held fast to the principle that all “independence movements” should be treated equally. The KPG could not be recognized as being representative of a country because it was a movement arbitrarily formed by a handful of individuals to resist an oppressive government, such as Nazi Germany, or, in this case, Japan.<sup>114</sup> The American government therefore had to postpone any official recognition of such movements, so that the people of the countries in question could be guaranteed the right to self-determine their government when liberated.<sup>115</sup> Gaus reminded Cho Soang, the KPG foreign minister, that there was the “French Committee,” which was not a government in exile but a liberation movement organized abroad, which had relations with the United Nations, even if it was not “recognized” as the “French government.”<sup>116</sup>

The policy was legitimate as a principle, and the United States may have succeeded in creating a safety net to avoid blame for any problems that might arise from giving recognition to any one group prior to the liberation. Nonetheless, if Korea and its surrounding region

<sup>112</sup> *United States Policy Regarding Korea 1834–1950*, p. 87.

<sup>113</sup> Lockhart to Rhee, June 5, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, p. 1930. See also U.S. Government Policy on Korea, June 8, 1945, Holborn and Fay, pp. 344–345.

<sup>114</sup> At the Quebec Conference in August 1943, Roosevelt and Churchill had not been able to agree on a joint Anglo-American declaration concerning relations with the French Committee of National Liberation. Eden remarked that in 1940 De Gaulle had been Britain’s only friend. Britain could not accept any formula with regard to the French Committee that did not contain the word “recognition.” Hull argued that “recognition” was given only to a functioning government, or some “form of government.” The two governments issued separate statements. [Hull, vol. 2, pp. 1232; 1240–1242.]

<sup>115</sup> Gaddis, pp. 12–13.

<sup>116</sup> Gaus to SS, May 19, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/338, especially enclosures.

had been viewed as being of absolute importance, the United States would have more actively intervened to help the tides of the regional situation flow to America's advantage. Britain's support for the exiled Polish government in London, along with Soviet support for the Lublin government, were examples of this kind. Stressing, moreover, the importance of unity and harmony among Korean groups, a report from the MID pointed out that Syngman Rhee and Han Kilsu might profitably be eliminated from the political scene in Washington, and encouragement be given to new and younger leaders, who were free from desires for personal aggrandizement.<sup>117</sup> Another report claimed that Kim Kyusic (Kysuk) commanded the respect of all Koreans.<sup>118</sup> Nevertheless, no action of a truly "proactive" nature was taken; on the contrary, the actions merely diminished. All these things are proof of the passivity of the United States's stance on Korea.

Such passivity predisposed the United States to be overly deferential toward China in relation to the Korean question, even though it should be said that this was also in line with the "American tradition" in East Asian policy. The United States invited China, then helpless and impotent, to the Cairo Conference, and later appointed it a permanent seat on the Security Council, influenced by the perceived need for a balance of power vis-à-vis Japan, even if Britain and the Soviet Union were opposed to this American policy. The American government also tried to ensure its interests in the Asia region through its cooperation with China. A similar approach applied to the Korean question.

The American-proposed "common policy" had, at its core, a "balance of power" among the nations concerned. In the early 1880s, when discussing the opening of Korea with China, Britain preferred to achieve that goal in concert with other European powers, and through cooperation with China. Britain needed to contain Russia, and the other powers' relations with Korea seemed to provide a means of doing so. Britain supposed that if it were the sole power (besides Japan) concerned in the opening of the hermit kingdom, it would provoke Russia, and hence increase tensions without producing any practical benefits. Britain, therefore, helped several other Western countries form relationships with Korea, and did not try to prevent the United States from playing a particularly important role.<sup>119</sup> It was in a similar context that the United States, in the 1940s, was willing

<sup>117</sup> Minutes of DFEA on MID's Memo, September 12, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/171.

<sup>118</sup> MID to SS, January 12, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/216.

<sup>119</sup> For Britain's "common policy" at the time of the opening of Korea, see my article, "Han'guk ūi taesōbang kaeguk munje ūi chaegōmt'o" (Revisiting the Opening of Korea to Western Countries), *Sahoeguwahak nonjip* (Social Science Review), 3 (December, 1983) (Ewha University).

to admit China's interests and priorities in the peninsula, and invited Britain to take a more active part in the Korean scene.

Lastly, the most important point here is that the Korean question was not a major "war objective" for the United States. This helps explain why none of the ideas concerning Korea were systematized into becoming specific policy suggestions. President Roosevelt was certainly inconsistent in his statements that related to Korea. The State Department no doubt frequently felt estranged from the effective development of wartime diplomacy, as this was largely carried out according to Roosevelt's grand schemes. In the case of "the Korean question," however, there was hardly any discrepancy between grand schemes and the working level research at the State Department. Hull was a liberal, and was faithful to the anti-bloc, anti-European Wilsonian tradition. Yet unlike Roosevelt, he emphasized the role of the professional diplomat, asserting, for example: "I never at any time favored excursions into foreign affairs by Henry Wallace, the vice president... and a network of questions and conditions existed in our international affairs, especially during the war period, which necessarily had to be handled with extreme care and delicacy."<sup>120</sup> He was, indeed, devoted to conventional diplomacy, which emphasized professionalism and control by professional diplomats. In such a time of change as World War II, however, bold decisions were required, as well as insight. The Korean question must certainly have required both. Hull's approach to Korea was only from the broader standpoint of the overall postwar settlement. The secretary of state remained so hemmed in by complacency, caution and tradition that he almost gave the impression of abandoning any initiative at all, as far as Korea was concerned.

This does not necessarily mean that the United States "neglected" the Korean question. There were many dozens of "policy memoranda." Yet none of them took a step further. The Korean question seemed about to stagnate permanently in the working level research done by the United States, Britain and China, in particular during the last days of the war, and then Japan surrendered, and the issue had to be handled on an *ad hoc* basis. The United States merely acted in keeping with the conventions of traditional international relations, in which it was just one among the great powers. Another, perhaps more important, point is that U.S. Korea policy before and during the war should not be evaluated in light of the Americans' present international status. At the time, there was no National Security

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<sup>120</sup> Hull, vol. 2, p. 1585. For a brief description of Hull, see Dougherty, James E. and Pfaltzgraff, Robert L., Jr., *American Foreign Policy – FDR to Reagan* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), p. 42.



Council, no integrated Department of Defense, and no Central Intelligence Agency, even though the number of personnel in the State Department nearly quadrupled between 1940 and 1945.<sup>121</sup> It was almost inevitable that policies formed on the basis of past traditions would be revised after World War II, when the role of the United States was to be reestablished within the Cold War system. Such issues, however, were not to surface fully until after Korea's division into two nation-states.

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<sup>121</sup> Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, p. 43.

## China's Korea Policy: Reassertion of its Position and Korea



### UNITED STATES AND THE OTHER POWERS IN THE KOREAN QUESTION

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF China's Korea policy during World War II has so far been underestimated or, at best, misinformed. This chapter will examine China's wartime policy on Korea, looking at its significance and policy goals in the broader framework of China's foreign policy. It will consider how China cooperated with, or confronted, the United States; how the Kuomintang (KMT) government controlled, managed and used the Korean issue, particularly as regards the Korean Provisional Government (KPG) in Chongqing; and how all these elements exerted an influence on the division of Korea.

The foreign policy of a state is generally founded upon its national interests. In a sense, what we call "national interest" is a totality of social values, which are comprehensive and abstract in nature. Yet in another, narrower sense, it might be defined as an immediate foreign policy goal. This chapter has raised the basic idea of national interest to examine more fully how the powers defined and approached the value of the Korean peninsula, in terms of their own national interests. In particular, if a power played a secondary role in an East Asian war (e.g., China in the war against Japan), or if, like Britain, it had limited interest in the East Asian region, we could reasonably expect certain questions regarding national interest, and related foreign policy objectives, to be revealed in that power's Korea policy.

The interests that the powers had in the peninsula arose from the geopolitical and strategic value of the area. Paradoxically, it was this strategic importance that made the United States take an extremely cautious approach to Korean affairs. The United States dealt with the issue of Korea based on the general principle of having to establish a

postwar system of peace. The peninsula was not at all essential to U.S. interests, but its geopolitical and strategic value could make the area a source of international discord. The United States thus concluded that the Korean peninsula must not become an object of conflict that would threaten a durable peace in East Asia and the Pacific. It was from this perspective alone that the United States examined the issues concerning Korea's future.

China had two main objectives. On the basis that the Korean peninsula was essential for its security, the maximum objective should be to restore the influence that China had enjoyed in the peninsula before the Sino-Japanese War of 1894, in the name of "sovereign power." The minimum objective should be to contain or eliminate the influence of hostile powers, especially that of the Soviet Union, in the region. Britain was interested not so much in the value of Korea as in British East Asian policy, but was particularly concerned that Korea should not set an unfavorable precedent for future settlements involving British colonies. The Soviet Union was not immediately involved in the issue, since its participation in the war was not decided until just before the end of the conflict. The other powers, however, considered Soviet military advances in the latter years of the war as a potential menace to the balance of power in the region. Such considerations later materialized in the United States and Britain's common approach to the envisaged Korean "trusteeship."

At this point, it is necessary to review the Korea policies of Britain and China carefully. What was it that China and Britain saw in the Korean peninsula as being in their national interest? What were their policy goals, and how did they influence U.S. policy? In brief, the answer is that the policies of these two countries, especially that of China, contributed to Korea's lasting division in both direct and indirect ways, even though the division was decided on under overwhelming U.S. and Soviet influence. One might say that both China and Britain failed to wield *enough* influence on the Korean question, overshadowed by the role played by the other two powers, which occupied and divided the peninsula. However, the Shanghai-later Chongqing-based Korean Provisional Government (KPG), regarded by the Koreans as an expression of the people's will as unleashed during the March First uprising, had maintained a close relationship with Kuomintang (KMT) China. These circumstances have led to a certain misunderstanding of China's role in Korean liberation and independence. It is therefore essential to examine China's Korea policy in light of Sino-U.S. relations if we are to understand the essence of the Korean question that the Allies faced at the time.

## WARTIME POLICIES OF THE KMT GOVERNMENT AND KOREA

With repeated defeats in the war with Japan, and with the fall of Nanjing, its capital, in mid-December 1937, the KMT government had taken refuge in the western hinterland of Chongqing. When the war in the Pacific broke out, China expected that its strong new ally, the United States, would help destroy Japan, and would eventually restore the status China had earlier enjoyed in East Asia. China finally freed itself from the yoke imposed by unequal treaties with the Western powers, and became a sovereign nation in the true sense of the term.<sup>1</sup> In its diplomatic relations with the major Allies, China was treated as an equal, elevated from “ministerial” to “ambassadorial” level. The United States, focused on the idea of cooperation between the four powers and the creation of the United Nations, considered China a partner in the postwar settlement of Asian affairs. As important as the extermination of the Communists, or the establishment of a unified nation against Japan, was, however, the KMT government also needed Allied support to secure its international status as a great power, and as a partner in the settling of the Korea question. China was thus completely reliant on the United States. Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) pledged to follow U.S. leadership on diplomatic and political questions. He insisted that China and the United States should together try to assist in the independence of Korea, Indochina and other colonies, as well as that of Thailand.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of China’s reliance on the United States and their seemingly loyal and friendly wartime relations, the two powers did not always agree on specifics. For instance, on what terms should China recover its lost territories? Didn’t the Allies contradict each other in their postwar Asian plans? How should one define the “police” role that the United States had granted to China? Similarly, although the United States had chosen China as a partner in Korean affairs, their respective ideas of what an independent Korea should like, and how it should be attained, differed greatly. From the American perspective, China was allowed to participate in the Korean question as one of the four Allied powers, based upon historical, ethnic and security interests. But the KMT government had no intention of simply accepting the limited role granted to it by the United States. It was in this regard that “Korea policy” became a source of discord in China’s relationship with the United States, and with the KPG.

<sup>1</sup> *FRUS, 1942, China*, pp. 268–418. Also see *FRUS, Japan 1931–1941*, vol. 2, pp. 929–930.

<sup>2</sup> Hurley to Roosevelt, November 20, 1943, *FRUS, Conferences at Cairo and Teheran, 1943*, p. 264; Roosevelt–Chiang Dinner Meeting, November 23, 1943, *Ibid.*, p. 325.

It is unfair to examine China's Korea policy without considering the circumstances the KMT government faced at the time. KMT China, inheriting the Manchu Empire, was a multi-national state, and was, according to an American report, "more than the Austro-Hungarian [Empire] in its complexity."<sup>3</sup> The KMT government unified China in 1928, but the unification was in form only. The KMT had to fight against Japan without complete control over its domestic politics. Yet, in spite of these unfavorable conditions, Jiang Jieshi and other KMT leaders cherished an ambition to regain a "Sinocentric" leadership or overlordship in Asia. As soon as the United States entered the war against Japan, the KMT government declared its leading role in that war, which should lead not only to the recovery of its lost territories, but to the liberation of other Asian colonies under Western rule. The promise of independence for Korea was, in fact, a sort of Chinese wartime pledge for Asiatic freedom.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, China intended once again to become the dominant power in Asia, and "Sino-centrism" influenced China's Korea policy, making it more difficult to settle the Korean problem.

The Chinese attitude would also pose a clear obstacle to U.S. wartime and postwar policies. The "virus of nationalism in China," one American dispatch complained, "would become the source of difference and friction in international affairs, and now was capable of becoming a cancer, with its attendant internal manifestations, suspicion and misunderstanding."<sup>5</sup> William Langdon, who had broad experience in Korean affairs, felt that the KMT leadership had engaged in various undercover movements, as a cover for thinly veiled Chinese aspirations in Indochina, Burma, Tibet, Outer Mongolia and Korea, at a time when the full attention and effort of the Chinese government should be focused on the war against Japan, and on cooperation with the Allies in that conflict.<sup>6</sup> Neighboring Asian countries were also alarmed at the KMT government's attitude, as they had suffered the bondage of dependency on China before the Western powers came to the region in the nineteenth century. It was under such circumstances that, in December 1942, Jiang made Liu Jie (Liu Chieh), the Chinese minister in Washington, deliver an avowal that China would repudiate the idea of "leadership of Asia," as such leadership could mean a continuation of the authoritarian principles that had been

<sup>3</sup> T-B8 Political Regions of Eastern Asia, Council on Foreign Relations, "Studies of American Interests in the War and Peace, Far East, Korea," May 13, 1940, in *Yi and Ch'ong*, vol. 1, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> *New York Herald Tribune*, February 24, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.00/833.

<sup>5</sup> Memo by Ballantine, September 2, 1943, *FRUS, 1943, China*, p. 324.

<sup>6</sup> Langdon to SS, August 1, 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 6, pp. 493-495; See also memo. by Service, September 23, 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 6, p. 587.

synonymous with the domination and exploitation that China had itself suffered in the past.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, such aspirations remained a consistent trend in the KMT government's policy toward other Asian countries, and, in particular, with regard to Korea.

It was the Soviet Union's China policy that the KMT government most feared. As Clarence E. Gauss, the U.S. ambassador to Chongqing, pointed out, the KMT leadership saw potential postwar developments based on Soviet initiatives as "a very serious threat to its power," considering the Soviet Union's geographical closeness, expansionist tendencies, and support for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). If it should venture to join the war and take further initiatives in defeating Japanese land forces, which seemed well within the realms of possibility, the Soviet Union was very likely to extend its influence to Korea, and have a strong say regarding postwar issues there.<sup>8</sup> China would then lose its sovereignty over Manchuria, and Beijing and its vicinity would definitely fall under the threat of Soviet menace. Domestically, the Soviet Union would take advantage of the KMT's government greatest weakness, and allow the Communists to control some areas, probably in the northwest and northeast of China, on a semi-autonomous basis.<sup>9</sup> For Jiang Jieshi, and the party's other leaders, including Song Ziwen and Minister of Education Chen Lifu, this was the worst kind of nightmare.<sup>10</sup>

Believing that China could not resist the Soviet security menace alone, the KMT tried to contain such advances with help from the United States and Britain. Wang Shijie (Wang Shihchieh), the Executive Secretary of the People's Political Council, pointed out that U.S. influence on the Soviet Union had grown since the U.S. had entered World War II, in line with the increase in military assistance that the U.S. was lending the Soviet Union. The British, moreover, had their Anglo-Soviet Treaty, concluded in May 1942. More specifically, he said, China would welcome a "pre-peace" agreement on fundamentals with Russia.<sup>11</sup> Before the Cairo Conference in November 1943,

<sup>7</sup> Memo by [George] Acheson (Assistant Chief of DFEA) to SS, December 8, 1942, *FRUS, 1942, China*, pp. 258–259.

<sup>8</sup> It was in this respect that China did not want the creation of an international air base in southern Korea to curb Japan after the war, nor have Russia participate in its control. [T-A28 China and Southern Asia/China and Russia, Council on Foreign Relations, "Studies of American Interests in the War and Peace, Far East, Korea," August 19, 1942, in *Yi and Chōng*, vol. 1, p. 95.]

<sup>9</sup> Gauss to SS, December 16, 1942, *FRUS, 1942, China*, pp. 266–267.

<sup>10</sup> Memo by John Stewart Service, April 7, 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 6, pp. 777–781.

<sup>11</sup> Memo of Conversation by John Carter Vincent, November 12, 1942, *FRUS, 1942, China*, p. 742. The Sino-Soviet Treaty was agreed upon on August 14, 1945, and, among other things, guaranteed Soviet support for Jiang's KMT government. [Buhite, Russell D., "Patrick J. Hurley and the Yalta Far Eastern Agreement," *Pacific Historical Review*, 37–3 (August 1968), pp. 345, 347.]

the Generalissimo questioned the American President's personal representative, Patrick J. Hurley, as to whether or not he could meet Marshal Stalin at Tehran on terms of amity. Jiang wished to see the President first in Cairo, to obtain a guarantee of American support.<sup>12</sup> The United States, however, believed that such concern on the part of China was rather exaggerated. Such differences of ideas between the two countries sometimes hindered U.S. policy implementation in East Asia, and also influenced Korea policy.

China's "Korea policy" during the war can be understood in this context. It failed, however, to implement any Korea policy to the extent originally intended during the course of the war. The silver lining was that this seemed to excuse China from any responsibility in the division of Korea. In 1992, when Beijing and Seoul normalized their diplomatic relations, some insisted that this was tantamount to betraying Seoul's past benefactor, the KMT government, now in Taiwan. Indeed, the KMT government did support Korean independence, at least publicly, and leading KMT personalities gave many psychological and material favors to the KPG. It has even been asserted that, since the establishment of the KPG in Shanghai, and the subsequent unification with other Korean independence groups in September 1919, the Chinese government continued supporting the KPG-led Korean nationalist movement for twenty-seven years.<sup>13</sup> Individual memoirs of KMT figures, as well as official government records, are full of stories of this kind, stressing the consistency of their support.<sup>14</sup> The Chinese, in particular, have stressed these personal relationships, and the unofficial aspects of their support. As China had been under Japanese pressure to arrest "recalcitrant Koreans," open support on a governmental level was impossible, but there were other channels of communication through the party and through military personnel, who maintained personal relationships with these Koreans.<sup>15</sup> One must, however, distinguish Chinese national interests from the friendship, or simple good will, of certain individuals in the government. Expressions of support at the individual level might be used merely to gloss over the unfavorable direction of China's Korea policy,

<sup>12</sup> Hurley to Roosevelt, November 20, 1943, *FRUS, Cairo and Teheran*, pp. 102–103.

<sup>13</sup> Yi, Hyŏnhŭi, *Taehanmin'guk insi chŏngbusa* (History of the Korean Provisional Government) (Seoul: Chimmundang, 1982), p. 354.

<sup>14</sup> *Guomin zhengfu yu hanguo dili yundong shiliao* (Historical Materials Concerning the Nationalist Government and the Korean Independence Movement) (Taipei: Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Jindaishi Yanjiusuo, 1988); Shao, Yulin, *Shihan hiyilu* (My Mission to Korea) (Taipei: Biographical International Press, 1980), chapters 1, 2; Hu, Chunhui, "Chen Guofu yu Hanguo dili yundong" (Chen Guofu and the Korean Independence Movement), *Zhong-han guanxishi guoji tankaohui lunwenji* (Proceedings of International Conference on Sino-Korean Relations, 960–1949) (Taipei: The Chinese Association for Korean Studies, 1983).

<sup>15</sup> Shao, p. 26.

or to mitigate adverse reactions by the Koreans. Under the circumstances, the all-encompassing nature of wartime policy, and Chinese maneuvers to that end, can only have had a negative impact on the settlement of the Korean question. In the final analysis, China must accept its responsibility, if only implicitly, in the division of Korea.

First and foremost, China never recognized the KPG, even though it believed that this Korean organization was the best candidate for KMT support.<sup>16</sup> The Chinese admitted that they were in a position to exert a considerable, if not deciding, influence on the Allies' discussion of the Korean question. In April 1942, when Chongqing made overtures to recognize the KPG, the United States and Britain gave it a certain free hand, out of respect for the intimate relationship between the two Asian countries. (See Chapter 2). They even proposed reexamining the matter, and adjusting their positions to that of China. Fu Bingzheng (Foo Pingshueng), the Chinese vice foreign minister, even warned Gauss that the Korean issue was of primary concern to the Chinese government, and it wanted to retain the initiative. The Chinese feared that well-intentioned efforts on the part of the U.S. might as readily lead to confusion as to a solution. Fu did not wish to discourage U.S. efforts to unify the Korean groups in China and the United States, yet he felt that it would be better for the matter to be handled by the Chinese government, stating that the Chinese understood the Koreans, and the various personalities involved.<sup>17</sup> Around the same time, Song Ziwen said that he hoped his government would grant recognition as soon as the Korean factions in Chongqing formed a united front, and that he had recommended taking this step, irrespective of whether the State Department would follow suit.<sup>18</sup>

The Chinese ultimately defended non-recognition on the grounds that they had to avoid any possible dispute with the Soviet Union, and take into account the positions of the Allies, especially on colonial issues. This may sound convincing, at least in terms of their wartime position, vis-à-vis the other Allies. According to a Chinese record, the KMT government instructed its ambassador in Moscow to sound out the Soviet position on this matter, but the Soviets avoided giving a response. This was, from Chongqing's point of view, because both the Soviet Union and the CCP were supporting the Korean guerrillas who were fighting the Japanese army. It was possible that the Soviet Union might use these Korean groups in Siberia to control developments in the peninsula, should it officially enter the war

<sup>16</sup> Chaioxian gedangpai huodong jinkuang baogao (Report on recent activities of Korean factions), Xu Enzen to Zhu Jiahua, November 1941, *Shiliao*, pp. 107–110.

<sup>17</sup> Gauss to SS, May 16, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/130 and enclosures.

<sup>18</sup> Memo of DFEA, July 17, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/153.



against Japan.<sup>19</sup> This was what worried the United States the most. Later, however, the Chinese referred to another probability. If the Chinese government recognized the KPG, and other Western powers followed suit, the Soviet Union might encourage Koreans in Siberia to form another government, and this would create a precarious situation in Sino-Soviet relations. On the other hand, the Soviets might not insist on refusing recognition to the KPG, since Koreans living in the peninsula had regarded the KPG as their legitimate government since its creation in 1919. China believed that the second outcome would be more likely if the two powers should disagree over the Korean question.<sup>20</sup>

Second, China pointed to the split among the Korean groups as another reason for non-recognition. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs commented that the outstanding feature of the Korean anti-Japanese movement was its disunity. Two principal factions, though genuinely anti-Japanese, differed widely in their political perspectives, which ranged from republican radicalism to reactionary monarchism.<sup>21</sup> If the two Korean factions were only able to attain unity, the Chinese government would probably reconsider the question of recognition, and consult with the United States government on the matter. The Chinese, moreover, felt that they had done their utmost to achieve greater unity among the Koreans. The Korean leaders were summoned before Jiang Jieshi, who, according to one Korean informant, gave them what the Koreans termed a “lecture on the need for unity.”<sup>22</sup> In fact, a top secret KMT report described in gloomy terms the Koreans’ extreme factionalism, which had gone so far as an attempt by the Communist faction on Kim Ku’s life, embezzlement of Chinese subsidies by Kim, and Jiang’s “summons” of six Korean leaders.<sup>23</sup> Some KMT leaders also advocated for the establishment of a united front by warning that China would not recognize any of the Korean groups unless unification was achieved.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Shao, pp. 37–38.

<sup>20</sup> Enclosure in Gauss to SS, 10 April, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/117.

<sup>21</sup> Memorandum on Korean independence groups, February 16, 1942, 31824 (1573/165/23); Clark to Eden, January 12, 1942, 31824 (1789/165/23); SS to Gauss, March 12, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/56; March 25, 1942, 895.01/104.

<sup>22</sup> Memorandum by DFEA, April 22, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/266; Gauss to SS, November 15, 1943, 895.01/300. The attendees at the time took Jiang’s lecture as a “reproach,” even if recent studies in Korea have interpreted it as an “encouragement.” [Yi Hyōnhūi (1982), p. 355.]

<sup>23</sup> Li Guangji zhi Zhu Jiahua wei baogao liu yu Hanren jiefenhan (On the dispute of the Koreans in Chongqing, Li Guangji to Zhu Jiahua), September 24, 1943, *Shiliao*, pp. 587–592.

<sup>24</sup> Enclosure in Gauss to SS, April 10, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/117; Memorandum by DFEA, April 22, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/266; Gauss to SS, May 4, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/336.

It is undeniable that the KPG was only a paper government, and was fraught with problems. It was considerably out of touch with the real situation inside the peninsula, and with the problems relating to independence. It lacked concrete organization and precise plans, thus demonstrating poor leadership for a Korean independence movement. The DFEA cynically commented that the average age of the nine members of the KPG, whom Cho Soang, its foreign minister, had mentioned, was sixty-two.<sup>25</sup> Despite all these issues, the recognition of the KPG was essential for settling the Korean question in a progressive direction for the Korean people. Solid leadership would be one of the crucial elements in the establishment of an independent Korean state. Since political leadership could not possibly grow under Japan's rule, the powers naturally turned their attention to Korean groups in exile. (See Chapter 6.) One study has succinctly argued that in no other country did political émigrés play as important a role as they did in Korea after the end of the war. It was the older political émigrés, often septuagenarians, who assumed leading positions in Korea's political life.<sup>26</sup>

The KPG had therefore been very significant for Koreans since 1919. If China was wholeheartedly in favor of Korean independence, it only had to recognize the KPG and help all the Korean groups to unite under its leadership. The task was not so difficult. As Foreign Minister Song Ziwen noted in his memorandum to President Roosevelt in April 1942, the Korean groups could easily have been united if they had received international recognition, or financial and military support. China had provided them with material assistance, albeit irregularly, and the Koreans were grateful for China's protection. Yet China merely highlighted how divided the Koreans were, then looked away.

The divisions among the Koreans was noticed not only by China, but also by the United States and Britain. The Chinese attributed this factionalism to the Korean national character, which was said to be characterized by a deep-rooted mutual distrust, and to lack solidarity, a great leader, and a central theme, i.e., a leading ideology comparable to the KMT's Three People's Principles.<sup>27</sup> There was a power struggle

<sup>25</sup> Gauss to SS, February 12, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/81 and minutes. According to Gauss, General Kim Yaksan (1898–1958), the vice commander of the Korean Restoration Army, desired the post of minister of war, but the older members of the KPG opposed him on the ground that he was “too young” for the post. [Enclosures to Gauss to SS, May 15, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/337.]

<sup>26</sup> Dallin, David, J., *Soviet Russia and the Far East* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1971), pp. 256–257.

<sup>27</sup> Qijiang Hanguo qi dang tongyi huiyi jingguo baogaoshu (Report on the unified conference of seven Korean parties at Qijiang, Wang Rongshen to Zhu Jiahua), October 5, 1939, *Shiliao*, pp. 25–28.

between the Korean Independence Party (KIP, later the KPG), who were supported by their Restoration Army (better known as the Korean Independence Army), and the Korean Revolutionary Party (KRP), who were allied with the Korean Volunteer Corps, led by Kim Yaksan (also known as Kim Wŏnbong). The older generation tended to be pitted against the younger, and conservatism against reformism. In this sense, ideological factors loomed large in the split among the Korean groups in China, and were also linked to the KPG's affiliation with the KMT, as opposed to the KRP's association with the CCP. The Americans believed that the KPG was dominated by the moderate KIP, and that the left-leaning KRP had a large following among Koreans in Manchuria. When the two factions were urged to unite by Chinese pressure, the KRP demanded equal representation in the united National Congress and in the KPG, which proved to be a source of veiled enmity within the united organization.<sup>28</sup>

In Korean groups in the United States, the major conflict was between Syngman Rhee (of the KPG, or Korea Commission), and Han Kilsu (of the Sino-Korean People's League, or KRP). The most salient feature of this was their struggle for leadership of the Korean independence movement. Personal affiliations and loyalties, which had been strong for many years, also created a barrier between the two groups.<sup>29</sup> Rhee accused Han of marring the unity of the independence movement by being a "Jap's spy," and by blindly pursuing his own ambitions. Han replied that Rhee, out of self-righteousness, tried to justify terrorism and murder committed against his opponents. Han forwarded articles critical of Rhee to the Allied governments. The State Department emphasized that a reconciliation of these two groups would be of critical importance for the Koreans. The Department planned such a reconciliation between Rhee and Han, in the presence of members of the DFEA, with the aim of forming a joint committee. One memo notes that "the controversies between the various groups have been widely publicized and our own files are full of them."<sup>30</sup>

Was "contention" a national characteristic of the Korean people? Was China's attitude toward Korea simply a means of hiding its ambitions? Since its opening, the history of modern Korea invariably

<sup>28</sup> Gauss to SS, January 3, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/56; November 15, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/300. According to An Wŏnsaeng (David An), part of the blame for this disunity could be ascribed to the Chinese, who continued to subsidize the KPG and other factions separately. [Gauss to SS, April 4, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/335.] See footnote 93 about David An.

<sup>29</sup> "Korean Independence Movement," a report from the Research and Analysis Branch, Office of Strategic Services. [April 25, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/60-21/26.].

<sup>30</sup> Berle Memo, July 21, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/7-2144..

showed a factional tendency at almost every stage, of which the powers wholly disapproved. A recent study has even tried to find the origin of such factional strife in Korean history, going back to the *Hwabaek* (council of nobles) of the Silla dynasty (57BC–935), the institution of *Sahōnbu* (office of the inspector-general), and the so-called “four-colors” factionalism of the Chosŏn dynasty.<sup>31</sup> The Chinese, moreover, believed that wartime Korean factionalism originated, by and large, from the traditional “provincialism” of Korean nationalists in China. As a result, they viewed it as a struggle between leaders from central Korea (Kyōnggi and Ch’ungch’ōng Provinces), and those from two P’yōng’an Provinces in the north.<sup>32</sup>

As a matter of course, personality studies or psychological approaches cannot form a general theory, even if they do contribute to explaining certain aspects of social phenomena. Yet one may find an important clue to this question in the development of Korean history, and its geopolitical characteristics. The modern era saw the conception and formation of Korean nationalism, through a series of experimentations, and especially through contact with foreign powers. The basic trait of such nationalism was to secure national independence, and to keep the identity of the people free from the intervention of any great power. For this purpose, the people could form a united front with any political ideology or religion, or even with a foreign power. Political leaders of the times, either consciously or unconsciously, tended to react to any threat of foreign encroachment. They would join hands with practically any country, even Japan, should that country be judged compatible with the advancement of Korean nationalism, and as useful in the achievement of its goals. In studying the period before the annexation of Korea, I discovered pro-Japanese leanings in Min Yōnghwan and Yun Ch’iho, even though they were generally regarded in Korea as anti-Japanese patriots. Before condemning or praising the results of their actions, one must examine how they interpreted the policies of the powers, how they saw such policies in terms of compatibility with Korean nationalist goals, and, finally, how accurate their judgments were.

The split among the Korean groups, meanwhile, was fueled by the country’s geopolitical circumstances. The United States and Britain, as well as Japan, China and Russia, had certain ambitions or interests in the Korean peninsula, to varying degrees. This added to the scope of action for nationalistic Koreans. In the 1920s, the advent of socialism allowed an element of ideological struggle.

<sup>31</sup> Henderson, Gregory, *Korea – The Politics of the Vortex* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 245–252, 265–269.

<sup>32</sup> Shao, p. 16.

All these factors, especially the manipulation of the powers by separate tutelage, contributed to the view that the Korean nationalist movement had all along been nothing more than a series of factional squabbles. In a rather analogous way, Roosevelt and Stalin commented that the Poles were quarrelsome people, not only at home but also abroad.<sup>33</sup> China was no exception in this matter. Contrary to the Chinese view that the Koreans were very friendly, intimate and civilized, the Chinese government claimed that the lands of Indochina, together with those of Burma and Malaya, were “far better fitted to obtain their independence than the people of any other protected area in the Far East,” and that in a hundred years the French had done very little to benefit the Asian peoples whom they had colonized.<sup>34</sup> These were but a few examples of how readily the great powers would manipulate weaker nations when they felt it necessary.

An impressive report remains in the State Department on this issue. George McAfee McCune, who had begun his work as Chief of the Korea Section in the Office of Far Eastern Affairs in the Department from May 1944, drafted a memorandum that reviewed various aspects of Korea's capacity for independence. Its main gist was “What is the present status of the capacity of the Korean people for independence as measured by the possibility of adequate harmony among divergent political groups?”

Although the factional character of Korean politics is well known and undisputed, much of the rivalry is more apparent than real. The factionalism of the independence movement is, of course, paralleled by factionalism in almost all exile independence movements and can scarcely be considered unique to the Koreans.... The Koreans as a whole are by nature “politically minded,” a common expression in the Korean language which means in effect that they are highly vocal in expressing their opinions on all matters of political import. The Korean people do not naturally fit into a totalitarian framework as has been discovered by their Japanese rulers. They are not easily regimented, nor do they accept dictation without protest. There are some advantages, therefore, in the democratic individuality of the Korean political scene, even though it tends to produce a multiplicity of parties and rival factions.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Gaddis, John Lewis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941–1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), pp. 162–163.

<sup>34</sup> Box 55, P-Min47, Meeting of March 13, 1943, Division of Political Studies, Records of Harley A. Notter, 1934–45, *Yi and Chǒng*, vol. 1, p. 303.

<sup>35</sup> H-207 Preliminary- Korea: Capacity for Independence – Possibility of Adequate Harmony, November 27, 1944, RG59, Box 117.

Although McCune's report was outstanding in its thorough analysis and insight into the history and society of Korea, it did not directly address the question of Korean independence. Moreover, as Arnold Toynbee, the head of the British Korea Committee, argued, his deduction seems to have departed from the previous line of argument. Even though the U.S. government had made much of the disunity among the Koreans abroad, McCune's paper judged that the Koreans were able to run a democratic government without external support after Japan's rule, while Britain concluded the exact reverse.<sup>36</sup> In any case, the intrinsic value of this paper lies in academic speculation, and it does not seem to have changed the generally negative feelings that the State Department harbored toward Korea.

It must be remembered that China was also plagued with ideological confrontation, and by the split between the KMT and the CCP. As McCune accurately pointed out, the majority of the independence movements in colonies were suffering from either ideological or religious strife at the time. If the KMT government sincerely desired the independence of Korea, there was no need for it to highlight the split among the Korean groups. On the one hand, one cannot deny that the Chinese leadership was serious about these factional disputes in the Korean nationalist movement. A large part of the Chinese archives on KMT-KPG relations cover this issue, and there were many memoranda on how to resolve the problem from a Chinese standpoint. One report blamed Kim for the fall of the KPG's international status, as he had failed to pacify opposition groups, under the subtitle "Jin Jiu yipai zuie" (The Kim Ku faction's crimes).<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, serious as this strife was, a considerable part of it was manipulated and exaggerated by China. They then reported these exaggerations to the Allies. Korean factional strife thus used in the service of China's Korea policy.

<sup>36</sup> Toynbee's left a comment as follows: "The Korea Committee members find themselves unable to agree that the factionalism of the pre-1910 regime in Korea 'was mainly an accompaniment of the unique social conditions of the time,' and they doubt whether the factionalism displayed today by Korean politicians in exile can be correctly diagnosed as an occupational disease. The factionalism of the Koreans themselves in the pre-1910 period was heightened by the intrigues of foreign powers, but they would point out that the geographical situation of Korea, which is a permanent factor in her political fortunes, is likely to continue to expose her to the play of competing pressures from abroad. If Japanese-trained, Chinese-trained, American-trained and Russian-trained Korean politicians, with their differing outlooks and politics, were to be allowed to return from exile and shake down together as best they could without assistance or control, there might be at least as much factionalism as there was before 1910. [Draft on General Conditions in Korea, August 20, 1945, 46471 (6531/1653/23).]"

<sup>37</sup> Li Guangji zhi Zhu Jiahua wei baogao liu yu Hanren jiu fenhan (On the dispute of the Koreans in Chongqing, Li Guangji to Zhu Jiahua), September 24, 1943, *Shiliao*, p. 592.

Korean nationalists at the time stressed this point. The matter first surfaced in the early days following the outbreak of the Pacific War, in a conversation between Cho Soang and Gauss. Asked in February 1942 whether the KPG had been recognized by the Chinese government, Cho admitted that it had not, and “whisperingly” suggested that this was perhaps due to the desire of China to bring Korea under its suzerainty after the defeat of Japan.<sup>38</sup> Frequently thereafter, Korean nationalists accused China of using the split among the Korean groups as a pretext for non-recognition of the KPG.

#### RESTRAINTS IMPOSED ON THE KPG AND THE INDEPENDENCE ARMY

The KMT government intensified its interference with, and control over, Korean groups in manifold ways. Even if the war against Japan created a certain level of solidarity between the Chinese and the Koreans, the former did not allow the latter the authority to take independent action in Chinese territories. A “Guide for Activities of the Korean Independence Army,” issued in November 1941, reflected this fact. It stipulated that while the KIA and the KPG were in China fighting Japan, they would be directly under the control of the Military Affairs Commission of the KMT government. They would receive commands and military orders solely from China, and not via other political interventions (Article 1); the KPG and the KIP were separate entities with no special relationship (Article 2); when the Koreans took action in the direction of Korean territory and the areas adjoining its borders, it must conform to China’s war efforts, and be subject to Chinese authorities (Article 3); the KIA was to take orders from the Military Commission, even in joint operations in Korea (Article 8); prior to the termination of the war, when the Korean army and the KPG would have already pushed into Korean territory, the relations between that army and the KPG were to be fixed anew through discussions, and the KIA would continue to take orders from the Chinese Commission for Coordinated Warfare (Article 9), etc.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Gauss to SS, February 12, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/81.

<sup>39</sup> The original and translated texts are found in Gauss to SS, December 11, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.01/200. For Korean records, see Yi Hyōnhui, pp. 343–344. Yi, however, eliminated, either intentionally or unintentionally, the latter part of Article Eight, thus neglecting China’s true intent of exercising control over the Independence Army even outside China. For the Chinese text, Junweihui ban gongting zhi Li Qingtian wei ni Guangfujun huodong zhunshen jiu tiaodian (On Nine Guidelines of the Korean Restoration Army, Military Commission to Li Ch’ōngch’ōn), November 13, 1942, *Shiliao*, p. 337.

At the time, the “Guide for Activities” was completely shrouded in mystery, even though it was the only and most clearly stated official document on relations between the KMT and the KPG. Very few Koreans knew of its existence, and few Chinese officials were familiar with it.<sup>40</sup> Ambassador Gauss tried without success to ascertain who precisely had drawn up and accepted these conditions, on either the Chinese or Korean side. We can assume, however, that the final responsibility for it lay with War Minister He Yingqin (Ho Yingch’ in) and Generalissimo Jiang, as they possessed the highest authority in the Chinese military establishment.<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, Chinese records reveal that the “Guide for Activities” was not an isolated document but was drafted as part of “general guidelines to assist the Korean independence movement.” Zhu Jiahua (Chu Chiahua), the director of the KMT Organizational Department, played a leading role in the matter.<sup>42</sup> In any event, regardless of who held the final responsibility, China’s intention was to take the initiative in a united front against Japan by officially making the Korean independence movement a partner.<sup>43</sup>

This “Guide for Activities” was the best option that the KMT government had in late 1941, since the KMT’s grip on power had weakened to a considerable extent following the outbreak of a broader war against Japan, involving Britain and the United States. Worse, the CCP was expanding the Red Army (renamed as the Eighth Route Army, according to the United Front agreement in 1937) in North China, and was challenging the KMT authorities by forming a “border government.” The KMT government was afraid of “another Eighth Route Army problem” if it were to permit the organization of a Korean independence army on Chinese territory.<sup>44</sup> Edgar Snow, the American journalist and biographer of Mao Zedong, commented that the KMT government hesitated in assisting the Korean army because it worried that there were over a million Koreans in Manchuria, and another two hundred thousand

<sup>40</sup> Military Attaché to MIS, December 11, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.01/228. “It is said that Kim Ku, the chairman of the KPG, originally accepted these conditions when his party was in great need of outside assistance in the form of recognition and financial subsidy. At present, there is dissension within the cabinet, because it is felt that these conditions will exercise too much control over the domestic and foreign policy of the Koreans, particularly if there is eventually an independent Korea.”

<sup>41</sup> Memorandum by Clubb, December 7, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.01/200.

<sup>42</sup> Zhu Jiahua zhi He Yingqin wei qing cong su ling chi Guangfujun chenglian (On Hastening the Formation of the Korean Restoration Army, Zhu Jiahua to He Yingqing), July 3, 1941, *Shiliao*, p.326.

<sup>43</sup> This part comes from the preface of the “Guide for Activities,” which was recorded in only one document. (Military Attaché to MIS, December 11, 1942, LM.79, R.2, 895.01/228.)

<sup>44</sup> Enclosure in Gauss to SS, November 25, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.01/199.



in Siberia, and that a large proportion of them were Communists and trained soldiers.<sup>45</sup> Despite the meager size of the army and its arms, the Korean troops were likely to move to a frontier of Manchuria as the war against Japan developed.

The significance of this document for Korea was that China did not intend to recognize the KPG in the first place. China referred to the KPG as the “KPG of the Korean Independence Party,” deflecting its identity in a direction that was the opposite of what the KPG had hoped. Despite the KMT government’s past pledges that it was ready to grant recognition to the KPG, the document did not recognize the KPG’s legitimacy, much less guarantee any special treatment to distinguish it from the other Korean groups. In addition, by separating the KIA from the KPG, China deprived the KPG of a crucial means of competing with the other groups. As noted in the previous chapter, the United States refused to recognize the KPG on the grounds that all groups in the liberation movement must be treated equally. In essence, China’s policy was not any different. Considering that the “Guide to Activities” was drafted in late 1941, one might conclude that the efforts China made the following year to encourage the Washington government to recognize the KPG, when it raised the issue of recognition with the Allied governments, were a sham. If such efforts were sincere, China must be blamed for the short-sightedness and inconsistency of its KPG policy.

The KMT then did not take any serious action to foster the Korean army, which had an affiliation with the KPG. Chinese records laid a particular emphasis on the fact that the chief of staff and the head of the Political Section of the KIA should be Chinese, appointed by the Military Commission. Shao claimed, however, that the Koreans did “request” that the KMT dispatch Chinese political and staff officers for the training of the KIA.<sup>46</sup> Accordingly, a “Zhao” (Cho in Korean)

<sup>45</sup> Snow, Edgar, “China’s Japanese Allies,” *Asia*, June 1939, p. 343. Snow wrote: “Koreans are particularly helpful to Chinese military intelligence and espionage. Koreans can occasionally pose and pass as Japanese in army and political circles. The Communist Eighth Route Army especially relied on information reaching them through Japanese and Korean intelligence channels functioning in the occupied areas. Koreans could easily raise a division in China if given the proper facilities by the Chinese government, but the conservatives at Chongqing were unwilling to create a large revolutionary force, fearing the effects both on foreign opinion and on the KMT troops.” [*Ibid.*, enclosure in Historical Note on Korea, March 3, 1942, 31773 (2101/623/61).]

<sup>46</sup> These points were highlighted in a memorandum, presumably compiled by Zhu, titled *Hanguo guangfujun zongsilingbu zanzing bianzhibiao* (Temporary Formation of the Korean Restoration Army), in *Junweihui ban gongting zhi Li Qingtian wei ni Guangfujun huodong zhunshen jiu tiao dian* (On Nine Guidelines of the Korean Restoration Army, Military Commission to Li Ch’ongch’ön), November 13, 1942, *Shiliao*, p. 338. See Shao, pp. 43–44.

and a “Huang” (Hwang in Korean) were appointed for this job. The head instructor and his assistants were all to be Chinese.<sup>47</sup> In addition, the Chinese kept Korean commanders away from their troops, so that no military movement might be carried out. Vice Commander-in-Chief Kim Yaksan had wished to join his forces in Xi’an, but had been prevented from traveling to that region by the Chinese authorities. This might be excusable in light of his Communist affiliation. However, Commander-in-Chief Yi Ch’ongch’ön, who had been on extremely good terms with KMT officials, was also more or less permanently resident in Chongqing.<sup>48</sup> Korean prisoners were released, presumably for service in the KIA, after a certain period of indoctrination in the Three People’s Principles (*sanmin zhuyi*). Service in the army was not attractive, however, as the trainees were not given sufficient rations and were usually half-starved. For this reason, the Koreans at Chongqing did not encourage other Koreans from the occupied areas to come to free China and enlist in the army, even when the Chinese promised to give them training and equipment. The Koreans thus became cynical as to whether the Chinese had ever had any intention of really arming them or giving them a chance to do anything.<sup>49</sup>

The Three People’s Principles were an ideological tool for the Chinese in controlling the Koreans in Chongqing. The KMT wanted the KPG to subscribe to the *sanmin zhuyi*, and make it the official political doctrine governing the Korean nationalistic movement. In a narrower sense, the purpose was to inculcate the Korean leaders and soldiers with Chinese political ideology, so that the Koreans in China would not turn their backs on the KMT. In a broader sense, it was certainly a statement of “Sino-centrism.” In his first meeting with Kim Ku, Jiang Jieshi stressed that the Three People’s Principles applied to all the peoples of Asia, and not just to the Chinese.<sup>50</sup> Sun Ke, the son of Sun Wen (Sun Yatsen), one of the officials who was most friendly to Korea, had previously promised \$10,000,000

<sup>47</sup> Talk of Clubb with m Taehyöng (David Um), enclosure in Gauss to SS, December 7, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.01/200.

<sup>48</sup> Enclosure in Gauss to SS, December 11, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.01/200.

<sup>49</sup> Enclosure in Gauss to SS, April 18, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/335; Gauss to SS, June 29, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/6–2944 and its enclosure. In his diary, Kim Ku writes: “My Chongqing days mainly consisted of leading the KPG and taking refuge [from Japanese raids]. I ate and slept only in between.” Liu interprets this statement to indicate that he was almost incapable of any meaningful activities. [Liu, Xiaoyuan, “Sino-American Diplomacy over Korea during World War II,” *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 1–2 (Summer 1992), p. 237. See also Kim, Ku, *Paekpöm Ilchi* (Diary of Kim Ku), first published in 1947 (Seoul: Pöm’usa, 1984), p. 248.]

<sup>50</sup> Enclosure in Gauss to SS, June 29, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/6–2944. See also Kim Ku, p. 226.

(or perhaps CN\$10,000,000) to the KPG, but later insisted that the implementation of this promise was conditional on the Koreans' acceptance of his father's political doctrine as Korea's basic political philosophy.<sup>51</sup> Chinese writings described the Koreans, among them Kim Ku and Kim Yaksan, as having received these Chinese principles, which were subtly recommended by Jiang himself, without much strife. Shao explained this matter in an apologetic vein: Shao himself had told the KPG leaders in a casual fashion that the *sanmin zhuyi* were not the monopoly of the Chinese people, but that they stood for such universal doctrines as democracy, nationalism and equal opportunity, and, like any political principle, could be applied across borders.<sup>52</sup> This is similar, however, to the tactics of the old imperial China in culturally assimilating neighboring peoples by propagating Confucianism as the standard of social behavior. Yet, according to American documents, while the KPG allowed individuals to subscribe to any political or religious doctrine they wished, they considered as unacceptable the demand that the *sanmin zhuyi* be adopted as official Korean policy. The Koreans decided to forego KMT financial aid, rather than obey this edict, and the issue was deferred.<sup>53</sup>

China suppressed and controlled the growth of the Korean Army in this manner. This "Chinese way" was extended to controlling the KPG, which mirrored the old conventions of the Sinocentric past, when China considered neighboring political entities as only semi-civilized at best. Jiang Jieshi did not designate one ministry or one person to take charge of the Korean question, but handpicked members of a triumvirate that would oversee the KPG. This was decided by Jiang personally, after several meetings with government leaders.<sup>54</sup> The three members of this triumvirate were General He Yingqin, the chief of staff and minister of war; Zhu Jiahua, the director of the KMT Organizational Department; and Wu Tiecheng (Wu Tehchen), the secretary-general of the KMT's Central Executive Committee, and the Generalissimo's personal secretary. In addition, Shao Yulin, Jiang's senior secretary, was appointed as special advisor to the KPG at the request of Kim Ku. Shao was a leading specialist on Korean affairs within the KMT, and personally maintained friendly relations with

<sup>51</sup> Enclosure in Gauss to SS, November 25, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.01/199.

<sup>52</sup> Shao, p. 46; Yang, Daqing, "Between Lips and Teeth: Chinese-Korean Relations, 1910–1950," in Cumings, Bruce (ed.) *Chicago Occasional Papers on Korea* (Chicago: Center for East Asian Studies, University of Chicago, 1991), p. 69.

<sup>53</sup> Gauss to SS, June 29, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/6–2944 and its enclosure. A young Chinese officer of the KIA (Zhao or Huang) was described as good for nothing but social life and talking about the Three People's Principles. (Talk of m Taehyŏng with Clubb.)

<sup>54</sup> Shao, p. 31.

Kim Ku and other KPG officials. For Chongqing, this arrangement might have been necessary to avoid giving the Allies the impression that the Chinese government was inclined to give diplomatic recognition to the KPG.

Yet the Chinese policy caused difficulties for the KPG. Shao admitted that the triumvirate's handling of Korean affairs inadvertently planted seeds of division among the Koreans.<sup>55</sup> Of the three, Zhu Jiahua was the leading figure in handling Korean affairs, in his capacity as chairman of a commission that oversaw frontier areas, including Tibet and Mongolia, and, in particular, as one of the directors of the Sino-Korean Cultural Association.<sup>56</sup> This was an indication, as Gauss commented, that China was using such Chinese-controlled organizations to pay more attention to neighboring countries, in an attempt to reassert Chinese authority in border areas.<sup>57</sup> In any case, the KMT delegated the Korean question to an advocate of Sino-centrism, treating the matter as a "frontier issue." The Koreans felt particularly indignant over such treatment, which meant that their tie with China was brought under the traditional Chinese concept of a tributary relationship. At the time, the conflict between the KMT government and the CCP did not mean only a power struggle within China; it was, rather, a war of ideology and world outlook in the creation of a new society. While the CCP formed a united front with other ethnic minorities, championing the equality of all peoples, the KMT approached the Korean question in terms of Sino-centrism, a symbol of inequality par excellence, albeit advocating a benign Chinese leadership over Asian peoples. Even Shao described the Sino-Korean relationship as one of an "autonomous region" under weak Chinese influence, similar to the British Empire's relationship to its dominions.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, a "Political College" with 200 Korean students had been established, presumably in Yan'an (Yenan),

<sup>55</sup> Shao, p. 28.

<sup>56</sup> The Sino-Korean Cultural Association was inaugurated at Chongqing on October 11, 1942, with Dr. Sun Ke as president and General Wu Tiesheng and Zhu Jiahua, together with two Koreans, as members of the standing committee of the Board of Directors. [Seymour to Eden, February 28, 1943, 35956 (1462/723/23).] The *Shiliao*, a Chinese compilation of source materials, while devoting one chapter to activities of the association from its creation with Chinese monetary aid, and to exchanges of correspondence during the postwar period, does not leave any record on membership composition. [pp. 686–687.]

<sup>57</sup> Gauss to SS, December 19, 1942, *FRUS, 1942, China*, p. 748. According to Edmund Clubb, the second secretary of the U.S. Embassy at Chongqing at the time, and a well-known China specialist later, Zhu had studied in Germany, and was an important figure in the fascist movement in China. (Enclosure in Gauss to SS, December 11, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.01/200.)

<sup>58</sup> Shao, p. 12.

with help from the CCP, and many young Koreans were making their way to the area.<sup>59</sup>

Second, while each of the aforementioned “triumvirate” held responsibility for the Koreans, there was no coordination in their handling of Korean problems. One of the factors in the disunity among Korean groups were the circumstances in which the Koreans were forced to deal with these three persons.<sup>60</sup> According to John Service, one of the U.S. embassy staff and later a China specialist, the three never held meetings, and never agreed with each other. Each of them also insisted that the KPG should deal with him, and him alone. In the end, the KPG could not help but fall victim to this bickering. It was not an exaggeration to say that the Koreans in Chongqing had three masters. China’s policy could not possibly be consistent in these circumstances. In April 1944, before the Congress of the KPG opened, Zhu summoned Kim Ku and the other Korean leaders and very curtly told them that he did not want there to be any “Communists or leftists” in the KPG. This was a downright contradiction of what the Koreans had been told by the Chinese government up to that moment, since they had been told that they were to unite all parties and factions. The Koreans met and decided to refuse, if necessary, all financial aid from the KMT, and they did elect some left-wing representatives at the Congress.<sup>61</sup>

Obviously, the distribution of financial aid for the Korean independence movement was meant to encourage Korean divisions. While the majority of the subsidies went to the KIP (and thus to the KPG), the remainder went to General Kim Yaksan for the KRP. David An suggested to Sun Ke and General Wu that they cease subsidizing the KPG until the Koreans reached an agreement among themselves.<sup>62</sup> Kim Yaksan occupied a somewhat difficult position, since he had connections with both Zhou Enlai, the Chongqing Communist representative under the united front agreement between the KMT and the CCP, and the Blue Shirts, an ultra-rightist group.<sup>63</sup> According

<sup>59</sup> Memorandum by Division of Japan Affairs, December 18, 1944, LM79, R.3, 895.77/28. It was also reported that these Koreans had some connections “right on through to home base.”

<sup>60</sup> Gaus to SS, April 15, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/337.

<sup>61</sup> Gaus to SS, June 29, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/6–2944 and enclosures. See also Kim Ku, p. 240.

<sup>62</sup> Gaus to SS, April 18, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/335 and enclosures.

<sup>63</sup> Gaus to SS, December 11, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.01/200 and enclosures. Kim Yaksan, a graduate of the Huangpu (Whampoa) Military Academy near Guangzhou, had personal connections with his former colleagues in the KMT government, including leaders of this ultra-rightist group. [Hu, Chunhui, “Chen Guofu yu Hanguo duli yundong” (Chen Guofu and Korean Independence Movement), *Zhong-Han guanxishi guoji tankaohui lunwenji* (Proceedings of International Conference on the History of Sino-Korean Relations, 960–1949), pp. 277–278; Shao, pp. 25–26.]

to the U.S. embassy, the KPG and the KIP were supported and subsidized by the “CC [Central Club, or the initials of Chen brothers] clique” of the KMT, while the Kim Yaksan group and the KRP were supported by the Chinese military, chiefly the Blue Shirts. So long as these disparate Chinese groups continued to provide such monetary support, the Korean factions could hardly be unified.<sup>64</sup> As Kim Yaksan had been known for his leftist inclinations, and for his association with the CCP, the KMT’s aid clearly indicated that the Chinese were adhering to their usual “divide and rule” policy when it came to the Korean movement in China.

Chinese claims to have tried to end the factional struggle between the two Korean groups cannot therefore be justified; rather, the Chinese seemed to encourage division, or at least to obstruct harmony. The Chinese Foreign Ministry stated informally that when the Korean groups did unite in 1943, the Koreans’ unity had not greatly altered the Chinese government’s attitude toward the Korean question. It did not, in other words, see a direct relation between this unity and recognition of the KPG.<sup>65</sup> The KMT felt uncomfortable that the Korean parties were able to come to an agreement, while the KMT had made no effort to take similar action in regard to the various Chinese political parties. It was perhaps for this reason that they prevented the publication of the Korean manifesto, which declared this new unity. As a result, only the *Xinhua Ribao*, a Communist paper, published it, although the document had been given for publication to all the Chinese newspapers in Chongqing.<sup>66</sup>

The KMT government’s stance on the KPG reflected a harder line from late 1942, as it entered a period of a reckless adventurism, under the assumption that, with the entry of the United States and Britain, victory in the war was now guaranteed. In spite of the KMT government’s repeated repudiation of “Chinese imperialism,” there were suspicions that China was striving to return to the old sovereign-dependent relationship with Korea.<sup>67</sup> This was suggested first of all by the fact that the Chinese authorities took a negative

<sup>64</sup> Vincent to SS, March 17, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/244. The Blue Shirts, led by Wang Fengshan, were said to be strongly entrenched in the Generalissimo’s favor by virtue of Wang’s espionage activities in Japan prior to the outbreak of Sino-Japanese hostilities. Thus, those who handled the Korean question were in possession of solid and practical power in Chinese domestic politics. [*Ibid.*] American reports on the matter were not short of criticism. See also Gauss to SS, January 7, 1942, *FRUS, 1942, China*, pp. 192–193, 212–226.

<sup>65</sup> Vincent to SS, March 13, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/225.

<sup>66</sup> Gauss to SS, May 15, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/337 and enclosures.

<sup>67</sup> T-A23 Report by Owen Lattimore on China and Chinese Opinion regarding Postwar Problems, March 18, 1942, *Yi and Chōng*, vol. 1, p. 73. See also aforementioned Service and Langdon memo. *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 6, pp. 493, 780.

view of any contacts between local Koreans and the foreign embassies in Chongqing. The British armed forces in India and Burma were reported to have employed a few Koreans to translate captured Japanese documents, and to question Japanese prisoners. They had found the Koreans so useful that they were endeavoring to obtain the services of additional Koreans in China. Yet the Koreans stated that the Chinese were placing all possible obstructions in their path.<sup>68</sup>

In another case, one Korean, who was sent to China from the Soviet Union as the representative of a league of some 800,000 Koreans in Siberia, with the aim of contacting the KPG, was granted a Chinese visa by a Chinese consulate in Russia. When he arrived in Xinjiang, his passport was taken away, although he was allowed to proceed. Upon his arrival in Gansu Province, however, he was arrested without any charges and taken to Shaanxi Province, where he was detained in a prisoner of war camp. It was not until nearly three years later that the local Koreans came to know of his existence, his presence having been made known to them through a representative of the International Red Cross.<sup>69</sup> In this way, China forced the KPG to manage foreign affairs through the Chinese government alone, just as it had hindered any independent contact between Korea and other foreign countries in the 1880s.<sup>70</sup> Obviously, this dual stance of China also resulted from persistent disparagement of the Koreans, and from certain anti-Chinese activities made by the Koreans under Japan's occupation.<sup>71</sup>

#### RESPONSE OF THE KPG TO THE KMT POLICY

The KPG was well aware of the significance of China's Korea policy, as well as its dual attitude. Cho Soang said that the Chinese government could be divided roughly into three groups on the basis of their attitude toward the Korean independence movement. First, there was the "diplomatic group," which might be considered generally

<sup>68</sup> Gauss to SS, December 11, 1942/200, LM79, R.2, 895.01 and enclosures. November 15, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/300 and enclosures; April 18, 1944, 895.01/335 and enclosures.

<sup>69</sup> Gauss to SS, April 18, 1944, enclosures to LM79, R.2, 895.01/335.

<sup>70</sup> Three conditions, which Li Hongzhang imposed on the Korean mission to Washington in 1887, included prior consultations with the Chinese legation, see Nelson, M. Frederick, *Korea and the Old Orders in Eastern Asia* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1945), p. 187.

<sup>71</sup> British documents noted that the Chinese tended to despise and dislike Koreans, calling them *Gaoliren*. They saw the Koreans in many cases as "jackals of the Japanese," as Koreans in northern China had taken part in smuggling, narcotics traffic, and other activities harmful to China. [Japanese Administration in Korea, January 21, 1944, 41813 (990/443/23).]

favorable to recognizing the KPG. The names Wang Zhonghui, Guo Daiji (foreign minister, May–December 1941), Gu Weijun (Wellington Koo, ambassador to London and foreign minister after December 12, 1941) and Sun Ke were mentioned as persons who could be considered favorable to the KPG viewpoint. Second, there was the “military group,” which was inclined to view Korea as China’s “life-line,” and therefore wanted to see the maintenance of Chinese interests there. Third, there was the political “Confucius–Mencius group,” which viewed Korea as being closely allied to China in terms of culture, and therefore suited to amalgamation into modern Chinese cultural concepts.<sup>72</sup> For this last group, Cho did not provide a detailed description. He seems to have perceived them merely as trying to maintain the sovereign–dependency relationship of the past in some modified form. He believed that the diplomats were trying to recognize the KPG, while the military were opposed. For instance, when Guo Daiji became minister of foreign affairs, he informed the KPG that China was prepared to recognize the KPG within just a short time. However, after the military clique got wind of this proposed action, Guo then informed the KPG leaders that the time had not yet come for recognition.<sup>73</sup>

This illustrates how naïve the KPG leadership could be in its understanding of the factions in China, and of their respective Korea policies. Chinese diplomats did seem favorable in their public comments, as shown by the various statements they made abroad.<sup>74</sup> Yet they handled the issue in terms of China’s overall foreign policy, particularly in terms of the war against Japan. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs consulted the American embassy over the Korean question, to try to coordinate some bilateral policy.<sup>75</sup> It functioned merely as a spokesperson to the outside world on the Korean question, however, while most of the real power lay in the hands of conservative and military factions. Naturally enough, perhaps, Cho did interpret China’s policy only in terms of factions or competition within the KMT government. He also clearly perceived that there was a long-lasting notion of Sinocentrism involved in all of this, along with an expected strategic awareness.

<sup>72</sup> Gauss to SS, December 11, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.01/200. See also DFEA memo, April 22, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/266.

<sup>73</sup> Vincent to SS, March 17, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/244; Gauss to SS, March 25, 1942, *FRUS, 1942*, vol. 1, p. 866. See also, Yang, p. 75.

<sup>74</sup> DFEA Memo on MID report, December 3, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/9–2043; Salisbury Memo, September 9, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/285.

<sup>75</sup> “Dr. Soong asserted that the question of recognition of the KPG is not one for China alone but for the United Nations.” (Gauss to SS, February 2, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/313.)



Yet there was no alternative for the KPG but to rely on China, since the other powers were only perfunctory in dealing with the Korean question. However limited, China at least provided protection, as well as financial and military support for the KPG. It was therefore necessary to rely on China's support, both for the long-term goal of achieving independence, and for the more immediate goal of winning international recognition. The KPG, moreover, believed that since Japan had made Korea a base for further advances into the continent, the Chinese and the Koreans, given their close historical and geopolitical relationship (which people in both countries used to call a "lips and teeth relationship"), needed to join hands to liberate the peninsula. But, while admitting such dependency, the KPG was never off guard. The "Guide for Activities" had, in particular, left a lingering suspicion among the Koreans, who were unanimous in questioning or criticizing China's intentions, regardless of their factional affiliations:

Some Koreans greatly lament the existence of this agreement for it compromises the future of Korea. One Korean is very strong in his denunciation that Koreans know where they stand under Japanese rule, but wonder about the intentions of the Chinese government after the war.<sup>76</sup>

The KPG was therefore reluctant to comment on the very existence of such a document. When the document was made public, the Kim Yaksan group insisted at the unified Korean Congress that they should request that the Chinese annul the agreement. Kim Ku reportedly lost much of the popular support that he might have enjoyed in the KPG because of his alleged acceptance of its conditions.<sup>77</sup> Eventually, the Chinese realized the adverse effect that the "Guide for Activities" had had on KMT-KPG relations. In February 1945, the KMT belatedly replaced it with a document called "Assistance to the Korean Restoration Army," which was acceptable to both sides,<sup>78</sup> and Shao later excused the Chinese control of the Korean army as being "temporary." In the face of the condition that the KIA should no longer continue to exist, Cho Soang once suggested that, while the Korean army was stationed in Chinese territory, the arrangement should be

<sup>76</sup> MID to SS, January 12, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/216.

<sup>77</sup> Gaus to SS, December 11, 1942. LM79, R.2, 895.01/200; George Atcheson to SS, August 13, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/280; Memorandum of conversation, May 16, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/338. The Kim Yaksan group at the time of its amalgamation with the KPG's Independence Army was unaware of the existence of the "nine conditions." Gaus to SS, November 25, 1942, enclosure to LM79, R.2, 895.01/199]

<sup>78</sup> Shao, pp. 43-44, 34.

along the general lines of the five conditions established for cooperation between the Czechoslovak and the Russian armies in the USSR.<sup>79</sup>

Another background factor in the Chinese influence on Korean affairs was the general lack of intelligence on the part of its two Western Allies. The American government was well aware of the conflict among the Korean groups. Whenever the Korean question came up for a full discussion, the United States and Britain keenly felt their lack of information on the subject, especially on the Korean groups in China. These refugee groups were likely to be in charge of postwar Korea, and the majority of them were based in China.<sup>80</sup> In Britain, when the Korea Committee was established in the Foreign Office, it was noted that more information was required on the different groups of Koreans in exile, and their leading personalities. It was doubtful how much information of this kind could be obtained through the embassies in Chongqing, Washington, or Moscow.<sup>81</sup>

China once again played a significant but unperceived role in deciding the future of Korea. The American embassy in Chongqing did have direct contact with some members of the KPG, yet its main informants were the Chinese and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which the Americans tended to place more trust. In British records, there is no evidence that the British ever contacted members of the KPG. This means that information on Korea was generally

<sup>79</sup> Gauss to SS, November 25, 1942, enclosures to LM79, R.2, 895.01/199. At the time of World War I, the independence movement by the Czech corps against Austria proceeded under a comprehensive agreement with the Russian government, as the latter began its transformation from a Tsarist, to a “provisional,” and then to a Bolshevik regime. The Russian provisional government allowed the Czech corps to fight on the southwestern frontiers as reinforcements. The Czech corps reaped considerable success, but suffered great frustration and betrayal at the hands of both the Tsarist and the Bolshevik governments. See Bradley, John F. N., *The Czechoslovak Legion in Russia, 1917–1920* (New York: Eastern European Monographs, Boulder, 1991), chapters 1–2; Hoyt, Edwin P., *The Army without a Country* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 36–47; Morley, James William, *The Japanese Thrust into Siberia, 1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), p. 233ff.

<sup>80</sup> “The Department of State found the majority of the [telegraphic] intercepts regarding Korean matters distinctly helpful to the work of the DFEA. These [reports on] activities of Koreans in the United States are an important source of our information regarding the relations of Koreans in free China with Koreans in the United States.... The DFEA would regret the discontinuance of the supplying of this Division with copies of such intercepts, as discontinuance would handicap the Division in its work concerning Korean matters.” [Office of Censorship to Shaw (Division of Foreign Activity Correlation, SS), May 10, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/326 and DFEA minutes.]

<sup>81</sup> Minutes of Korea Committee, June 7, 1944, 40798 (4320/4320/70). The British government appreciatively told the United States that the information provided was most useful for the Korea Committee. (Sansom to Ballantine, July 11, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/7–144.)

conveyed to the Allies through a Chinese prism. The Chinese took advantage of this opportunity. They delivered information that was favorable to China, with such interpretation as they saw fit. While the Chinese criticized Japan's colonial policy, they declared at the same time that the Koreans lacked the competence necessary for independence, since the Japanese had so thoroughly trained them to be dependent. As KPG officials pointed out, this reflected the subtle and vicious propaganda against the KPG that the Japanese were spreading in China.<sup>82</sup> The Japanese complained that Korean nationalists abroad were mostly "ignorant and arrogant." They publicly denounced them as having only been engaged in factional struggles since the KPG was established in 1919.<sup>83</sup> Yet one cannot attribute the Western powers' negative impression of Korea simply to Japanese or Chinese propaganda. Going further back, the image of governmental incompetence had been branded on many minds since the time of the late Chosŏn Dynasty. The KPG's many inherent weaknesses made it appear to be an organization that could neither become a menace to Japan, nor a valuable partner to the Allies. More importantly, the nature of the Korean independence movement was inclined more toward diplomatic solutions than armed struggle. Yet just as Japan had misinformed the West about the Korean nation ever since the annexation, China engaged, albeit in more cautious ways, in the same sort of "smear campaign" against the Korean people and their fight for independence in the 1940s.

Under such circumstances, the KPG seriously considered moving its headquarters to the United States. China's intervention and restraints served as one good reason. Yet there was still a tangle of other elements involved. As the war began to look more favorable for the Allies, the KPG judged it to be very important for the future of Korea, and for the government itself, to contribute to the war effort against Japan, as the United States was demanding. Since 1944, Japan had conscripted Korean laborers for its own war efforts abroad, and the KPG felt it had to show its determination and ability to counter this. There seemed to be great possibilities for mobilizing

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<sup>82</sup> According to a conversation between David (Wŏnsaeng) An, the nephew of An Chunggŭn, who assassinated Itō Hirobumi in 1909, and an American embassy official, the Japanese Communist Party, together with some groups in China, including the Blue Shirts, had been strongly criticized by the KPG for spreading propaganda unfavorable to the KPG in the Japanese-occupied areas of China. This type of propaganda merely played into the hands of the Japanese, who were able to utilize such materials to exacerbate the disunity of the Korean factions and to discredit the KPG. (Vincent to SS, March 17, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/244.)

<sup>83</sup> Ku, Daeyeol, *Korea under Colonialism – The March First Movement and Anglo-Japanese Relations* (Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society-KB, 1985), pp. 218–220.

large numbers of Koreans in China. Unity, which had been presented as a prerequisite for the promised support of the Allies, now seemed complete. Should the KPG move to Washington, the Koreans' dissatisfaction with the Chinese government and their desire to be freed from dependence on China would be largely resolved.<sup>84</sup> The KPG tried to convey such ideas to the American embassy in Chongqing, and sent an agent to India to facilitate an exchange of information with Syngman Rhee in Washington. The Chinese did not, at least outwardly, show any objection to the KPG proposal of moving its headquarters to Washington. Later, Foreign Minister Song and Generalissimo Jiang said that even a short-term visit to Washington by Korean representatives would create more interest in the East Asian situation, and in the promise of Korean independence.<sup>85</sup> The United States, however, were correct in their prediction that the Chinese authorities would not give the Koreans passports or other travel documents for such a trip.<sup>86</sup> By this time, the KPG was enraged at the Allies' inaction in the Korean cause. Faced with Chinese obstruction and American and British indifference, some Koreans implied that they might, as a last resort, end up regarding Soviet Russia as their only hope.<sup>87</sup> Yet, after the Cairo Conference, this issue was overshadowed by the whirlwind debate on the phrase "in due course," and faded away without further consideration.

#### SINO-AMERICAN COOPERATION AND CONFRONTATION OVER KOREA POLICY

U.S. policy concerning the China-KPG relationship was potentially important for the future of Korea. The United States, even if it had a fairly good understanding of the developments between the two parties, refrained from taking any action. The American regard for the KPG had been thoroughly negative at first, but this slightly changed post-1943, when the leftist KRP joined the KPG by formally merging

<sup>84</sup> Enclosure to Gauss to SS, February 12, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/81; November 25, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.01/199; May 19, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/338.

<sup>85</sup> Enclosure to Gauss to SS, April 18, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/335.

<sup>86</sup> Gauss to SS, December 9, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.01/197; DFEA memo, January 23, 1943, 895.01/199; December 11, 1942, 895.01/200 and enclosures; Minutes of DFEA, June 5, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/337. The DFEA further records: "Kim Ku, the President of the KPG, is to resign at an October conference and Syngman Rhee may be designated as President of the KPG which may be moved to Washington." (DFEA memo, June 10, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/267.) Kim Ku recorded in his diary that the Chinese authorities refused to issue his visa on the ground that he had maintained "some connections with the United States." (Kim Ku, p. 329.)

<sup>87</sup> Gauss to SS, November 15, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/300.

with the KIP. The Americans believed that the increased influence of the KRP in the new government would lessen the pressure for immediate recognition of the KPG, since the KRP had not advocated for recognition as urgently as the KIP. In this sense, the United States predicted that the KPG would now direct most of its efforts to securing material assistance and military aid, rather than in appeals for immediate recognition.<sup>88</sup> The United States, however, turned down the Korean demand for Lend-Lease funds. Gauss explained to Cho Soang that U.S. aid to China was insufficient for various reasons, including the lack of transportation facilities, and reminded him that the new KPG must function with the knowledge and consent, at least tacitly, of the Chinese government. The United States was likely to face "multitudinous demands" if it should lend-lease arms and equipment to a Korean army in China, without the consent and agreement of the Chinese government.<sup>89</sup>

On the other hand, the United States looked favorably on, and accepted, KMT policies on the KPG. The Chinese government was "wisely," and of necessity, being very cautious in regard to the Koreans, and pursuing a "watch and see" policy. The "Guide for Activities" agreement was indicative of close Chinese restrictions on the organization and direction of Korean military units, but was not clear evidence of a desire to dominate postwar Korea, even if the Cho group saw an imperialistic intent.<sup>90</sup> Zhu Jiahua's "extortion" of Korean unity was also favorably received. Zhu stated the matter so forcibly that many Koreans were deeply resentful of his lack of courtesy. But the "demand" for Korean unity was taken very seriously indeed, and the Koreans outwardly buried their differences to come to an understanding on the reorganization of their government.<sup>91</sup>

Through continued contact with KPG officials, however, the United States came to realize what the Chinese measures actually meant. The nine conditions in the "Guide for Activities" were, in fact, inhibiting the effective organization and activities of the Koreans. What is more, according to these conditions, the Chinese government would continue to control the Korean army even after Korea regained independence. The State Department strongly favored the utilization of Koreans in the war effort. This is probably the only aspect in which the United States looked positively on the Korean movement. It judged, however, that efforts to organize Korean groups

<sup>88</sup> Gauss to SS, May 15, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/337 and minutes of DFEA; May 19, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/338.

<sup>89</sup> Enclosures to Gauss to SS, May 19, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/338.

<sup>90</sup> DFEA memo, March 17, 1943, LM79, R.1, 895.01/89; Gauss to SS, December 9, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.01/197.

<sup>91</sup> Gauss to SS, May 15, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/337 and enclosures.

for resistance to the Japanese had failed, partly because of obstruction by the Chinese government, which apparently desired to keep the Korean independence movement under its control, and partly because of the refugee Koreans themselves, who failed to provide an adequate and united leadership.<sup>92</sup> In April 1944, the United States concluded that a very real obstacle to Korean unity lay in the support and subsidies given to the two opposing factions by the different Chinese groups.<sup>93</sup> In June of that year, it finally stated that Korean complaints were in large measure justified.<sup>94</sup>

Such changes had complex implications. The early and favorable response to Chinese policy was only a matter of course, given the importance of China as a partner in both the war and the postwar settlement of Asian affairs. Nonetheless, the United States and China were not always in agreement over the Korean question, which was chiefly due to differences in defining China's role in the postwar peace system. In short, Washington was, according to Welles, "shocked" by the Chinese demand that its supremacy in Asia be guaranteed, and that the United States should take part in the postwar settlement "only to back off." The Chinese took the attitude that the part that they had played in the war entitled them to dictate the terms under which the rights and interests of other Asian powers should be determined.<sup>95</sup>

The Chinese attitude to the Korean question was further strengthened as the war approached its end, and the "Soviet menace" loomed more clearly over the horizon. The Chinese stressed that their Korea policy was of a defensive nature, resulting from geopolitical and security concerns, based on a so-called "lips and teeth concept" between Korea and China. Weakened by war, China could not afford to confront

<sup>92</sup> DFEA Memo, July 31, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/7-2144.

<sup>93</sup> Gaus to SS, November 25, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.01/199; December 11, 1942, 895.01/200; DFEA Memo, April 22, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/242; The American embassy in Chongqing kept in touch with David An throughout the process, generally accepting his opinions. In American reports, he was introduced as An Chunggün's nephew, and was highly esteemed for his character. His views on the KPG and its relationship with China were accepted as those of "a responsible Korean" who was not inclined to any factional bias. Since late 1942, U.S. views on the interior affairs of the Korean independence movement had largely relied on the embassy staff's conversations with An. This is in striking contrast to their mistrust of KPG officials in Chongqing, and of Syngman Rhee in the United States. [DFEA memo, April 22, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/242; Vincent to SS, March 17, 1943, 895.01/244.] In the KPG records, An's major responsibility was publicity. [Tongnip Undongsa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe (Korean Independence Movement Compilation Committee), (comp.) *Tongnip undongsa charyojip* (Materials on the Korean Independence Movement), (Seoul, 1982), vol. 4, p. 876.]

<sup>94</sup> Enclosure in Gaus to SS, June 29, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/6-2944.

<sup>95</sup> Box 55, P-Min47, Meeting of March 13, 1943, Division of Political Studies, Records of Harley A. Notter, 1934-45, *Yi and Chŏng*, vol. 1, p. 306.

the Soviet menace on its own. As long as Korea became a strong independent state after the war, and could never be used as a foothold for any foreign powers, all would be well. Yet this seemed only a remote possibility. It would thus be best if China maintained complete control over the KPG, while retaining a broad range of policy alternatives. The United States, though it had acquiesced, if not consented, to China's earlier policy in its bilateral relations with the KPG, was determined that Chinese policy should not jeopardize the U.S. plan for a joint postwar settlement by the four powers. The Americans believed that the Chinese were exaggerating the Soviet menace, and were taking advantage of it for their own purposes. On the other hand, Britain and the Soviet Union were strongly opposed to the idea of granting China the status of a great power, and accepting it as one of the Big Four (see Chapter 4). It seemed, indeed, as though the Korean question was becoming trapped in Sino-Soviet rivalry, with the United States caught in between, and that the earlier ostensible unity in Sino-American Korea policies had developed the potential for serious discord.

As early as December 1942, Jiang suggested, through his American political advisor, Owen Lattimore, turning Korea into a semi-independent state under American and Chinese tutelage.<sup>96</sup> Two important issues were involved here. First, although this corresponded to the U.S. idea of trusteeship, Jiang's use of the words "under American and Chinese tutelage" meant thoroughgoing control by China. American records in the early days of the Pacific War also implicitly indicated this possibility: "Korea might be independent, a member of a possible Chinese federation... In case China were to be a loose federation, Korea might conceivably join it."<sup>97</sup> Second, and more important, was the Chinese intention to exclude Russian influence from the peninsula. Roosevelt replied that after the war the Allies would have to think of China, America, Britain and Russia as the four "big policemen" of the world, even if China and the United States were the principal major powers concerned in the Western Pacific and Indochina. In the northern part of the Pacific, however, where American territory approached Siberia, Korea and Japan, it would be undesirable to attempt to exclude Russia from such problems as Korean independence. To isolate Soviet Russia in this area would run the risk of creating tension, instead of relieving it.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Draft of Letter from Lattimore to Generalissimo, December 22, 1942, *FRUS, 1942, China*, p. 186.

<sup>97</sup> Box 54, P-31, Tentative Views of the Committee: Korea and Sakhalin, August 6, 1942, *Yi and Ch'ong*, vol. 1, p. 238; Box 54, P-236, Political Subcommittee: Summary of Views, *Ibid.*, p. 251.

<sup>98</sup> Liu's interpretation is that presumably Jiang and Roosevelt failed to agree on the issue until they met at Cairo. (Liu, pp. 239-241.) See Chapter 6.

For the United States, the prospect of Chinese hegemony was a greater menace to Korean independence than the Soviet Union, and also had a negative impact on American war strategy. Washington was thus determined that it should avoid all appearance of unqualified diplomatic support for China, especially vis-à-vis Russia. U.S.-Soviet relations had to be crafted in light of the war against Germany and Japan, as well as of designs for postwar settlements. The Americans therefore had to make every effort to learn the details of Soviet intentions in Asia. But U.S.-Russian relations in Asia were only a subordinate part of their political and military relations in Europe, and of their approaches to European postwar settlements. The U.S. government pursued a pro-Chinese policy aimed at guaranteeing China's territorial integrity and equal economic opportunity. It would, however, not be swayed by China in determining its policy toward Russia in Asia: "The initiative must be kept firmly in our hand."<sup>99</sup> It was also necessary not to assume an anti-Soviet stance in Sino-Soviet relations. Nor should Sino-Soviet conflict hinder Russia from entering into the war against Japan. In short, China's Korea policy impeded Soviet participation in the Asian war, and the United States had to give priority to its relationship with the Soviet Union.<sup>100</sup> In British records, China's Korea policy was viewed in the same way. Perhaps naturally enough, the British government would not intervene in the issue as long as China's ambitions did not hinder its East Asia policy. This meant that it did not take any action. The British embassy in Chongqing commented that China's non-recognition of the KPG was partly due to a natural reluctance to sign away Chinese claims on Korea, "though the Chinese must by now [1944] be resigned to that."<sup>101</sup>

The United States and Britain tried to underplay China's ambitions at the Cairo Conference. The so-called Korea clause of the declaration was crucial, primarily as a declaration of the general principles that had been discussed among the Allies since the early days of the Pacific War, and secondarily as a potential U.S. restraint on China's ambitions. Strangely enough, Jiang's biography is inconsistently vague about his role at the Cairo Conference in regard to the Korean question. According to Roosevelt, the Generalissimo desired a trusteeship over Korea, to be administered by Russia, China and the United States.<sup>102</sup> It was stated that China, Britain and the United States should agree to recognize Korean independence after the war. The Soviet

<sup>99</sup> Memo by Service, April 7, 1944; Memo by Clubb, *FRUS, 1944*, vol.6, pp. 777–793.

<sup>100</sup> Memo for Hopkins – Russia, August 10, 1943, *FRUS, Washington and Quebec*, pp. 625–627.

<sup>101</sup> Japanese Administration in Korea, January 21, 1944, 41813 (990/443/23).

<sup>102</sup> Proposed Agenda for President's Conferences with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, Prime Minister Churchill and Marshall Stalin, (undated). *FRUS, Cairo and Teheran*, p. 257.



Union's commitment to this agreement for the recognition of Korean independence was to be welcomed at any stage.<sup>103</sup> Yet in the Chinese records there is no reference to the issue of trusteeship. At best, one can only say that it was because the three powers had already agreed on this point. Nonetheless, given that the Cairo Conference was a venue to formalize Korea-related issues, the trusteeship proposal should have been properly addressed at least in some form.

According to his biography, on territorial questions Jiang said that the territories wrested from China by Japan, such as the four eastern provinces – i.e., the three provinces of Manchuria, plus Rehe (Jehol) – along with Taiwan and the Pescadores Islands, should be restored to their rightful owner. Again, there is no reference to the Korean peninsula, or to the Ryūkyū Islands. The biography further quotes the Korea clause of the Cairo Declaration, but without any particular comment. Later, giving no details, it casually comments that, at the time Jiang flew to Cairo to attend the conference, he had drawn up eighteen different proposals for discussion, including matters touching on Korean independence. The Generalissimo also referred to the Korean question when he stressed the conflict between China and Britain over the matter of imperialism in East Asia. Jiang wrote that Churchill did not like the idea of an independent and free Korea, believing instead that it was enough to say that Japan must give up its control of the country, lest the independence of Korea encourage the people of Malaya, India and other British colonies to develop similar ideas.<sup>104</sup>

Chinese writings insisted that Britain was against the inclusion of the Korean clause in the Cairo Declaration. They maintained that Churchill was not happy even with the mere mention of the restoration of Manchuria, Taiwan and the Pescadores to China. According to Shao, discussions were held before the conference to draft the declaration among the three powers, with the attendance of W. Averell Harriman, the U.S. ambassador to Moscow, Sir Alexander Cadogan, the British Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and Wang Chonghui, the General Secretary of the Supreme Defense Council of China. Cadogan proposed eliminating any mention of Korea, since the British government could not give its consent to any announcement on Korea without a prior discussion by the British cabinet; and, more importantly, because the three powers did not know what the Soviet reaction would be. China, however, strongly insisted that the guarantee of Korean independence was essential for China and other

<sup>103</sup> Memo by the Chinese Government, November 24, 1943, *Ibid.*, p.389.

<sup>104</sup> Furuya, Keiji, (ed.) abridged English edition of Chung-ming Chang, *Chiang Kai-shek – His Life and Times* (New York: St. John's University Press, 1981), pp. 783, 788.

Asian countries, because Japan's expansion into the continent had started with its annexation of the peninsula. Harriman also supported the Chinese position by adding that President Roosevelt did not consider the Korean question to be related to the Soviet Union. In the end, according to Chinese reports, Churchill inserted the phrase "in due course" in the final communiqué.<sup>105</sup>

According to a record of the conversation, Roosevelt pointed out to Jiang that they needed to reach a mutual agreement on the status of Korea, Indochina, Thailand, and other colonies. This implied that Roosevelt made it clear that the United States would prevent any hegemonic Chinese ambitions in the region. Jiang, concurring, stressed the necessity of granting independence to Korea. Roosevelt, however, after a conversation with Churchill, concluded that there was no doubt that China had "wide aspirations," which included the reoccupation of Manchuria and Korea.<sup>106</sup> Given that China had caused concern among the other powers over its ambitions in Southeast Asia, this conversation is rather intriguing. In addition to the above-mentioned records in the *FRUS* series, another record of a conversation among American officials, including Roosevelt and General Stilwell, provides further background information on the atmosphere in which Korea was discussed. In Roosevelt's words:

He [Stalin] agreed with me about Korea and Indo-China. We should set up commissions to take charge of those countries for twenty-five years or so, till we get them on their feet. Just like the Philippines. I asked Chiang point-blank if he wanted Indo-China, and he said, "Under no circumstances!"<sup>107</sup>

The State Department later commented: "To a limited extent, therefore, the influence of China as political spokesman for Asians seeking independence suffered from this commitment."<sup>108</sup> In such a context,

<sup>105</sup> Shao, pp. 53–54. For a similar description, see also Chang, Chiyun, *Record of the Cairo Conference* (Taibei, 1953), pp. 4–10, quoted in Weathersby, Kathryn, "Soviet Policy toward Korea: 1944–1946" (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1990), p. 136.

<sup>106</sup> Roosevelt and Chiang Dinner Meeting, November 23, 1943, *FRUS, Cairo and Teheran*, pp. 325, 334.

<sup>107</sup> C-65, Memo by General Joseph W. Stilwell of Conversation with President Roosevelt, Harry Hopkins and a fourth American whose name was deleted, Cairo, December 6, 1943, Handbook of Far Eastern Conference Discussions, Treatment of Political Questions Relating to the Far East at Multilateral Meeting of Foreign Ministers and Heads of Government 1943–1949, Research Project No.62, November 1949, in *Yi and Chông*, vol. 2, p. 135. [This quotation comes from *The Stilwell Papers* (arranged and edited by Theodore H. White), New York, 1948, pp. 251–254.]

<sup>108</sup> Department of State, *United States Policy Regarding Korea 1834–1950*, p. 87.

the Chinese were seen as unlikely to act on the matter of recognizing an independent Korea without prior consultation with the other parties involved.<sup>109</sup>

The Korean reception of the Cairo Declaration was not at all positive. Since late 1942, a year before the Cairo Declaration, rumor had had it that the Korean question was to be settled via a trusteeship. The KPG became more alert, relating the rumor to China's possible rule over Korea. It stressed the need for "absolute independence," rejecting any sort of mandatory control or subjugation. According to the American embassy, such a response was due to the fact that "the hypothetical mandatory power whom the Koreans had in mind was not a vanquished Japan, but a victorious China."<sup>110</sup> In early 1943, several American magazines, including *Fortune*, *Life*, and *Time*, started publishing articles in favor of a trusteeship in post-liberation Korea. Cho Soang released a statement for publication in the Chinese press criticizing these articles. American officials in Chongqing acknowledged that, while his criticism was ostensibly directed toward the proposals being put forth by the American publications, his remarks should be taken as being principally, though obliquely, directed toward China. Cho and other Korean leaders had, on several occasions, confidentially expressed to the United States their fears regarding Chinese aims with respect to postwar Korean independence.<sup>111</sup> When the Cairo Declaration was proclaimed, representatives of the KPG and the KRP at Chongqing asked the American embassy to clarify the phrase "in due course," as it related to Korea. Eventually, a Korean meeting to celebrate the Cairo Statement was canceled.<sup>112</sup>

Differences between the United States and China seemed, on the surface, at least, to have become much less visible toward the close of the war. In reality, however, this hardly meant that China was truly satisfied with U.S. policy on Korea. It only indicated China's helplessness in opposing that policy. The underlying Chinese position surfaced in early 1945, when the United States, Britain and China discussed a questionnaire on the Korean question. As mentioned in the previous chapter, China welcomed this working level conference as an "ABC (America-Britain-China) united front" against the Soviet Union. The Chinese government delegated Shao Yulin and Yang Yunzhu, the director of East Asian Affairs in the Foreign Ministry,

<sup>109</sup> SS to Gauss, May 12, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/340. China seems to have been fully cognizant, however, of the limitations set by the Cairo Declaration. (Shao, p. 38.)

<sup>110</sup> Gauss to SS, December 29, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.01/207.

<sup>111</sup> Vincent to SS, March 17, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/244.

<sup>112</sup> Gauss to SS, December 7, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/301.

to take part.<sup>113</sup> The Chinese Foreign Ministry prepared a draft. Yet, as Jiang instructed that the draft should only be presented as an alternative to the American plan, it was not disclosed during the discussion. The two delegates only represented China's views in a rather nonspecific and general way. According to them, no matter which army entered Korea, the potential military administration should be undertaken jointly by the three powers – China, the United States and Britain – with the inclusion of the Soviet Union, if it entered the war against Japan. Joseph Ballantine recorded that the Chinese side was very insistent in this view, and repeated the above statement several times. The Chinese officials hoped to obtain a more definite expression of U.S. views on Korea before they returned to assist their colleagues in the preparation of numerous Korea-related papers. They wanted to ascertain “how the wind blows” before compiling their reports. At the same time, the two emphatically asserted that Soviet influence in Korea must be reduced to the lowest possible degree, with help from the United States.<sup>114</sup>

Although the Chinese plan was not presented by these officials, their intentions after the Cairo Conference are fully revealed here, and make for interesting reading. Militarily, the phrase “in due course” could mean a period of military occupation by the Allies, which, in the opinion of the *Waijiaobu* (Foreign Ministry), might last five years. While Chinese ground forces would assume responsibility for maintaining domestic order in Korea, the other Allies' air and naval forces would be deployed to defend Korea from external attacks. A “temporary system of international assistance” could be jointly established in Korea by China, the United States and Britain, to help the new government. Advisory responsibilities would be divided among the Big Four, although the lion's share would be given to China in the

<sup>113</sup> Strangely enough, Shao did not mention this meeting in his autobiography. He briefly mentioned his visit to the State Department in another book, but “Korea” was not among the topics that he discussed with American officials. [Shao, Yulin, *Sūngni chōnhu* (Before and After the Victory), trans. By Ha, Chong'ok (Seoul: Minjosa, 1969), pp. 34–38.] But it must be noted that these two Chinese experts on the Korean question came from different offices, one from the Office of the President, and the other from the Foreign Ministry. Although Shao writes that they maintained close consultations during their visit to the United States, meetings at the State Department were individually held at different times and dates. For example, Shao attended meetings held on January 24 and February 5, while Yang attended one on February 17. This shows how uncoordinated the Chinese approach was on this occasion.

<sup>114</sup> Memo of Conversation by Ballantine, February 5, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, pp. 1018–1020. Memo of Conversation by Ballantine, February 17, 1945, *Ibid.*, pp. 1020–1022. See also Post-war Problems in the Far East, Memo by Grew, January 27, 1945, C0012, R.8. Yet an American letter to the British Foreign Office only stressed: “It was agreed that recognition of the KPG should be withheld for the present.” [Allison (US Embassy) to Bennett, February 28, 1945, 46468 (1394/1394/23).]

control of Korean affairs. China would take charge of diplomatic and police affairs; the United States would guide financial and transportation affairs; Britain would assume judicial responsibilities; and the Soviet Union could help with the public health needs of the Korean government. The key in this solution would be the coexistence of a Korean government and an Allied military authority in Korea from the beginning of the occupation period. A provisional government in Korea during the occupation period could be no other than the KPG in Chongqing.<sup>115</sup>

China's fear of the "Soviet menace" now became the most decisive factor in its Korea policy. In particular, they feared that the Korean Communists, having been trained in the Soviet Union, might have a far greater chance of taking power in Korea if the Soviet Union participated in a trusteeship.<sup>116</sup> Song Ziwen, promoted to the post of prime minister in 1945, expressed concerns in Moscow, during his negotiation of the Sino-Soviet Treaty, that two Soviet-trained Korean divisions and other political personnel might enter Korea after the Allied forces invaded the peninsula in the final stages of the war. He was fearful that under these conditions, the Soviets might come to dominate Korean affairs, even with a four-power trusteeship.<sup>117</sup> Song and other Chinese officials foresaw the possible establishment of a Czechoslovak-style government, like that under President Eduard Beneš, or one like the Lublin government in Poland, which would be a vehicle for Soviet influence. Moscow might find a number of candidates for the role of a "Manchurian Beneš."<sup>118</sup> Admitting that they might not have a complete hold over the Korean peninsula, the Chinese were inclined toward what seemed like the second best alternative: the independence of Korea under the initiative of the KPG, supported by China and the United States.

This formed the background to the Chinese leaders' endorsement of Korean independence in the latter stages of the war. By early 1945, during working level meetings with the United States, China displayed ardent support for the KPG. This was after the United States, Britain and China had already agreed on the trusteeship concept, and

<sup>115</sup> This description is based on the Chinese records. [Liu, pp. 254–255.]

<sup>116</sup> The Situation in China – Memo by DeWitt C. Poole (Office of Strategic Services), May 20, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 7, p. 873.

<sup>117</sup> Harriman to Truman and SS, July 3, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 7, p. 914. Stalin stated to Song that there should be no foreign troops in Korea. Stalin had great expectations for the role of these Korean troops.

<sup>118</sup> Memo by DeWitt C. Poole, May 20, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 7, pp. 872–873. The possibility of an independent state in Manchuria established by the Soviet Union was strongly suggested both before and after the war. (SWNCC-224, U.S. Policy toward China and Manchuria, November 16, 1945, LM54, R.19). See also 895.01/6545, LM80, R.4.

China was well aware of the Korea policies of the other two powers. One might conclude that China's attitude represented no more than an alternative scheme to return to Korea via the KPG. In their talks at the Department of State, Chinese officials observed that the Chinese were taking more positive steps for the guidance of Korean leaders, and of the independence movement as a whole, than were the Americans. Shao Yulin even stated, on the basis of his conversations with the Koreans in Washington, that most of them considered Rhee to be too old, and to lack the necessary energy and initiative to pull the Koreans together, and to help them make an effective contribution to the war effort.<sup>119</sup> China had suggested to these Korean leaders that they organize an underground movement, along the lines of that in France, which would invigorate the Korean people; suggestions that the KPG used to plan just such a strategy. The Chinese would welcome any encouragement from the United States on the matter of official support for the KPG, not as a *de jure* government but as the heart of the Korean resistance movement in China. Shao even inquired whether it would be possible to obtain military equipment on a lend-lease basis for the arming of Korean troops.<sup>120</sup> The British were aware of China's change of attitude towards the KPG. In response, they commented that such things could be done even without diplomatic recognition of the KPG, so long as the Americans had a plan for training and equipping the KPG's Independence Army.<sup>121</sup>

#### CONCLUSION: LIBERATION AND THE CHANGE OF CHINA'S KPG POLICY

Chinese archives are full of reports on how the KMT government helped the Koreans' struggle for independence during the colonial period. The KMT officials had ceaselessly provided Korean

<sup>119</sup> Shao, p.17. The Chinese insisted that this displeased Rhee so much that, when asked to give his agreement to Shao's appointment as the first Chinese ambassador to Korea, Rhee, when he was the first President of the Republic of Korea, delayed the decision for half a year. [Jiang, Junzhang, "Son Mun, Chang Kaesök ūi Han'guk tongnip undong chiwŏn" (Aid to the Korean Independence Movement by Sun Wen and Jiang Jieshi), in Chŏngsin Munhwa Yŏn'guwŏn (Academy of Korean Studies), (comp.), *Han'guk tongnip undongsa charyojip* (Materials on the Korean Independence Movement), (Seoul: Pakyŏngsa, 1983), p. 204; Yang, Daqing, "Between Lips and Teeth: Chinese-Korean Relations, 1910–1950," in Cumings, Bruce (ed.) *Chicago Occasional Papers on Korea* (Chicago: Center for East Asian Studies, University of Chicago, 1991), p. 82.

<sup>120</sup> Memo of Conversation by Ballantine, February 5, 1945 and February 17, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, pp.1018–1022; Memo of Conversation by Dickover, January 24, 1945, LM80, R.1, 895.01/1–2445.

<sup>121</sup> Seymour to Eden, June 1, 1945, 46468 (3649/1394/23); See also minute on Korea's Capacity for Independence, February 24, 1945, (2330/1394/23).

nationalists with shelter and money, and had sometimes admonished them to resolve the Koreans' chronic factionalism. Such actions by the Chinese, as Shao later observed, were also aimed at helping themselves in their struggle against Japanese aggression.<sup>122</sup> On the other hand, one must pay considerable attention to "reading between the lines" of these documents, as they were extremely concerned with "saving face."

China thus insisted that, for all its efforts, it had been impossible to recognize the KPG under the international circumstances of the times. Such failure was due to the lukewarm or negative attitude of the United States and Britain, and China was therefore not to blame. In the same vein, the Chinese alleged that Britain had opposed any statement on Korea, and that the United States had insisted on the phrase "in due course" in Cairo, while China was the only true champion of Korean independence.<sup>123</sup> The Koreans in Chongqing were even informed by the Chinese that it was Churchill who was responsible for the phrase "in due course." The British, in turn, informed them that it was the result of Chinese insistence.<sup>124</sup> It was perhaps for this reason that the British, as noted earlier, considered the prime mover in the Korea-related aspects of the Cairo Declaration to be the United States.

KMT policy toward Korea was undoubtedly aimed primarily at reinstating an ascendant or preeminent Chinese influence in the Korean peninsula, in whatever form it might take. When this dream was frustrated at the end of the war, Jiang declared that "the Chinese Government and people should resolve with noble, sincere, and firm determination never to imitate the way of Japan toward Korea."<sup>125</sup> When the KPG leaders returned to their country, Jiang further stated his support by hosting a farewell party in their honor, as Chairman of the KMT – though not as "head of state," since the KPG had not been officially recognized.<sup>126</sup> The Chinese government, one of the four trustees of Korea, was simply informed of the decision on the Korean trusteeship that had been taken at the Moscow Conference; in return, on January 4, 1946, China stated, more in sorrow than in

<sup>122</sup> Shao, p. 28.

<sup>123</sup> Gauss to SS, June 3, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/340; June 29, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/6-2944 and enclosures.

<sup>124</sup> Gauss to SS, April 18, 1944, enclosures to LM79, R.2, 895.01/335.

<sup>125</sup> Mr. Chiang Kai-shek: Statement on Foreign Policy, Delivered to a Joint Session of the Supreme National Defense Council and Central Executive Committee, (Chongqing), August 28, 1945, Holborn and Fay, pp. 848–849. See also the same report in Chinese Ministry of Information (comp.), *The Collected Wartime Messages of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek 1937–1945*, vol. 2 (New York: The John Day Co., 1943), p. 856.

<sup>126</sup> Robertson to SS, November 5, 1945, 740.00119 Control (Korea)/11–545, RG59, Box 3823.

anger, that a trusteeship would not really be necessary, as it would greatly complicate the Korean situation.<sup>127</sup> These were the lines along which China's policy toward the KPG gradually unfolded.

To study the record of the times without a good understanding of China's position would only suggest confusion. At one time, the Chinese supported "independence," and then later they advocated "trusteeship." According to a British record, the Chinese had few illusions as to the capability of the Koreans for self-government. Yet the Chinese government had been toying with the idea of recognition, encouraging the KPG to send periodical "trial balloons" from Chongqing, in the form of telegrams, letters and manifestos addressed to the Allied leaders.<sup>128</sup> It is indisputable that the KMT's diplomacy, even if it resulted partly from the other powers' restraint and lack of capability, had a negative influence on the immediate independence of Korea. China's objective of "returning to Korea" was particularly frustrating, since it was incompatible with KPG goals. It must be noted that this Chinese goal was belatedly achieved in the form of involvement in the newly established CCP government in the Korean War in 1950. It is also worth pointing out that existing studies by Korean scholars on KPG history have been unable to provide adequate and accurate descriptions of its activities and significance, as they have tended to focus only on the activities of the KPG itself, while ignoring the policies of the powers with which the KPG had to deal.

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<sup>127</sup> Shao, pp. 55, 58; Memo by [Dean] Acheson (Under SS): Trusteeship for Korea, January 4, 1946, 740.00119 Control (Korea)/1-446, RG59, Box 3824.

<sup>128</sup> Seymour to Eden, May 12, 1943, 35956 (2942/723/23) and minutes; Minute on Korea's Capacity for Independence, February 24, 1945, (46468) (2330/1394/23). In June 1944, the Chinese government pressed the KPG to submit a petition for recognition to U.S. Vice President Henry A. Wallace, who was on a visit to China. [Gauss to SS, June 3, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/340.]



## British Korea Policy: Restoration of the Empire and the Korean Question



### BRITAIN'S PRESENCE IN THE KOREAN QUESTION

WITH THE OUTBREAK of World War II in 1939, Britain had to greatly downgrade its presence in East Asia. As Hitler swept over Europe in the early stages of the war, Britain was completely on the defensive, and could not afford to take any initiatives in East Asian affairs. Worse, after December 1941, Britain found itself entangled in another arduous war against Japan. As a result, British colonies in East Asia fell to Japan in short order. On December 10, 1941, *H.M.S. Prince of Wales*, the state-of-the-art battleship on which Churchill and Roosevelt had declared the Atlantic Charter, was sunk off the coast of Singapore. On February 15 of the following year, Singapore, the fortress of the British navy in the East, was occupied by the Japanese army, and the British Empire reached its twilight in Asia after several decades of decline.<sup>1</sup> As an ally of the United States, Britain was its most important partner in wartime talks, and was part of discussions regarding the Pacific campaign, although the United States virtually took sole charge of the war, even after Germany's surrender in

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<sup>1</sup> Enclosure in Stimson to Roosevelt, December 20, 1941, *FRUS, The Conferences at Washington, 1941-42, and Casablanca, 1943*, p. 46. See also Clifford, Nicholas R., *Retreat from China - British Policy in the Far East 1937-1941* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967).

May 1945.<sup>2</sup> For Britain, having the United States as an ally was a guarantee of ultimate victory, something that led Britain to divert, with some composure, a certain amount of attention to East Asian affairs. Yet Britain's campaigns in the Asian region were limited to Southeast Asia, where its colonies were concentrated.

These were the circumstances under which Britain participated in the Korean question. China and the United States were responsible for the campaigns relating to the Korean peninsula, and Britain had scarcely any interest in them. Moreover, as there was no Korean group or refugee government within its territory, Britain was, compared with the United States or China, under far less public pressure regarding the Korean independence issue. Korean groups only asked that the status and aims of the Korean Provisional Government (KPG) be treated as "one of the refugee governments in Chongqing similar to the European refugee governments now in England."<sup>3</sup> This also meant that Britain was able to remain relatively aloof from the Korean question.

British interest in Korea, however, had begun to increase by early 1942. In mid-1943, when Italy's surrender and the Soviet counteroffensive at Kursk made circumstances on the European front appear more favorable, that interest diminished somewhat. But then, in 1944, with the establishment of the Korea Committee in the Research Department of the Foreign Office, the British started acting once again with greater enthusiasm. The background to this British interest varied greatly between each period. In early 1942, China strongly supported KPG recognition, as part of its war strategy against Japan. The British were concerned about the potential influence of this Chinese policy on Hong Kong, Malaya, Burma and India, since these colonies were either under Japanese occupation or were at risk of such a fate. They were interested, accordingly, in the Korean question, even if only in a passive manner. Yet even in 1944, when the Allied victory had become fairly certain, Britain's more urgent priority was to restore the British Empire in Asia. The Korean question was now considered in this newer context. This is, therefore, a good example of how a power with little interest in Korea handled the issue in the

<sup>2</sup> The British admitted that their contribution in the war against Japan was only meager: "The British Pacific fleet would make little difference to the supreme problem of invasion, when American sea and air power already seemed sufficient for the task." [Ehrman, John, *Grand Strategy – History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Military Series*, vol. 4 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1956), pp. 220–235.]. The Americans were of same opinion: "At present, the war against Japan is being carried on almost entirely by the United States.... to be substantially true after the defeat of Germany." (Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to SS, August 3, 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 1, p. 701.)

<sup>3</sup> Seymour to Eden, February 18, 1943, 35956 (1462/723/23); Matthew to SS, February 28, 1942, LM97, R.1 (895.01/73).

broader framework of wartime policy and postwar settlements, in the midst of the great shifts that were taking place as a result of World War II. It may also help Koreans understand how their country was treated as a pawn in the great powers' wartime power games.

#### RESTORATION OF THE EMPIRE – CLASH WITH THE UNITED STATES

British foreign policy had always prioritized Europe, with Asian affairs being subsumed by imperial, colonial and commercial policy. Accordingly, as the situation in the European war became more serious, the British wanted to avert a war in the Pacific.<sup>4</sup> Americans felt that Britain, even in the middle of the war, was still thinking of Japan as a possible counterbalance to China or Russia, as these two powers expanded their capabilities in East Asia.<sup>5</sup> Britain was fortunate that the United States had joined the war against Germany; yet they had no desire whatsoever to become involved in another war against Japan. Not surprisingly, Britain stressed that its top priority was victory over Germany in Europe. When Churchill visited Washington in 1942 for a strategic meeting, he claimed:

It is generally agreed that the defeat of Germany entailing a collapse will leave Japan exposed to overwhelming force, whereas the defeat of Japan would not by any means bring the world war to an end.... We cannot expect to develop adequate naval, air and military superiority in the area (i.e., Asia) for a considerable time having regard to other calls made upon us.<sup>6</sup>

The United States also prioritized European affairs. Nevertheless, as the major power on the Asia-Pacific front, it allocated 70 percent of its power to the Atlantic, and 30 percent to the Pacific.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Memo by Ballantine, July 3, 1942, *FRUS, 1941*, vol. 4, pp. 372–373. Along with the United States and the Netherlands, Britain acted firmly against Japan, although not until the British had concluded that the war against Japan was practically unavoidable. (*Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 348–349.)

<sup>5</sup> P-A47, Forty-seventh Meeting of the Political Group, May 22, 1944, Council on Foreign Relations, “Studies of American Interests in the War and Peace, Far East, Korea,” *Yi and Chông*, vol. 1, p. 222..

<sup>6</sup> Memo by Churchill, January 10, 1942, *FRUS, Washington and Casablanca*, pp. 226–227. The 14th Army, which operated in Burma, was referred to as “the forgotten army.” [Buckley, Roger, *Occupation Diplomacy – Britain, the United States and Japan 1945–1952* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 7–10.]

<sup>7</sup> Memo by Combined Chiefs of Staff Minutes, *FRUS, Washington and Casablanca*, pp. 536–537. However, the military and officials in charge of the Pacific campaign estimated that only 15% of the U.S. war capacity had been engaged against Japan.

Second, the British Asian policy of the period was characterized by the theme of “reestablishing the British Empire.” Britain promoted the war against Germany and Japan as a democratic resistance to fascism and militarism. Yet, as the power with the greatest number of colonies in the 20th century, it was by no means willing to give up its territories, irrespective of the war’s outcome. In his famous speech, entitled “A New Experience – Victory,” Churchill affirmed in November 1942, “I have not become the King’s First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.”<sup>8</sup> If Churchill was judged to be one of the most outstanding wartime leaders in British history, he was also feared to be an imperialist of the Kipling school. In short, Churchill had an almost fanatical faith in the Empire and the Commonwealth.<sup>9</sup> British officials in the Asian colonies were aware that, unless they preserved the Empire, their country would not be a first-class power on a par with the United States or the Soviet Union. For this purpose, Anglo-American collaboration in the postwar era was not only desirable but essential. They believed, according to one observer, that American policy was “at one with the British in desiring the restoration and extension of “whiteocracy,” or white supremacy in Asia.<sup>10</sup> Britain’s Asia policy therefore had two cardinal objectives: victory in war, and maintenance of the Empire in the postwar era.

Yet such efforts to maintain the British Empire meant a direct clash with the United States, when it was in almost desperate need of American support. During and after World War I, Britain had little trouble preserving its colonies, and even strengthened its Empire by adding the colonies of the defeated powers to it. Yet, with this second war, Japan immediately snatched the British colonies to the east of

<sup>8</sup> Churchill, Winston S., *Winston S Churchill – His Complete Speeches 1897–1963*, vol. 6 (New York and London: Chelsea House Publishers, 1974), p. 6695. This speech greatly shocked the Allies. U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull felt that “the British Prime Minister merely stood on the policy that Great Britain would not be dismembered while he was in office. This included their Indian situation among others.” [Memo of Conversation, by SS, July 22, 1944, *FRUS*, 1944, vol. 3, p. 52.]

<sup>9</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, May 14, 1941, vol. 371, p. 1277. See also Louis, William Roger, *Imperialism at Bay – the United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire 1941–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 5, 14; Knaplund, Paul, *Britain, Commonwealth, and Empire* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1956), pp. 278, 291.

<sup>10</sup> Merrill (Chargé in New Delhi) to SS, October 26, 1943, *FRUS*, 1943, *China*, pp. 878–880; Campbell, Thomas M. and Herring, George C. (eds.), *The Diaries of Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., 1943–1946* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975), p. 210. In the United States, too, political leaders including President Roosevelt and Secretary of War Stimson believed that the American participation in World War II was to maintain the Anglo-American entente and its “way of life” which was threatened by the Axis powers. [Iriye, Akira, *The Cold War in Asia – A Historical Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974), pp. 48–51.]

Burma. The British believed that the Americans, as a part of their global strategy, wanted Britain to remain a first-class power. On the other hand, they were concerned lest criticisms of British imperialism, and consequent isolationist tendencies in American society, should exert a worsening effect on the bilateral relationship. Britain thus proclaimed to the American people that it dealt in an “enlightened imperialism,” which brought progress to the “natives” of underdeveloped colonies. Yet the United States continued to criticize all forms of European imperialism. Some Americans suspected that, beneath the idealism of Britain’s war objectives, lurked the familiar beast of British economic imperialism. Roosevelt is even portrayed as having believed that future threats to the world’s peace would come not from Russia, but from the European colonial powers, especially Britain.<sup>11</sup>

The conflict between the two powers thus continued even as their leaders met in Newfoundland to hammer out the Atlantic Charter in August 1941. In Article 3 of the Charter, which dealt with the liberation and independence of colonies, Britain agreed that it wished “to see sovereign rights and self-government be restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.” For Britain, this was nothing more than a declaration of a universal principle, “a small price to pay to affirm the solidarity of the non-belligerent United States.”<sup>12</sup> Britain immediately declared, however, that it could not grant complete independence to all colonies when there remained problems of security, a lack of capacity for self-government, and weakened economies. Churchill explained that Article 3 aimed at “primarily, the restoration of the sovereignty, self-government and national life of the states and nations of Europe now under the Nazi yoke.”<sup>13</sup>

The issue was more than a mere conflict between the American tradition of idealism, and the British desire for the *status quo* in the postwar settlements on colonies. It was also a struggle between the two powers for hegemony in the postwar world. The United States believed that economic imperialism had motivated Britain, and, more

<sup>11</sup> Louis, pp. 4–7, 20, 24 and chapters 9–10; Gaddis, John Lewis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941–1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), pp. 18–23. For a historical review of the British stance on the self-government of colonies, see Hachey, Thomas E., “Self-Determination: British Perspectives,” in Alexander, Yonah and Friedlander, Robert A. (eds.), *Self-determination: National, Regional, and Global Dimensions* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980).

<sup>12</sup> Churchill suggested that there be inserted in the text of the third point, before the word “self-government,” the words “sovereign rights and.” (*FRUS, 1941*, vol. 1, p. 361.) Roosevelt’s purpose was to make explicit the principle of self-determination, while Churchill’s addition of this phrase made the clause inapplicable to the dependencies of the British Empire. “Sovereign rights,” as the highest form of power, also implies the preeminence of the suzerain state. (Louis, pp. 123–124, and Chapter 6.)

<sup>13</sup> *Parliamentary Debates 1940–1941*, vol. 374, pp. 68–69. See also Knaplund, p. 291.

specifically, that the British had sought to increase the economic autarchy of the British Empire by strengthening the Ottawa Agreements of 1932, which had institutionalized the system of “imperial preference.” The U.S. government did not bother to hide its intention of acquiring practical benefits by remodeling the world order. While the United States and its people, one confidential paper admits, were committed to a policy of future cooperation and collaboration with the British Empire, they were also entering an era of intense competition with that empire, not only in matters of trade but also in political and economic affairs, as part of a struggle for increasing importance and influence throughout the world.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, many in Britain suspected that the Americans might take advantage of the war to create a new American empire, mainly at British expense. They believed that Roosevelt and other Americans probably intended that their own country should replace the British Empire as a global power. For the British, American clichés such as “free trade” and “the open door” meant, in practice, an enforced equality of economic opportunity and access to colonial raw materials. Churchill once reportedly commented that he would prefer the “new order of Hitler” to the “free trade” of Cordell Hull. The Britons were struggling against Hitler to protect the British Empire. Should Stalin, Jiang or Roosevelt try to replace Hitler in dismantling the Empire, therefore, there was no point in collaborating with these powers.<sup>15</sup> According to Anthony Eden, the British foreign secretary, Roosevelt hoped that former colonial territories, once free of their masters, would become politically and economically dependent on the United States, and had no fear that other powers might fill such a role.<sup>16</sup> It was in this context that Churchill declared at the 1943 Tehran Conference that “Britain would hold fast to her own territories and bases and no one would take them away from her without going to war.”<sup>17</sup> The free trade issue, however, cannot be explained in terms of clashes of national interest between these two powers alone. Free trade has been considered one of the essential objectives of the Western international tradition since the era of ancient Athens.<sup>18</sup> As a corollary to this aim, in the nineteenth century Western powers requested that Asian countries, including Korea, enter open-door

<sup>14</sup> Committee on Colonial and Trusteeship Problem, March 8, 1944, RG59, Box 119.

<sup>15</sup> Louis, pp. 24, 33.

<sup>16</sup> Eden, Anthony, *The Memoirs of Anthony Eden Earl of Avon – The Reckoning* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965), p. 593.

<sup>17</sup> Harriman, W. Averell and Abel, Elie, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941–1946* (New York: Random House, 1975), p. 274.

<sup>18</sup> Wight, Martin, *International Theory – The Three Traditions*, ed. Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1992), p. 56 and chapter 4.

treaty relations. It should be no surprise, therefore, that the United States emphasized free trade and access to raw materials when they discussed the Korean question during the war.<sup>19</sup>

The problem of colonies was, of course, a key element in the establishment of the United Nations. Not surprisingly, the two Anglophone powers clashed again over the formation of this postwar system. The United States advocated the self-determination of peoples, and the universal application of trusteeships on the precondition of absolute independence for colonies. Britain, however, wanted to prevent such trusteeships from having any potential negative impacts on the future of its colonial territories (see Chapter 6.) As late as February 1945, before the discussions on the creation of the United Nations were held in San Francisco, a majority of those dissatisfied with the extent of Big Three cooperation in the United States held Britain most responsible.<sup>20</sup> This eventually influenced the resolution of the Korean question.

#### EAST ASIA AND KOREA IN BRITISH POLICY

The reestablishment of the British Empire primarily implied the restoration of Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaya, which had been captured by Japan. The Foreign Office once reported:

Korea is situated in an area in which British influence was steadily diminishing before the war.... The vital interests of Britain in the Far East lie in the area south of the Tropic of Cancer and it is likely that all our available resources will be required for re-establishing and maintaining our influence there.<sup>21</sup>

The most symbolic of all would be the restoration of Hong Kong, which Roosevelt demanded should be returned to China after the war, and later made a free port.<sup>22</sup> The Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House), a semi-governmental institution closely related to the Foreign Office, commented that the prevention of Japan's rearmament, along with the preservation of the British colonies in Southeast Asia, would be crucial to Britain's East Asia policy. According to this report, Owen Lattimore, the well-known American expert on East Asian affairs, had put forward the thesis that, in the

<sup>19</sup> DFEA, Hamilton's Memo, October 10, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.00/840.

<sup>20</sup> Gaddis, p. 230.

<sup>21</sup> Korea, July 22, 1945, 46468 (4702/1394/23).

<sup>22</sup> C-65, Memo by General Joseph W. Stilwell, of Conversation with President Roosevelt, Cairo, December 6, 1943, *Yi and Chông*, vol. 2, p. 135.

future, the center of gravity in the region would be not so much the Pacific coast as the borderlands between China and Russia, which stretched over five thousand miles. This prediction turned out to be correct, since conflict in East Asia did later move from Anglo-American competition to Sino-Soviet rivalry. There was, furthermore, the issue of Korea, the old “cock-pit of Asia,” still fertile ground for international friction.<sup>23</sup>

This report went on to state, however, that another peculiar feature that would affect the question of general security in the region was “the separation of power and interest.” In other words, vision was not always matched or supported by power; or, to use Iriye’s phrase, there was a “gap between vision and power.”<sup>24</sup> The Western powers would be the main providers of the peace-keeping forces’ naval components, and perhaps also of their airborne contingents, although the indigenous countries obviously had a higher stake in regional issues of war and peace. As a result, there was a partial divorce between power and interest, which, in practice, would make cooperation considerably harder. The report insisted that, although Britain had an implicit interest in such regional problems, it was nevertheless an external Western power. Naturally, the British position was awkward. Even if British colonies might be permitted varying degrees of autonomy, according to their domestic conditions – Britain, for instance, planned on granting India “dominion status” after the war – it was absolutely necessary that these colonies preserve a sense of solidarity and cohesion, under the concept and rubric of the British Commonwealth.<sup>25</sup> This situation would directly influence Britain’s policy in its return to Asia.

Britain’s imperial interests were, in fact, essentially more economic than territorial. From this viewpoint, the British Empire in East Asia had become a commercial-maritime empire in the late nineteenth century, whose two main pillars were trade and the navy, which protected the essential sea routes connecting the treaty ports that were scattered throughout the empire. Efforts to restore the empire after World War II should be understood in this context, and China seemed to provide one solution to Britain’s imperial problems. The British

<sup>23</sup> The Place of the Far East in World Reconstruction, by G. E. Hubbard, December 10, 1943, 35851 (6587/2610/10). The above observation was limited to Korea. Other British officials thought that Japan, North China, Manchuria and Korea could become a tinder box with a new and expanding American presence likely to come up against the military might of the Soviet Union. (Buckley, p. 20.)

<sup>24</sup> Iriye, Akira, *The Cold War in Asia – A Historical Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974), p. 68.

<sup>25</sup> The Place of the Far East in World Reconstruction. See also British Plan for a Western European Bloc, (undated), *FRUS, Berlin*, vol. 1, pp. 258–260.



believed that China's development plans, which had been initiated by the KMT government in the 1930s, but then interrupted by the Sino-Japanese War, would be revived after the war's end. By participating in these projects, they would be able, in a certain sense, to work toward reconstructing the empire that Britain had had in the past. For this purpose, it was crucial that Britain secure its international status as a great power. Such beliefs finally led to the conclusion that Korea could help secure this great power status.

Traditionally, when a force from outside a certain region wanted to get involved in the affairs of that region, it had to have some special rights or interests as a great power.<sup>26</sup> In this vein, immediate economic interests in the region could become important. It is generally believed, however, that the powers' interest in Korea had initially been of a largely political nature, and that it was only later that economic interests were generated. If Britain had avoided intervening in the Korean question on the grounds of scant economic interest, it would have given an impression of irresponsibility as a great power in the international community. Britain was aware, therefore, that such inaction could risk exposing its own vulnerabilities in China.

In the various wartime conferences, Britain tried not to interfere in East Asian affairs. In Tehran in November 1943, for example, Churchill let the Soviet interest in Manchuria, including the issue of an ice-free port in Dalian, pass, perhaps because he thought the subject was within the scope of greater American interests.<sup>27</sup> He then admitted that Japan came under the jurisdiction of the United States. This had been the basic British wartime stance on the Korean question, and can be construed as an act of relinquishment of the status of a great power, as far as Korea was concerned. As the reestablishment of the empire emerged as a postwar priority, however, Churchill signed the agreement on East Asian affairs at Yalta. The prime minister did this "in order that Britain might stay in the Far East," in spite of his foreign secretary's objection.<sup>28</sup>

Britain and the United States defied each other over China policy, and this mirrored divergences between Britain and China. Britain had acknowledged China's vested rights and its voice in Korea as a great power. Such acceptance, however, was limited to the Korean question. In international relations as a whole, Britain could not risk

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<sup>26</sup> For the status and role of the "great powers" and the "minor powers" in international politics, see Wight, Martin, *Power Politics*, ed. Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1978), chapter 3.

<sup>27</sup> Feis, Herbert, *Churchill Roosevelt Stalin – The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 466.

<sup>28</sup> Eden, p. 594; Stettinius, Edward R., Jr., *Roosevelt and the Russians – the Yalta Conference* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1949), pp. 94–95.

recognizing China as a great power, since this would be incompatible with the British goal of preserving its East Asian empire. This represented a subtle but essential difference in the East Asia and Korea policies of the United States and Britain. As far as the peninsula was concerned, the Americans made it clear that China must not threaten Korean independence, even if it was an important partner in East Asia. On the other hand, the British were willing tacitly to disregard Korea's independence, if it benefited their East Asia policy. Meanwhile, outside Korea, Britain had considerable interests in China and its environs. Accordingly, Britain allowed China to remain stable, function as a market for its products, and take the initiative in the region *to a certain degree*. It had no desire, however, to see China grow strong enough to threaten British interests or status in East Asia. Britain, due to such imperial considerations, wanted postwar China to be weak, and possibly disunited.<sup>29</sup> Ironically enough, this stance was in perfect harmony with the Soviet position.<sup>30</sup>

The United States, meanwhile, would grant China the status of one of the “Big Four” powers, despite its lack of real authority, since it aimed at establishing China as its partner in, and the principal stabilizer of, U.S. postwar settlements in East Asia. A strong, friendly China would do much to lighten the American load.<sup>31</sup> Immediately after the outbreak of war with Japan, the United States drafted a joint statement for the Big Four, including China, which eventually developed into the United Nations Declaration in early 1942.<sup>32</sup> In addition, a China-Burma-India (CBI) theater of war, a grey zone between the American Pacific and the British Indian Ocean theater, was created in January 1942, with Jiang Jieshi Commander-in-Chief of the China theater.<sup>33</sup> Later, U.S. endeavors to grant China the status

<sup>29</sup> Merrill (*Chargé* in New Delhi) to SS, October 26, 1943, *FRUS, 1943, China*, pp. 878–880.

<sup>30</sup> Unity of Anglo-American-Soviet Policy toward China, (undated), *FRUS, Malta and Yalta*, pp. 352–353. For a British view, see USSR and Korea, March 21, 1945, 44468 (1736/1394/23).

<sup>31</sup> Unity of Anglo-American-Soviet Policy toward China; SWNCC-224, U.S. Policy toward China and Manchuria, November 16, 1945, LM54, R.19. See also *FRUS, Malta and Yalta*, p.353. Yet Churchill once termed American policy toward China “the dream of four hundred million customers that fired the American imagination – the great American illusion.” [Snell, John L. et al. (eds.), *The Meaning of Yalta: Big Three Diplomacy and the New Balance of Power* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, (1956), p.130.) See also *FRUS, Berlin*, vol. 1, p. 47.

<sup>32</sup> Joint Declaration by the United States of America, China, Great Britain, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and other Signatory Governments, December 19, 1941, *FRUS, Washington and Casablanca*, pp. 39–40.

<sup>33</sup> Roosevelt to Chiang Kai-shek, December 29, 1941, *FRUS, 1941*, vol. 4, pp. 763–764. See also United States Department of State, *United States Relations with China with Special Reference to the Period 1944–1949* (Washington: Government Printing Office, August 1949), vol. 1, pp. 26–37.

of a great power were symbolically finalized when China was granted a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

Britain, together with the Soviet Union, resisted such U.S. efforts until the last. In March 1943, Roosevelt persuaded Eden that China might, in fact, become a very useful power in East Asia in helping to police Japan, and that it would be an effective counterweight to the USSR. Eden replied that China might well have to go through a revolution after the war, and that he “did not like the idea of the Chinese running up and down the Pacific.”<sup>34</sup> In Washington, in May, Churchill was even suspicious that Roosevelt was trying to present China as a U.S. puppet. Churchill also defended his position in terms of international politics: he refused to give China the status of a great/world power, which would allow China a potential say in affairs outside Asia.<sup>35</sup> The United States, however, eventually succeeded in forcing the two Allies to recognize China’s status as a great power, if only in Asian affairs.<sup>36</sup>

This discord over China seems, at least indirectly, to have made a negative impact on the Korean question, which was officially discussed by the Allied leaders for the first time at a wartime conference. Churchill did not approve of the U.S. decision to invite Jiang Jieshi to the Cairo Conference. He complained that the U.S. President spent much of his time closeted away in long conferences with the Generalissimo, which were of no interest to Britain. As far as Churchill was concerned, “Chinese business occupied first instead of last place at Cairo – an issue lengthy, complicated and minor,” when the truly urgent issue, from Britain’s perspective, regarded operations on the “European front.” Jiang, in turn, acidly commented that “Churchill was still an unreconstructed imperialist.”<sup>37</sup> As noted in earlier chapters, the Korean question was discussed informally by President Roosevelt and Jiang Jieshi at the latter’s temporary residence in Cairo. Churchill either voluntarily avoided this topic, or China and the U.S. actively avoided seeking his opinion. Britain, however,

<sup>34</sup> Memo by Hopkins, February 22, 1943, *FRUS, 1943*, vol. 3, pp. 34–36, 39. See also Woodward, Llewellyn, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1970–1976), vol. 5, p. 34.

<sup>35</sup> Churchill, Winston S., *The Second World War IV: The Hinge of Fate* (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1950), p. 802. Churchill scarcely disguised his contempt for China in conversation, calling the Chinese “pigtails,” “Chinamen,” “Chinks,” or “little yellow men.” (Louis, p. 7.)

<sup>36</sup> Stalin also tried to evade recognizing China as a great power on various pretexts. (Memo by Stettinius to SS, September 12, 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 2, p. 795.)

<sup>37</sup> Churchill, Winston S., *Closing the Ring* (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1951), pp. 328–329, 332–333, 346. Churchill’s dissatisfaction is also mentioned in Furuya, Keiji, (ed.) abridged English edition of Chung-ming Chang, *Chiang Kai-shek – His Life and Times* (New York: St. John’s University Press, 1981), pp. 785, 781.

did leave its mark on the issue with its revised draft of the “Korea clause.” Even the U.S. State Department and the British Foreign Office did not receive any information on Korea until both offices received the Declaration. This reflected the fact that Korea had not been one of the formal items on the conference’s agenda.

We must consider one further point: that Britain’s concerns about China were, in certain respects, justified. As the British expected, China had failed to overcome the turbulence of revolution, and was therefore unable to achieve the practical authority to be involved in world affairs as a great power. In this sense, the British approach to the Chinese situation was quite accurate. Yet, albeit from a short-term point of view, a Chatham House report in 1945 commented that “the Americans no longer treated China as a great power in embryo after its war against Japan. Instead of an Ally, the Chinese had become a problem.”<sup>38</sup> In this regard, if one power had to come to be in charge of the trusteeship of Korea, many British diplomats felt that China could hardly have undertaken the job.<sup>39</sup>

#### BRITISH PERCEPTIONS OF THE KOREAN QUESTION

Britain’s wartime and postwar Korea policy can be explained from several perspectives. First and foremost, Britain approached the Korean question in terms of its global strategy, rather than on the basis of any specific interest in the peninsula. Independence, recognition, and the powers’ plan of trusteeship were of paramount importance to the Koreans, but for the British these issues were viewed only within the general framework of their colonial problems. They constantly weighed the long-term relevance of the Korean issue to the Empire’s colonial problems, which had grown increasingly grave. The British stance was succinctly expressed by the repeatedly emphasized “U.K. point of view.” According to that viewpoint, “Korea was not worth the bones of a single British grenadier,” in an acidly reworked quotation of an earlier remark by Bismarck.<sup>40</sup> This was an expression of realism in international politics, symbolically making the point at which the powers should refuse to become entangled in the issues of marginal areas where they had scant interests. For Britain, the Korean

<sup>38</sup> McNeill, William Hardy, *America, Britain and Russia – Their Cooperation and Conflict 1941–1946* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 632.

<sup>39</sup> James to de la Mare, minutes of March 15, 1945, 46471 (1653/1653/23).

<sup>40</sup> The Future of Korea, December 20, 1944, 41801 (6012/102/23) and minutes. Bismarck’s original remark before a session of the German Reichstag of 1876 was: “The Balkans are not worth the good bones of one single Pomeranian musketeer.” [Morgenthau, Hans J., *Politics Among Nations* (5th ed.) (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), p. 348.]

question was not worth a separate and independent resolution; it was, rather, one minor article to be considered and used in the light of potential postwar power games.

Second, Britain maintained that “the main interests of the United States will be almost identical with those of the U.K.” In this context, the Foreign Office was ostensibly glad to have the opportunity of supporting any action that the Department of State might eventually decide to take.<sup>41</sup> This reflected the traditionally similar stance that the two countries held on East Asian affairs. Third, Britain basically agreed with China in its Korea policy. Both Britain and the United States wanted China’s participation in formulating their own Korea policies, but Britain took the more active, i.e., more pro-Chinese, stance. This was amply illustrated by the Foreign Office’s “nine points,” which were, in fact, the British reply to an American inquiry before the latter finalized its Korea policy in early 1942. This was the most comprehensive survey of the Korean situation that Britain undertook during the early phase of the Pacific War. The British had often gone as far as to ask themselves what line would be taken by the Chinese government on the issue, and justified their position on the matter of non-recognition of the KPG by quoting the report of a discussion between its representatives and Chinese Foreign Ministry officials in Chongqing. If a new situation should later arise due to any Chinese recognition of the KPG, the Foreign Office advised modifying the British policy “in concert with the Chinese in any action looking toward the recognition of a Korean Government.”<sup>42</sup> When the Korea Committee started reviewing the Korean question in 1944, the British insisted that “the Chinese should be brought into the picture from the start.”<sup>43</sup> Britain was not on friendly terms with China over the issue of colonies but, on the Korean question, Britain continued respecting China’s leadership.

Fourth, as an East Asian regional affair, the Korea question was one of the concerns of the British Commonwealth, especially Australia and New Zealand. Although these self-governing colonies supported British war efforts, they were not blind advocates of British foreign policy. In fact, after World War I, colonies, self-governing or not, had put tremendous pressure on London government policy concerning whether to renew or terminate the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.

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<sup>41</sup> The Future of Korea, and minutes; circa February 16, 1942, 31824 (1573/165/23). The same opinion is included in the “nine points” Britain communicated to the United States.

<sup>42</sup> Memo by US Embassy, February 16, 1942, 31824 (1573/165/23) and minutes; SS to Gauss, March 2, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/56; Matthews (London) to SS, February 18, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/73; April 27, 1942, 895.01/103.

<sup>43</sup> Minutes on Questionnaire on Korea, May 16, 1944, 40798 (4320/4320/70).

The autonomy won by the dominions after this earlier war led to the establishment or extension of departments of external affairs, and the appointment of separate diplomatic missions to foreign capitals. The outbreak of World War II radically enhanced the stature of Canada, both within the Commonwealth and in the world at large. Canada now dealt with Britain on terms of complete equality, and became its creditor.<sup>44</sup> It was a matter of course that these dominions would share British responsibilities if Britain were to get involved in the settlement of the Korean question. The United States predicted that Britain would rather participate in this matter through one of its dominions, perhaps Canada (see Chapter 6). The Korean question, moreover, was naturally related to the occupation of Japan. Britain was also vitally interested in the system of control over Japan, for which Korea would provide an essential operations base.<sup>45</sup>

Fifth, there was a possibility that the Korean question might create discord between the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office. Not long before Stanley Hornbeck, the State Department's advisor on Far Eastern Affairs, arrived in London for official talks, the Colonial Office requested the opportunity of participating in any "informal discussion" that the Foreign Office might hold with him on subjects affecting the British East Asian colonial territories, and future means of Anglo-American cooperation. The Colonial Office believed that it was extremely important to deliberate on the postwar atmosphere in East Asia, including matters not only of trade, shipping, air communications and markets, but also practical cooperation in less tangible matters.<sup>46</sup> In addition, by dint of the Canberra Agreement, it was agreed with the Colonial Office that copies of all papers produced by the Korea Committee should be sent to them at a very early stage, for communication to Dominion governments.<sup>47</sup> The Foreign Office, however, commented that if the Colonial Office's stance was accepted, Korean discussions might become rather cumbersome,

<sup>44</sup> Knaplund, pp. 303, 312.

<sup>45</sup> The Future of Korea, December 20, 1944, 41801 (6012/102/23). Britain's stance on Japan was based on two assumptions: first, that control would be shared by the major powers; second, that Britain should take the lead in any Commonwealth role in the international control of Japan. [Buckley, pp. 19–21.] The Americans also had an idea of policing Japan from Korea: "Korea offers an obvious point for the location of bases for the control of Japan." (H-201 Preliminary, Korea: Security Problems – Strategic Bases, November 13, 1944, RG59, Box 117.)

<sup>46</sup> Blackburn (Colonial Office) to Clarke (FO), October 7, 1943, 35927 (5378/1953/61). Hornbeck, who had been a recipient of a Rhodes fellowship, instituted by the British colonialist Cecil Rhodes, tended to be an advocate of the British approach to the colonial problems. (Louis, pp. 160–167.) Yet he appears not to have agreed with British officials as far as the Korean question was concerned.

<sup>47</sup> Minutes on Questionnaire on Korea, May 4, 1944, 40798 (4320/4320/70); Toynbee to Bennett, February 14, 1945, 46468 (2330/1394/23).

while the Dominions' views were unlikely to be very informed. The Colonial Office was against letting the settlement of the colonial affairs of defeated nations set any precedents for Britain. In any case, the Foreign Office promised to send the Colonial Office the final agreed text for communication to the Dominion governments in due course.<sup>48</sup>

Lastly, there was the minor issue of how to evaluate Korea in terms of British trade opportunities. This, too, could not be dealt with as an isolated problem. Most of Britain's interests in East Asia were concentrated in China. During the four decades of Japan's rule, what meager economic interest it had had in Korea almost disappeared: "In the years 1935–39 inclusive the average annual exports from the United Kingdom to Korea amounted to 156,000 Pounds and the imports from Korea to the United Kingdom to 9,000 Pounds."<sup>49</sup> With the overthrow of Japanese domination, a new market of considerable potential value would come into existence, and would offer new opportunities. This new market, however, would be affected by the character of the political regime that was to be established. It was crucial for Britain, therefore, that the harmony of the great powers should not be disturbed by any conflict of interest in this region. If such a conflict should occur in an extreme form, the reestablishment of British mercantile houses in East Asia would be threatened, along with the stability of world peace. Apart from these general considerations, the region's commercial opportunities were likely to be impaired if there was friction between China and the Soviet Union over Korea, or any other areas. Though the effect of such friction might lead the Chinese government to seek closer relations with Britain, it was doubtful that any advantage gained as a result would be enough to compensate for losses due to the general reduction in trade and industry that would likely ensue.<sup>50</sup>

Given such concerns, Britain maintained a passive attitude until virtually the end of the war. This British passivity differed, however, from that of the United States. Britain tried to avoid referring to the Korean question at all, let alone the issue of independence. Before Britain entered the war against Japan, any open discussion or criticism

<sup>48</sup> Minutes on Questionnaire on Korea; The Future of Korea, December 20, 1944, 41801, (6012/102/23). At the informal meeting with Hornbeck in October 1943, officials of the Dominions Office were present. Hornbeck did not seem entirely convinced by the Dominion Office's views. [Post-war Settlement in the Far East, October 14–15, 1943, 35927 (5469/1953/61).] On the Dominions Office's opposition to trusteeship, see Yu, Pyŏngyong, "Ich'adaejŏn chung Han'guk sint'akt'ongch'i e taehan Yŏngguk ũ oegyo chŏngch'aek yŏn'gu" (A Study of British Foreign Policy toward Korean Trusteeship during World War II), *Yŏksahakpo* (History Review), 134–135 (September 1992), p. 178.

<sup>49</sup> Korea, July 22, 1945, 46468 (4702/1394/23).

<sup>50</sup> The Future of Korea, December 20, 1944, 41801 (6012/102/23).

of Japan's military rule had been restrained. Yet when Japan continued to incite the British colonies in Asia in the name of the "East Asian Co-prosperity," Britain came to the conclusion that Korean aspirations for independence might be of use in anti-Japanese propaganda. As a result, Korea's history under Japanese domination, and Japan's many, violated assurances of open markets in Korea and Manchuria, were extremely useful in creating such publicity. The Foreign Office felt that Korea furnished an excellent object lesson in the meaning of Japanese domination. Once disparaged as reckless and useless, the spirit of Korean nationalism was now praised for surviving Japan's brutal suppression, and was expected to stimulate opposition to the Japanese on the part of Koreans in China and Manchuria.<sup>51</sup> From this point on, Britain held in high esteem the "use" of Koreans on the Indian and Burmese war fronts, and even asked China to issue visas to Koreans to facilitate their journeys to India.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, simple, non-official acknowledgements had been sent in reply to letters from Korean organizations, breaking what had been a long silence.<sup>53</sup>

Yet Britain's position on Korean independence was still negative when, in March 1942, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Sumner Welles commented in the press that, though he viewed the activities of Korean and other liberation movements with the utmost sympathy, there were still many problems that needed to be resolved in each particular movement before recognition could be contemplated. The Foreign Office interpreted this general sentiment as coinciding with its own.<sup>54</sup> When China toyed with recognizing the KPG in Chongqing, the Foreign Office remained evasive. Although, as discussed earlier, it admitted the dominant position of the Chinese in this matter, the Foreign Office did not stint in enumerating various

<sup>51</sup> Craigie to Scott, May 21, 1941, 27992 (6206/2007/23); FO to Ministry of Information, May 9, 1942, 31845 (3293/3293/23); Matthews to SS, February 18, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/73.

<sup>52</sup> Minute on Historical Note on Korea, March 3, 1942, 31773 (2101/623/23). Britain was very keen on the "use" of Koreans for practical objectives.

<sup>53</sup> Lee Chengchen (Yi Ch'ŏngch'ŏn) to Churchill, enclosure in Seymour to Eden, October 12, 1942, 31824 (7676/165/23). However, it was decided in this case, as in previous cases of written communications from Koreans, that no acknowledgement should be sent from the Prime Minister's Office or the Foreign Office, even though the letter had been duly received by the British embassy in Chongqing. [Cancery, British Embassy (Chongqing), on Tjo Sowang (Cho Soang) to Churchill, May 11, 1943, 35956 (2403/723/23).] The United States took an identical stance. [Gauss to SS, December 17, 1941, *FRUS, 1941*, vol. 4, pp. 757–758.] On the other hand, the American ambassador in Chongqing frequently met KPG officials and exchanged ideas with them, while his British counterpart sent an embassy official of lower rank to respond to the Koreans' requests for interviews and for other matters. [Seymour to Eden, March 2, 1945, 46468 (1777/1394/23).]

<sup>54</sup> US Embassy (London) to FO, March 24, 1942, 31824 (2507/165/23) and enclosure.



negative factors. Replies to continued Korean advances should be confined to assurances of sympathy with Korean efforts toward the eventual realization of their aspirations for national freedom and independence. Nor had the Foreign Office committed itself as to the future of Korea after the war.<sup>55</sup> In the same context, Britain remained silent as to whether the third point of the Atlantic Charter should be applied to Korea in the same way as to its own colonies.<sup>56</sup> In May 1943, Senator Alexander Wiley of Nebraska submitted to the American Congress a resolution for the recognition of Korea's independence. Ambassador Halifax then complained that Wiley was a typical senator of no very outstanding ability or strong convictions, who was intruding into a problem intimately connected with the prosecution of the war. The Foreign Office commented that Wiley's speech could only have been made by someone ignorant of the Koreans and of conditions in Korea.<sup>57</sup>

#### THE CAIRO DECLARATION AND AFTER

Britain was one of the three powers who announced the joint declaration to guarantee Korean independence in Cairo in 1943. Unfortunately, the British did not leave any record to explain how they decided upon this *démarche*. It is impossible to find a comprehensive study on the Korean question that dates from that time in the documents of the Foreign Office. The Far Eastern Department grumbled that no information was given by the prime minister before (or after) the Cairo Declaration, admitting that it certainly had no cut-and-dried solution to this problem.<sup>58</sup> Although Churchill often wrote memos on war conditions and various strategies, as he did in his "morning thoughts," he seems to have had no time for the Korean question.<sup>59</sup>

From 1942, Britain worked with the United States to establish a joint Allied approach, by way of talks and informal exchanges of ideas between British and American officials. The most significant event in this context would be the visit of Anthony Eden to Washington in March 1943. In this conference, officials of the two powers

<sup>55</sup> Korean Resistance to Japan, US Embassy to FO, February 16, 1942, 31824 (1573/165/23) and minutes; Matthews to SS, April 27, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/103.

<sup>56</sup> As for the third point of the Atlantic Charter referred to by the Koreans, see Seymour to Eden, May 8, 1942, 31824 (4093/165/23); Cho Soang to Churchill, May 11, 1943, 35956 (2403/723/23) and minutes.

<sup>57</sup> Halifax to Eden, May 5, 1943, 35956 (2436/723/23) and minutes.

<sup>58</sup> Minutes on Parliamentary Question, December 8, 1943, 35956 (6467/723/23).

<sup>59</sup> Churchill did not even have any particular plans for the postwar settlement of Japan. [Buckley, p. 18–19.]

discussed the organization and function of the United Nations, and the Korean question was included as a matter of course. According to a contemporary newspaper article, eight exiled governments of various nationalities in London became more fully informed around that time of Anglo-American plans for a postwar world structure. The outline that emerged from the Roosevelt–Eden discussions was that this project would be primarily operated by a world council of four, comprising the United States, Britain, China and Russia. As a corollary to this four-power directorate, a committee of eight smaller nations would be created, and a system of rotation would ensure that all the smaller nations would eventually serve terms on the council. Korea was temporarily to be placed under “international guardianship,” before becoming independent.<sup>60</sup> This first high-level discussion that included the Korean question went smoothly enough. Yet when it came to defining the functions of the various branches of the United Nations, Britain started contradicting the United States, with the aim of protecting its interests, and the Korean question was accordingly influenced by this change of atmosphere (see Chapter 6).

Following the British–American conferences in Washington of March 1943, the larger questions affecting East Asia policy were discussed in “off-the-record” talks with Stanley Hornbeck and other American officials. Although no systematic policy suggestions emerged from these talks, the British were able to obtain a rough understanding of U.S. policy through this exchange of ideas with American officials. This was especially the case with Hornbeck, who was regarded as accurately conveying the American plan for postwar settlements in East Asia. Both parties agreed that there was no perfect scheme to resolve the Korean question. Hornbeck admitted that, as far as Korea was concerned, no ideal solution was apparent, and that the United States government had so far stalled on the matter, while the Chinese government had made no specific request with regard to it. Hornbeck thought that Russia might well make trouble over Manchuria, and that such ulterior purposes would lead Russia to demand a share in beating Japan before the war ended.<sup>61</sup>

In the October talks, just a month or so before the Cairo Conference, two of the participants were Ashley Clarke, the head of the Far Eastern Department at the Foreign Office, and Sir George Sansom, the councilor of the British embassy in Washington in charge of East Asia affairs. Sansom, a Japan specialist, suggested that the immediate solution might be to allow the Koreans to take over the country at

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<sup>60</sup> Allied Plans for Post-War Structure Revealed, enclosure in April 28, 1943, 35956 (2942/723/23).

<sup>61</sup> Halifax to Eden, July 11, 1943, 35740 (3561/25/10).

once, even though this would probably mean that the administration would be run on very modest lines at first. He believed that the administrative problem was really secondary to the problem of security, and how this security could be provided by collective means after the war. It was also suggested that administrative advisers should be chosen from different nationalities, and it was thought probable that the Russians would expect a large share. Hornbeck did not raise objections to this suggestion, probably because the British approach differed from that of the State Department. Hornbeck thought that the first difficulty would be to find persons adequately qualified to be responsible for any sort of government among the Koreans now working in the United States and in China. In the absence of any single predominant Korean personality, it was suggested that it might be helpful to install a figurehead from a branch of the former Korean royal family.<sup>62</sup> Hornbeck, however, did not seem to be overly enthused by this idea, probably because the State Department had so far not considered any restoration of the Korean monarchy.

This was all that the British Foreign Office had prepared in regard to the Korean question before the Cairo Conference. As noted in the previous chapter, Chinese records mention a proposed working level conference among the three powers before the summit meeting at Cairo, but this was never took place. Like the U.S. State Department, the British Foreign Office made no independently identifiable contribution to the final communiqué of the three leaders at Cairo. But, in any event, the clause on Korea in the Cairo Declaration marked an important concession on the part of Britain, in the sense that it agreed to the independence of Korea, even though there was a string of "in due courses" attached. It was one occasion in which Britain got involved in a regional matter in which it had scant interest. Indeed, the Foreign Office later declared that Britain had little interest in the future of Korea, except for the fact that it was a signatory of the Cairo Declaration.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, references to the independence of Korea were meager and were made reluctantly, even after the Cairo Conference, similarly to Churchill's references to India and Burma following the Atlantic Charter of two years previously.

Immediately following the Cairo Declaration, the Department of Far Eastern Affairs prepared a reply to a question given by the House of Commons. Originally it was worded as follows: "The manner and stages by which these objectives, [i.e., the independence of Korea] can be achieved must obviously be considered in consultation with other

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<sup>62</sup> Post-war Administration of Korea, October 13, 1943, 35956 (5471/723/23) and minutes.

<sup>63</sup> Korea, July 22, 1945, 46468 (4702/1394/23).

members of the United Nations in the light of developments in the Far Eastern theater of war. But that does not mean that independence need be withheld." Yet Clement R. Attlee, the deputy prime minister and lord president of the Council, deleted the latter statement in the official answer, to avoid giving the impression that Britain would be against Korean independence.<sup>64</sup> By the middle of 1944, the British embassy at Chongqing had begun to take a more active interest in the Korean movement in China, as the Korea Committee started to compile reports on Korea. Yet the embassy was instructed by London not to express any opinion on the question of recognition.<sup>65</sup> In early 1945, the KPG demanded recognition for the last time. The Foreign Office once again demurred. Recalling the results of unofficial conversations with Chinese and American officials, and considering its policy to be in keeping with thinking in both countries, the Foreign Office officials were of the opinion that the question of recognition should be deferred. They believed that Anglo-U.S. recognition of the KPG might well lead to further difficulties with Russia, similar to those that they had experienced over the "London Poles." The Foreign Office then instructed Ambassador Horace Seymour in Chongqing not to reply to KPG demands for recognition.<sup>66</sup>

By 1945, a liberated France was on friendly terms with the KPG, and the French embassy in Chongqing had informal but *de facto* relations with it. Immensely encouraged, the KPG claimed that France had "recognized its *de facto* status, at least." This directly contradicted the Allied Korea policy. The United States promptly took action, and found that the claim was exaggerated. The British reaction, however, was more emotional. The Foreign Office commented that this was a meaningless gesture, since French interests in Korea were small and the KPG held no control over Korea whatsoever. Finally, the Foreign Office regarded it as a pity that the French should have thought fit to take this step without consulting the United States and Britain. They added that it would be interesting to know whether they had consulted the Russians.<sup>67</sup> Yet there is no record that Britain made an official representation to France in any form.

Since late 1944, when the coming Allied victory seemed obvious, Britain included the Korean question in issues of the postwar settlement when the United States asked for an exchange of opinions. The Foreign Office created the Korea Committee, chaired by

<sup>64</sup> Parliamentary Question, Draft Reply, December 8, 1943, 35956 (6467/723/23).

<sup>65</sup> Gaus to SS, June 1, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/343.

<sup>66</sup> Allison (US Embassy) to Bennett, minutes of February 28, 1945, 46468 (1394/1394/23) and FO to Seymour, April 4, 1945 (1394/1394/23).

<sup>67</sup> Minutes on Ministry of Information to FO, March 26, 1945, 46468 (1864/1394/23).

Arnold Toynbee, for this purpose. The committee drafted six reports. Of these, "The Achievements and Failures of the Japanese Administration in Korea," "Korea's Capacity for Independence," "Economic Conditions in Korea and Future Problems" and "Korean Committees Abroad" were to be exchanged with the United States, while "The Future of Korea" and "The International Control and Defense of Korea" were for internal circulation only. It is difficult, however, to say that these reports precisely expressed Britain's Korea policy. For one thing, the committee was formed in the Research Department of the Foreign Office, under the aegis of the Economic and Reconstruction Department, to study the problems of postwar Korea, in conjunction with similar inquiries that were to be conducted by the State Department in Washington.<sup>68</sup> As Sterndale Bennett, who was in charge of Korean affairs in the Far Eastern Department pointed out, its function tended to duplicate that of the Far Eastern Committee, which covered all issues in the East Asian region, including Japan. Unless a member of the Korea Committee attended the discussions of the Far Eastern Committee, and unless the Korea Committee stood in relation to that committee as a sort of "working party," its policy functions and the significance of its reports were sure to be weakened. Second, the Korea Committee was said to have failed to grasp ministerial-level opinions on British East Asia policy. As the war drew near to its end, Britain felt that it was being excluded by the United States and the Soviet Union in the settling of the Korean question. Britain was indeed failing to secure enough information. As a result, the Korea Committee had difficulty in exchanging ideas with the Americans, even on a low level.<sup>69</sup> Nonetheless, one may say that the reports of the committee, especially the ones for internal use, were relatively comprehensive summaries of the British stance on the Korean question, as one of the Big Three. In conclusion, the reports stated: "It must be borne in mind that if the organization for world security is to succeed, we cannot adopt an entirely isolationist policy toward any problem which may contain the seeds of international dispute, and Korea eminently constitutes such a problem." Britain, in other words, should be a token participant in settling the issue, in concert with the United States and China.<sup>70</sup>

Here another, more important, factor in British reluctance over Korea became apparent. This was its appreciation and concern in regard to Soviet interests and capacities, vis-à-vis the Korean peninsula. The reports commented that, in view of the political

<sup>68</sup> FO to Chancery (British Embassy, Moscow), June 24, 1944, 41801 (2769/102/23).

<sup>69</sup> Minutes on The Future of Korea, December 20, 1944, 41801 (6012/102/23).

<sup>70</sup> Korea, July 22, 1945, 46468 (4702/1394/23).

consequences that might ensue from “Russia’s renaissance as a Far Eastern power;” it might not even be desirable to restore the pre-war British position in the years immediately following the war. The Soviet government might well decide that Korea was an essential element in its security system. The future administration of Korea therefore largely turned on Russian attitudes, which were unknown. From a strategic point of view, it did not seem likely that the Soviet Union would agree to the control of Korea remaining exclusively in the hands of any single great power. It seemed likely that Russia would consider the control of naval and air bases by another power, even with only a modicum of troops to protect them, as a threat to their position in East Asia. The Soviet Union might attempt to create a position in Manchuria that corresponded in some degree to what it had possessed before the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05. It would expect rights in Dalian, and perhaps in Lüshun (Port Arthur), and the right of passage by ship and rail to Vladivostok. It was possible that the Soviet Union might wish to extend this advantage to Korea’s railways and ports.<sup>71</sup>

Britain believed that recognition of the KPG by the other three powers would not diminish the possibility of the appearance in East Asia of a Soviet-sponsored, Lublin-type “Liberation Committee,” such as had been created in Poland.<sup>72</sup> The Soviet Union might try to establish an independent state of a Communist or semi-Communist character, which could then be controlled in the same manner as Outer Mongolia. Moreover, whereas the Korean groups in Chongqing and the United States were merely exiles, a substantial Korean population of about 180,000 resided in the Soviet Union, most of whom had been deported to Central Asia in 1937 from their former homes in the Maritime Province and around Khabarovsk. There were also a number of Korean officers and men in the Red Army. If Russia were determined to assume virtual control of Korea, none of the other three powers, or even all three combined, would be able to stop it. In this regard, the question was not so much whether Russia would have a voice or demand “a large share” in the administration of Korea, but whether it would agree to any other nation having any voice or share in at all. This was the crux of the whole problem. Without some such arrangement to address possible Soviet

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*; The Future of Korea, December 20, 1944, 41801 (6012/102/23) and minute.

<sup>72</sup> “In addition to the report that the Red Army had trained and equipped Russian Koreans in the Far East, the British government endeavored to confirm the rumor that the USSR had established in Vladivostok a Free Korean group to take over the government of Korea after the Japanese had been expelled.” [USSR and Korea by Jones (Research Dept.), March 16, 1945, 46468 (1736/1394/23) and minutes; USSR and Korea, April 24, 1945, (2537/1394/23) and minutes.]

demands, the Soviet Union might refuse to accept the creation of a truly independent Korea. British experience in Romania and Bulgaria had also demonstrated the difficulty of running a joint show with the Russians. In this sense, the British concluded that "from our own purely selfish point of view it should be foolish to try to stop her." However much the British might have believed that the Soviet government was the supreme realistic egoist as regarded minor countries, they also believed such demands would meet with tremendous opposition from other governments. Consequently, there was no reason to believe that the Russians would not be prepared to recognize that other powers also had a major interest in the region.<sup>73</sup>

The British appraisal and policy suggestions regarding Korea showed a very European, or conventional, approach to international affairs. Unlike the new American efforts for four-power cooperation and the establishment of a peace system, Britain had entered into a competition with the Soviet Union to divide Europe into spheres of interest. In settling postwar affairs, the Pacific would belong to the U.S. sphere; East Europe to the Soviet; and the Mediterranean and North Africa to the British. Even the peace system should, in this view, be based on such a division into spheres. Regions like the Balkans, whose sphere was obscure, would become objects of competition. In the case of Korea, the situation was in some ways similar to the state of affairs that had existed in Iraq following World War I. The British believed that Korea might be as uncomfortable a problem as Greece was proving to be. Nevertheless, whereas Greece and Iraq were of essential interest to Britain in preventing Soviet expansion into the Mediterranean and the Middle East, Korea was a concern of the United States, in which other powers' spheres of interest were also intertwined. The greatest American interest was the vanquishing of Japan, and Korea belonged to the American sphere in this regard. Britain hoped that the United States would control the peninsula. Yet, even if the situation seemed still rather favorable to the Soviet Union, Britain decided to leave it up to the U.S. government to deal with the Soviet government when the time came.<sup>74</sup> By giving its dismal forecasts of Soviet capacities, Britain made it clear that it had no intention of fighting the Soviet Union over the Korean peninsula. This sort of retreat from the Korean question bore new significance even before the end of the war. In Potsdam, Britain commented that

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<sup>73</sup> The Future of Korea, December 20, 1944; Post-war Administration of Korea, October 13, 1943, 35956 (5471/723/23) and minutes.

<sup>74</sup> The Future of Korea, December 20, 1944. British discussions of Soviet factors appeared as early as 1942. [US Embassy (London) to FO, February 16, 1942, 31824 (1573/165/23) and minutes.]

the best course of action would be to leave the United States and the Soviet Union to play their hands, but there was the potential danger that the Russians might demand something from Britain (most likely in Europe) if the Americans raised difficulties for them in East Asia.<sup>75</sup> Britain could not allow the Korean peninsula to turn into an object of U.S.-Soviet competition, and thus complicate the Anglo-American situation in Europe.

The last point regarded British ideas on the form that Korea's government should take, which were of course intimately associated with its postwar intentions on colonial issues. Like the United States, Britain suggested "a form of administration as a condominium." In terms of the details, however, the two powers greatly differed. Britain approached the issue with attention to such factors as the geopolitical importance of the peninsula, the dearth of British interests in Korea, the Korean people's lack of capacity in economic and administrative affairs, and the disharmony of Korea's political groups, all features that the Americans also emphasized. Based on these assumptions, Britain made these alternative suggestions: (1) that sovereignty be restored to Korea, over which foreign advisors would then maintain control; (2) that Korea be administered by one of the great powers; (3) that Korea be administered by one of the smaller powers with colonial experience; and (4) that some form of general control be established in which all the great powers would share. After talks with Hornbeck, British officials believed that the United States was inclined toward the first option. Yet it seems more likely that this was first and foremost Britain's preferred choice, as reports in the American archives would tend to substantiate.<sup>76</sup>

According to Bennett, Korea's situation was, from the British perspective, not dissimilar to what had existed in Iraq after World War I, when Britain suggested that "independence be recognized in principle but restricted in practice, either for a fixed number of years at the end of which the question would be reviewed by the world organization, or until the fulfillment to the satisfaction of the world organization of certain specified conditions under the presence of a High Commissioner or Principal Adviser appointed by the world organization to exercise certain reserved powers." Under such circumstances, there seemed to be no need for a Korean army, and a local police force or gendarmerie organized under foreign guidance

<sup>75</sup> Foulds to Bennett, July 39, 1945, 46468 (4802/1394/23) and minutes.

<sup>76</sup> For the conversations between Hornbeck and Foreign Office officials, see also Post War Settlement in the Far East, 14–15 October, 1943, 35927 (5469/1953/61); H-200 Preliminary, Korea: Political Problems – Need for International Supervisory Authority, November 13, 1944, RG59, Box 117.



should suffice. It might be as well, however, to have a definite agreement at the outset as to how troops should be provided to back up such a police force, if necessary. For such a method to be effective, it would be necessary to dispatch troops to major strategic points in the peninsula, and to control them. If the troops were separate contingents of different powers, there would be a huge danger that rivalry and friction could grow between them. It seemed, therefore, that an international system of advisers would, in itself, solve none of these problems.

The second alternative was to entrust the government in Korea to a single great power. This power could be allowed to set up an impartial and efficient administration, having as its main purpose the training of the Koreans to become completely self-governing at the earliest possible opportunity. Britain would itself be unwilling to accept such a position, in view of its other commitments. China, moreover, could hardly be entrusted with this responsibility. Yet if the Soviet Union were to assume it, China would protest vehemently. The best power to take on such a responsibility would thus be the United States. The United States, however, might not wish to undertake the task alone, and it was doubtful, even if it did, whether the Soviet Union would agree. The third approach could avoid the awkward consequences of giving control to any one of the powers, and Britain seemed very much interested in the idea. The Netherlands, with its long experience of administration in the Far East, was an obvious choice; the Dutch government, however, would not accept such a "thankless task." Denmark could also fulfill the requirements, or perhaps one of the British Dominions with seaboard on the Pacific. Yet it was thought that neither Australia nor New Zealand would be in a position to do so, because of their special relationship with Britain. The close connection of Canada with the United States would seem to rule this country out, too. Ultimately, considering the difficulties inherent to all such possible alternatives, the arguments in favor of the administration of Korea being entrusted to the United States appeared to be further strengthened.

The fourth and last suggestion was a form of "condominium," such as was then being discussed in connection with the future of colonial territories. There had been no precedent for joint administration by more than two states. If a committee were to be formed with officials from each of the powers concerned, such a committee was deemed not likely to make for an effective administration. It would be a Herculean task, since the interests of the powers could well contradict one another. This seemed, hypothetically, the only method that might possibly reconcile certain conflicting interests in this area, in particular those of the Soviet Union and China. For this

purpose, the administration of Korea might be entrusted to a national from a small power, a high colonial official of the Netherlands, for example, who would report to some kind of “Council of the Liberating Powers” (composed of the principal liberating powers), or to the United Nations. These powers would have to supply the armed forces necessary for maintaining order. Roosevelt, in March 1943, had indicated that he considered the United States, the USSR and China to be Korea’s potential “protecting powers.” It was thought that the United States would welcome British help in any situation where difficulties with the Soviet Union were likely to occur. According to a December 1944 memorandum, Britain would be in a stronger position in the event of any friction between the United States and the Soviet Union, were it to remain outside. But the problem was so bound up with others that it was difficult to see how Britain could remain aloof.<sup>77</sup>

Two further problems were then raised. The first concerned the issue of Korean sovereignty. When a state becomes independent, it is sure to want to exercise its sovereignty. Yet this might be delayed if the great powers decided to control it for a certain period of time. The problem was never raised in detail when the powers discussed the Korean question. According to a British report, the peace treaty with Japan would presumably transfer sovereignty over Korea to those members of the United Nations who had taken part in the anti-Japan war, which would be exercised on their behalf by the four powers. Any change in the system of administration would presumably, therefore, be the responsibility of those powers, and they should determine when the Koreans should themselves take it over. The second issue concerned the use of Korean ports. For Britain, Korea was one of the most convenient routes for reaching the sea for a very wide area, including Manchuria and Trans-Baikal Siberia. The prosperity of these regions, as well as Korea’s own, would be increased if arrangements were made for them to use Korean ports, in addition to the ones at Dalian and Vladivostok, which would hardly be sufficient by themselves. It might, therefore, be advisable to establish certain free ports in Korea, with special facilities for the handling of transit trade between China and the Soviet Union, and overseas countries. There were several precedents for such special arrangements, including Hamburg and Salonika.<sup>78</sup> The idea of free ports was in concord with Britain’s East Asia policy.

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<sup>77</sup> The Future of Korea, December 20, 1944, 41801 (6012/102/23) and minutes; International Control and Defence of Korea, September 4, 1944, 46471 (6531/1653/23).

<sup>78</sup> International Control and Defence of Korea, 46471(6531/1653/23).

While British officials were preparing to inform their American counterparts of these nuances in British thinking through such memos, they did not have the opportunity to undertake truly in-depth discussions with their colleagues in the United States and China. One reason may be that the British could not afford to concentrate on the Korean question because of other urgent postwar issues. What is more, by focusing on the settlement of Italian colonies at the Potsdam Conference, where its proposals sharply contradicted those of the Soviet Union, Britain allowed the last opportunity to agree on the settlement of the Korean question in a friendly atmosphere to slip away. The sudden end of the war in August 1945 then put to an end to any further substantial discussions on the Korean question.

#### CONCLUSION: "KOREA IN WORLD POLITICS"

When Japan surrendered and Asia regained peace, Korea became a vortex of contradictions for Britain. It looked too good simply to be thrown away, and too thorny to be preserved. Britain would have liked to intervene in the matter to maintain its status as a great power in the region. On the other hand, it wanted to avoid getting involved in any troubles that Korea might cause. The British attitude toward the Korean question was sometimes active, sometimes passive. In the end, Britain completely renounced the matter. Despite, or perhaps owing to, such limitations, Britain's case is useful for understanding the position and significance of Korea in the process of the postwar settlement.

It must be pointed out, first of all, that although Britain agreed to the American idea of trusteeship, and itself suggested "a sort of condominium" solution for Korea, Britain really preferred a system that was more in line with the existing system, i.e., one based on British colonial experiences. After talks with Hornbeck in October 1943, the Foreign Office complacently emphasized the fact that the U.S. State Department also had in mind for Korea a regime that would be comparable to the one that once existed in Egypt. In such a regime, sovereignty would remain in Korean hands, but the government would be run by "advisers," who would be appointed by the principal liberating powers. The British believed that such a system would allow colonial possessions to be managed in such a way that third party interests were recognized, and that the metropolitan powers would have to recognize some sort of accountability.<sup>79</sup> Yet London

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<sup>79</sup> Place of the Far East in World Reconstruction, Hubbard (Royal Institute of International Affairs) to FO, December 10, 1943, 35851 (6587/1610/10).

was unable effectively to push for this kind of regime in negotiations with the United States or China.

Next, Britain seemed to acknowledge the value of the Korean question in terms of participation in Asia-Pacific regional issues. In October 1945, Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin convened the Far Eastern Ministerial Committee to discuss ways to involve Australia in a Korean trusteeship. With regard to the suggestion that Australia should represent the British Commonwealth on the trusteeship body, it was pointed out that an awkward situation would arise if the Russians and the Americans opposed the suggestion. The way would be open for Britain to suggest that Australia should take the place of the United Kingdom in a four-power trusteeship. Any decision on this matter was to be deferred until the views of the Australian government, and of the other Dominions, had been received, and perhaps to wait for input from the forthcoming Moscow foreign ministers conference.<sup>80</sup> In slightly differing turns of phrase, almost all of the British Commonwealth nations consented to the idea of Australian participation, at least in principle.<sup>81</sup> It was after ascertaining these views that Britain moved on to the Moscow Conference in December.

By its own reckoning, Britain had been delegating responsibilities concerning Korea to the United States. Yet, before and after the liberation of Korea, it also expressed discontent with how the United States and the Soviet Union were apparently excluding Britain from the resolution of Korean affairs. On August 8, 1945, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan, and thus committed itself to the establishment of a free and independent Korea in due course. The British then came to suspect that there were two indications, neither of them conclusive, that the United States and the Soviet Union might have entered into some secret agreement on Korea, without the knowledge of the British government. The first point was that, on August 16, President Truman was asked at a press conference whether he was aware of any changes in the plan for Korea. He replied that he was not. Truman claimed that the Korean question had been discussed at Berlin (the Potsdam Conference), and that the plans would be carried out as expected. But, as far as Britain knew, Korea had not been discussed in Berlin; not, at least, at any meeting that had been attended by British representatives. This meant that Truman's statement was difficult to explain. Yet if Truman's remark was correct, it most likely meant that the U.S. delegation had held some conversation on the subject with their Soviet colleagues, which the British delegation

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<sup>80</sup> Cabinet Far Eastern Committee, October 26, 1945, 46469 (9049/1394/23).

<sup>81</sup> Korean Question of a Four Power Trusteeship, December 8, 1945, 46469 (11690/1394/23).

was neither asked to participate in nor informed of. The second indication was contained in General Douglas MacArthur's "General Order No. 1," which was communicated by President Truman to the British prime minister on August 15. This stated that the Japanese commanders in Korea, north of the 38th parallel north, would surrender to the commander-in-chief of the Soviet forces in the Far East, and that those south of that parallel would surrender to the commander-in-chief of the United States armed forces in the Pacific. This order, which meant that, for the purposes of occupation, Korea would be divided into two roughly equal parts, was the first indication received by the British government of any Russo-American understanding about a joint disposition of the territory. On August 17, the U.S. Chiefs of Staff asked for the views of the British Chiefs of Staff "concerning forces for Korea in line with the understandings reached at Yalta concerning the quadripartite trusteeship for that area." This subject had not, in fact, been discussed at Yalta, and the British Chiefs of Staff replied on August 30 that they had no knowledge of the mentioned understanding, and that their present plans made no allowance for forces to assist in the occupation of the stated area. It was believed, however, that bisecting the country between Russia and the United States did not necessarily contain any sinister implications for Britain.<sup>82</sup>

Britain's doubts persisted until the postwar Moscow Conference in December. The British delegation had discussed Soviet actions in Korea rather freely with American embassy personnel in Moscow. Once again, suspicions were raised. The British believed that the Americans had reached a definite agreement with the Russians on the subject of Korea during the Soviet-American military staff talk at Potsdam. There had surely already been Soviet-American conversations regarding East Asia, including Korea, at Yalta, to which Britain was not privy. This supposed agreement would have confirmed Korea's right, as proclaimed at Cairo, to be free, democratic and independent, and eventually to choose its own form of government. It would also have provided for a temporary two-power occupation of the country, with the 38th parallel as the line of demarcation between the two commands, while acknowledging that the other powers (namely, Britain and China) would eventually be brought into the system of control. The Americans were initially concerned by the fact that the Red Army had crossed the agreed demarcation line at two points before their own troops had reached it. The Russians

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<sup>82</sup> Future of Korea, September 8, 1945, 46468 (6733/1394/23). As for the lack of manpower for Korea on the British side, see *The Future of Korea*, December 20, 1944, 41801 (6012/102/23). For the bisecting of the peninsula, see next chapter.

withdrew, however, and from that point on Korean affairs did not seem to have been a subject of serious dispute between the Soviet and American governments.<sup>83</sup> Given such assumptions, Bevin said that he was unaware of the exact terms of any such agreement, and requested a copy of any Soviet-American agreement on a Korean trusteeship. Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov and U.S. Secretary of State James Byrnes replied that the agreement was oral, and that no written record had been kept. The issue was resolved by dint of the fact that the trusteeship suggested by the Soviet Union seemed highly satisfactory to Britain, and these long-held suspicions therefore dissipated.<sup>84</sup>

Britain's discontent never became a real obstacle in dealing with the Korean question, even if no British action had been taken to resolve it. Korea was never discussed formally at Yalta, and it was only casually mentioned by the Soviet Union at Potsdam. At the time of Japan's surrender, American officials briefly struggled to find records of earlier discussions on Korea among the Allies. This confusion only made manifest the fact that Korea was, after all, of only marginal interest to the powers in the settling of postwar issues. In general, Britain recognized the rights of other powers in regions over which it did not maintain control, especially in regard to issues that were of little interest to itself, and Churchill had remained an onlooker at Yalta, as far as U.S.-Soviet discussions of East Asia were concerned. He appeared to have signed the final Yalta agreement reluctantly. Korea was pushed aside as being within the spheres of interest of the United States and China, rather than those of Britain. But, in spite of all this, Britain still felt discontented at having been "excluded" from Korean affairs. Perhaps it was upset, as one of the Big Three, that its voice had not been heard.

On the other hand, at the "working level," the British response was quite different. The Foreign Office seemed relieved that Britain was now free from the burden of Korea: "In view of our small commercial and strategic interest in this area 'any solution' which did not contravene the terms of the Cairo Declaration would be acceptable to us."<sup>85</sup> According to one American report, the British government had a completely open mind on the question of Korea, and was willing to agree to any solution that met the dual need of securing an adequate government for Korea, and preventing Korea from

<sup>83</sup> Roberts (Moscow) to Bennett, November 26, 1945, 46469 (11191/1394/23).

<sup>84</sup> Memo by the US Delegation at the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers, December 16, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 2, p. 626; Meeting of Conference: 16th December, 50938 (U10134/6550/70); Minute on UK Delegation (Moscow) to FO, December 21, 1945, 46469 (12118/1394/23).

<sup>85</sup> Future of Korea, September 8, 1945.

becoming a center of international rivalry and friction. With respect to the American desire for a four-power international trusteeship, one British official said that the only question in the British mind was, "Will it work?" The British Foreign Office, however, expressed the opinion that there could be no final solution for Korea, or for any other Far Eastern problem, until the extent of Soviet participation in the control of Japan was clarified through the Far Eastern Advisory Commission.<sup>86</sup> In the end, however, the issue was determined not by Britain but amid the U.S.-Soviet confrontations of the Cold War. It is clear, nevertheless, that the British approach to Korea during the war years can significantly contribute to our understanding of "Korea in world politics."

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<sup>86</sup> Winant to SS, November 14, 1945, 740.00119 Control (Korea)/11-1445, RG59, Box 3823.

## The Soviet Union and Korea: Revisiting Soviet Intervention in the Korean Question



### SOVIET FACTORS IN U.S. KOREA POLICY

AFTER WORLD WAR II, Korea was divided and occupied by the United States and the Soviet Union, a decision which has remained a permanent factor in contemporary Korean history. The U.S. Korea policy during the war has been generally assessed in terms of this particular result, and of its permitting of massive and unnecessary extensions of Soviet power. This chapter will examine the Soviet intervention in Korea, and the consequent division of the peninsula in light of Soviet-U.S. relations. Instead of providing a detailed description of the process of division, which has been fairly well documented by other studies,<sup>1</sup> this chapter broadens our understanding to include some of the general issues that dominated the conduct of the war and wartime diplomacy, and which consequently had a tremendous, if indirect, impact on the final decision to divide Korea. One obstacle to this approach is that, despite the revelations provided by the bulky volumes in Soviet archives that have become available for study since the fall of the Soviet Union, there are very few documents that relate to the inception and development of the Soviet Union's Korea policy during the war. I have on several occasions made enquiries of Russian experts on Russo-Korean relations, regarding the existence of Russian documents on Korea from the early days of the war, i.e., from mid-1943 to 1944, when the Soviet Union began to feel some relief on the western front, and started to

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<sup>1</sup> Kim, Kijo, *Samp'alsŏn pundan ūi yŏksa* (History of Division along the 38th Parallel), (Seoul: Tongsan, 1994); Sin, Pongnyong, *Han'guk pundansa yŏn'gu* (Study on the Division of Korea) (Seoul: Han'ul Academy, 2001.) See also McGrath, Paul, *The US Army in the Korean Conflict*, in *Sin*, vol. 1.



turn its attention to the east in general, and to Korea in particular. These have, however, all been in vain.

If the Soviet entry into the war against Japan opened the door for its participation in the Korean question, the “Soviet factor” became a part of American strategic thinking immediately after the outbreak of the Pacific War. It was first suggested indirectly by President Roosevelt’s remarks to Soviet Ambassador Maxim Litvinov on December 8, 1941, just a day after Pearl Harbor. Secretary Cordell Hull also discussed the general conduct of the war against the Axis powers with Litvinov on the same day.<sup>2</sup> American efforts to persuade the Soviet Union to take part in the Far Eastern conflict were strenuously pursued until the final moments of the war. It is not an exaggeration to say that American documents, such as *Soviet Entry* and *Military Mission*, were devoted in large part to this subject. In 1942, however, although the possibility of a Japanese attack on Russian Siberia was receiving more and more attention, Moscow decided not to comply with American requests to intervene in the war against Japan, partly because it was confronting such formidable enemies on the western front. After the German advance had been contained in Kursk in the middle of 1943, Stalin indicated at the Moscow Conference in October of that year that Russia would enter the war against Japan following the defeat of Germany, a position that was confirmed in December in Tehran.<sup>3</sup> The price that the United States paid for this intervention took the specific form of “Stalin’s political conditions” at Yalta in February 1945.<sup>4</sup>

The Soviet factor appeared in U.S. Korea policy from the earliest days as well. The United States took a “common sense approach” to the Korean question, considering that no policy could be implemented satisfactorily without Soviet participation. Unlike Britain and China, however, the Soviet Union could not be an official partner in practical matters concerning Korea due to the neutrality pact concluded with Japan in April 1941. But the United States, undaunted by such limitations, still felt Korean issues should be discussed with the Soviet Union. When Syngman Rhee attempted to present his credentials as the official representative of the Korean Provisional

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<sup>2</sup> *Soviet Entry*, in *Sin*, vol. 1, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Telegraph of Secretary Hull to President, Moscow, October 3, 1943: “A message has been given me from the person highest in authority to be delivered to you personally in extreme secrecy. The message promises to get in and help to defeat the enemy in the Far East after German defeat.” (Handbook of Far Eastern Conference Discussions, Treatment of Political Questions Relating to the Far East at Multilateral Meetings of Foreign Ministers and Heads of Government 1943–1949, Research Project No.62, November 1949, in *Yi and Chông*, vol. 2, p. 69.)

<sup>4</sup> *FRUS, Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, pp. 378, 896.

Government (KPG) in Chongqing to the State Department in December 1941, William Langdon stated that factors such as the attitude toward Korean independence expressed by China, Russia and Britain would have to be taken into account. The United States, he stated, would have to study these thoroughly to establish a clear policy regarding the restoration of Korean independence.<sup>5</sup> Maxwell Hamilton, the head of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs (DFEA), also wrote in early 1942 that it would seem advisable for the United States “to inform that government and to give it an opportunity, should it so desire, to make observations or comments.”<sup>6</sup>

After a common policy was agreed on with Britain and China at the Cairo Conference in December 1943, the Department of State instructed Ambassador Clarence E. Gauss in Chongqing to approach the Soviet embassy unofficially to ascertain its opinion on recent developments in Korean circles in China’s wartime capital of China, and to discover the nature of its relations with the KPG government.<sup>7</sup> In addition, Soviet opinion might be sounded out on the subject of inviting a Korean representative to attend council meetings of UNRRA as an observer. These openings might provide an opportunity to discern whether the Soviet authorities would be interested in further informal discussions on Korea, and, if the Soviet attitude should prove responsive, it might then be determined whether such discussions should be initiated on a staff level or through diplomatic channels.<sup>8</sup> The State Department was thus well-prepared for talks with Moscow on Korea from the early stages of the war.

The problem is that the Soviet Union joined the war against Japan only at the very last moment, on August 8, 1945, and by its intervention made the division of the Korean peninsula an established fact.

<sup>5</sup> DFEA Memo, December 20, 1941, LM.79, R.1, 895.01/54. See also his Memo, February 20, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/79.

<sup>6</sup> DFEA Memo, October 10, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.00/840.

<sup>7</sup> SS to Gauss, May 12, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/340. Yet no record confirms that there had been any contact between the United States and the Soviet Union in Chongqing over the Korean question.

<sup>8</sup> Berle and DFEA Memo, July 21, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/7–2144. Sensing the mood in the American government, Syngman Rhee started to stress the Soviet menace in the Korean peninsula from 1943. When the American press suggested a trusteeship of Korea the same year, Rhee related the whole issue to the danger of Soviet expansionism, singling out its alleged aim to establish a Soviet Republic of Korea. (Rhee to Roosevelt, May 17, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/257.) Before the Yalta Conference, Rhee insisted that the resolution of the Korean question not be delayed any further, considering that the Soviet-trained Korean army was stationed in Siberia. (Rhee to Grew, February 5, 1945, LM80, R.4, 895.01/2–545.) For Rhee’s attitude toward the Soviet Union, see Chung, Henry, in *The Russians Came to Korea* (Seoul and Washington: Korean Pacific Press, 1947). Chung was Rhee’s partner during his exile in the United States.

It is true that there were other countries at war with Japan, including France, Australia and the Netherlands, as well as China and Britain, even if the deciding force in the Allied victory was the United States. The prizes awarded to the Soviet Union after the war were thus undeservedly excessive, considering the time, sacrifice and efforts the other Allies had devoted to the war. These prizes were not only given at the cost of Chinese interests, but also became the major factors that influenced the division of Korea. One must reflect cogently, therefore, on how to judge American wartime policy, especially in regard to the termination of the war and the Korean question. Was it legitimate on strategic, historical, or other grounds? These are the first questions one must ask before moving forward.

#### SOVIET ENTRY INTO THE KOREAN QUESTION

First of all, the Soviet entry in the war against Japan can be termed, in a broad sense, a “second front strategy,” the purpose of which would be to force the enemy to disperse its resources. Controversies over this issue were, indeed, one of the root causes of the Cold War. Immediately after the German invasion in 1941, Stalin asked Churchill to establish a second front “from somewhere in the Balkans or France.”<sup>9</sup> Despite Stalin’s desperate appeals, the two Western powers did not act until the landing operation at Normandy in June 1944, by which point there had already been 20,000,000 Soviet casualties. The Soviets were furious that the opening of the second front came “when the war, as a result of the heroic efforts and historic victories of the Soviet army was already drawing to a close.”<sup>10</sup> Russia’s independent actions regarding Eastern European issues can be understood in this context. The United States, nonetheless, believed that the second front in Normandy fulfilled Soviet needs, and that the Western Allies were now favorably placed “to press for Russian creation of a second front in the Far East.”<sup>11</sup> In the end, the Soviet entry into the Japanese war in 1945 was a sort of wartime game, through which it could secure political interests in the name of a second front. The Soviet inter-

<sup>9</sup> Stalin to Churchill, September 4, 1941, in Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. 3: *The Grand Alliance*, pp. 455–457.

<sup>10</sup> Beitzell, Robert (ed.), *Teheran, Yalta, Potsdam: the Soviet Protocols*, (Hattiesburg, Mississippi: Academic International, 1970), iii–iv. It has also been noted that “delaying a second front in France until 1944... contributed ‘far more than any other factor’ to the ‘postwar disillusionment and disunity’ we call the Cold War.” [Dallek, Robert, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy 1932–1954* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 534.]

<sup>11</sup> Gaddis, John Lewis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941–1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), pp. 77–78.

vention in the war and the Korean question could accordingly be approached or justified under these circumstances.

The U.S. request for Soviet participation in the East Asian war should be understood from political, as well as military, perspectives. The United States judged that military victory alone would not prevent future conflicts from arising in East Asia. Nor would any system based on a balance of power, since this would inevitably offer an opportunity for the resurgence of a militarist Japan. Cooperation among the four powers was therefore the only promising alternative for resolving the region's problems.<sup>12</sup> In October 1943, four-power cooperation was established at the Moscow Conference, when Stalin accepted China as a fully fledged member of the Big Four without any special reservations.<sup>13</sup> When the Soviet Union declared war against Japan and occupied Manchuria in August 1945, Washington cautioned that the "superficial moderation on Manchuria" must not allow any misunderstanding of "Russian intentions toward Japan and Korea." The Soviet Union would remain "masters of the situation even after troops have withdrawn." Yet the American government spoke very highly of Russian willingness to withdraw its forces, and to allow Chinese control of civil affairs, which reflected "mature statesmanship on the part of Stalin and his Moscow advisers."<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, the United States began to worry about the intense conflict between the two Allies, Britain and the Soviet Union. To American eyes, they were still under the influence of European power politics. As Germany retreated from the Balkans, "the term 'spheres of influence' was sedulously avoided or disclaimed... Rumanian affairs should be the 'main concern' of the Soviet government or Russia would 'take the lead'... Greek affairs should be the 'main concern' of the British government." This was different from the blind division of territories in the past, in that the Anglo-Russian rivalry was based on "the political character of the governments in various countries of Europe beyond the Soviet borders." The Soviet government suspected that Britain wanted to see right-wing, reactionary governments installed wherever possible, which (from the Soviet point of view) would be hostile to the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the British were apprehensive that the Soviet

<sup>12</sup> Memo prepared in the Office of Far Eastern Affairs, April 18, 1944, *FRUS*, 1944, vol. 5, p. 1232.

<sup>13</sup> Memo of Conversation by SS, November 1, 1943, *FRUS*, 1943, vol. 1, pp. 692–693; Hurley to Roosevelt, November 20, 1943, *FRUS, Conferences at Cairo and Teheran, 1943*, pp. 102–103, 869.

<sup>14</sup> Department of State, *The China White Paper*, originally issued as *United States Relations with China with Special Reference to the Period 1944–1949* (Washington: Government Printing Office, August 1949), vol. 1, pp. 122–123. See also vol. 2, pp. 92–100.

Union would endeavor, in its turn, to install and support left-wing totalitarian governments as far west in Europe as possible.<sup>15</sup> For the Americans, the Cold War was already looming large over the European horizon, which augured ill for Big Four cooperation.

Militarily, the Soviet participation in East Asian affairs should be analyzed in terms of the general, overall development of World War II, as well as in its impact on the specific war against Japan. In the final analysis, it was Soviet military capabilities that made the United States invite the Soviet Union to enter the Far Eastern theater. After the containment of the German advance in early 1943, the United States began to highly esteem Russian military capabilities, commenting that whenever the Allies opened a second front on the continent, it would be a decidedly secondary front to that of Russia.<sup>16</sup> As for East Asia, unless the Soviet Union effectively entered the war against Japan, the United States would continue to bear the brunt of carrying on that war, even after the defeat of Germany. With Russia as an ally, however, the war could be terminated in less time, and at the cost of fewer lives and resources. The conclusion was that the United States must make every effort to develop and maintain the most friendly relations with Russia.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the United States hoped to avoid landing operations on Japan's main islands. The Japanese navy, of course, was virtually deprived of any effective power after the battle of Leyte Gulf in October 1944. However, "the [American] landings [there] were followed by greater resistance than had been expected and a hard battle continued for six weeks." Weakened as the Japanese military forces had become, the costs of conquering its "fortified main island" were estimated to be enormous.<sup>18</sup>

In such circumstances, the Russian entry in the war would be a *coup de grâce* for the Japanese, who were already in a hopeless position, and would oblige them to make a decisive capitulation immediately, or shortly thereafter.<sup>19</sup> The Soviet Union could deal with the Japanese in Manchuria and Korea, if necessary, and revitalize the

<sup>15</sup> MacLeish (Assistant SS) to Grew (Under SS), January 24, 1945, *FRUS, Malta and Yalta*, pp. 102–106.

<sup>16</sup> Memo for Hopkins, August 10, 1943, *FRUS, Conferences at Washington and Quebec, 1943*, p. 625.

<sup>17</sup> Memo by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to SS, August 3, 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 1, pp. 699–703.

<sup>18</sup> Ehrman, John, *Grand Strategy—History of the Second World War United Kingdom Military Series*, vol. 6 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1956), p. 210.

<sup>19</sup> The Japanese government was of the opinion that within a few hours of hearing the Soviet declaration of war on Japan, it should accept the inevitability of surrender with one condition: to keep Japan's emperor system. Japanese Foreign Ministry (comp.), *Shūsen shiroku* (Records of History on the Termination of War), vol. 4, p. 76, quoting from Kim Kijo, p. 227.

Chinese to a point where, with the assistance of American air power and some supplies, they could finish driving the Japanese out of their own country. The main target here was the Kwantung Army, admittedly the mightiest of Japan's land forces, which President Roosevelt had estimated at Yalta to number about 4,000,000.<sup>20</sup> But the Kwantung Army had, in fact, been greatly depleted since the latter part of 1944.<sup>21</sup>

The United States also ruled out virtually any possible military campaigns against Korea. General George C. Marshall, the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, pointed out that the situation in Japan was practically identical to that in Normandy. The Americans chose November 1, 1945, as the target date to go into Kyushu. This was on the presumption that the British recapture of Singapore would take place in November, while the invasion of the Tokyo Plain would begin on March 1, 1946. Though an assault on Korea was considered, it was mainly in the political context. Military operations in Korea might combine landings from the sea with an overland invasion from Siberia; and, for political reasons, Korea should be considered a "combined zone of operations," probably under a single Allied command. Any Korea operation by the U.S. forces, however, was deemed more difficult and costly than an assault on Kyushu, though U.S. air and sea power had already greatly reduced Japanese shipping to the peninsula.<sup>22</sup> It would not, moreover, be an effective strategy of strangulation. An earlier memorandum commented: "If you occupy any area [in East Asia], the heart of Japan should be occupied."<sup>23</sup>

#### U.S. DETERRENCE VIS-À-VIS THE SOVIETS IN KOREA

All these considerations combined to impel the U.S. to appeal for the Soviet Union's entry into the war in Asia. Early termination of the war by such a Russian move would automatically involve the Korean peninsula in the Soviet sphere of operations. Siberia and Korea were assumed to be potential bases for offenses against Japan, a prospect that required complete or partial Soviet control over the peninsula. The Americans, however, did not feel any undue euphoria regarding this prospect. Concerns about Soviet expansion were increasing, and

<sup>20</sup> Roosevelt-Stalin Meeting, February 8, 1945, *FRUS, Malta and Yalta*, p. 766.

<sup>21</sup> Butow, Robert J.C., *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954), p. 154; Kim Kijo, pp.128–130.

<sup>22</sup> Minutes of Meeting Held at the White House, June 18, 1945, *FRUS, Berlin*, vol. 1, pp. 903–911, 937.

<sup>23</sup> Box 55, P-Min 47, Meeting of March 13, 1943, Division of Political Studies, *Yi and Chông*, vol. 1, p. 296. Besides, the Korean peninsula was considered "Japan's citadel," which would make a land invasion arduous. (Liu, p. 259.)

ultimately wielded a potent influence on U.S. Korea policy. A turning point had come in summer 1943, when the Soviets stepped up their offensive after the Battle of Kursk, and then turned more of their attention to other areas. Significantly, it was around this time that the United States began paying more attention to the future of East Asia, and to Soviet political and military objectives in the region.

A memorandum was prepared by the DFEA, in consultation with the officers of European Affairs and with the Office of Political Relations, in response to a question put by Cordell Hull: "What do the Russians want in the Far East?" According to this inter-divisional memorandum, the fundamental Soviet aim in East Asia was a natural desire to promote its national security, as was also the case in Europe and in other areas adjacent to or near the USSR. Consequently, its paramount political objective was the creation of well-disposed and ideologically sympathetic governments in the vicinity. Outstanding examples of this approach were the Soviet Union's dominant influence in Outer Mongolia (where a Soviet-type government had been created), and its influence in Xinjiang and among the Chinese Communists in northwest China. Korean guerrillas operating in Manchuria were also believed to have close Soviet connections. On the other hand, the Soviets had a deep, organic suspicion of any and all non-Soviet governments. This suspicion gave rise to determined efforts to bring neighboring governments and peoples into the Soviet orbit, to exercise control over them, and to influence radical social and economic movements. The Soviet government also had a strong desire for warm water ports in East Asia, so that it could have access to the Pacific through a port or ports in northern China or in Korea. The Soviet Union might desire transit privileges via the railways across Manchuria to Vladivostok, and to a warm water port under a government subservient to it. When the war in Europe came to an end, it might seek to gain control of, or to create, Sovietized governments in Inner Mongolia, Manchuria, southern Sakhalin, Korea, and possibly other areas in the western Pacific. This would be problematical for the United States.<sup>24</sup>

Memoranda drafted before the Cairo Conference reviewed Soviet policies in East Asia, including Sino-Soviet relations and Korean independence, from the same standpoint. Regardless of its participation in the war, the Soviet Union would rise to become "the strongest land power in Asia." With its military victory, as well as its national and social program, the Soviet Union held great attraction for many Asian and colonial peoples. The Soviets would, at the very least, spur

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<sup>24</sup> USSR Aims in the Far East, Hornbeck to SS, August 19, 1943, *FRUS, Washington and Quebec*, pp. 627-629.

the residents of the region to become discontent with their own governments, and hence to feel more attracted to the Soviet Union. This was the background that saw the KMT government regularly warn Washington to be wary of Soviet expansionism, while attributing its own weaknesses to Soviet instigation. It would therefore be best for China and the Soviet Union to arrive at a direct settlement of all the issues that were outstanding between them, something which finally materialized with the Sino-Soviet Treaty of August 14, 1945. A failure to establish a direct Soviet-Chinese settlement might have serious consequences for postwar relations among the four powers, in that the United States and Britain might feel compelled to strengthen China's position in the light of unreasonable Russian demands. The result would be a return to a balance-of-power politics in East Asia. These developments were significant for Korea because of the anticipated spread of a pro-Communist atmosphere, the strengthened Soviet capacity, and possible Sino-Soviet conflicts over Korea.<sup>25</sup>

By 1944, the Soviet presence was increasingly being felt in American approaches to the Korean question. If it entered the war against Japan, Russia would, in all probability, attack the Japanese through northern Korea, and, if so, Soviet forces would occupy a considerable percentage of the peninsula. The various groups of trained Korean soldiers outside Korea would doubtless be anxious to participate in combat operations, and in the occupation of the country. The units supported by the KPG, now in Chongqing, probably contained fewer than 1,000 trained troops, which were directly under the control of the KMT Chinese. There were other Korean units with the Chinese Communist armies in and around Shaanxi Province, but their actual numbers were unknown. There was also a large group of Korean settlers in Manchuria, some of whom might become soldiers. The most significant group of Korean troops was the one trained by the Soviet Far Eastern Army,<sup>26</sup> whose role and political significance in the liberation of Korea will be discussed later in this chapter.

These U.S. concerns were explicitly demonstrated by the concessions made to Russia on postwar East Asian issues at Yalta, which, in the U.S. view, were “generally within the military power of Russia to obtain regardless of US military action short of war.” Of course, the U.S. navy easily succeeded in turning the Pacific and Indian Oceans into “American lakes” with no resistance. The Soviet Union, however,

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<sup>25</sup> Possible Soviet Attitudes towards Far Eastern Questions, October 2, 1943, PG-28, RG59, Box 119.

<sup>26</sup> Memo Prepared by the Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East – Korea: Occupation and Military Government: Composition of Forces, March 29, 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 5, pp. 1224–1228.



was militarily capable of defeating the Japanese and of occupying Karafuto (the southern part of Sakhalin), Manchuria, Korea and northern China, and would be able to do so before it would be possible for the U.S. military forces to occupy these areas. Only in the Kuriles was the United States in a position to circumvent Russian initiatives. There was little, if any, military leverage to bear on the Russians, as far as East Asia was concerned, unless the American government chose to use force.<sup>27</sup> By the time of Japan's surrender, Soviet troops had already advanced to the northeast region of the Korean peninsula, while the nearest American troops were stationed in Okinawa, 800 miles (1283km) away from Korean territory.<sup>28</sup> Symbolically, this distance indicated that the United States was not the sole heir to the Japanese empire, which it had dismantled at the cost of enormous human and material resources, and that the Korean peninsula could not be claimed as its exclusive possession.

The American scheme for deterring Soviet expansion was, in a political sense, the Korea clause of the Cairo Declaration. The United States, however, stretched the meaning of this declaration, which was so far the sole international commitment concerning Korea. The clause originally stipulated a common approach by the Allies, with a view to preventing China from independently handling the Korean question. However, while Chinese ambitions were now greatly subdued, a possible Soviet menace seemed to be on the rise. Judging from the situation in East Asia, the Soviets might well attempt to set up "friendly" governments in Korea and Manchuria, and the United States insisted that "a commitment by the Soviet government to adhere to the Cairo Declaration needs to be supplemented by a detailed understanding as to the course of action to be taken in the Far East and the Pacific by the Soviet Union." It was believed that the agreement reached at Tehran would prevent unilateral action by any of the three states in establishing a "friendly" government in Manchuria, possibly China as a whole, or even Korea. The U.S. government thus explicitly defined Soviet adherence to the relevant clause in this agreement as one of the *quid pro quos* for Stalin's "political conditions," which the Soviet Union had put forward at the Yalta Conference. A "friendly government" meant a pro-Soviet, Communist government. Such an outcome may not have been contradictory to the pledge of support for Korean independence, and, in a sense,

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<sup>27</sup> Stimson to Acting SS (Grew), May 12, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 7, pp. 876–877. The U.S. military also judged that relative strengths were such as to preclude the military defeat of the Soviet Union, even if the United States were allied with Britain. (Memo by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 3, 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 1, pp. 699–703.)

<sup>28</sup> Hoag, C. Leonard, *American Military Government in Korea – War Policy and the First Year of Occupation 1941–1946*, in *Sin*, vol. 2, p. 75.

Soviet support of the Cairo Declaration should not in itself stand in the way of Soviet efforts to set up “friendly governments” in Manchuria and Korea. It was, however, against the spirit of the Korea clause, insofar as no great power would wish to see any one nation acquire a predominant position in Korea.<sup>29</sup>

Another American scheme to prevent Soviet expansion was to propose four-power participation in the government of Korea, following its liberation. Whether the liberation of Korea should be the result of a military campaign or of the general capitulation of Japan, a Korean military government should be inter-Allied in character, and the participating states should be China, the United States, Britain (or one of the British Dominions), and, should it enter the war, the Soviet Union as well. The basic principles of military government in Korea should, however, be uniform. A zonal system of military government, as in the case of Germany, should be avoided, and a combined centralized civil affairs administration (based on the Austrian model) should be established as early as possible. The United States, moreover, should have a substantial representation in such a government. If an effective force of Korean troops, such as those already existing within the Soviet Far East, should enter Korea under a separate command, or as irregulars, the Department of State would inform the military authorities as to the political status of those Koreans, and of the attitude to be taken toward them, by the American military authorities.<sup>30</sup> The U.S. government did not forget to emphasize that, whatever the outcome, there should be no mandate for the United States alone, although the representation of other states should not be so large as to weaken the U.S. position. Supervision of Korea by the Soviet Union would create serious problems, and the United States might consider such a development a threat to future security in the Pacific.<sup>31</sup> Here one point must be added: the United States made it clear that bilateral discussions between the Russians and the Chinese on the future of Korea would be contradictory to American interests, even though it encouraged a rapprochement between the two countries. The United States and

<sup>29</sup> Soviet Support of the Cairo Declaration, June 29, 1945, *FRUS, Berlin*, vol. 1, pp. 926–928, 310–311. Grew claimed “unequivocal adherence of the Soviet government to the Cairo Declaration regarding the return of Manchuria to Chinese sovereignty and the future status of Korea. This agreement should make clear that the four trustees are to be the sole authority for the selection of a temporary Korean Government.” [Memo for S of War, May 12, 1945, in Grew, Joseph C., *Turbulent Era – A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years 1904–1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1952), vol. 2, p. 1457.]

<sup>30</sup> Memo– Korea: Occupation and Military Government: Composition of Forces, March 29, 1944.

<sup>31</sup> Memo Prepared by the Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East – Korea: Political Problem: Provisional Government, May 4, 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 5, pp. 1239–1941.

Britain both had a very definite interest in the future of Korea, and should both be included in any discussions thereof.<sup>32</sup>

The United States never considered a military option vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in Korean affairs, but there were certainly plans to prevent Soviet expansion on the local level in Korea. Looking back at the situation before and after Japan's surrender, U.S. intentions in East Asia were, without doubt, frustrated by the Soviet Union. However, in May 1945 (before the Potsdam Conference) the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC) outspokenly commented that, while the primary goal of forming and training Korean troops was to use them in the war against Japan, fostering pro-American troops had a "political utility" as well. It seemed most probable that the Soviet Union would seek to establish a "friendly" government in Korea by dispatching a great number of Korean troops who had been indoctrinated by Communist ideology, and that these were the only Korean forces that could overwhelm the KPG in Chongqing. It was accordingly advised that the United States should take steps to train groups of Koreans, preferably those indoctrinated with democratic ideas.<sup>33</sup> Around this period, the Department of Army revised the number of U.S. garrison forces in Korea from 5,000 to 10,000, doubling it from the State Department's original suggestion. On the establishment of a trusteeship by the four powers, the powers would withdraw all their respective armed forces from Korea, except for a token force, which was not to exceed 10,000 men from each power.<sup>34</sup> This suggested measure was clearly aimed at minimizing the possible influence of Korean troops supported by the Soviet Union.

#### MILITARY OCCUPATION AND DIVISION OF KOREA

While the United States continued to produce self-contradictory strategies, prey to both the perceived need for Soviet entry into the

<sup>32</sup> Memo by Vincent (Chief of the Division of Chinese Affairs) to SS, February 8, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 7, p. 854. In Chinese records, it was commented: "During the Sino-Soviet negotiations at Moscow, Stalin complained to Song that although he and Roosevelt had agreed on trusteeship in Korea as a prelude to independence, the current American leadership was more receptive to the British view, seeing trusteeship as a step toward colonization. He also said that no binding decision regarding Korea had been reached at Yalta." [Liu, Xiaoyuan, "Sino-American Diplomacy over Korea during World War II," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 1-2 (summer 1992), p. 261.] See also Korea: Political Problems: Provisional Government, May 4, 1944. "Provisional Government" meant an interim government to be established before independence. The expression was later changed to "Interim Government," as it was often confused with the KPG in Chongqing.

<sup>33</sup> SWNCC-115, Utilization of Koreans in the War Effort, May 26, 1945, LM54, R.12.

<sup>34</sup> Recommended Amendments to be used as a Basis for Exploratory Conversation, McCloy to SS, May 27, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 7, p. 887.

war and to concerns regarding Soviet expansion, the war against Japan approached its final stages, and the division of Korea, in effect, began. This phase of the war requires some detailed analysis. One issue that has been frequently raised in past studies is that the United States, despite its continued effort to coordinate Soviet relations, seemed to lack consistency. On the one hand, a series of developments, including the Yalta Conference, Germany's surrender, the Potsdam Conference, and a Communist-leaning Poland, all contributed to a favorable trend for the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the rise of Harry S. Truman, the atomic bombs, and Japan's surrender meant that the situation in East Asia appeared to favor the United States. Under such circumstances, it was necessary for the United States to reorient its Soviet policy. Disagreements between the State Department and the military were exposed, reflecting the fact there had not been enough time for such differences of opinion to be resolved before the end of the war.

This period, especially the last three months between Germany's surrender and that of Japan, has been substantially covered in previous studies. We have to be wary, however, of rushing to any conclusions as to whether the United States had correctly understood Soviet intentions and policies at each negotiating table, and whether it had managed "successfully" to maximize U.S. interests during these final stages of the war. The military campaigns did progress successfully, and this implied that short- and mid-term objectives were being achieved one by one, even if the necessity of reexamining and reshuffling all matters concerning the "next target" was always urgent. Various frictions in Soviet-U.S. relations impacted on the formation of a post-war global order. But the point is that all these frictions were not influential enough to nullify agreements built on the Grand Alliance throughout the war, especially those concerning postwar settlements made through cooperation among the Big Four. The agreements were not made at the whims of certain wartime leaders; they were founded on the basis of international politics, such as estimations of national power, respective capabilities in waging war, historical and legitimate rights, and the powers' foreign policy objectives, all of which had been fully considered and consolidated throughout wartime negotiations.

At Yalta, the United States made great concessions to try to entice the Soviet Union to participate in the Asian war. At Potsdam, however, although Stalin had tried to persuade Truman to ask him formally to join the struggle against Japan,<sup>35</sup> the Americans demurred, not wanting Stalin to be able to say later on that he had come to the rescue of the United States, and thus demand excessive rewards. Indeed, some

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<sup>35</sup> *Yi and Chōng*, vol. 2, p. 230.

of Truman's advisers now hoped that the war would end before the Russians intervened at all.<sup>36</sup> On August 6, the Americans unleashed the atomic bomb over Hiroshima for the dual purpose of quickly terminating the war and preventing the Soviets from entering it. Three days later, Stalin frustrated American intentions with his prompt decision to enter the war just as it was about to end, and to lay claim to some of the booty in the process. Yet this action was also in line with the promise that the Soviet Union had made at various conferences; namely, that it would participate in the war against Japan two or three months after Germany's surrender. In other words, this action did not violate the general principles agreed upon in the spirit of the Grand Alliance, even though it had been implemented to maximize Soviet interests. As a result, the United States decided to divide the Korean peninsula for joint occupation with the Soviet Union, which gave solid grounds for Soviet intervention in the Korean question.<sup>37</sup>

Beyond issues such as how the division proceeded, or who exactly decided that the border would be at the 38th parallel, the main concern of this study is how the division should be interpreted. It would be best to start such a discussion with the most well-known account of the division at the 38th parallel, as made by Dean Rusk. Recorded in *FRUS*, Rusk's testimony might be interpreted as representing the official stance of the United States. As Rusk describes it:

The suddenness of the Japanese surrender forced emergency consideration by the Department of State and the armed services of the necessary order to General MacArthur and the necessary arrangements with other Allied governments about the Japanese surrender. For this purpose SWNCC held several long sessions during the period August 10–15... We recommended the 38th parallel even though it was further north than could be realistically reached by US forces in the event of Soviet disagreement, but we did so because we felt it important to include the capital of Korea in the area of responsibility of American troops.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> McNeill, p. 637 note 1; Byrnes, James F., *Speaking Frankly* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), p. 208.

<sup>37</sup> For studies from a Korean standpoint, which describe and censure the U.S. policy in terminating the war, see Cho, Soon-Sung, *Korea in World Politics, 1940–1950*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), chapters 1–2. See also Matray, James Irving, *The Reluctant Crusade – American Foreign Policy in Korea, 1941–1950* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985).

<sup>38</sup> Dean Rusk was a colonel in the War Department General Staff in August 1945. He was an eyewitness to the division of Korea at the 38th parallel. This testimony was made in 1950, in reply to an inquiry from the Division of Historical Policy Research, in regard to the 38th parallel in Korea. (For the complete testimony of Rusk, see *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, p. 1039.) See also Truman, Harry S., *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman*, vol. 1 (New York: A Signet Book, 1956), pp. 485 and 490.

The Soviets accepted the 38th parallel, and that line was subsequently agreed to internationally.

This statement on the 38th parallel goes a long way in explaining the reasoning behind the U.S. Korea policy. The Americans insisted that the Soviet-U.S. joint occupation of Korea was not a violation of the oral understanding made at Yalta, to the effect that four powers, including China and Britain, should establish a temporary international trusteeship over Korea, and that this understanding would not necessarily lead to an eventual multipartite occupation.<sup>39</sup> Second, Rusk was somewhat surprised that the Soviets accepted the American suggestion of the 38th parallel, since he thought that they might insist upon a line further south, in view of their respective military positions in the area.<sup>40</sup> The Soviet Union could have occupied the whole peninsula if it had chosen to do so. Even the Japanese Government-General in Seoul initially thought that the whole country would be occupied by the Soviet Union, and consequently turned in succession to Song Chinu and Yŏ Unhyŏng, two political leaders at the time, in the hope of installing a government acceptable to the Russians.<sup>41</sup> The United States was therefore not at a disadvantage, since the Soviet acceptance seemed to Washington a concession to U.S. suggestions.

A memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out that setting the dividing line at the 38th parallel was practically the best decision that could have been made. This memorandum comprehensively covered details relating to Korea at the time of Japan's surrender. According to the memo, "the parallel 38th north has been selected in Korea since it gives to U.S. forces the port and communications area of Seoul and a sufficient portion of Korea so that parts of it might be apportioned to the Chinese and the British in case some sort of quadripartite administration eventuated." Preliminary arrangements were put in place for the entry of U.S. forces into Seoul and Dalian, in the hope that they might arrive before the Russians occupied them. It was, however, believed that this, along with the matter of U.S. forces seizing key points along the North China coast, could present excessive problems, and that they would therefore have to be handled "on an operational basis" with detailed directions made on the spot.

<sup>39</sup> Memo by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, (undated), *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, pp. 1038, 1040.

<sup>40</sup> President Truman commented: "All Stalin wants in the Far East is Port Arthur, the famous warm water harbor together with the Chinese Eastern Railroad and the South Manchurian Railroad leading to it [Port Arthur].... He [i.e., Truman] also said that Stalin does not want Korea." [Balfour to FO, August 21, 1945, 46455 (5665/630/23).]

<sup>41</sup> Benninghoff to SS, September 29, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, p. 1063; Henderson, Gregory, *Korea – The Politics of the Vortex* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968, pp. 115, 117.

There was, in addition, the problem of avoiding any misunderstanding with the Russians, both as regarded the Kuriles and the areas around the Yellow Sea.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, plans were drawn up and orders issued for the occupation of Dalian by U.S. troops. These orders were subsequently canceled because they could not be implemented in time to prevent Russian occupation.<sup>43</sup> This clearly shows the discrepancy between political goals/ideals and military means in U.S. Korea policy, and thus indicated that it would not be easy for the United States to outpace the Russians in occupying the peninsula.

There are other interesting discourses on the military occupation by the Soviet army, and the origin of the 38th parallel. First of all, it has been argued that the Russians decided to enter the peninsula only after discovering at the Potsdam Conference that the United States had no immediate intention of landing American forces there. Several witnesses have substantiated this view. For example, Admiral Leahy, who attended the Potsdam Conference, wrote: "The Russians asked us about invading Korea, but were told that we did not consider such an expedition predictable until after a successful landing on the main islands of Japan."<sup>44</sup> Until this American disclosure, Soviet planning for postwar Korea had been based on the assumption that the Red Army would not be in a position to influence the course of post-liberation political developments in the country. The information obtained at the meeting on July 24 provided the basis for a quick revision of Soviet plans to occupy the northern half of the peninsula before the conclusion of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of August 14, 1945.<sup>45</sup> The Russians might interpret this American decision as a tacit consent to the Red Army's occupation of the Korean peninsula.

A second argument is that the division of Korea along the 38th parallel originated with the demarcation of limits for air and naval operations, which were agreed upon between the Americans and the Russians at Potsdam. The British, suspecting that they had been excluded from such discussions, stuck to this idea.<sup>46</sup> As noted earlier, the Americans judged that military operations in Korea might

<sup>42</sup> Memo by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 14, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, p. 657; Instruments for the Surrender of Japan, SWNCC, 21/7, LM54, R.3.

<sup>43</sup> SWNCC-224, U.S. Policy toward China and Manchuria, November 16, 1945, LM54, R.19.

<sup>44</sup> Leahy, William D., *I Was There – The Personal Story of the Chief of Staff to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman Based on His Notes and Diaries Made at the Time* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950), p. 415.

<sup>45</sup> Slusser, Robert M., "Soviet Far Eastern Policy, 1945–1950: Stalin's Goals in Korea," in Nagai, Yōnosuke and Iriye, Akira, *The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1977), pp. 134–136.

<sup>46</sup> McNeill, pp. 633, 643. See also Part 2, Chapter 4 and Future of Korea, September 8, 1945, 46468. (6733/1394/23).

combine landings from the sea and an overland invasion from Siberia. Separate zones of naval and air operations were to be set up for the United States and the USSR. With these boundary lines, U.S. records made it clear that part of South Manchuria, “practically all of Korea,” and the Japanese islands were to be included in the U.S. operational zones.<sup>47</sup> It does not seem valid to conclude that such operational zones were the sole origin of the 38th parallel, but it is a point worthy of discussion, as it shows some of the ways in which political leaders tended to approach politico-military problems concerning the Korean peninsula.

#### A REINTERPRETATION OF THE SOVIET INTERVENTION

Still, the strategic position and military capacity of the Soviet Union alone cannot fully explain its participation in the Korean question. Foreign policy is the sum total of a nation’s capabilities, external orientations, and cultural, psychological and historical factors, under the prevailing power relations of the times. The Soviet intervention in Korean affairs should be understood in this context. First, World War II brought about a revolutionary shift toward a new global order. In the process, a power vacuum was created, and certain regions became a crossroads for the forces of the great powers. Such regions then became the object of bargaining among them. Not surprisingly, Eastern Europe came under Soviet occupation, and North Africa, the Mediterranean and Southern Europe came under Anglo-American control. Interestingly, however, when the global order is being realigned, and when a certain party tries to intervene, even issues in a region occupied exclusively by a single power might become an issue of global import among the powers. For instance, Britain and France demanded a strong voice on Poland, on the grounds of their defensive alliance with this country prior to World War II. The Soviet Union insisted on participation in the settlement of the Italian colonies on the grounds of universal trusteeship by the United Nations. Yet, most of the time, in areas where one nation dominated, settlements were made according to the intentions of the occupying forces. Of course, the United States had long insisted that “dependent”

<sup>47</sup> *Yi and Chông*, vol. 2, p. 231. As for the detailed demarcation lines between these zones, *FRUS, Berlin*, vol. 2, pp. 410–411. For other staff conferences between the United States and the Soviet Union at Potsdam, see Deane, John R., *The Strange Alliance – The Story of Our Efforts at Wartime Cooperation with Russia* (New York: Viking Press, 1947), pp. 272–275. Feis also stressed that the Korean peninsula was included in the U.S. operational zone. See Feis, Herbert, *The China Tangle – The American Effort in China from Pearl Harbor to the Marshall Mission* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 326.



territories, including occupied regions and colonies, should not be the subjects of bartering. Nonetheless, as previously noted, by early 1944 a tendency had gradually emerged to divide occupied territories, especially those in the Balkans, between Britain and the Soviet Union. In regions where the influence of several powers overlapped, issues tended to be settled by package deal negotiations.

Korea was one such region. It could have been influenced by any of the contingencies of the war. When the issue of recognizing Korean independence arose, the Americans had already indicated that the Korean question was closely interwoven with other regional or global issues. When the war was nearing its end, world politics became sharply divided, and various issues were resolved through cooperation or confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States. The Korean peninsula could either provide an excellent test case for future cooperation between the two powers, or become a *quid pro quo* at the negotiating table. In 1944, a report commented that the occupation of Korea would prove a testing-ground for long-running unity among the powers. In the event of such cooperation, Korea offered an obvious point for the location of bases for the control of Japan.<sup>48</sup> As reported by Ambassador W. Averell Harriman in Moscow, Stalin was aware that Washington looked on the Korean experiment as “a splendid chance to demonstrate how the United States and Soviet governments could work together.”<sup>49</sup>

In so many wartime conferences, however, evidence had continued to emerge that Korea had become an object of bartering, and that the issues concerning Korea were neglected and relegated to a minor position. The frequency of such cases increased all the more immediately before and after the termination of the war. One might make some suppositions regarding how the relative importance of the Korean question was being assessed during this period. In May 1945, when Hopkins and Stalin were holding discussions in Moscow, the issue of Korea was only mentioned briefly, the priority at that moment being the Polish question. In July, Potsdam, the Korean question was

<sup>48</sup> H-201, Preliminary, Korea: Security Problems – Strategic Bases, November 13, 1944, RG59, Box 117. Tyler Dennett, an expert in East Asian issues, perceptively predicted, “Korea promises to be a test case in international cooperation and international good faith.” (Dennett, Tyler, “In Due Course,” *Far Eastern Survey*, January 17, 1945, 14–1, pp. 3–4.)

<sup>49</sup> Harriman and Abel, p. 533. In Potsdam, too, the Americans believed that “Korea in American eyes was becoming a test case for the efficacy of the World Organization.” [Foulds to Bennett, July 30, 1945, 46468 (4802/1394/23) and minute.] See also Matray, p. 52. On the other hand, from a decidedly anti-Communist point of view, Korea was the first battlefield where an “expansionist-Communist” Soviet Union and a “defensive-democratic” United States confronted one another. [Letter from Professor Robert Oliver, (undated), LM80, R.1, 895.00/5–1247].

brought up when the Soviet Union and Britain argued over the settlement of Italian colonies in northern Africa. One British diplomat in Potsdam commented that in discussing the Korean question, the Russians might demand something from the British, if the Americans raised difficulties for the Russians in East Asia.<sup>50</sup>

Should Korea be subject to such political compromise, the most important incident may well have been Soviet consent to the U.S. suggestion of dividing control of Korea between them. The Russians were quite capable of driving Japanese troops out of Korea immediately following their declaration of war against Japan, and the Americans were fully aware of this military capacity. The Soviet Army, however, halted at the 38th parallel. Stalin may have felt that a Soviet refusal of the proposed dividing line in Korea would have meant disclosing Soviet aspirations to control the entire peninsula, which could have provoked a drastic response from the United States. In any case, the U.S. proposal on the 38th parallel at least provided a legal basis for the Soviet occupation of half the country, something that had previously been lacking. Yet Stalin likely made the concession in large part to persuade the United States to accept his request for a Soviet zone of occupation in Japan. At that time, he was demanding that the United States allow the Soviet Union to accept the surrender of Japanese troops in Hokkaido. The American government, however, flatly refused this request, believing that it would enable too much Soviet participation in the postwar settlement.

The U.S.-Soviet confrontation over the occupation of Japan seems to have only indirectly influenced the division of Korea, entangled as it was with other issues in Europe. After Japan's defeat, the United States allowed the Soviet Union to enter Manchuria, northern Korea, southern Sakhalin and the Kuriles; it even allowed the reentry of European powers to their former colonies in Southeast Asia. Yet none of them could interfere with the postwar settlement of Japan. True, it had been the U.S.'s suggestion to form a Far Eastern Commission among the Allies to oversee Japan's occupation. Yet the function of that commission was limited to being advisory, which occasioned serious opposition from Britain and the Soviet Union.

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<sup>50</sup> Foulds to Bennett, July 30, 1945, 46468 (4802/1394/23) and minute. In another case, discussed by Thorne, Korea was referred to, if somewhat obliquely, as a potential object of a mutual deal: "Eden had warned Churchill before the Yalta conference that Manchuria and Korea were likely to become disputed territories and that it was therefore advisable to go warily and to avoid anything like commitments or encouragement to Russia." See Also Thorne, Christopher, *Allies of a Kind – The United States, Britain, and the War against Japan, 1941–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 528–529. See also Eden, Anthony, *The Memoirs of Anthony Eden Earl of Avon – The Reckoning* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965), p. 587.

Vyacheslav M. Molotov, the Soviet foreign minister, demanded the establishment of an Allied Control Council in Japan, to supervise the policies of General Douglas MacArthur and the American occupying forces. The issue was discussed at the Council of Foreign Ministers in London in September 1945. This London meeting is recognized, however, as having been irrelevant to the Korean question, even if the British Foreign Office prepared one draft for it that touched on Soviet suggestions made in Potsdam, vis-à-vis Korea.<sup>51</sup> In the end, the Korean question was never publicly mentioned when the Council met. The United States, “with the implied threat of the bomb in its pocket,” seemed to be stepping up its opposition to the Soviet Union, criticizing the latter’s occupation policy in Eastern Europe. The Soviet government judged that the American stance had become more hard-line and uncooperative, as shown, for instance, by its unilateral occupation policy in Japan. The Council in London is thus widely believed to have been a point of departure for the disintegration of Allied cooperation. Stalin was upset about the American policy in Japan, and stopped cooperating with the United States in other regions. He then proceeded to carry out his intentions in those regions where the Soviet position was dominant.<sup>52</sup>

At the Foreign Ministers’ Conference in Moscow in December 1945, the United States, wishing to revive three-power unity by placating Stalin, strove to make up for the failure of the London Council. Secretary of State James F. Byrnes obtained minor Russian concessions in Romania and Bulgaria in a package deal negotiation, which covered various issues, including the occupation of Japan and the trusteeship of Korea. Since the United States had just accepted the Soviet proposals on Korea, he commented, the Soviet government would surely assist in finding a solution to difficulties in regard to Bulgaria and Romania. The latter problems were significant in that their resolution would be a starting point for peace treaties with the satellite states that had formerly been under German domination. In the hope of resolving these matters, the United States seems to have yielded to Soviet demands concerning the Korean question.<sup>53</sup> Alternatively, the Korean question may have been

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<sup>51</sup> See Future of Korea, September 8, 1945, 46468 (6733/1394/23) for the draft prepared by the Foreign Office.

<sup>52</sup> On the London Council, see Gaddis, pp. 263–267, 275–276; Iriye, Akira, “Continuities in US-Japanese Relations, 1941–49,” in Nagai, Yōnosuke and Iriye, Akira (eds.), pp. 396–398; Aruga, Tadashi, “The United States and the Cold War – The Cold War Era in American History,” *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>53</sup> U.S. Delegation Minutes, December 22, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 2, p. 728; McNeill, pp. 706–797. Here, the United States agreed to make a token concession on the Japan issue by agreeing to the establishment of an Allied Council, which would consult with and advise General MacArthur on occupation measures. [Gaddis, p. 281.]

handled in a deal to settle issues concerning China. Molotov proposed fixing a date for the “simultaneous” withdrawal of Russian troops from Manchuria, and of American troops from China. Byrnes would not agree to this, arguing that the Americans had yet to complete the job of repatriating the Japanese, and could not set an end date for the accomplishment of the task. This was one of the issues that led to deadlock at the Moscow Conference, and it was finally agreed to leave open the question of a schedule for the withdrawal of troops. The Russians had thus, in effect, endorsed American policy in China. In return, Byrnes accepted the Russian program for Korea.<sup>54</sup> All these cases represent “quid pro quo negotiating tactics,” in which Korea was, more often than not, sold out quite cheaply to outsiders without its knowledge. Uncooperative Soviet behavior, consequent U.S. concessions, and the division of Korea were all under the influence of these postwar settlements.

The “legitimate rights” approach may serve to explain Soviet interventions in the Korean question, and, for that matter, the consequent actions of the other powers in the war-related diplomacy of the time. Roosevelt, in designing a postwar system for peace, believed that he could obtain Stalin’s postwar cooperation by meeting Russian security needs. In Europe, Soviet yearnings were realized in the form of the annexation of the three Baltic states, and the ceding of some territories by Finland, Poland, Germany and Romania.<sup>55</sup> In East Asia, however, the Russians had not suffered any serious loss of interests in the wake of the Bolshevik revolution and World War I. Rather, taking advantage of Japanese incursions into China, they could successfully expand their influence by implanting Communism in China, and allowing Mongolia independence as a buffer state. Nevertheless,

<sup>54</sup> McNeill, p. 708. Such an interpretation is possible when one studies the process of the Moscow Conference. However, no direct reference to such bartering was made in the records McNeill quotes. See Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*, p. 122, 222. However, in his lengthy telegram report to Washington, which showed that Byrnes had talked with Stalin, he did not mention Korea at all. See Byrnes, James F., *All in One Lifetime* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), p.336; United States, Senate, *A Decade of American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1941–49*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1950), pp. 63–64. Ernest Bevin left a similar record to that effect. See Bullock, Alan, *Ernest Bevin, Foreign Secretary 1945–1951* (London: Heinemann, 1983), p. 212. The Korean delegates’ attendance at the United Nations was also connected to issues concerning other countries. “The Italian government had declared war on Germany and had been fighting with the Allies against the Axis since September, 1943. However, the United States and Britain still exercised joint military control over Italy.... If Italy were to be considered for invitation to the United Nations, the question of Albania and Korea and the other matters which the delegation had been trying to avoid might come up.” See *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 1, pp. 1238, 1242.

<sup>55</sup> As an expedient, President Roosevelt expressed the hope that Stalin’s territorial claims could be satisfied “through a combination of plebiscite and trusteeship techniques” without violating the principle of self-determination of peoples. (Gaddis, p. 136.)

other major powers admitted that Russia had been deeply involved in East Asia's regional politics since the late nineteenth century. It was also acknowledged by all that its defeat in the Russo-Japanese War had cost Russia southern Sakhalin and the Korean peninsula, and that Japan-related developments during the 1920s and 1930s deprived the Russians of their interests in Manchuria. Due to all this, there were implied Soviet security needs, vis-à-vis a potential Japanese enemy, and as a result of their loss of the rights that imperial Russia had earlier obtained in Korea and Manchuria.<sup>56</sup> Such sentiments were loosely connected to the concept of legitimate rights.

This is both a very elusive and controversial concept in the study of international politics. The greatest dilemmas accompany the question of how to explain the intervention of great powers in the affairs of smaller powers, as it can be an infringement of sovereignty. In the "political independence" section of one memorandum by the Department of State, it was stipulated that the United Nations was to be based on the "sovereignty" of all states, which implied that the members of the organization would retain legal control over their own actions, except in so far as they agreed by treaty to limit it. All states, of course, naturally attach the highest value to their political independence. It was added, however, that an undertaking to respect the political independence of other states did not necessarily involve a commitment to guarantee it. One great power might control the actions of another state by indirect means. It was impossible to distinguish such actions from what was generally regarded as "legitimate influence." It was, therefore, not easy to define exactly what political independence was. An objection to any guarantee of political independence was that "it would only extend to external and legal forms." The United Nations Charter explicitly recognized the sovereignty of each nation. Nonetheless, by abolishing the unanimous voting system, the consummation of sovereignty was simultaneously denied. Theoretically, this reflected a Hobbesian realism regarding international relations.<sup>57</sup>

These arguments represent the positions of powers that possessed colonies. One cannot, however, easily dismiss these ideas as "imperialistic."

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<sup>56</sup> Stalin, in presenting his political conditions regarding entry of the Soviet Union into the war against Japan, demanded that "the former rights of Russia violated by the treacherous attack of Japan in 1904 shall be restored." (*FRUS, Malta and Yalta*, p. 984.) In June 1945, the Soviet Foreign Ministry commented that the Russo-Japanese War was a "historically justified act" to prevent Japan's expansion. (Weathersby, Kathryn, "Soviet Aims in Korea and the Origins of the Korean War, 1945-1950: New Evidence from Russian Archives," Cold War International History Project, Working Paper no. 8, Woodrow Wilson Center (Nov 1993), p. 7.) See also Foltos, Lester J., "The New Pacific Barrier: America's Search for Security in the Pacific, 1945-47," *Diplomatic History*, 13-3 (summer 1989), pp. 323-324.

<sup>57</sup> Detailed discussions may be found in Wight (1992), pp. 33-40.

In the realism of international politics, “immanence of power” is stressed in all political actions, regardless of outward causes, such as human rights and international intercourse. In the age of imperialism, especially when a war was being waged, concepts of international idealism/rationalism, including cooperation, the harmonization of interests, and international law and organization, were overwhelmed by concepts such as national interests, power, and security. The U.S. principle of “cooperation among powers” was, in fact, an effort to seek an idealistic solution on a realistic basis. In this sense, there was no difference of position between the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union in the matter of securing their “legitimate” rights in the postwar settlements.

Henry L. Stimson, the secretary of war, argued that the great powers, who had won the war for law and justice, would be obliged to maintain the security of the world, and that, in establishing this security, they would have to decide on many questions that were important primarily for their own safety:

The Soviet Union would claim that her self-defense as a guarantor of the peace of the world would depend on relations with buffer countries like Poland, Bulgaria, and Rumania, which will be quite different from complete independence on the part of those countries. For the United States the acquisition of the bases was necessary for the defense of the security of the Pacific for the future world. Acquisition of them by the United States does not represent an attempt at colonization or exploitation. They are not colonies; they are outposts, and their acquisition is appropriate under the general doctrine of self-defense by the power which guarantees the safety of those areas of the world. To serve such a purpose they must belong to the United States with absolute power to rule and fortify them.<sup>58</sup>

From such a point of view, the United States and Britain obviously acknowledged Soviet demands in wartime negotiations, justifying such recognition with words such as “Russia’s historic position,” “legitimate Russian objectives,” “minimum demands,” and “legitimate influence.”<sup>59</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Stimson to SS, January 23, 1945, *FRUS, Malta and Yalta*, pp. 78–79; *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 1, pp. 23–27. It was with such an idea in mind that the War Department strongly warned the State Department that it would get into “needless mazes” if it tried to set up forms of trusteeship.

<sup>59</sup> Here follow some excerpts from American references to the “legitimate rights” of the Soviet Union: “The Soviet authorities will, as a minimum, demand the re-establishment of the dominant position they held in this area prior to the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth.” (Memo by the Chief of the Division of Eastern European Affairs, May 10, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 7, pp. 862–63); “Legitimate Russian objectives in the Far East include assurance of ready communications with Eastern Siberia...” (Memo by Arthur Young, American Adviser to the Chinese Ministry of Finance, April 2, 1945, *Ibid.*, p. 858).

Churchill was even more eager. He insisted in Tehran that the powers should satisfy their aspirations. Such a large landmass as Russia deserved access to warm water ports. This could be settled “agreeably and as between friends.” Churchill further commented that, although Britain had objected to Russia’s access to warm water ports in the past, it now saw no objections to this legitimate request, and that it furthermore hoped to see Russian fleets, both naval and merchant, on all the world’s seas. Roosevelt agreed with him. The idea of a free port might be applied to East Asia, and he mentioned Dalian as a possibility. Stalin pointed out that Russia had only one ice-free port, namely Murmansk, while there was no port in Asia that was not closed off in mid-winter. Vladivostok was only partly ice-free, and in any case was connected to the Pacific Ocean by Japanese-controlled straits. However, since the other two powers had acknowledged the Soviet acquisition of warm water ports as a legitimate Russian right, Stalin was unconcerned by the issue. He commented that it would be better to await Russia’s active participation in the Far Eastern war.<sup>60</sup> (Stalin may have made this point with some Korean ports in mind as possible candidates, as will be discussed later.)

In his *The Second World War*, Churchill employed a different line of rhetoric on the same issue. He insisted that “the government of the world must be entrusted to satisfied nations, who wished nothing more for themselves than what they had.” He continues:

If the world-government were in hands of hungry nations, there would always be danger. But none of us (the United States, the Soviet Union and Britain) had any reason to seek for anything more. The peace would be kept by peoples who lived in their own way and were not ambitious. We were like rich men dwelling at peace within their habitations.<sup>61</sup>

The United States was aware that Jiang Jieshi wanted Manchuria to be returned to China after the war, it being understood that the Liaodong Peninsula and its two ports, Lüshun (Port Arthur) and Dalian, must also be included.<sup>62</sup> In January 1944, the Pacific War Council reported that Russia, having no ice-free port in Siberia, was desirous of obtaining one, and looked with favor upon making Dalian a free

<sup>60</sup> Roosevelt–Churchill–Stalin Luncheon Meeting, November 30, 1943, *FRUS, Cairo and Teheran*, pp. 567–568. Churchill and Stalin both mentioned that Lord Curzon had objected to the Russian acquisition of a warm water port. in 1885. For Curzon’s view on Russian threats, see Curzon, George, Earl of Kedleston, *Problems of the Far East* (London: Archibald Constable and Co., 1896), pp. 213–214.

<sup>61</sup> Churchill, Winston S., *The Second World War*, vol. 5: *Closing the Ring*, p. 382.

<sup>62</sup> Chinese Summary Record, November 23, 1943, *FRUS, Cairo and Teheran*, p. 324.

port for all the world, with the idea that Siberian exports and imports could be sent through the port, and then transported in bond to Siberian territory via the South Manchurian and Chinese Eastern Railways.<sup>63</sup> U.S. naval leaders, although they pointed out that the Soviets preferred Pusan in that it was close to Japan, raised no objection.<sup>64</sup> The U.S. and British governments believed that Chinese sovereignty should once more be reestablished over Manchuria, although on the understanding that the legitimate commercial interests of the Soviet Union would be given full recognition by the Chinese government in the future. When Song Ziwen asked for a detailed explanation of “legitimate commercial interests,” Sumner Welles said that he was not in a position to answer the question. He felt, however, that the recognition of Soviet “legitimate rights” would not constitute an infringement on Chinese sovereignty.<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, both Western powers must have believed that the Russian and Soviet interests that had been lost in the past would automatically be restored on the USSR’s entry into the Asian war. The “political conditions” that had been agreed on in Yalta were a statement of such a belief.

The Soviet intervention in the Korean question could be justified in this way. Recent discoveries in Soviet documents indicate, however, that Stalin had far greater designs on and around the Korean peninsula, which certainly exceeded what could be construed as Russia’s legitimate rights, and went beyond even Tsarist Russia’s Korean ambitions, which had included control over the whole peninsula. According to a document entitled “Notes on the Question of Former Japanese Colonies and Mandated Territories,” dated September 1945, the Soviets wanted to secure not only Pusan but also Inch’ŏn and Cheju Island. It states:

... Korea must become a trust territory of the four powers, with appointment of three strategic regions: Pusan (Tsinka), Kvel’part (Saisiu, Cheju) Island and Chemul’po (Dzinsen, Inch’ŏn), which must be controlled by the Soviet military command. Insisting on the apportionment for the USSR of the strategic regions in Korea, we can

<sup>63</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of the Pacific War Council, January 12, 1944, *FRUS, Cairo and Teheran*, p. 869.

<sup>64</sup> Proposed Agenda for President’s Conversation with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, Prime Minister Churchill and Marshal Stalin, November 19, 1943, *FRUS, Cairo and Teheran*, p. 257.

<sup>65</sup> Memo of Conversation by Welles, March 29, 1943, *FRUS, China, 1943*, pp. 845–846. “Transit privileges granted to the Soviet government ... would not constitute an infringement of Chinese sovereignty. Dalian is an internationally free port, not a Soviet property.” (Sino-Russian Problems in the Post-War Settlement, October 4, 1943, PG-34, RG59, Box 119.)



exert pressure on the position of the Americans, using their wish to receive for themselves strategic regions in the Pacific Ocean.<sup>66</sup>

In one sense, the Soviets regarded these Korean ports as a bargaining chip, vis-à-vis the American takeover of the Pacific islands; in another, they were attempting to achieve their long-cherished dream of establishing complete Russian maritime and naval routes from Port Arthur, via these Korean ports, to Vladivostok. It should be pointed, however, that the Soviet design was too ambitious, in that it would prevent, if implemented, the other great powers from carrying out maritime activities in parts of the East China Sea, and would consequently present a serious threat to the security of Japan, as well as that of the United States and China. Stalin's overeagerness in this matter was in stark contrast to the Soviet Union's previous cautious approach to Korea, and therefore seems to reflect Soviet frustration at the unfavorable developments that were taking place in the controlling of occupied Japan.

Some Western and Korean scholars have generally accepted the idea that a sort of military opportunism came to the fore when the division of Korea was decided on, a theory that has consequently become "evidence" for the decision having been made in an unthinking and somewhat reckless way.<sup>67</sup> It may be true that Roosevelt lacked detailed knowledge and sufficient understanding of the Korean question. He certainly did not pay particular attention to the suggestions of the State Department when the Korean question was on the table in Cairo and Tehran, and he also failed to predict the direction that postwar developments would take, such as the radicalization of nationalism in Third World countries. The circumstances of the year 1945 alone do not sufficiently explain the Soviet intervention in the Korean question, nor the U.S. decision to divide the peninsula. Strategic and historical elements in U.S. East Asian/Korean policy should not be underestimated, however. The "military opportunism" explanation focusses only on the conditions that were inherent to one particular point in time; that is, the moment when the 38th parallel was drawn during the closing moments of the war. In this sense, the developments following Japan's surrender were neither unexpected nor seriously at odds with U.S. policy traditions

<sup>66</sup> Weathersby (1993), pp. 9–10. See also her talk with Yi Chǒngsik, "Stalin ūn haebang Han'guk ūi Chejudo rŭl t'annaetta." (Stalin Wanted Cheju Island in Liberated Korea), *Sindong'a* (September 1993).

<sup>67</sup> In this regard it is even pointed out that the Soviet control of Korea might have been prevented if President Roosevelt had not made "unnecessary concessions." Matray, p. 45; Kim, Hakchun, *Han'guk munje wa kukjehōngch'i* (The Korean Question and International Politics), (Seoul, Pakyōngsa, 1982), p. 22.

on Asia and Korea. The seemingly “expedient” decision of the United States on the Korean division did simply reflect the historical and geopolitical status of the United States, and its policy in East Asia. A decision of a temporary nature could theoretically have been made for the speedy disarmament of the Japanese army. The situation, however, revealed the profound limitations of the United States regarding the Korean question, especially if the Soviet Union is brought into the equation. More importantly, the American government was well aware of this fact. In sum, one might safely say that neither the Soviet intervention in the Korean question, nor the subsequent division, was decided on in an impromptu way, as has been widely supposed. From the outbreak of war, or even before, some aspects of historical and strategic thinking had remained consistent.

There still remains one subject worthy of review; namely, the Korean army controlled by the Soviet Union. This issue is no doubt of a somewhat different nature from the other issues raised so far. First, there are questions about the very existence and the size of this army, whose appearance on the scene was first made publicly known in 1942, when the Chinese government deferred any formal recognition of the KPG. The Chinese did not, however, elucidate the source of their information about the Soviet-trained army. From this point on, this army was referred to by Chinese, American and British sources in various ways. Some said it was 20,000 strong; others said that its forces numbered 50,000. On some occasions it was described as having two divisions, on others as having two regiments and one combat division. The accuracy of such reports was clearly questionable. The United States, however, accepted the information without question, and raised the point whenever it discussed the Korean question. The point was that this Korean army, having been thoroughly indoctrinated with Soviet ideology and methods of government, militarily surpassed the Independence Army of the pro-Chinese and pro-American KPG in Chongqing; that it might participate in operations in Korea as soon as the military situation warranted it; that it might operate independently from Soviet command; and that it could gain dominance over Korean domestic politics if a four-power trusteeship was implemented.

Information on this particular army continued to increase in fits and starts. Yet the details hardly differed. For instance, the American embassy in Moscow commented in 1945 that there were over 20,000 Koreans (presumably possessing Soviet citizenship) in the Red Army. It commented, however, that since all Koreans of either Soviet or Japanese citizenship had been removed from the Maritime Province to Central Asia in 1937, conditions in the Vladivostok area were not thought to permit the existence of an organization such as the

“Korean Liberation Committee.” The United States, Britain and China took notice of the possible existence of such a committee, as it would be a political vanguard in the Soviet invasion into Korea, if and when the Soviet Union entered the war against Japan.<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, any potential rival to the KPG would probably initially appear in Northwest China (Shaanxi) at some later date, when the conquest of Korea might be near at hand, and the split between the CCP and the KMT would have become more aggravated with the improvement of the political and military position of the former. The Jiandao region of Jilin Province would then presumably provide fertile ground for further such developments.<sup>69</sup>

Britain, too, saw the political significance of Korean groups in the Soviet Union. British officials endeavored to cooperate with the American embassy, and to collect information on this issue, to no particular avail.<sup>70</sup> The British government held in high regard the information given by a Korean (Yi Ch’ungmo) who had returned to Chongqing from Russia in August 1943. According to this information on the activities and treatment of the Koreans removed by the Russians to Kazakhstan, about 10,000 Koreans were in the Soviet army, with many taking part in the Soviet-German war and gaining much glory. Even in terms of the deportation to Central Asia, Yi said, all had been well-prepared, and a warm welcome had been given to the Koreans on their arrival at their destination.<sup>71</sup>

How should we estimate the role of this army? Was it really the vanguard of the Soviet army at the time of its advancement into Korea? Did Kim Il-sung and his followers, who were supported by the Soviet Union, belong to this army? Would these military men play a significant role in the occupation and communization of North Korea? The probability was ample, since Soviet-resident Koreans had been included in the Russian armies in both World Wars. There were also Koreans in the Chinese Communist army, who later played a major role in the North Korean invasion of the South in 1950. These armies, whether Chinese- or Soviet-trained, were originally organized for the war against Japan in China, or for the war in Europe. As the situation developed, leading figures emerged, such as “Mujong” in the CCP’s army. In the Soviet Union, however, developments were taking a different turn.

<sup>68</sup> Memo Prepared by the Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East – Korea: Occupation and Military Government: Composition of Forces, March 29, 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 5, pp. 1224–1228.

<sup>69</sup> Kennan to SS, April 17, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, pp. 1026–1027.

<sup>70</sup> Chancery (Moscow) to Far Eastern Department, July 30, 1944, 41801 (3834/102/23). “In the Russian forces in Siberia, there are two divisions of Koreans.” (Halifax to FO, April 17, 1942, 31824 (3330/165/23).)

<sup>71</sup> Bennett to Allison (US Embassy), June 30, 1945, LM89, R.4, 895.01/7–545.

There are a great number of sources available on Kim Il-sung's guerrilla forces, including his own autobiography, and other writings published in North Korea and elsewhere.<sup>72</sup> Albeit with some minor discrepancies, these texts state that, in the years 1938 and 1939, Kim Il-sung fought in the Jiandao region as part of the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army Brigade. He then retreated to Soviet territories in either December 1940 or March 1941, in the face of Japanese annihilation campaigns against Chinese and Korean partisan groups. By 1942, when information on the Korean Army was made public, Kim belonged to the 88th Special Regiment, the new name given to the aforementioned Brigade, which was under the command of Zhou Baozhong, a well-known Chinese guerrilla leader in Manchuria. These partisan groups were welcomed by the Soviet Union, as the Soviets anticipated their eventual entry into war against Japan. The Korean partisans, Kim included, were scattered between three Soviet training camps, which were near Vladivostok, Nikolsk (modern Ussuriysk), and Khabarovsk, respectively.<sup>73</sup>

Kim Il-sung remarked that Stalin had relied significantly on Korean and Chinese anti-Japanese guerrilla groups, when the Soviet Far Eastern Army was reinforced from 1944 onward. What Kim was trying to highlight, while acknowledging the Soviet leadership, was the self-reliant, international nature of his group. According to Kim, his guerrilla troops worked as a special unit, and as one of several “national” groups that formed the “international” units, while cooperating closely with the Chinese Northeast Anti-Japanese Army as part of the “United Nations” forces that were under the leadership of the Soviet Far Eastern Army.<sup>74</sup> Kim's group, however, did not perform independent military activities. Zhou was appointed colonel of the 88th Regiment of this international unit, while Kim Il-sung was made a major. Kim returned to Korea in a Soviet army uniform in September 1945, bearing the rank of captain or major.<sup>75</sup>

More importantly for the purposes of this study, Kim's unit was unable to participate in the invasion of the Korean peninsula as part

<sup>72</sup> Kim Il-sung, *Kim Il-sung tongji hoegorok – segi wa tōburō* (Memoir of Comrade Kim Il-sung – Together with the Century) (Pyongyang: Chosŏn Nodongdang Chu'lp'ansa, 1998), vol. 8; Suh, Dae-sook, *Kim Il Sung – The North Korean Leader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Wada, Haruki, trans. by Yi, Chongsŏn, *Kim Il-sung kwa Manju hang'il chŏnjaeng* (Kim Il-sung and the Anti-Japanese War in Manchuria) (Seoul: Ch'angjak kwa Pip'yŏngsa, 1992); Lankov, Andrei N., trans. by Kim, Kwangnin, *Soryŏn ūi charyo ro bon Pukhan hyŏndae chŏngch'isa* (Contemporary Political History of North Korea through Soviet Materials) (Seoul: Orŭm, 1995).

<sup>73</sup> Lankov, p. 22; Suh, p. 47.

<sup>74</sup> Kim Il-sung (1998), vol. 8, pp. 364, 446, 448.

<sup>75</sup> Suh, pp. 49–50.

of the Soviet Red Army, when the latter crossed the Korean border. Kim Il-sung claimed that his partisan army had liberated the north-eastern tip of the peninsula, along with other areas including Najin and the Pyongyang district, when it entered North Korea as part of the vanguard of the Soviet Army in August 1945. His group, however, having been exhilarated on hearing the Soviet declaration of war against Japan on August 9, was ordered by Stalin to stop their march while they were moving from their camps toward the Amur, which formed the Soviet-Manchurian border. Even the main body of Zhou's Chinese Communist forces was not allowed to move to the front line. As discussed earlier, the United States, with the onset of inter-Allied discussions with Britain and China, began to discuss this aspect of the coming liberation of Korea: "If combat operations in Korea are necessary prior to the capitulation of Japan, what attitude should be taken toward Korean troops which may enter Korea as separate units or as irregulars in the campaign to free Korea?"<sup>76</sup> All the powers judged that the independent entry into the Korean peninsula of irregular forces, including the KPG's Independence Army (and Kim Il-sung's group), as a part of a military campaign against Japan, would present insurmountable problems for the Allies' cooperation in the settlement of the Korean question. As a result, the Allies – or, at least, these three powers – refused to recognize the *de jure* existence of these groups. Moreover, by preventing the KPG's army from crossing the Korean border, China and the United States might reasonably expect a quid pro quo from the Soviet Union with regard to its Korean troops, including Kim's group.<sup>77</sup> Although a recent study claims that Soviet actions to prevent Kim Il-sung's army from crossing the Tumen were based on an agreement at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945,<sup>78</sup> the Big Three left no evidence that they had discussed this relatively minor issue during their Potsdam military staff meetings.

It is also questionable whether the Soviets fostered and trained any particular person for future leadership in Korea, at least before the liberation.<sup>79</sup> According to Russian materials that have recently

<sup>76</sup> Questionnaire on Korea, April 18, 1944, 40798 (4320/4320/70).

<sup>77</sup> In the treaty negotiations with Moscow in August 1945, Jiang Jieshi won Soviet recognition of the KMT government as the sole legitimate government in China, and minimized Soviet support of the CCP, so as to prevent the Communist army from receiving the Japanese surrender in Manchuria. [*The China White Paper*, vol. 1, p. 93.]

<sup>78</sup> Yi, Chongsŏk, *Pukhan-Chungguk kwangye 1945–2000* (North Korea–China Relations 1945–2000) (Seoul: Chungsim, 2001), p. 40.

<sup>79</sup> Yi, Mikyŏng, "Juch'esasang ūi kiwŏn kwa ch'ogi hyŏngsŏng e kwanhan yŏn'gu" (A Study on the Origin and Early Formation of the Juche Ideology), Ph.D. dissertation (Ewha University, Seoul, 1997), pp. 60–68.

been made public, in December 1945 the Soviet Army headquarters in Pyongyang advised the Moscow government of the necessity of choosing, at the earliest possible date, who among three Korean leaders – namely Kim Il-sung, Pak Hŏnyŏng, and Cho Mansik (a nationalist) – was likely to be the most pro-Soviet, and would therefore best protect Russian interests in the peninsula. Of the three leaders, the report judged that Kim would be the most favorable for these purposes.<sup>80</sup> In sum, Kim's regiment was certainly not equivalent to two divisions of the Korean Army, nor was it the vanguard at the time of the Soviet invasion into Korea. This leads us to wonder whether the Chinese had exaggerated its reports on the Korean Army in Russia to heighten American suspicions about Soviet ambitions in Korea.

One obvious point, however, is that this information did encourage U.S. Korea policy to be passive. The U.S. military predicted that these Koreans – although naturalized in the Soviet Union, they were still Koreans – would probably gain control of, and influence over, the setting up of a Soviet-dominated local government, rather than an independent one, whether an international trusteeship was set up in Korea or not. They feared that this would become “the Polish question transplanted to the Far East.” Stimson believed that the trusteeship should be urged, and that at least a token force of American soldiers or marines should be stationed in Korea during the trusteeship.<sup>81</sup> As we have already seen, the United States decided to increase the number of its troops stationed in Korea from 5,000 to 10,000, to counterbalance these Soviet-sponsored Korean troops.

With the liberation of Korea, U.S. government fears concerning the rise of Communist influence in Korean society came true. It had already been reported before the end of the war that Korean Communists in the Maritime Province were maintaining a direct connection with domestic groups. This “direct connection” with anti-Japanese elements inside the peninsula was considered of great importance by the Western powers in their review of the KPG and its capabilities. Although there was no hard evidence that the Soviet Koreans had established such a connection, the existence of the Korean army among the Soviet forces made such an assumption probable. Inside the Korean peninsula, the Korean Communist Party, and this party alone, had taken the lead in the anti-Japanese movement via systematic organization, which helped it maintain a certain degree of popularity among the younger generation during the final years of Japanese rule. This is demonstrated by the fact that the Communist Party was briefly the most influential political force in postwar

<sup>80</sup> Situation in North Korea, Iosif Vasilievich Shikin to S. A. Lozovskii, December 25, 1945, Quote in *Chung'ang Ilbo (Joongang Ilbo)* (Seoul), February 14, 1995.

<sup>81</sup> Stimson to Truman, July 16, 1945, *FRUS, Berlin*, vol. 2, p. 631.

developments. Moreover, concerns about Communist capabilities increased as the Soviet troops outpaced the Americans in advancing into the peninsula, and as economic difficulties increased after the liberation and division. By November 1945, General John R. Hodge was warning that Communist activities were reaching a point where they might gain the upper hand unless positive action was taken.<sup>82</sup> Secretary of State Byrnes also expressed his concern to British Prime Minister Clement Attlee that unless the powers could reach an early decision regarding the future administration of Korea, the United States would be faced with the *fait accompli* of Russian control.<sup>83</sup>

#### CONCLUSION: FINLANDIZATION AND DIVISION?

Wars are great agents of change, as the Soviet intervention in the Korean question demonstrates. Militarily, the Soviet Union could have occupied the peninsula completely. Politically, the Soviet-supported Korean army could gain an advantage over the Chinese-supported KPG with strong backing from Korean political leaders in the peninsula. On the other hand, if the Soviet Union demanded, or seemed to American eyes to demand, absolute rights that exceeded its already-acknowledged “significant” interests, and gave the other powers only nominal voices in the new administrative authority in Korea, the situation could become problematic. The United States, for its part, wanted Korea to be designated as a trust area, and placed under the authority of the United Nations.<sup>84</sup> All this indicates that the Americans were worried lest the Soviets should overplay their advantage and make exorbitant demands. The Soviet Russians were also sanguine about the fact that, unless there were some direct clash with the Americans, they could easily use political games to control Korea under a trusteeship.<sup>85</sup> It was this confidence in their overwhelming dominance that led the Soviet Union to allow North Koreans more autonomy than they had granted in Eastern Europe.

<sup>82</sup> Hodge to MacArthur, November 2, 1945, 740.00119 Control (Korea)/11-245, RG59, Box 3823. In December 1945, MacArthur submitted a report, commenting that “the situation in South Korea makes extremely fertile ground for establishment of Communism.” [MacArthur to Joint Chiefs of Staff, December 16, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, p. 1145.]

<sup>83</sup> Halifax to FO, November 16, 1945, 46469 (10156/1394/23).

<sup>84</sup> Briefing Book Paper – Interim Administration for Korea and Possible Soviet Attitude, July 4, 1945, *FRUS, Berlin*, vol. 2, pp. 311–313.

<sup>85</sup> Even in the event of military conflict with the United States, the Soviet Union was viewed as having the upper hand. According to Harriman, the Korean forces formerly fighting with the Chinese Communists had already been ordered into Manchuria by then; and in the Soviet-occupied areas of Korea, Communist-trained Korean elements were obviously being entrusted with responsibility for civil affairs. [Harriman to SS, September 4, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 7, p. 984.]

Perhaps naturally, the Soviet Union seems to have approached the Korean question in a similar vein to “Finlandization,” demonstrating its great and unquestioned interest in contiguous territories. Finland retained its independence but was tied to the Soviet Union by a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, which was signed on April 6, 1948. This treaty required Finnish neutrality, limited Finnish foreign policy initiatives, and inhibited domestic political behavior.<sup>86</sup> The Soviet Union had shown a similar stance on the Polish question at the time of the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in October 1943. Molotov said that his country was vitally interested in the question of relations with Poland, and made it clear that there must also be a Polish government that entertained friendly feelings toward Russia.<sup>87</sup> The future of Poland, a nation that became an independent state after World War I, was, however, also a matter of tremendous interest for both the United States and Britain. The communization of Poland by the Soviet Union was, therefore, one of the main causes of the Cold War.<sup>88</sup>

The Soviet attitude became more obvious with the communization of Eastern Europe. The advocates of Roosevelt’s policy were alarmed, and were increasingly worried by the turn of events. Britain complained that “a costly effort was put into the occupation of Hungary and the Balkans when the shortest route to Berlin lay through Poland: Bulgaria in particular had never been at war with Russia. ... [Yet] the Russians declared war and occupied the whole of Bulgaria.” The Russians were in an even greater hurry to take what had been promised to them in East Asia. Manchuria, northern Korea and Sakhalin were occupied without regard for the Japanese surrender on August 15.<sup>89</sup> To all of this, Stalin replied that his country only wanted to guarantee that Poland would be friendly to its interests, but that

<sup>86</sup> With the outbreak of World War II, Finland began a heroic struggle against the Soviet Union, usually known as the Winter War (1939–1940). Yet Finland had to surrender in the end, leaving the Soviet Union potentially able to annex the whole country. The treaty of 1948 gave the Soviet Union an overwhelming control over Finland’s domestic and foreign policies. [Department of State Library, *Dictionary of International Relations Terms* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1987), p. 39.] Fox, Annette Baker, *The Power of Small States – Diplomacy in World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), chapter 3.

<sup>87</sup> Before the Cairo Conference, Harriman commented: “They (the Russians) are determined to recognize only a Polish government that will be a whole-heartedly friendly neighbor.” [Harriman to Roosevelt, November 4, 1943, *FRUS, Cairo and Teheran*, p. 154.]

<sup>88</sup> Some writers say that the Cold War began, just like World War II, with Poland as the immediate cause of the conflict. [Itō, Takayuki, “The Genesis of the Cold War: Confrontation over Poland, 1941–44,” in Nagai and Iriye (eds.), p. 148.]

<sup>89</sup> Bullock, p. 10.



Britain wanted to revive the system of *cordon sanitaire* along Soviet borders.<sup>90</sup>

The Americans were well aware that a friendly government meant a pro-Soviet one. Nevertheless, as the Cold War intensified, Ambassador Harriman suggested that a resolute response on the part of the United States would be the only solution. He knew the danger that lay in the Soviet policy itself. When Stalin requested including the northern part of Hokkaido in the region that the Japanese army would surrender to Soviet troops, Harriman insisted that the United States should “stand firm” on its own plans.<sup>91</sup> From this vantage point, Harriman warned on August 23, 1945, just a week after the liberation of Korea, that the Soviets would endeavor to make the foreign policy and ideology of the future Korean government biased toward their country. He continues:

I expect that we will have some difficulty in Korea as it is my impression the Russians want to dominate this country in spite of Stalin's agreement that it should develop its independence through a four-power trusteeship. I believe the Russians are feeling their way out with us to see how far they can go with their unilateral objectives in the Far East. Soong's [Song's] negotiation [of the Sino-Soviet Treaty] were of interest in that Stalin gave in when he found that the United States was firm on certain issues.<sup>92</sup>

In September, he compiled a similar report, which stated that the *New Times* (the English-language edition of the Soviet journal *Novoye Vremya*) had accurately revealed Soviet intentions in its praise for the help given to Korea by the Red Army. Rejecting, by implication, any need for outside capital investment and business management, the journal claimed that Korea was intimately connected with the continent, both geographically and economically. According to the article, a free and independent Korea, progressing along economic, political and ancient native cultural lines, could be realized with economic,

<sup>90</sup> Memo of First Conversation at the Kremlin, May 26, 1945, *FRUS, Berlin*, vol. 1, pp. 25–28, 38–39. Originally, the concept of *cordon sanitaire* was used by France during World War I to prevent the spread of Communism by way of alliance with Eastern European nations. [Albrecht-Carrié, René, *A Diplomatic History of Europe since the Congress of Vienna* (revised edition), (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 408.] However, as the Cold War began, it meant a containment policy against Soviet expansion, by which the Soviet Union felt strongly repelled. In November 1943, Molotov told Harriman: “The Soviet leaders are determined to have no semblance of the old ‘*cordon sanitaire*’ concept around Russia in Eastern Europe.” (Harriman to Roosevelt, November 4, 1943, *FRUS, Cairo and Teheran, 1943*, p. 154.)

<sup>91</sup> Stalin to Truman, August 16, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, pp. 667–668.

<sup>92</sup> Harriman to Truman, August 23, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, pp. 689–690.

technical and cultural help from the United Nations, and principally from powerful neighbors on the continent, i.e., the Soviet Union.<sup>93</sup>

In November, Harriman finally pointed to a Finlandization-like concept in explaining Soviet policy toward Korea. The Russians made it clear that historically they had regarded Korea in much the same light as Finland, Poland, and Romania; in other words, as a potential springboard for attack on the Soviet Union. Soviet predominance was more likely to be realized through the establishment of an “independent, friendly” Korean regime than through any system of international tutelage. The ambassador further pointed out that the Soviet government had not responded to American suggestions for negotiation over matters that would arise from a divided occupation; for instance, the rationalization of communications, and commercial, financial and other outstanding issues, including the regular delivery of coal and electric power to the American zone. The Soviet press, furthermore, was now not even referring to a “trusteeship” of Korea. The Soviet Union was, in fact, losing interest in the trusteeship system. Consequently, until the other powers raised the question of what to do with Korea, “the Soviet Union was probably content to concentrate on action, not debate; on political consolidation in North Korea and political penetration of South Korea so that by [the] time [the] issue of civilian rule is raised, Soviet political groundwork will have been laid.”<sup>94</sup>

Harriman’s statement was fairly accurate in both a short-term tactical and a long-term policy perspective. It may be true, as Weathersby repeatedly points out, that in postwar settlements Korea was of no pressing concern for either Stalin or Roosevelt. Korea may have held the least significance for Moscow of all the East Asian territories, as indicated by the fact that in wartime conferences there was much negotiation over the details of the Manchurian settlement but little over Korea.<sup>95</sup> The Soviet Union appeared to take a moderate stance on Korean developments until its agreement to the trusteeship at the Moscow Conference. Nevertheless, the Soviets actually wielded all the levers vis-à-vis the United States. The Americans were alert to Soviet attempts to exploit local situations in the interests of establishing illegitimate Soviet influence in Manchuria, Korea, and elsewhere, just as Cold War confrontations had been developing in Europe. There was here a dilemma for the United States. On the one hand,

<sup>93</sup> Harriman to SS, September 3, 1945, LM80, R.4, 895.01/9–345.

<sup>94</sup> Harriman to SS, November 12, 1945, LM80, R.4, 895–01/11–1245. Political Adviser to the American military government H. Merrill Benninghoff reported that the United States might soon be faced with problems similar to those it faced in Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria. (Benninghoff to SS, September 29, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, p. 1065.)

<sup>95</sup> Weathersby (1990), pp. 122, 128–129, 134, 150, 154, 161, 169.

its principal political objective in the Pacific and East Asia was to maintain and extend the collaboration that now existed among the members of the United Nations.<sup>96</sup> It could not afford to break off from the great framework of a new postwar world order to settle the Korean question based upon previous agreements with the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the Korean question was already in the grip of the Cold War. In 1943, the United States had not opposed a Polish government friendly to the Soviet Union. But in 1945 the Americans made it clear that they would not welcome attempts to build another such government in Korea. They did not, in other words, exclude the possibility of confrontation with the Soviet Union. Should the Soviets continue to refuse cooperation, they might find out “what Stalin meant when he agreed to the idea of a trusteeship for Korea with the delicate proviso, ‘if necessary.’”<sup>97</sup>

In a long-term policy perspective, the Soviet stance was moving from “balance of power,” to Finlandization, and finally to the division of Korea. This interpretation can be fairly well substantiated by documents of the Soviet Foreign Ministry from 1945 to 1950, which have recently been opened to historical scrutiny. Before the Soviet Union entered the war, or at least at the time of its entry, it was content with the four-power trusteeship and division at the 38th parallel, which seemed to show an inclination toward a “balance of power” in Korea. Soviet policy then moved toward encouraging a “friendly and closely related” government to ensure that the Korean peninsula should not be reduced to a base for attacking the U.S.S.R. Finally, the Soviet Union demanded that it play a more-than-equal role in any trusteeship. After gaining control of the northern part of Korea, it expanded its goals to including Inch’ön, Pusan and Cheju Island in its security system, thus clearly indicating its intention to control the whole Korean peninsula and surrounding seas. Since this scheme remained unfulfilled, the Soviets finalized the division of the peninsula.

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<sup>96</sup> PR-18 Preliminary, Basic Policies and Objectives of the United States in the Pacific and the Far East, August 31, 1945, RG59, Box 119; SWNCC-282, Basic U.S. Military Objectives, September 19, 1945, LM54, R.25.

<sup>97</sup> McCloy to Acheson (Under SS), November 13, 1945, 740.00119 Control (Korea)/11-1345, RG59 Box 3823.

## A New Look at the Trusteeship



### PROBLEMS IN EXISTING INTERPRETATIONS

MANY SCHOLARS TEND to interpret the issue of trusteeship mainly in the light of postwar American strategy. Such an approach is legitimate in certain regards. According to Bruce Cumings, President Roosevelt set a goal of reorganizing the postwar world in accordance with the ideas of liberalism. The intention of the trusteeship idea was the furthering of American interests. As the largest economic unit and as an anti-colonist power, the United States would obtain sound advantages should it liberate colonies through a universal application of trusteeship. This was also in accord with the U.S. tradition of an economic open door policy. It was perhaps natural enough that the United States should secure American influence on the Korean peninsula by way of a trusteeship, although it could not eliminate the possibility of predominant control by the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup>

James Irving Matray stressed that the trusteeship was the most appropriate policy to achieve American goals in East Asia. The United States, which would have the status of a superpower after the war, declared that balance-of-power approaches were not necessarily the best suited for maintaining peace. Yet it chose to remain content to follow traditional lines on East Asia policy. Ostensibly seeking participation and cooperation from the other powers, the United States tried to balance, maintain and coordinate power to establish peace in the region. The Korean question was of a piece with this policy complacency. For this purpose, cooperation and support from Britain and China were essential. On the other hand, the United States could not

<sup>1</sup> Cumings, Bruce, *The Origins of the Korean War – Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes 1945–1947* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), chapter 4. Louis approached the trusteeship issue in the same way. See Louis, William. Roger, *Imperialism at Bay – the United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire 1941–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), chapters 1 and 5.

afford absolutely to endorse the Korean policies of these Allies, as has been discussed in the previous chapters. In this respect, Britain and China were passive supporters/partners, but the United States had to be on its guard if need be. Nonetheless, as the war proceeded, the greatest menace to American goals proved to be the Soviet penchant and potential for expansion. The trusteeship was a strategic plan by the United States to include the Soviet Union in this partnership, and to encourage all four trusteeship powers to contain one another.<sup>2</sup>

As far as the United States was concerned, if the Soviet Union emerged from the war as “America’s foe instead of friend” and gained access to a warm water port, it would become an important maritime power and an economic rival in Asia. Another possibility was that China would not remain an ally of the United States but would become hostile, demonstrating violently anti-foreign sentiments. The war would irretrievably weaken Britain’s basis of power, so that even its defensive anchor at Singapore would be negligible. Above all, Japan could remain bellicose. If Japan became pro-American, there could ultimately be a restoration, sanctioned by the Americans, of a considerable measure of Japanese strength, and American bases would be a significant factor in the interval before Japan regained its military strength. It was of the utmost importance that the United States should maintain control over Japan, and, more generally, East Asia. Where would these strategic bases be located? The Security Subcommittee of the State Department’s Advisory Committee on Foreign Policy emphasized the importance of control over Korean airfields, which might be facilitated by placing the country under international trusteeship.<sup>3</sup>

The positions of the other three powers can be explained in the same regard. None of the four powers was capable of standing against the others, and of settling the Korean question in an exclusive way. The Soviet Union, the only power that might have been capable of such action in terms of its military capabilities, accepted the four-power trusteeship as a safe measure for other reasons, or as part of the bigger framework of East Asian policy. The Soviet Union would yield to the American approach (i.e., trusteeship) rather than risk opposition from the other powers. In this way, it either expected the United States to consider the Soviet position in settling Japanese affairs after the war, or at least that the Koreans from the Soviet-trained army would control the government under trusteeship. China did not believe trusteeship to be the best measure, but judged it necessary

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<sup>2</sup> Matray, James Irving, *The Reluctant Crusade – American Foreign Policy in Korea, 1941–1950* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), chapter 1 and especially pp.19–20.

<sup>3</sup> Louis, pp. 75–76, 79.

to cooperate with the United States to prevent Soviet expansion. Britain believed that to participate in the Korean question would be advantageous for its broader East Asia policy objectives.

The trusteeship was thus intimately related to strategic issues in both its conception and implementation. In August 1944, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent a memorandum to the State Department, which cautioned that the territorial trusteeship and settlements would have to be treated with great care, given the profound changes that would be found in the relative military strengths of the major powers on the war's conclusion. Particularly given that they might adversely affect U.S. relations with the Soviet Union, the final resolutions should be delayed until after the defeat of Japan.<sup>4</sup> In deference to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the State Department eliminated this topic from the Dumbarton Oaks conversations, which was against the wishes of the other participants and led to severe criticism. Yet the Americans said the whole matter would be reexamined "from the viewpoint of further procedure."<sup>5</sup>

It would have been unnatural had there been no strategic considerations impinging upon the realignment of the postwar world order and the issue of trusteeship. It would also have been unnatural had the universal significance of trusteeship just been applied to the individual case of Korea. Indeed, the general nature of the strategic significance of the trusteeship concept was quite comprehensive, and could not be defined for the Korean peninsula alone. First of all, the creation of the United Nations, with trusteeship as one of its several mechanisms, should be approached from a broader perspective of fundamental changes for institutions, social forces, and their inter-relationships. In this regard, the United Nations was most significant in the post-war era. This worldwide organization originated from efforts to redefine international relations on the part of the victors, who would represent new forces in the postwar global society. However, while postwar international relations bifurcated around the bipolar superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union, the United Nations followed tradition and appointed the five principal victorious powers as the Security Council. It was therefore unable to create an international system that could optimally reflect the newly formed social/international relationships. Nonetheless, it was important that the problems that set the new powers at odds with the old powers be identified in

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<sup>4</sup> George Marshall to SS and enclosure, August 3, 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 1, pp. 699–703.

<sup>5</sup> SS to Stimson (S of War), December 30, 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 1, pp. 922–923. The War Department and Navy Department desired to take part in the discussion when the issues were discussed..

the process of its creation. The issue of colonies was one of them, and trusteeship was seen as one means of settling such problems.

In this regard, one might well criticize any methodology that approached a four-power trusteeship solely in terms of the strategic considerations of the United States. A vast range of issues were, in fact, at stake: British endeavors to reestablish the Empire; the significance of trusteeship in the history of Western colonial rule; the legitimacy (i.e., morality and fairness) of the way that “natives” in the colonies were being treated; independence or autonomy as the ultimate goal for dependent peoples; territories “mandated” by the League of Nations; sovereignty of colonies under trusteeship; and the U.S. insistence on its complete sovereignty over Japanese mandated islands in the Pacific. Since the conference in Quebec in August 1943, the creation, function and operation of the United Nations had become as essential an agenda as the settlements of the defeated countries, and trusteeship was one of the major issues. In all these respects, trusteeship was a complicated subject, and only by understanding the internal and external environment thrust upon Korea will one be able to judge or criticize the policy of the various powers, as well as the actions of Korean leaders under the postwar military administration.

Second, existing strategy-based studies on trusteeship can be criticized for their *ex post facto* explanations, which have overly emphasized Cold War circumstances in their analysis.<sup>6</sup> Allied leaders perceived that the postwar world was most likely to be ruled by a “concert system,” and that a four-power trusteeship would be possible only if such a system were presupposed. Even the Yalta agreement regarding East Asia would only be enforceable if cooperation among the Allies were assumed, in which China was obviously expected to play a significant role. This plan held successfully until April 1945, when President Roosevelt passed away. Later, under the Cold War system, the assumption of cooperation became quite unthinkable.

In analyzing the conception, international discourse and actual significance of the trusteeship issue, from the time of liberation to the Moscow Conference of December 1945, we should therefore avoid overemphasizing the significance of the Cold War, especially as far as Korea is concerned.

Conflict and cooperation are, however, perennial and coexistent phenomena in international politics. When one places international politics in a continuum, these two occupy its extremes, often in the

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<sup>6</sup> For a leading study on the subject in Korea, see Yi, Wanböm, “Hanbando sint’ak t’ongch’i munje 1943–1946” (Trusteeship in Korea 1943–46) in Pak, Hyönch’ae et al. (eds.), *Haebang chônhusa ü insik 3* (Understanding Korea Before and After Liberation, vol. 3) (Seoul: Hankilsa, 1987).

specific forms of alliance and war. More significantly, a concert system is inherently founded on a balance of power, which entails a certain amount of tension and conflict among the powers.<sup>7</sup> Historical evidence corroborates this assumption. In the 1940s, the United States, Britain and China entered into a cooperative system of “alliance” to overcome a conflict; in this case, a bloody war against Japan. Even if alliance is the highest form of cooperation, however, nations cannot work together in all aspects of wartime diplomacy. Although the United States and Britain glossed over their mutual tie as a “special relationship,” it was marked by a series of disagreements over various issues. Or, to put it another way, if the United States and the Soviet Union had competing global strategies in the Cold War era, they joined hands from time to time to protect their vested rights, as in the case of preventing the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. It was also a general principle that contentious issues should be resolved to the mutual advantage of the Allies, or by the will of the senior partner among the four powers, i.e., the United States, given the fact that the other three had been so heavily dependent on the United States in their war efforts.

In another pitfall generated by existing views, one can be tempted to “overly distinguish” the Soviet approach toward trusteeship from that of the United States. The Soviet Union was not a colonizer. The Bolshevik administration instigated and supported the liberation of colonies from its foundation until the 1930s. Even during the war, its stance on the settlement of colonies was as progressive as that of the United States and China, if not more so. At the Dumbarton Oaks Conference in 1943, the Soviet government was interested in the problems of trusteeship, even though it had no colonies and no experience in colonial administration.<sup>8</sup> China and the Soviet Union wished to introduce the word “independence” as an objective of the trusteeship system, but the British and French were against it. The Soviet Union demonstrated that it was more concerned with cleaning up the old practices of the past. Averell Harriman, the American ambassador to the Soviet Union, later quoted Stalin as having asked, in February 1945, why a trusteeship was necessary if the Koreans could produce their own government. Harriman assumed Stalin meant a Soviet-style government.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> On the concert system, see Wight, Martin, *International Theory – The Three Traditions*, Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter (eds.) (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1992), pp. 151–154, 165.

<sup>8</sup> Memo of Conversation by Pasvolsky, Special Assistant to SS, September 28, 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 1, p. 847; Stettinius to Stimson, December 30, 1944, *Ibid.*, pp. 922–993; International Trusteeships – Memo by Chairman of SWNCC to SS, February 26, 1945, *Ibid.*, 1945, vol. 1, p. 93.

<sup>9</sup> Millis, Walter(ed.), *The Forrestal Diaries* (New York: Viking Press, 1951), p.46. (Quoted from Cumings, p. 109.) None of the official American records of the Yalta Conferences made any reference to this point. See especially *FRUS Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, p. 770.



The Soviet approach to trusteeship could not be clearly distinguished from that of the United States, however. Of course, the concept of trusteeship was utterly foreign to Russian political culture, and especially to its tradition of colonial enterprise, which was aptly termed “continental colonialism” by Hannah Arendt (see Part 1, Chapter 1.) To Soviet leaders, a trusteeship over a territory meant “acquiring” that territory,<sup>10</sup> a stance that reflected a realist perspective on international relations. The Soviet attitude surfaced in its handling of the Korean trusteeship, following the liberation. While an article in *Red Star* on September 7 stated that the Japanese had never succeeded in breaking the free and independent spirit of the Koreans, it went on to describe the Koreans’ servility, and to state that, even after the departure of the Japanese, Koreans could not rid themselves of habits that were an absurd abasement of human integrity, and unpleasant for any Soviet citizen to see.<sup>11</sup> When Korea was liberated, the Soviet representatives on the U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission mentioned the reasons for trusteeship in Korea. In addition to those justifications already discussed in the previous chapter, they stated that the Koreans did not have any moral right to raise doubts on the liberating Allies’ designs, since the Korean people had hardly contributed to their own liberation.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps along the same lines, the Soviet representatives declared in a statement, “We believe that to say the Korean people could do without trusteeship under the Soviet-U.S. armies would be to deceive the Korean people.”<sup>13</sup> The Soviet attitude was on the side of “realism,” and was not any different from that of the United States or Britain, in the sense that it put greater stress on rights obtained by the winning of the war.

Regarding this issue, one study strongly argues that the U.S. and Soviet ideas of trusteeship completely differed. From this point of view, the “international trusteeship” of the United States and the “tutelage” of the Soviet Union developed into an important political issue, which transcends discourse on legal concepts.<sup>14</sup> This, however, presupposes the existence of theories that the Soviet Union

<sup>10</sup> Weathersby, Kathryn, “Soviet Policy toward Korea: 1944–1946,” Ph.D. dissertation (Indiana University, 1990), pp. 139, 151, 168.

<sup>11</sup> *Red Star*, September 7, 1945, enclosure in Roberts to FO. October 4, 1945, 46441 (7868/69/23).

<sup>12</sup> Sim, Chiyŏn (ed.), *Haebang chŏngguk nonjaengsa* (History of Debates on the Liberation Period) (Seoul: Han’ul, 1986), p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> “Soryŏngun kwa migun ūl Chosŏn esŏ ch’ŏlsu sikinŭn munje e kwanhan Mi-so kongdong wiwŏnhoe ūi Soryŏn taep’yo sŏngmyŏng” (Statement of the Soviet Representative in the U.S.-Soviet Joint Committee on the Problem to Evacuate the U.S. and Soviet Armies from Korea), in Kukt’o T’ong’ilwŏn (Board of National Unification) (comp.), *Soryŏn kwa Pukhan kwangye 1945–1980* (The Relationship between the Soviet Union and North Korea 1945–1980) (Seoul: Board of National Unification, 1988), p. 60.

<sup>14</sup> Ch’oe, Sangyong, *Migunjŏng kwa Han’guk minjokjuŭi* (The American Military Government and Korean Nationalism) (Seoul: Nanam, 1988), pp. 33–34, 178, 212–213

developed *after* World War II. In discussions with other powers, the United States used various terms, including tutelage, supervision, guide, control and trusteeship, sometimes with the word “international” attached to it, more or less interchangeably. Sun Wen and his KMT foresaw an initial period of what they termed “military governance,” followed by a period of teaching the people to govern themselves, and only then a third period of constitutional government. In doing so, they translated the second period as “tutelage” in the KMT program that they put forward in 1931.<sup>15</sup> There must be a difference between the KMT’s tutelage and the postwar trusteeship, in terms of who was expected to be the prime mover – it could be either foreign powers or domestic political groups. The original idea, however, is exactly the same in that it is about educating less enlightened people to adjust to the management of a modern state. It was only after the worsening of ideological conflict, therefore, that trusteeship and tutelage were terminologically distinguished. The Soviet Union added anti-West/anti-imperialist tendencies to the national liberation movement. According to this dichotomy, the Soviets claimed that their “tutelage” included “means for independence,” support for less developed countries by the United Nations, and ways to resolve the colonial system and exploitation. The U.S. concept of “trusteeship,” on the other hand, was merely a modified form of the League-mandated rule of the past, a means to reapportion colonies among the great powers, and a mechanism to maintain the subordination of weaker nations, much as had existed before. Such arguments were only legitimate in the days of the Cold War, when every issue in the international arena was given an ideological interpretation. Such reasoning was particularly supported by the left when pro- and anti-trusteeship arguments developed after the liberation.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Sheridan, James E., *China in Disintegration – The Republican Era in Chinese History 1912–1949* (London and New York: Free Press, 1975), pp. 207–208; Sharman, Lyon, *Sun Yat-sen – His Life and Its Meaning* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), pp. 216, 229; Clubb, O. Edmund, *Twentieth Century China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), pp. 144, 243.

<sup>16</sup> Sim, Chiyŏn (ed.), p. 53. Lenin defines colonies as “dependencies with a population having no legal rights,” or as countries over which the mandates have been given to financial bandits (capitalists). However, the Soviet Union did not approve sovereignty as the supreme form with unlimited authority. [Taracouzio, T. A., *The Soviet Union and International Law* (New York: Macmillan, 1935), pp. 33–34.] The Soviet stance, favoring unlimited sovereignty in theory, but leaving the door open to actual limitation in practice, was similar to that of Britain. At the time of the Czech invasion in 1968, limited sovereignty, as espoused by Leonid Brezhnev, combined revolutionist tradition (socialist internationalism as a general principle prevailing over the sovereignty of an individual state) with realist tradition.

More importantly, the United States could hardly “dictate” to the Allies on colonial issues, which would require delicate handling at the end of the struggle. Postwar history shows that the system was not imposed in an equitable manner. Due to Britain’s opposition, British colonies became the first exceptions. Indochina, which Roosevelt had considered, along with Korea, to be a test case, was blocked due to French opposition. Portuguese colonies, the worst cases of colonial government in the eyes of the Americans, were excluded in the final reckoning. The United States, on the grounds of security in the Pacific, excluded the Japanese-mandated territories in the South Pacific, as well as all the territories of the Western hemisphere, which would remain under American “benevolent guardianship.” Consequently, unlike those in Africa, most of the colonies in the Middle East and Asia, with their strong national consciousness and longer histories, had to achieve independence through negotiations or war with the ruling powers.

There is a conspiracy theory, too, which holds that the United States, and especially Britain, prepared a retrograde mechanism for trusteeship in Korea by inserting the phrase “in due course” into the Cairo Declaration. Each and every word in an international treaty or agreement should be full of significance. There are therefore people who believe that non-altruistic intentions on the part of the Allies are hidden in this phrase, through which a certain process was implied or indirectly established. After the Cairo Declaration, Korean nationalists continued raising questions regarding this issue. Ever since, this debate has formed the starting point in Korea for discussing the trusteeship and the division.<sup>17</sup> This interpretation, however, is overly naive. The powers’ decision to impose a trusteeship would not have been much influenced, whether the expression used had been “at the earliest possible moment” (as in the original draft), or “at the proper moment,” as in the suggested revision by Harry L. Hopkins.

Is there, then, a new interpretation that would complement these arguments? This chapter proposes just such a tentative conclusion. Ever since the powers had begun reviewing the Korean question, they had conceived the idea of trusteeship, or something of a similar

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<sup>17</sup> Churchill revised the American draft and inserted the phrase “in due course.” After the war, he once stated: “I’d never heard of the bloody place [Korea] till I was seventy-four.” Since he was born in 1874, the time he mentioned is 1948! [Quoted in Liu, Xiaoyuan, “Sino-American Diplomacy over Korea during World War II,” *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 1–2 (Summer 1992), p. 249.] In any case, this might indicate that Churchill never very seriously considered the Korean question or attached any specific meaning to the phrase “in due course” Often enough in Britain, “in due course” or “duly” is used to express an “ordinary process.”

nature, largely outside the framework of “strategic” considerations. This was partly the reason why the other powers did not oppose, or easily accepted, the American trusteeship proposal. American and British records present ample evidence of this. The idea of trusteeship was both tacit and expressed as soon as the powers initiated discussions on the Korean question. This idea became a *fait accompli* too easily and too speedily. When the United States was not willing to take charge of the matter alone, a “strategic” aspect – namely, the national interest of the other powers – was introduced into this mechanism in varying degrees. Such an easy compromise by the powers cannot be fully explained by power politics, security considerations or application of a general principle. The reason for such a decision can only be found by taking into account the “historical perceptions” of the powers; or, to be more specific, their opinions on Korea’s capacity (or incapacity) for independence. In this sense, it may be concluded that “at the earliest possible moment” implied not the moment of Korea’s liberation but the point at which Korea was declared fit for independence by the powers.

#### TRUSTEESHIP IN COLONIAL HISTORY

Trusteeship was, in short, the antithesis of imperialism.<sup>18</sup> Its institutionalization, moreover, would mean the dismantling of long-existing colonies, and the easing of tensions between the United States and Britain. In their original nature, all privileges, as claimed and exercised, are in the strictest sense a form of trust, and it is the very essence of every trust to be rendered accountable. According to John Locke, whenever that end is manifestly neglected or opposed, trust must necessarily be forfeited, and power devolved into the hands of those who gave it, which points to the right of rebellion. Yet, with the expansion of the West, after a certain lapse of time this principle came to be confused with the right of empire. Assuming that “the situation of man is the preceptor of his duty,” these theories justified the control of other peoples. Colonial government could liberate “barbarous natives” from the oppression and exploitation of indigenous rulers, and spread European technology and Christianity into uncultivated lands. This involved giving and benevolence, and the taking up of the “white man’s burden.” By this principle, any sort of resistance by native rulers to the European enterprise of colonialism should be rigorously suppressed, because it was against the will of God. This

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<sup>18</sup> Louis, p. 3.

had been the basic standpoint of British and Iberian colonizers from the sixteenth century. By the nineteenth century, the idea had been greatly strengthened by social Darwinism. Rationalist theory, however, believed that “barbarians” had rights under natural or moral law when it came to existing native laws and customs, well-being, and development. A principle of the rationalist theory concerning backward peoples was that international society had a “dual mandate.” Colonial powers were seen as trustees both for the advancement of the subject races, and for the development of their material resources for the benefit of mankind. The mandate system of the League of Nations seemed to be a culmination of the trusteeship doctrine, and it was later developed through the “trusteeship” of the United Nations.<sup>19</sup>

In this regard, Martin Wight concludes that trusteeship is a combination of the Machiavellian tradition of realism, the Kantian tradition of revolutionism, and the Grotian tradition of rationalism. In the Machiavellian tradition, moral rules that restrained states in their relations with one other did not arise. International law was the law governing the relations among “civilized” states. Relationships between European and non-European nations were in an arena where “a war of all against all” was under way. On the other hand, Kantian ideology took the view that, at a deeper level, international politics was about relations among the human beings of which states were composed. The ultimate reality was the “community of mankind,” which had the potential to exist, even if it did not actually do so. What was understood by international morality was not the rules that required states to behave as good members of the society of states, but the revolutionary imperatives that required all men to work for human brotherhood. This theory formed the basis of the Reformation, the French Revolution and the Communist Revolution. In the revolutionist theory, the natives of colonies must be freed from the yoke of exploitation and assimilated to Western culture, so that they might enjoy a decent human life. Trusteeship was, therefore, a byproduct of Grotian ideology, in that the mechanism involved the recognition of “international society,” in which morality and cooperation existed to restrain the state from a blind pursuit of power. Wight argues

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<sup>19</sup> On the development of the “trusteeship” concept, see Wight, pp. 75–77. In 1944, in a memorandum entitled “Japanese Administration in Korea,” the British Foreign Office stated: “A period of political tutelage and of training in responsible government would appear to be necessary before the Koreans could hope to stand on their own feet.” Someone at the U.S. State Department, as if indicating consent, entered the notation “white men’s burden” in a margin. (Enclosures of Halifax to Hull, July 9, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/342.)

that President Roosevelt thought and acted in accord with such a Grotian tradition.<sup>20</sup>

In colonial matters, human freedom had, in the history of Western colonial expansion, been expressed and developed around the two themes of national independence and human rights. Marxists explained the rise and fall of slavery from an economic viewpoint, while others, although agreeing with their opinions to a certain extent, believed the demise of slavery started “because the law of the church made it inadmissible to reduce to servitude a brother in Christ.”<sup>21</sup> The British obtained exclusive rights to slave traffic in the Americas by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1714, but in 1807 they banned the practice in the name of humanitarianism and universal morality, internationally instituting the suppression of the slave trade at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Russia and the United States followed suit in 1863 and 1865, respectively. The Berlin Conference of 1885 established two principles that later became the basis for both the mandate and the trusteeship systems. Moving on to 1890, a landmark was established in the form of the Brussels Anti-Slavery Act. The independence movement in Greece in the 1820s, and the war of independence in Bulgaria in the 1870s, gave rise to issues of self-determination and human rights in international politics, mingled with the power politics of the great powers. Colonial problems have thus steadily developed and improved over the centuries; and the ideas and principles embodied in these acts were adopted by the League of Nations, and eventually passed on to the United Nations.<sup>22</sup>

As a result, mandates/trusteeships were a matter of practical necessity, as well as posing moral problems as to how one should approach colonial issues. As for practical necessity, the stances of the various

<sup>20</sup> Wight (1992), especially preface by Hedley Bull, pp. xi-xiv, which discusses three traditions. Contrary to Machiavellian (realist) tradition, in which the moral rules that restrained states in their relations with one another did not arise, and contrary to Kantian (revolutionary) tradition, which took the view that, at a deeper level, international politics was about relations among the human beings of which states were composed, and thus the ultimate reality was the “community of mankind,” Grotian (rational) tradition advocated a “dual mandate” (i.e., improving the welfare of the natives as well as the right of access to natural resources for the welfare of all mankind). See also Butterfield, Herbert and Wight, Martin (eds.), *Diplomatic Investigations – Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966).

<sup>21</sup> Ray, James Lee, “Abolition of Slavery and the End of International War,” *International Organization*, 43-3 (Summer, 1989), pp. 408-415.

<sup>22</sup> On this subject, see Claude, Inis L. Jr., *Swords into Plowshares – The Problems and Progress of International Organization* (4th ed.), (New York: Random House, 1971), chapter 16, and Louis, chapter 5. Details of self-determination would differ according to the historical circumstances of each colony. See Alexander, Yonah, and Friedlander, Robert A. (eds.), *Self-determination: National, Regional, and Global Dimensions* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980), pp. 8-9.

powers were reflected therein. It was generally thought, however, that the continued existence of colonies, and the conflicts over them, were a likely cause of the two world wars. New resolutions should therefore be sought at the international, rather than national, level. The victors had to show that their war participation was not motivated by selfish causes through the principle of “no annexation.” At the same time, by establishing international control over the exploitation and administration of colonies, all the winners could satisfy their ambitions (if only partly), and still have free access to the resources in those colonies. In this regard, the Covenant of the League of Nations constituted the first explicit declaration of the authority and responsibility of the international community in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of “peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous condition of the modern world,” and provided broad outlines of a working arrangement whereby “advanced nations” would exert “tutelage” over such people. The powers were now in charge of a “sacred trust of civilization.”<sup>23</sup>

Independence movements in colonies, however, were the outcome of complex factors, such as the industrialization of colonies, the subsequent social transformation and ideological awakening of the people, the promise of self-determination by the colonial powers during World War I, and the idealistic concepts that President Wilson had introduced to international relations. During World War II, colonial issues were used by all the belligerent forces in radio propaganda. The Allies denounced Germany, Italy and Japan’s expansion into, and domination over, other nations. The Axis powers, on the other hand, censured what they called Anglo-American imperialism, and advocated the liberation of natives from their shackles. All of this accelerated change.

The problem of colonies had thus become a pending issue for the powers to resolve. Yet, in a sense, the two great wars gave victory to the *status quo* powers over the revisionist powers. Both Wilson and Roosevelt were realistic politicians, who believed that granting independence to the colonies had to face compromise with reality; that is, it would be achieved gradually. Accordingly, the goals set for the initial stage of a mandate/trusteeship had to be coordinated with compromising realities. We have already discussed how the issue of independence was forced to make concessions to the “legitimate rights” of the powers. The powers’ legitimate rights, furthermore,

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<sup>23</sup> It was also claimed that the very existence of colonies itself was an unhealthy way for advanced nations to maintain peace in international society. Since a colony is a “slum” in the human community, trusteeeship has been called a “Rooseveltian vision of a New Deal for the world’s underprivileged.” See Wight, p. 78; Claude, p. 354; Louis, p. 3.

contradicted the concept of human rights and fundamental freedom for colonial people.<sup>24</sup> The British representative expressed opposition to the reference to human rights and fundamental freedoms, saying that such a provision would give rise to the possibility that the organization might interfere in the internal affairs of member states. Ambassador Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet representative, said that the reference to human rights and basic freedoms was not germane to the main tasks of an international security organization. In the end, the principle of human rights and fundamental freedoms was eliminated. The United States pronounced its view that this point must be included briefly somewhere in the document, or it would publish the plan on its own, even if the Russians and British should not agree.<sup>25</sup>

How, then, should we evaluate matters of “international morality,” such as human rights, as advocated by the United States? Generally speaking, international morality should be seen as a central concept of utopianism/idealism, as opposed to “power politics.” It is also considered by many to be ineffectual in reality, and therefore unable to provide effective answers in an anarchical international society. However, the steady development of international law and international comity shows that there have been efforts to create certain rules. This, in turn, signifies that international morality has evolved from realistic necessities in international society, and not just from theoretical research. The resolution of colonial problems was thus one of the priorities of the times, and closely related to the morality issue. International morality in regard to colonial problems became more than just meaningless rhetoric.

Both a proper understanding, and a critical evaluation, of the mandate/trusteeship issue must start from such a background. Critics might insist that the old spectre of colonization was simply covering itself with a fig leaf and giving itself the new name of “mandate.” In such a view, whatever the cause or the euphemism employed, this system could be expected to guarantee the continued existence of colonial institutions. The winners seized the colonies of the defeated

<sup>24</sup> Progress Report on Dumbarton Oaks Conversations by Stettinius (Under SS), *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 1, p. 829, note 23.

<sup>25</sup> Progress Report on Dumbarton Oaks Conversations – Memo by Under SS to SS, September 9, 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 1, pp. 789, 825, 829, 834. Drafting the UN Charter in December 1942, the United States made this point in a separate, attached statement entitled “Bill of Rights.” However, by August 1943, a Human Rights statement was newly inserted as Article Nine, stipulating: “The members of the United Nations dedicate themselves to a common program of human rights.” [Department of State, *Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation 1939–1945* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1949), pp. 472–483, 530.] As for the Soviet attitude, [McNeill, William Hardy, *America, Britain and Russia – their Cooperation and Conflict 1941–1946* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 587.]



and redistributed them under the mandate system, by means of secret agreements or out of military necessity. Nevertheless, this system gave more hope than frustration to many people, especially when compared with the “permanent control” of the past. The “natives” could develop proper awareness, and international opinion was influenced in such a manner as to pave the way for liberation. However, unlike the League’s “Group A” (the Middle East), which showed “potential for independence,” Groups B (Equatorial Africa) and C (Southwest Africa and the Pacific Islands) were provided, in effect, with substitute forms of colonial government. These quasi-colonial institutions involved certain economic motives as well. The British had complained that, by blocking the annexation of the German colonies in 1919, the United States had kept the door open for greater American influence in the name of native welfare and a diaphanous idealism, and that, by putting forward idealistic principles in 1945, the Americans were laying down a smokescreen for the annexation of the Japanese islands in all but name. Britain regarded the economic clauses of the mandates as yet another example of the ways in which the Americans were attempting to reduce the British Empire to satellite status.<sup>26</sup>

Under such guises of Western tradition, political leaders maintained authoritarian, benevolent and paternalistic attitudes toward the natives of the colonies. Here, the conservatives and the progressive-reformists hardly differed.<sup>27</sup> Cumings was right in saying that “this [sort of attitude] reflected only the paternalistic, gradualist element of the trusteeship idea that deemed no colonial people fit to run their own affairs without a period of tutelage.”<sup>28</sup> When Churchill made strong representations against the dismantling of the British Empire, Roosevelt lectured him on the *noblesse oblige* of administering overseas territories, citing the Philippines as “an excellent example” of colonial government.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Claude, p. 352; Louis, pp. 90–93. Rights of negotiation, trade and missionary work were considered legitimate in the European history of expansion. (Wight (1992), chapter 4.)

<sup>27</sup> One of the outstanding advocates of reform policy for colonies was Lord Curzon, the British governor-general in India. Curzon is well known for his paternalistic attitude towards the natives. It was in this context that he strongly criticized the policies of Japan’s military regime in Korea at the time of the March First Movement. (See Part 1, Chapter 4.)

<sup>28</sup> Cumings, p.106.

<sup>29</sup> Memorandum prepared in the Office of Far Eastern Affairs, April 18, 1944, *FRUS*, 1944, vol. 5, p. 1233. See also Draft of Letter from Lattimore to Generalissimo, December 22, 1942, *FRUS*, 1942, *China*, p. 186. This trusteeship would be analogous to the principle of successive stages of self-government, embodied in the American schedule for Philippine independence. However, unlike this claim, the governance of the Philippines underwent serious changes, showing darker sides as well. See Kwōn, Osin, “Miguk e ūhan P’illip’in singminhwa ū ch’ogi chōngch’aek” (Early American Policy of Colonization in the Philippines), *Kangwōn sahak*, 8, December 1992.

Given this international atmosphere, the leaders of the great powers readily agreed to include Korea in the universal application of the trusteeship mechanism. Intentionally or not, however, studies by Korean scholars have overlooked the comprehensive significance of trusteeship in the colonial history of the West. Consequently, most of them have analyzed the issue from an overly narrow strategic point of view, or from the limited purview of U.S.-Korea relations.

#### THE ALLIES' DISCUSSIONS ON TRUSTEESHIP

Trusteeship was originally conceived by U.S. leaders, such as Roosevelt and Hull, who had anti-colonial, idealist and gradualist backgrounds, and was later institutionalized by experts who had ample experience with mandates of the League of Nations. Trusteeship as an institution was thus designed to make neo-Wilsonian ideological concepts a reality, and was loyal to the mandate tradition, while at the same time trying to overcome the League's shortcomings and limitations. American wartime leaders firmly believed in the legitimacy of the Wilsonian vision, and stressed both that they would not repeat the mistakes of World War I, and that a new system of peace would surely be established after the war.<sup>30</sup> Yet when Subcommittees on Political Problems and on Territorial Problems, affiliated with the Advisory Committee on Post-War Foreign Policy in the State Department, started to review the issue in 1942, they were challenged by various practical problems. Despite these obstacles, the United States came to an unwavering conclusion that the mandate system of the League of Nations was not enough, and that they needed a new system to secure independence and self-government for the people of former colonies.

Such a conclusion highlighted a contradiction between the United States and Britain. For the United States, in early 1943, the most urgent priority of trusteeship was to reach an agreement with Britain, a close but difficult ally.<sup>31</sup> The first effort to bring this about may be represented by the visit of Anthony Eden, the British foreign

<sup>30</sup> Stimson to SS, January 23, 1945, *FRUS, Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, p. 79. The United States was preoccupied with this sense of error regarding the past, which "seriously clouded the American vision of the postwar world. Washington's commitment to unconditional surrender, self-determination, the revival of world trade, and international organization all grew out of the determination to avoid mistakes which had led to World War II." [Gaddis, John Lewis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941–1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), pp. 26, 31, 127, 149–150.]

<sup>31</sup> Memo of Conversation by SS, March 27, 1943, *FRUS, 1943*, vol. 3, p. 37. See also The Forthcoming Conversations with Colonel Stanley, British Secretary of State for the Colonies, January 13, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 1, pp. 18–20.

secretary, to Washington, which has already been discussed. For Eden, the U.S. government was generally very helpful in all matters, and it is possible that the only delicate matter with which he had to deal during his visit was the possibility that British colonial administrations would be criticized. For this purpose, the United States handed two lengthy drafts to Britain, which had, in fact, been prepared for the coming Anglo-American Summit in Quebec in August 1943.<sup>32</sup>

According to an American draft memorandum, a proposed declaration was intended to draw a clear dividing line between, on the one hand, the treatment that was to be meted out to dependent areas that had been detached from former enemy territories after the two world wars; and, on the other hand, the treatment of colonial areas proper that the Allies had already possessed. It was suggested that an international trusteeship administration be set up for the first category of dependent areas. The second category would be left undisturbed, except that the colonial powers would proclaim certain specified principles, in accordance with which they would administer their dependent areas.<sup>33</sup> The United States thus showed respect for the British position, while still proclaiming that the ultimate goal of this system was the liberation of colonies.

What the United States intended was to give shape to the spirit of the Atlantic Charter and the Declaration of the United Nations (January 1942). Secretary of State Hull described the proposal as an effort to implement the pledges contained in the Atlantic Charter, relating to the right of all peoples to choose their own form of government. For this purpose, in early 1942 Stanley Hornbeck drafted a Pacific Charter, which he also called a World Charter, with extremely progressive contents. Hornbeck's draft was revised with a more realistic touch, and appeared as the "Declaration by the United Nations on National Independence" in March 1943. In keeping with its gradualist approach, it declared that, among other things, each colonial power should progressively grant measures of self-government to its colonial peoples, which would allowed them to move toward independence, while dates for the conferring of full independence should be fixed as soon as was practicable.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Memo of Conversation by SS, March 22, 1943, *FRUS, 1943*, vol. 3, p. 31. The American drafts were, "Declaration by the United Nations on National Independence, March 9, 1943" and "Memorandum on International Trusteeship, April 15, 1943," in *FRUS, Conferences at Washington and Quebec*, 1943, pp. 717-728.

<sup>33</sup> Memo for the Secretary - Trusteeship and Colonial Problems, August 18, 1943, *FRUS, Washington and Quebec*, p. 717.

<sup>34</sup> Hull, Cordell, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, (New York, Macmillan, 1948), vol. 2, p. 1236. The World Charter explicitly extended the principles of the Atlantic Charter throughout the world. (Louis, pp. 177-178.)

One interesting point in the U.S. proposal was that the capacity and desire of such peoples for the enjoyment of freedom and independence could best be demonstrated by their contribution toward the defeat of the Axis foes. Namely, active participation in war efforts would facilitate independence. Colonial people's efforts in this direction, moreover, must elicit unstinting consultation and collaboration between and among the nations that were directly responsible for the colonies' future. Here, too, the role of the United Nations mattered. The United Nations should give the fullest cooperation to the independence efforts of those peoples who were still unprepared for full independence, through political, economic, social and moral advancement. It would then eventually arrange for their assumption of independent status. For this purpose, the United Nations proposed establishing an International Trusteeship Administration, which was to operate through regional councils composed of representatives of the nations that had major interests in the respective regions.<sup>35</sup> These points were embodied in Articles 75–81 of the Charter of the United Nations, and other relevant articles (45, 84, and 87).

Another memorandum, entitled "International Trusteeship," gave specific action plans. In sum, the United States intended that non-self-governing colonies and territories should, as a consequence of the two wars, be placed under a form of international trusteeship, eventually achieving independence. There were conditions, such as preparation and education for self-government, protection from exploitation, and promotion of economic and social justice, to but name a few. Forms of self-government varied as well, and the formerly dependent areas could either stand alone as "independent," or be granted "autonomy and self-government," possibly in association with nearby states, or through voluntary federation with an independent state or states of their choice. The Executive Authority would have the power to adjust the areas included within the various regions, to alter the composition and jurisdiction of the Supervisory Council, and to judge the desirability of the termination of a trusteeship.<sup>36</sup>

The core difference between the American and British schemes concerned how they would establish the relationship with the parent country. Should a colonial settlement be national or international? The United States opposed returning to the past, and spoke out strongly

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<sup>35</sup> US Draft of a Declaration by the United Nations on National Independence, March 9, 1943.

<sup>36</sup> Memo on International Trusteeship, April 15, 1943, *FRUS, Washington and Quebec, 1943*, pp. 720–728. In this memo, Korea was considered to be one of the territories seized from Japan. Korea was to be temporarily administered by a Regional Supervisory Council, probably with close economic ties with China, and the members of the council would be China, Russia and the United States.

in favor of making progress in terms of institution-building. For this purpose, international supervision could reasonably be installed over all agencies dealing with dependent peoples, so that these agencies might observe all transition-period operations, and make known any and all facts that they judged the public should know. The United States would not make any commitment that would see East Asian colonies returned to their former parent nations after the war. Both Portugal, the worst of all the shocking examples of colonial administration, and France, whose colonial administration the United States had never highly valued, were naturally included in this calculus of trusteeship.<sup>37</sup>

For the British, however, the dependencies represented both the simplest and the thorniest of their problems.<sup>38</sup> Adopting a new approach to these issues, as the United States was requesting, could cause a lot of trouble. Britain, as it had always done, tried to preserve its colonies, and to reinstate the ones seized by Japan. A British proposal noted that, while some peoples were far advanced, others were not ready to achieve security and prosperity by themselves, and it was therefore the duty of “parent” or “trustee” states to guide and develop the social, economic, and political institutions of such colonial peoples. If regional commissions were established, therefore, parent or trustee states would remain responsible for the administration of their territories.<sup>39</sup> According to Churchill, “some parts of the British empire might be granted eventual independence but this would be done entirely by Great Britain herself, in accordance with her own moral percepts.”<sup>40</sup>

The second problem concerned how to define the colonies’ future. In August 1943, at the Quebec Conference, Eden stated quite frankly that he did not very much like the American draft on the subject. It was the word “independent” that most troubled him. Under the British imperial system, there were varying degrees of self-government, including the Dominion-status areas; Ireland, which had a special status that was somewhat different but still within the Empire; and more “backward” areas, which, it was assumed, would probably never have their own governments. According to Hull’s memoirs, Eden’s position was absolutely unchanged at the end of the discussion on this subject.

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<sup>37</sup> Memo of Conversation by SS, March 27, 1943, *FRUS, 1943*, vol. 3, p. 37. On American views of Portugal and France, see Louis, pp. 27–28, 165.

<sup>38</sup> The Place of the Far East in World Reconstruction by G.E. Hubbard, December 10, 1943, 35851 (6587/2610/10).

<sup>39</sup> Memo of Conversation by SS, March 22, 1943, *FRUS, 1943*, vol. 3, p. 31. See also Louis, chapter 5. On British paternalism, see Wight (1992), p. 80.

<sup>40</sup> Harriman, W. Averell, and Abel, Elie, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941–1946* (New York: Random House, 1975), p. 274.

Britain made it “perfectly clear” that the word “independence” could never have a satisfactory meaning that could cover all the various types of government.<sup>41</sup> But the United States considered the issue too significant to be erased by British opposition, and kept raising it until it was accepted as a “principle” at the Moscow Conference in October.

The issue remained a focus of controversy, however, until the Charter of the United Nations was discussed by the powers in San Francisco in early 1945. The Chinese and the Russians had been for the addition of the word “independence” as an objective of trusteeship. The United States, however, along with Britain and France, favored the phrase “progressive development toward self-government.” It was clear that Roosevelt felt that only the word “independence,” rather than progressive self-government, would satisfy the Oriental peoples. Should the Americans maintain this position, they would end up spearheading the British, Dutch and Belgian colonial empires; if they sided with the Chinese and Russians, there probably would be no trusteeship system, since Roosevelt was certain that the British would never accept such a stance. The Americans explained their position, making it clear that there should be no limit to self-government, and that it might lead to independence. Yet the word “independence” suggested full national independence and was provocative.<sup>42</sup> This American stance represented, in other words, a great backward step from the initial intentions of trusteeship.

Another issue in the discussion of trusteeship was “security points.” Around the time of the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers, the Americans attempted to include certain “security points,” such as the Baltic passages (Kiel), and a free zone for Russia, leading to the Persian Gulf, to be placed under international trustees.<sup>43</sup> The War Department was especially doubtful as to the possibility of discussing trusteeships without taking into account the strategic nature of certain areas.<sup>44</sup> More specifically, the military had expressed its wish to “exclude direct or indirect discussion of the disposition of

<sup>41</sup> Hull-Eden Meeting, August 21, 1943, Department of State Minutes, *FRUS, Washington and Quebec, 1943*, pp. 926–927; Hull, vol. 2, pp. 1237–1238.

<sup>42</sup> Minutes of the 45th Meeting of the US Delegation, May 18, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 1, pp. 789–790, 792–794. Hull said, “We could not press them – Britain and France – too far with regard to the colonial problems of the Southwest Pacific in view of the fact that we were seeking the closest possible cooperation with them in Europe.” See Hull, vol. 2, p. 1599.

<sup>43</sup> Memo of Conversation with Roosevelt, October 5, 1943, *FRUS, 1943*, vol. 1, p. 543.

<sup>44</sup> SWNCC-27 International Trusteeship, February 1, 1945, LM54, R.4. The Pentagon insisted that American security could be guaranteed only by turning the Pacific into an American lake. [Foltos, Lester J., “The New Pacific Barrier: America’s Search for Security in the Pacific, 1945–47,” *Diplomatic History*, 13–3 (Summer 1989), p. 318.]

the Japanese mandated islands occupied by the U.S. forces,” as well as to have complete control over them, including fortification and naval bases.<sup>45</sup> The State Department consistently insisted that it would not emphasize exclusive American control over strategic points. Should the United States insist upon “complete sovereignty” in such cases, this would give an opening for other powers to claim absolute titles to areas in the Middle East, which could injure U.S. security and commercial interests, such as a “great stake in Middle Eastern oil.”<sup>46</sup>

Roosevelt compromised, instructing that there should be no “annexation” but *de facto* control over the Pacific Islands, while the trusteeship question should be discussed at San Francisco, as the State Department insisted.<sup>47</sup> All this demonstrates that the trusteeship issue was the combined outcome of the proposed postwar settlements and Western colonial history.

#### KOREAN TRUSTEESHIP: HISTORICAL PERCEPTIONS AND REALITIES

Korea became the first country to be considered for an international trusteeship, as one of the territories to be seized from Japan, when the Advisory Committee on Post-War Foreign Policy started working on the details to institutionalize this system during the summer and fall of 1942. As long as the United States did not insist upon certain rights as victor over Japan, the trusteeship was expected to be applied without much difficulty. Sumner Welles played a key role in this committee. In Welles’s demonology of imperialism, a special place was reserved for Japan, namely “the Far Eastern type of imperialism as shown in Korea – the worst of all.”<sup>48</sup> Other notable features of the State Department’s proposals for trusteeship included the recommendation that Korea should be administered directly as a trust territory.<sup>49</sup> The United States then began a careful exchange of ideas with China, as the latter was an easier partner for colonial issues and, moreover, still needed American support for its struggle against Japan.

The first occasion on which the United States revealed its plan for a Korean trusteeship to its Allies was in December 1942, through

<sup>45</sup> The Background of Recent Department Work Regarding Dependent Areas, January 13, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 1, pp. 20–26, 92–95.

<sup>46</sup> Extracts from the Diary of Stettinius, December 1, 1944 – July 3, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 1, p. 141; Memo by Ickes (S of Interior) to President, April 5, 1945, *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>47</sup> Extracts from *the Diaries of Edward R. Stettinius*, December 1, 1944 – July 3, 1945, pp. 141, 210.

<sup>48</sup> Louis, pp. 164–165.

<sup>49</sup> Tentative Views of the Committee: Korea and Sakhalin, August 6, 1942, Box 54, 55, P31.

a letter sent to Jiang Jieshi by Owen Lattimore, his political adviser. The letter can be considered as expressing the official stance of the United States, as Roosevelt discussed, revised and approved the draft. Here, the president explained the core concepts of trusteeship. In summarizing postwar issues in East Asia and the Pacific region, he stated that trusteeship was analogous to the principle of successive stages of self-government, as embodied in the American schedule for Philippine independence, and that Korea would be one of the trust areas. After the war, one should think of China, America, Britain and Russia as the four “big policemen” of the world.<sup>50</sup>

The Korean question and trusteeship were, as mentioned previously, briefly brought up again in the spring of 1943, at the time of Eden’s visit to Washington. Korea was to be temporarily administered by a Regional Supervisory Council, anticipating independence via its close economic ties with China.<sup>51</sup> Welles told Chinese Foreign Minister Song Ziwen, who was in Washington around the same time, to attend the Pacific War Council conference, and that the thoughts of the Chinese, British and United States governments were moving along similar lines in envisaging the postwar establishment of Korea as an independent country under a temporary international trusteeship. He then suggested that the United States let the matter rest for the time being, although there would continue to be a free and frank exchange on this matter between the two governments.<sup>52</sup> The three powers’ discussion of Korea’s future thus came to an end, the details of which would be given material form in the so-called Korea clause in the Declaration of Cairo.

In this sense, the future of Korea was agreed upon all too readily. The Allies did not even feel it necessary that they should discuss essential strategic questions. On the other hand, as soon as Korea was referred to by U.S. officials (and by officials of other Allies, for that matter), they did not forget to mention Korea’s supposed “lack of competence for independence.” This clearly indicates that some factors other than those generally considered in the postwar settlements (e.g., strategy or national interest) had been at work in the deliberations over Korea by the Western powers. A role was surely played here by what we may call “historical perceptions of Korea.” It is apparent that such factors, which were rather more psychological than they were a strict reflection of facts and realities, could not replace

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<sup>50</sup> Draft of Letter from Lattimore to Generalissimo, December 22, 1942, *FRUS, 1942, China*, p. 186.

<sup>51</sup> Memo on International Trusteeship, April 15, 1943, *FRUS, Washington and Quebec*, p. 726.

<sup>52</sup> Hamilton Memo, April 22, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/266; *FRUS, 1943*, vol. 3, pp. 1090–1091.



or overshadow basic considerations, yet they could reinforce and strengthen the powers' convictions as they faced making a decision about a Korean trusteeship.

The perceptions of the Allies, and especially those of the United States and Britain, had various aspects. After they established their diplomatic missions in the Korean capital in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, they had continuously expressed their views on the government and its bureaucrats, the nature of the state, the role of its sovereign, the domestic situation, and the international environment. After the annexation, the attention of these Western powers turned to the Japanese colonial rule of the peninsula, as discussed in earlier chapters. The conclusions made by the Western officials and missionaries in Korea were complex. Looking at both the American and British reports concerning their Korea relations, the two powers made "double judgments" on Japan's control in Korea. Both before and after the annexation, Japan was praised for bringing political progress and improved welfare. Other reports described the former Chosŏn as a typically backward and undeveloped Oriental state, from which no progress could be expected. The Koreans were ignored when they contended that the forty years between 1905 and 1945 had been a period of rapid material progress everywhere, and that it would have come to Korea even without Japanese intervention. Japanese energy and talent for organization had undeniably, even if unintentionally, furnished Korea, a nation that was soon to be restored, with the social and economic framework to become a modern state.<sup>53</sup>

On the other hand, Japan was criticized for having forgotten the lessons of history and its responsibilities as a protecting state. Although Japan's policy brought material wealth, it also brought a brutal exploitation of Korea for Japan's own benefit, in complete disregard of the national feeling and culture of the subject people. As noted earlier, the United States publicly criticized the oppressive colonial policy of Japan, and expressed sympathy for the state of slavery in which the Koreans had been placed. With the outbreak of the Pacific War, the Foreign Office considered the aspirations for Korean independence to be most opportune, in that they clearly revealed the failure of Japan as a colonial power. One report emphasized the imitation of Nazi methods, and the perpetration of cruelties reminiscent of the Nazi concentration camps against Koreans suspected of "dangerous thoughts," or who refused to make obeisance at Shinto shrines. At the

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<sup>53</sup> Japanese Administration in Korea, January 21, 1944, 41813 (990/443/23); The Achievements and Failures of the Japanese Administration in Korea, September 2, 1944, 41813 (990/443/23).

same time, Korean independence movements in foreign lands were useful in the media war against Japan.<sup>54</sup>

The major driving force behind the powers' change of attitude was surely strategic. The national strength of Japan needed to be reduced for the security of Pacific and East Asian territories. The liberation of Korea was thus a matter of course. It was in this context that the immorality of Japan's rule in Korea was most heavily censured. When the issue of immorality was combined with political and strategic considerations, it became all the more convincing to conclude that, along with any sense of morality in its methods, Japan had lost its legitimacy to rule an alien people, and that its control of the Korean peninsula must therefore be ended. The Korean independence movement did not contribute much to the actual securing of this independence, yet it served as the final blow to Japan's hold on the country. Korean nationalists, especially those groups that devoted themselves to diplomacy and publicity, attached great weight to the issues of legitimacy and morality. Consciously or not, these people read the course of world history correctly.

The greatest stumbling block regarding the Korean question lay in this point. The Allies consented to the liberation of Korea but considered "independence" to be a separate problem. The powers felt positive about the former, and negative about the latter. They thus exercised their "legitimate rights" as great powers, in the form of a trusteeship. The Allies still held Korea in low esteem when they discussed the issue during World War II. Given its own colonial problems, the British perception of Korea was perhaps most negative. To British diplomats, the Koreans were "timid and inoffensive," were one of the "least warlike people in the world," and, as Theodore Roosevelt had said in 1905, "they could not strike one blow in their own defense."<sup>55</sup>

Perhaps "Korea's Capacity for Independence," a memorandum prepared in early 1945 by the Korea Committee headed by Arnold Toynbee, best represented the British perception of the Korean question. This was a systematic analysis, and a compilation of Western views on the controversial issue of Korea. Toynbee suggested that the capacity of a subject people for immediately setting up and administering a state of their own must be estimated according to five main criteria: (1) the extent to which an effective political and administrative system existed before the imposition of alien rule; (2) the duration and character of the alien rule; (3) the existence or lack of

<sup>54</sup> Craigie to Scott, May 21, 1941, 27992 (6206/2007/23) and its minutes; FO to Ministry of Information, May 9, 1942, 31845 (3293/3293/23).

<sup>55</sup> US Embassy (London) to FO, February 16, 1942, 31824 (1573/165/23) and minutes.

a person or group with a good claim to inherit the authority of the last independent national regime; (4) the number of individuals with experience in high administrative posts or in politics – other than of a purely conspiratorial kind – within the country; and (5) the general level of education and culture among the people at large. In conclusion, the memorandum insisted that on none of these counts was Korea in a favorable position. Its political system before 1905 was that of an unreformed archaic despotism with no modern state administration or representative institutions. The Japanese had kept a tight grip on industry, finance and public service, with the result that very few Koreans had administrative experience, except in minor posts. The population, though provided with a certain amount of vocational and technical education, had had only very limited opportunities to develop a minimum of intellectual life. The whole of the Korean economy, though much improved, had been closely integrated with that of Japan.<sup>56</sup> In another report, it was pointed out that Japan's economic policy was having a retrograde effect on the economic development of Korea.<sup>57</sup> Yet, since Britain was not in actual charge of the problem, its approach lacked direct applicability. Naturally enough, it reflected the general British stance on the postwar settlement of colonies, and was based on its own necessities and colonial experiences.

The American perception of Korea did not, in essence, differ from that of Britain. The idea of trusteeship surfaced at the outbreak of the war, and American records show that the issue was examined in greater depth than it had been in Britain. In this regard, a memorandum compiled by William Langdon in the early stages of the Pacific War would have the utmost importance. Maxwell Hamilton, the director of the DFEA, commented that this document had “much of factual information,” and that it would therefore be profitable to consider it when discussing the Korean question. The memorandum covers a wide range of issues related to Korea, including the Korean nationalist movement since the March First days, and Japan-Korean relations in earlier years. Yet it concludes that the independence of Korea would entail many problems. “By no means should the United States recognize any shadow organization as the KPG prematurely or before consultation with China, Russia and Great Britain.”<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Korea's Capacity for Independence, February 14, 1945, 46468(2330/1394/23).

<sup>57</sup> Japanese Administration in Korea, January 21, 1944. . As for the Koreans' capacity for independence, this report adds: “Capacity for self-government is a matter of opportunity and experience, and there is no valid reason to suppose that the Koreans would be less capable than other Asian peoples if they were once provided with the proper environment.”

<sup>58</sup> Langdon Memo, February 20, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/79.

It must be borne in mind that in the thirty-six years of Japanese rule, the Korean people had been politically emasculated. Langdon felt that the Koreans, long excluded from any participation in the administration of central and local governments, diplomacy, justice, law, police, finance, banking, education, communications or shipping, had not garnered the experience necessary to manage a modern state, were they to be given their independence. The Japanese had never allowed the Koreans to perform military service or to possess arms. The Korean people, moreover, had been protected for so many decades that they had no concept of self-defense, nor a deep will to defend themselves. Instead of “the so-called Korean volunteers in China,” the U.S. military authorities should endeavor to make contact with the Korean “malcontents” of the Jiandao and Andong areas in Manchuria. According to Langdon, the malcontent chieftains in the wildernesses of eastern Manchuria, whose names were Kim (given name unknown) and “Tsui Hsien,” commanded small units, each of three or four hundred men at most, but they formed convenient nuclei for a Korean nationalist army. If the Korean people should be appropriately protected, guided and aided, and given the opportunity to develop their very distinctive cultural lineage toward modern statehood, they would, in a generation, be quite able to stand on their own feet.

The State Department then turned its attention to Korean organizations abroad, to see what faculties they might have that could possibly substitute for the inadequate capacities for independence on the part of Koreans at home. We have seen in the earlier chapter that Langdon had associated “Korea as a war objective” with the role of these Koreans abroad. If an independence organization should be established, in liaison with Korean leaders within Korea, and if they should be ready to, and capable of, helping themselves and the cause of the Allies in positive ways, the United States might consult with the British, Chinese and Soviet governments about proclaiming the independence of Korea as one of the war aims of the United Nations. Following the Allies’ victory, a provisional government could be installed in Korea, which could administer the country with the aid of an international commission and the setting up of a constitutional government. The commission, and not the Koreans, might decide the time when international assistance would no longer be longer necessary.<sup>59</sup>

A “provisional government” here indicated at least some kind of government to be formed by the Koreans after independence. We have previously seen that the United States had judged the KPG in Chongqing to be incapable of carrying out the functions of such a government. Clarence Gauss recalled that Cho Soang, the KPG “foreign minister,” who sought American recognition and financial and

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<sup>59</sup> Langdon Memo. Hamilton suggested a similar idea in the above-mentioned memo.

military aid, was “most vague and unsatisfactory” in his presentation of the case for his “government.” Gaus in Chongqing and the DFEA in Washington agreed that Cho and his government were somewhat out of touch with the real situation and problems.<sup>60</sup>

The State Department also expressed dissatisfaction with Korean organizations in the United States. The Korean Liberty Conference, held February 27 – March 1 in Washington D.C., under the sponsorship of the United Korean Committee in America and the Korea-American Council, failed to encourage hopes of Korean independence. This conference, held in commemoration of the March First Movement in 1919, was initiated by Korean leaders as demands for Korean independence and recognition of the KPG were growing stronger. The State Department instructed Hornbeck and Langdon to observe the gatherings. The two reported that they were well attended by professional publicists and by press representatives, and impressed one as a “publicity stunt.” In the meetings, the speakers dealt with the past, showed no knowledge of the problems of the present, and were totally lacking in constructiveness. There were many allusions to the opportunity for “atonement” for the U.S. failure to defend and save Korean independence in 1905. An objective observer could have come away from the meetings with the impression that the independence of Korea was an entirely “American problem.”<sup>61</sup>

The United States eagerly considered the possibility of engaging the Koreans in China in the war against Japan from the early stages of the war. Such contributions to American war efforts were actually the standard of “the capacity for independence,” as far as the U.S. government was concerned. Since the U.S. government raised the issue frequently, an active movement on the part of the KPG in this direction could have had a positive influence in terms of attaining “recognition.”<sup>62</sup> The State Department had taken the position that every effort should be made to facilitate a Korean leader to travel to Chongqing to organize Korean units.<sup>63</sup> Sumner Welles reported to President Roosevelt that he would take up the matter of organizing

<sup>60</sup> Gaus to SS, February 12, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/81 and minutes; Gaus to SS, February 2, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/313 and minutes.

<sup>61</sup> Memo by Hornbeck, March 3, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/84.

<sup>62</sup> On Korean sabotage against Japan, see Memo of DFEA, July 23, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/156A; Cromwell to Berle, July 27, 1942, 895.01/165; Kim Ku’s autobiography also focused on this issue. Kim, Ku, *Paekpöm ilchi* (Diary of Kim Ku), first published in 1947 (Seoul: Pöm’usa, 1984), pp. 243–246.

<sup>63</sup> Berle to Stimson, December 17, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.01/193. The Division of European Affairs suggested that an American Mission Headquarters be established in Vladivostok to encourage any anti-Japanese movement in Korea. However, the plan was cancelled on the grounds that the Soviet Union would probably oppose the idea. (Memo by Henderson, Assistant Chief of the Division of European Affairs, December 26, 1941, *FRUS, 1941*, vol. 4, pp. 762–763.)

and equipping a Korean irregular army with his Liaison Committee, so that recommendations for the president's consideration might be formulated by the General Staff and the Naval Operations.<sup>64</sup> Yet Joseph W. Stilwell, the commander of the American army in Chongqing, objected that there was no Korean organization recognized either as a Korean government-in-exile or even as a National Committee.<sup>65</sup> In 1944, the issue was raised again. Adolf A. Berle, the assistant secretary of state, instructed the DFEA that it should examine the possibilities for organizing a "Korean National Legion."<sup>66</sup> Cho Soang also strongly requested of the American embassy at Chongqing that a training center for Koreans be established. The State Department, however, was concerned that the KPG would probably be unable to carry this out, even if aided and assisted, and that making the KPG the exclusive or even primary agency for operations on this matter would certainly result in future political complications.<sup>67</sup>

The point here is that what the Americans asked of the KPG or Syngman Rhee was not mere unity, but rather "leadership." This meant, more than mere rhetoric, the ability to understand the Korean situation with a sense of reality, and to provide the means to contribute to the war effort, along with a vision for a new nation. It was in this sense that the Americans felt most disappointed with the KPG, whose members were mostly older men over sixty, who seemed willing to promote independence only at the levels of words and ideals. At one time, Americans considered Kim Yaksan as a "leader of action," even though he was not a perfect advocate of democracy. As for Korean requests for Lend-Lease or other aid, the United States concluded that it would be useless unless distribution of funds, materials and equipment should be strictly controlled by American officials.<sup>68</sup>

Judging from the American attitude toward the Korean groups, the KPG could have become a partner of the United States if it had been equipped with a vision for military action, and had trained its

<sup>64</sup> Memo for the President, April 13, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/96–1/3.

<sup>65</sup> SD Memo October 3, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.24/1.

<sup>66</sup> Berle considered that a discussion with the Soviet Union should be necessary for this purpose. (Berle Memo, July 21, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/7–2144.); Memo for Berle, July 31, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/7–2144.

<sup>67</sup> Enclosures in George Atcheson to SS, March 2, 1945, LM80, R.4, 895.01/3–345 and Memo by McCune, April 26, 1945. This issue was again discussed in May 1945 by SWNCC but the response of Albert C. Wedemeyer, the commander of the U.S. Forces in the China Theater, was negative. (SWNCC 115 – Utilization of Koreans in the War Effort, May 26, 1945, LM54, R.12.) For other skeptical views on support for the KPG, see Memo by Dickover, January 24, 1945, LM80, R.4, 895.01/1–2445

<sup>68</sup> SWNCC 115 – Utilization of Koreans in the War Effort, May 26, 1945, LM54, R.12; Memo for Berle, July 31, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/7–2144.

men, instead of constantly demanding “recognition” or guarantees of independence. To lay the groundwork for backing one organization that would, in effect, take precedence over the many existing rival groups for the furtherance of unity among the Koreans, the United States considered “measures looking toward the seating of a Korean observer at UNRRA [UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration] meetings.” The United States then planned to sound out Soviet opinion on the subject.<sup>69</sup> A seat at the United Nations was one of the greatest wishes of Korean organizations.<sup>70</sup> The plan also intended to foster a pro-Western Korean army, as opposed to the one trained by the Soviet Union.

In this sense, the logic that the KPG had used to oppose trusteeship was completely beside the point. As early as December 1942, the KPG was declaring that after the war “Korea shall obtain independence, absolute independence; and with respect to that requirement, there shall be no compromise to permit that Korea, a country of an ancient culture and a people with a political capacity adequate for modern needs, shall be subject to any sort of mandatory control.”<sup>71</sup> By 1943, when the rumor spread that Britain and the United States would place Korea temporarily under an international guardianship (trusteeship), Cho Soang protested that a postwar international guardianship of Korea did not accord with the Atlantic Charter, and would be against the will of thirty million Koreans.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, a recent study makes the criticism that, with trusteeship, Roosevelt imposed an unnecessary period of waiting on a country that had been united and independent for more than ten centuries, and should thus be very capable of self-government.<sup>73</sup>

Yet these ideas did not sound valid in terms of the situation in Korea, as reviewed by the Allies. Most strikingly, Korean deficiencies

<sup>69</sup> DFEA Memo, July 31, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/7–2144. In talks at an expert level between China and United States in February 1945, Shao Yulin, the senior secretary of the Generalissimo, had suggested to the Korean leaders that they organize an underground movement along the lines of that in France, which would stir up the people of Korea. (Memo of Conversation by Ballantine, February 5, 1945, *FRUS 1945*, vol. 6, pp. 1019, 1021.)

<sup>70</sup> UNRRA Memo, January 31, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/317. However, the United States believed that to delegate responsibility or authority to any single Korean group would be likely to interfere with military operations, as well as to create international complications. (DFEA Memo, July 31, 1944.)

<sup>71</sup> Gauss to SS, December 29, 1942, LM79, R.2, 895.01/207. It appears fairly obvious that the hypothetical mandatory power whose coming the Koreans had feared was a victorious China.

<sup>72</sup> Vincent to SS, May 11, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/251 and enclosure; [Cho Soang to Churchill, May 11, 1943, 35956 (2403/723/23).]

<sup>73</sup> Cho, Soon Sung, *Korea in World Politics, 1940–1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), p. 23.

were reflected in the American policy of employing skilled Japanese technicians even after Japan's surrender. Due to the lack of a sufficient Korean labor force in technical areas, an inter-divisional memorandum in 1944 recommended the continuing employment of Japanese technicians. This crucial point, which ruffled many feathers in Korea, was not an *ad hoc* idea of the military government led by General John Hodge, but a plan fully discussed from an earlier stage. The issue ended when H. Merrill Benninghoff, political advisor to Hodge, suggested the necessity of eliminating Japanese officials.<sup>74</sup> Yet the issue revealed the American ignorance of the historical relationship between Korea and Japan, and more importantly, reflected the Americans' skepticism about the Korean capacity for independence, and their conviction as to the legitimacy of trusteeship, at least in their own eyes.

The Koreans did not fail to sense this perception. Syngman Rhee insisted that the dissension in Chongqing consisted "only of internal difference of opinion."<sup>75</sup> While developing a counter-argument against trusteeship, the KPG claimed that the Koreans were now all as one in their efforts for independence.<sup>76</sup> When American journals, including *Fortune* and *Time*, published articles in 1943 suggesting joint control of Korea, Cho Soang argued, rather mistakenly, that the U.S. formula of trusteeship neither reflected American public opinion nor was approved of by the Allies, including China, Britain and the USSR. By virtue of the production, population and natural resources of its territory, as well as its civilization, its history and its political ability, Korea was capable of establishing a new nation in compliance with principles of self-determination and self-reliance, without resorting to control by foreigners.<sup>77</sup> Considering, however, the ailing conditions within its organization, and the special contingencies of war, such claims appeared unconvincing. None of the powers would pay much attention to the words of the KPG without action to back them up.

<sup>74</sup> Memo Prepared by the Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East – Korea: Occupation and Military Government: Japanese Technical Personnel, March 29, 1944, *FRUS*, 1944, vol. 5, pp. 1228–1230; Benninghoff to SS, September 15, 1945, *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 6, p. 1049. "The temporary retaining of Japanese in positions cannot at present be filled by the Koreans but the appointment of Korean understudies, who would gradually take over, might prove the most advisable course to take." [Comment on 'Economic Conditions in Korea and Future Problems,' Cotton (Enemy Branch) to de la Mare, May 29, 1945, 46471 (3356/1653/23).]

<sup>75</sup> Dickover Memo, April 22, 1944, LM79, R.2, 895.01/332.

<sup>76</sup> Gaus to SS, February 12, 1942, LM79, R.1, 895.01/81.

<sup>77</sup> Kang, Man'gil (ed.), *Cho Soang* (Han'gilsa, 1982), pp. 118–120. See also The Problem of Korea's Independence after the War – Disapproval of International Control, Enclosure to Vincent to SS, March 17, 1943, LM79, R.2, 895.01/244.



## AMERICAN PREPARATIONS FOR TRUSTEESHIP

One can find much evidence for trusteeship-oriented efforts on the part of the State Department after the Cairo Declaration. Memoranda prepared by the Inter-Divisional Area Committee in May, and the H-Paper series prepared in November 1944, are examples. The first group of memoranda consolidated the State Department's ideas and claims regarding the Korean question, which have been covered throughout this study. An independent but weak Korea would become subject to international pressure and intrigue, and would threaten political stability and peace in the Pacific, which made it highly desirable that some form of interim supervisory organization be established.<sup>78</sup>

The H-Paper series provides a thorough study of the relevant issues, on the assumption that a trusteeship would be established. The first item concerned the current capacity of the Korean people for independence, as measured by the state of literacy and education. The average adult literacy rate in Korea was 45 percent in 1940, which equaled that of Mexico. Korea compared favorably with Portugal (40%), Brazil (30%) and Egypt (12%), but was somewhat less advanced than Yugoslavia (55%), Spain, Thailand (60%) and the Philippine Islands (51%). Korea compared less favorably with these countries in secondary education. Technical and vocational education was considered "adequate," while literacy and education were considered sufficiently developed to avoid any serious hindrance to the Korean people's governance of themselves. Korea, however, was not truly favored by a "high" literacy rate or by an "adequate" educational system, and therefore the democratic base for an independent regime in Korea would be limited.<sup>79</sup>

The political participation of Koreans would testify to the capacity and experience of an independent state. Among the officials of the old Korea government, some, such as Yun Ch'ihō, known for his patriotism, were recognized as able leaders and experienced administrators. Most of them, however, were over sixty years of age, and had spent the previous thirty-five years in complete or partial retirement from public office. In 1936, the last year for which detailed statistics were available, there were a total of 87,552 officials and government clerks in the various departments and bureaus of the Government-General, and in the provincial, municipal, and educational offices.

<sup>78</sup> Memo Prepared by the Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East - Korea: Political Problems: Provisional Government, May 4, 1944, *FRUS, 1944*, vol. 5, pp. 1239-1242.

<sup>79</sup> H-204, Preliminary, Korea: Capacity for Independence - Literacy and Education, November 27, 1944, RG59, Box 117.

All these statistics showed that a substantial number of Koreans had experience in government service, but that very few of them had held top-ranking positions of primary responsibility. The Americans believed that a new Korean regime would be unlikely to employ these men unreservedly, since they had been serving the Japanese rulers, and concluded that many such men would be considered as “collaborators” by the Korean populace.<sup>80</sup>

The United States then considered the interval between liberation and Korean independence, i.e., the length of trusteeship. Absolute independence would only be possible when certain internal and external factors were all satisfied. What was needed internally were adequate and experienced civil service personnel; sufficient mass experience in democratic government; and trained technicians who could operate a modern Korean economy and develop the entire structure of the Korean economy. Bearing all these factors in mind, it was difficult, as of November 1944, to set a definite date for the establishment of Korea’s independence. It was believed desirable to make a tentative decision, to clarify the intentions of the interested powers of the United Nations vis-à-vis the Korean people. The following alternatives were discussed: (1) that the date for the establishment of Korean independence should be fixed straightaway; (2) that no date should be set, but that a series of steps to be fulfilled prior to complete independence should be determined; (3) that the date for the establishment of Korean independence should not be fixed at the present time; and (4) that although no date for the establishment of Korean independence would be fixed at that moment, a date might be set at which time such a decision would be taken. These alternatives, while each presenting certain advantages, were thought to pose additional problems for the settlement of Korean affairs.<sup>81</sup> It was probably the contemplation of such problems that led James F. Byrnes to tell Molotov at the Moscow Conference in December 1945 that the period of trusteeship would be decided “within a period of five years which might be extended if necessary by agreement among the four states.”<sup>82</sup>

<sup>80</sup> H-205 Preliminary, Korea: Capacity for Independence – Participation of Koreans in Government, November 27, 1944, RG59, Box 117. SWNCC examined the desirability of utilizing Koreans in such positions under military government, so as to reduce the burden on the occupation authorities and provide Koreans with practical experience in the management of their own affairs. (SWNCC-78, Politico-Military Problems in the Far East: Utilization of Koreans in the Administration of a Military Government, March 19, 1945, LM54, R. 9.)

<sup>81</sup> H-209 Preliminary, Korea: Political Problems – Factors Determining Interval between Liberation and Independence of Korea, November 27, 1944, RG59, Box 117.

<sup>82</sup> Memo by the US Delegation at the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers, December 17, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 2, p. 643.

Another issue concerned the actual implementation of the trusteeship. This system had never yet been put into effect, but the four powers simply agreed to its implementation. As to detailed action plans, they could hardly make any suggestions, let alone come to an agreement. The United States reviewed several measures on the premise of a four-power trusteeship. The first was a "military government." Whether the liberation of Korea was the result of a military campaign or the general capitulation of Japan, the profound interest of the powers in the future political status of Korea would indicate the probability that a military government would be inter-Allied in character. The question might arise, therefore, whether a military government was the best organization for the control of the peninsula during this period of transition, both from the point of view of the United Nations (i.e., the Allies) and from that of Korea, because a military government was not specifically designed to cope with the difficult and complex problems that would inevitably arise in the process of transforming a former colonial territory into an independent state. The vast majority of the Korean people, the paper pointed out, had become suspicious of all foreigners due to their experiences under Japanese domination, and were especially opposed to any form of military occupation that extended beyond the period required by military necessity. On the other hand, the continuation of military occupation until Korea became independent would have the advantage that no new international commission or authority would be needed.

Another possible solution would be the establishment of an independent Korea with a system of foreign advisorship immediately after the occupation ended. In this system, a foreign advisor would be appointed as chief executive of the Korean government, and would be given extensive powers during the period of reorganization and testing of the new regime. Such a system of advisors could be used to create a civil service of Koreans who would ultimately make the appointment of foreigners unnecessary. This system would have the advantage of potentially satisfying certain groups of Koreans who hoped to attain independence immediately after the termination of the occupation, by obliging them to cooperate with this interim government. It would have meant, however, that during the period of occupation the United Nations would have had to select and support some Korean group that would have then formed the nucleus of the new government. It might have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain at that time whether any single group had the confidence of the Korean people.

A third possible measure was the establishment of a Temporary Supervisory International Authority. On the assumption that both internal and external factors in Korea would require an extended

period of tutelage, a temporary international authority could operate for a longer or a shorter period, depending on how quickly the Koreans were able to form a national government capable of resolving internal and external problems. Such an authority would be primarily political in character, and hence would be in an advantageous position to resolve the various political problems that would arise. It could reduce the possibility of any one power becoming the predominant influence in Korean affairs and disturbing the security of the region. Nonetheless, the various nations concerned would have to agree on certain basic Korea-related policies, and they would be faced with innumerable complicated problems, which would be difficult for any government to solve, necessitating endless consultations between the nations responsible for the authority. Finally, the Koreans themselves might object to such a program for fear that it could continue indefinitely and thus deprive them of their full independence.<sup>83</sup>

The United States, therefore, did not make a definite decision on the issue of an international supervisory organization. What was more, studies on the problems of postwar Korea undertaken by the State Department and by the British and Chinese Foreign Offices had not yet progressed far enough to be able to make specific recommendations. In terms of forms of government, the choice was to be made either under the authority of the United Nations' organization, or by a special interim supervisory administration including the four powers. The United States preferred the latter. In case the Soviet Union should make strong demands that it play a leading role in the control of Korean affairs, Korea might be designated as a trust area, and placed under the authority of the United Nations itself. It was thus envisaged that the postwar government of Korea would be divided into three stages: (1) an Allied military government; (2) an interim international supervisory administration; and (3) a free and independent Korea.<sup>84</sup>

A substantial number of studies on Korean trusteeship were produced after the principles on this matter were determined in Cairo and Tehran. Discussions, however, remained at the stage of basic theories. Sometimes the discussion itself was deferred for strategic reasons. At certain points the United States seemed to give up on trusteeship; at others, the Soviet Union seemed to lose interest. Nevertheless, the United States always returned to the same conclusion: the only solution to the Korean question could be trusteeship. Consequently, the Korean question had still not been resolved when liberation was

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<sup>83</sup> H-200 Preliminary, Korea: Political Problems-Need for International Supervisory Authority, November 13, 1944, RG59, Box 117.

<sup>84</sup> Interim Administration for Korea and Possible Soviet Attitude. July 4, 1945; Post-War Government in Korea, July 4, 1945, *FRUS, Berlin, 1945*, vol. 1, pp. 311–314.

achieved. It was only then that the United States examined action plans in detail.

In one of the K-Paper series, it was argued that the U.S.-Soviet occupation must be turned into a four-power control. At the earliest practicable time, a centralized civil administration (unlike the zonal administrations in Germany) should be established in Seoul by the military commanders of the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union and China. This centralized council would need to coordinate the policies and activities of the occupation forces in their respective zones. The four occupation zones should be drawn so that they would have, as far as was possible, equal importance in the control and administration of the country. The Soviet Union would administer North and South Hamgyŏng Provinces and Kangwŏn Province; China would administer North and South P'yŏng'an Provinces and Hwanghae Province; the United States would administer Kyŏnggi Province, South Ch'ungch'ŏng Province, and North and South Chŏlla Provinces; and Great Britain would administer North Ch'ungch'ŏng Province, and North and South Kyŏngsang Provinces. If Britain or China should be unwilling or unable to assume equal responsibility with the Soviet Union and the United States in the administration of civil affairs, they should be accorded subordinate positions befitting their wishes and capacities. In this case, the United States and the Soviet Union would be obliged to take over all of the responsibilities originally envisaged for the other two powers.<sup>85</sup>

The first draft of this trusteeship agreement was prepared in November 1945.<sup>86</sup> This draft is important in that it was meant to be an example of a universal application of the system, but was at the same time specific to Korea. One may safely say that the many studies on Korea that were carried out around this time were a process of information gathering and research, with the specific aim of providing a foundation for this agreement. Despite certain complaints about the lengthiness of this trusteeship plan, there were those in the State Department who were pleased that its term would not be shortened. They pointed out that it would be the first of several trusteeship agreements, and should be a model for the others. The Russians also preferred a detailed document.<sup>87</sup> But as crucial

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<sup>85</sup> K-15 Preliminary, Politico-Military Problems in the Far East: Structure and Composition of Military Government in Korea, August 29, 1945, 740.00119 Control (Korea)/8-2945, RG59, Box 3823.

<sup>86</sup> Draft Trusteeship Agreement for Korea, November 8, 1945, PR-30, RG59, Box 119.

<sup>87</sup> During the negotiations of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of 1945, Molotov commented that Korean trusteeship was an unusual arrangement with no parallel, and that therefore it would be necessary to come to a detailed understanding. [Truman, Harry S., *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman*, vol. 1 (New York: A Signet Book, 1956), p. 351.]

as the agreement was, the State Department failed adequately to coordinate its past research results, or to hold sufficient discussions with Britain and China, as had originally been intended. J. Carter Vincent, who was in charge of drafting the agreement, left a note on one embarrassing moment:

The actual documents reporting these conversations with Stalin [i.e., over Korea at Yalta, the Stalin-Hopkins talks, and the Potsdam talks] are not tonight (November 9) available but exact quotations from them can be obtained in the morning [orally from Ben Cohen, who made records on the Stalin-Hopkins talks]... After approved by the Secretary of State, we expect to submit the agreement to the governments of the UK, USSR and China and request them to enter into negotiations for drawing up a formal four-power trusteeship agreement for Korea.<sup>88</sup>

Since Vincent was very knowledgeable on the Korean question, the State Department's past research on Korea must have indirectly formed the basis of the draft. Yet the chaotic atmosphere that led to the creation of this draft, which was meant finally to provide a solution to the Korean question, mirrored the chaotic status of Korea in the postwar settlement.

In this draft, Korea was one of the territories "which may be detached from enemy states as a result of World War II, and may be placed under the trusteeship system by means of trusteeship agreements agreed to by the states directly concerned." The contents were as follows: Chapter 1, Establishment of Trusteeship; Chapter 2, Form of Administration; Chapter 3, Relations of Administering Authority to the Koreans; Chapter 4, Purpose of the Administering Authority in Korea; Chapter 5, Relations of the Administering Authority to Members of the United Nations; Chapter 6, Relations of the Administering Authority to the United Nations; Chapter 7, Amendment, Termination, and Ratification; and Protocol. Most of the contents were well known, but there were some fresh ideas; for instance, that the administering authority should exercise its powers and functions through a High Commissioner and an Executive Council (Article 7); and that a High Commissioner and a Deputy High Commissioner, who should not be nationals of any of the states that comprised the administering authority, should be appointed by

<sup>88</sup> Memo by Vincent – Trusteeship Agreement for Korea, November 9, 1945, 740.00119 Control (Korea)/11–945, RG59, Box 3823. Bohlen was a leading Russian area expert, who came to play a key role in the long-range, globally oriented Policy Planning Staff. [McCormick, Thomas J., *America's Half-Century – United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 13.]

the unanimous agreement of those states, and might be removed by the majority (Paragraph 1, Article 8).

From American records, however, one cannot determine whether or not the draft was submitted to the Moscow Conference. Byrnes only referred to the ideas as not having taken definite form, but as being tentative.<sup>89</sup> He suggested that the proposals made in Harriman's letter would be a most desirable step toward establishing an independent Korea, following which a formula of trusteeship could be discussed. The "urgent questions" to which Harriman referred had to do with establishing a unified administration for Korea, including the exchange of commodities, the resumption of railway operations, shipping and financial policy, and so on. Molotov replied that the settlement of these urgent questions should be jointly assigned to the American and Soviet commanders in Korea. With respect to the long-term questions, he suggested that a Joint Commission of representatives of American and Soviet troops in Korea be created, and that the recommendations worked out by the commission should be presented for the consideration of the four governments. The United States accepted this suggestion, and discussion on the Korean question thus ended for the time being [until it was taken up again by the U.S.-Soviet Joint Military Commission in 1946].<sup>90</sup> At this conference, Britain did nothing except to agree on the principle of four-power joint control, and suggest further discussions. Britain, regarding the Soviet proposal as "highly satisfactory," delayed its decision on the option of having Britain represented on the four-power trusteeship by Australia.<sup>91</sup> As far as trusteeship was

<sup>89</sup> Unified Administration for Korea, December 17, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 2, pp. 641–642. The U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union took on a harder line before and after the Moscow Conference, and had established a definite anti-Communist stance by early 1946. For Truman's reactions to the conference, see Matray, p. 92.

<sup>90</sup> Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 2, pp. 618–619, 642, 697–700, 716, 721. In particular, see Memo by the US Delegation at the Moscow Conference – Unified Administration for Korea, December 17, 1945, *Ibid*, pp. 641–643. When controversies over the trusteeship became quite heated in Korea, the Soviet Union released a *TASS* statement on the Korea question in 1946. However, it did not mention whether the United States had proposed the draft of the trusteeship plan to the conference. [US Embassy (Moscow) to SS, January 25, 1946, 740.00119 (Control (Korea)/1–2546, RG59, Box 3824.)] On the Moscow Conference, see also Byrnes, James F., *Speaking Frankly* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), pp. 110–122, 204–229; on the radio speech by Byrnes, see *A Decade of American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1941–49*, prepared at the Request of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations by the Staff of the Committee and the Department of State (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1950), pp. 66–72.

<sup>91</sup> British Delegation (Moscow) to FO, December 18, 1945, 46469 (12038/1394/23); December 21, 1945, 46469 (12118/1394/23); December 23, 1945, 46469 (12175/1394/23).

concerned, the Moscow Conference was all theories and principles. The final agreement and implementation were thus assigned to the U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission.

Nonetheless, by now the four-power trusteeship was losing its significance. Britain and China were not in a position to propose any independent policy. For the British, there could be no final resolution in Korea until the extent of Soviet participation in the control of Japan through the Far Eastern Advisory Commission had been clarified.<sup>92</sup> The Chinese government hoped in early 1946 that the trusteeship itself would not be necessary, as it felt that this would greatly complicate the Korean question.<sup>93</sup> In the end, it was the U.S.-Soviet Joint Commission that initiated substantive talks on trusteeship, giving birth to two independent governments on the Korean peninsula.

#### CONCLUSION: TRUSTEESHIP AND DIVISION

Trusteeship was a byproduct of the American tradition in international politics, and its legacy of limited intervention in Korea. The United States designed a cooperative postwar system to resolve colonial issues, based on the new mechanism of trusteeship. Accordingly, rather than relying on the European method of defining spheres of interest in each region and holding negotiations on them, it strove to approach postwar issues in the wider frame of postwar peace and the role that America was to play in it. Learning lessons from the past, the United States successfully came to agreements with the Allies on American postwar plans. In resolving the Korean question, mutual trust and the cooperation of the powers were all that mattered. If Korea should become independent “prematurely,” the Americans believed that, along with the country’s domestic stability, security in East Asia and harmony among the powers would be put at risk.

Cooperation among the powers would only be possible when they shared strategic interests in, and a similar historical perception of, the Korean question. Trusteeship satisfied the powers, at least in regard to these two points. The system itself was not an immediate reason for the division. The division took place because U.S.-Soviet policy objectives acquired a more short-term nature as a result of the Cold War. The divergent objectives of the two powers developed to include,

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<sup>92</sup> On the Far Eastern Advisory Commission, see SWNCC-65-2, Establishment of a Far Eastern Advisory Commission, April 30, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, pp. 529–535, 828–832.

<sup>93</sup> Memo of Conversation by Acheson with Chinese Ambassador, Trusteeship for Korea, January 4, 1946, 740.00119 Control (Korea)/1-446, RG59, Box 3824.



respectively, the “containment” and “spread” of Soviet influence in the Korean peninsula, and these began to clash. Nevertheless, since trusteeship necessarily required cooperation among the powers concerned, it can probably be said to have contributed to making the division seem more “practical.” The trusteeship concept was, in fact, a quite understandable American measure, but was also a cause of the division.

There was little possibility, however, of the trusteeship really succeeding, even if there had been no Cold War. It was a system that could function if – and only if – all the nations concerned should participate in it, and if they felt gratified by it, at least to a certain extent. For this purpose, the nations concerned had to recognize a certain level of rights for all nations, especially the great powers in the region. At the same time, the powers had to show moderation and good faith in relations with their equivalent or weaker counterparts. The “concert system” was thus based on rationalism, not on “realism.” To facilitate this system, one needs ideological affinities to perceive the behavior of others from the same, or a similar, point of view. Here, we could mention the sort of “concert system,” based on conservative impulses, which followed the Napoleonic Wars, as well as the “concert system” of Bismarckian Europe. However willing the Soviet Union might have been, in one sense, to participate in such a system, it was not at all likely that this Communist state would have agreed to establish a postwar Korea that was politically democratic and economically capitalist. This would have contradicted the most important principle of Soviet foreign policy; that of establishing “friendly governments” among its immediate neighbors. From this perspective, the notion of trusteeship always carried with it the inherent possibility of failure.



## Epilogue and Conclusion: An Established Division



WITH JAPAN'S SURRENDER in August 1945, the Allies' primary war objective in East Asia was accomplished. As part of the next stage, the Allies set to work arranging the region's postwar settlements. It was as part of this effort that the Korean question was settled by the unsatisfactory principles, at least as far as the Koreans were concerned, of the Cairo Declaration. At the end of 1945, those principles took further shape in the course of the three-power Foreign Ministers' Conference in Moscow. The Moscow Conference was, in fact, an occasion to discuss points of the postwar settlement that had yet to be agreed by the Allies. Among these points, the Korean question was viewed as being a minor issue, as it had been in the Allies' wartime discussions. A well-known diplomatic historian confessed that he did not even know that the Korean question was brought up at this Conference.<sup>1</sup> However, as far as the Korean question was concerned, the Moscow Conference is the terminal point of this study. The political situation of a liberated Korea and its division would be the subjects of another book entirely. Admittedly, the establishment of two separate states is important in that it represents the specific form that the powers' Korea policy finally took. In this last chapter, the subject of "World War II and Korea" will be concluded with the Moscow Conference, under the rubric of "epilogue." Then a "conclusion" will be drawn on the significance of the powers' Korea policies during the 1940s.

### EPILOGUE

In Moscow, the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union decided on a five-year trusteeship for Korea. Notwithstanding the approach of the Cold War with the end of war, U.S. Korean policy was to compromise with the Soviet Union, with the consent of the latter. While the United States acknowledged that such compromise

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<sup>1</sup> This was what Professor Ian H. Nish (LSE) mentioned humorously in the classroom.

was indispensable to establishing an independent state in Korea, the Soviet Union concluded that the mechanism of trusteeship would not be disadvantageous, as it could completely control and Sovietize the northern part of the Korean peninsula. However, this *mariage de convenance* was soon challenged by the emerging Cold War and by Korean nationalism, a factor totally underestimated by the foreign powers. The United States and the Soviet Union then chose to prioritize their own parochial interests over mutual cooperation. The division of Korea thus became a reality.

The United States had been fully aware of Korean opposition from the time that the Roosevelt administration first conceived the system of “trusteeship.” This opposition, however, was utterly ignored. Neither the Roosevelt-Stalin conference nor the Moscow Conference made any reference to what might happen in the event of serious Korean opposition. The Americans may have regarded the opposition of the Koreans as an “unreasonable resistance” on the part of the “natives.” They failed to see the anti-foreign nature of the Koreans’ nationalism, which had taken shape since the opening of Chosŏn in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and had been reinforced during the colonial period. In Yalta, Stalin stressed that the shorter the period of trusteeship, the better. He also emphasized that foreign troops would be unnecessary. This does not mean that Stalin was friendly to Korea or concerned by possible nationalist opposition. He simply believed that the Soviet Union would have an advantage over the United States in political games in the peninsula.

When the decision on a possible trusteeship was disseminated in Korea with the coming of the Moscow Conference, the news created an “unreasoning and semi-hysterical alarm in minds of many Korean leaders and much of populace.”<sup>2</sup> Almost all the Koreans considered the specific word “trusteeship” to connote the same type of foreign tutelage that had characterized the period of the Japanese “protectorate,” which had led to annexation in 1910. Trusteeship, for them, meant nothing more than a prelude to domination by another foreign power. In the minds of all Koreans, “trusteeship” hung over them like a sword of Damocles.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps naturally, all the political groups and leaders, regardless of ideology, joined hands

<sup>2</sup> Langdon to SS, November 30, 1945, 740.00119 Control (Korea)/12–3045. RG59, Box 3823. Records on the Moscow Conference are found in *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 2.

<sup>3</sup> MacArthur to Joint Chiefs of Staff, December 16, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, p. 1146; Langdon to SS, December 30, 1945. Langdon suggested: “Avoidance of this word and use in its place of another phraseology such as ‘interim stewardship’ in the future might help to remove the stigma and to create a greater degree of assurance in the Korean mind.” See also Sim, Chiyŏn (ed.), *Haebang chŏngguk nonjaengsa* (History of Debates on the Liberation Period) (Seoul: Han’ul, 1986), p. 263.

in the anti-trusteeship movement, even if the left later made an about-face and ardently supported the trusteehip. Shops were shut down, schools were closed, and, in the spirit of freedom that followed liberation, people went out into the streets to demonstrate and even to commit acts of violence, something that had earlier been seen during the March First Movement.

The U.S. military administration in Korea had a difficult time controlling the country, as the anti-trusteeship movement reinforced discontent with the American occupation. The U.S. forces have often been discussed in terms of whether they represented an army of liberation or of occupation, and they were often accused of assuming an arrogant attitude toward Koreans, as might troops occupying an enemy territory. There is no need, however, to overemphasize the significance of such behavior. The methods of occupation and the general actions of the U.S. military at the time might be attributed to a lack of understanding on the part of the American administration. These problems, however, fundamentally resulted from differences between East and West, as well as the limitations inherent to Western military tradition. One must view the situation in the light of Western military tradition, whose nature was essentially different from that of the French Army during its Revolutionary/Napoleonic Wars, the Red Army of the Soviet Union, or the Chinese Communist Army, all of which were politically oriented to varying degrees. The U.S. Army had been trained to be an apolitical group, and, accordingly, it could not understand the new circumstances that had been created in Korea. It tended to treat the Koreans as an army of occupation would have treated the people of an enemy state.<sup>4</sup>

In an SWNCC meeting, the Americans discussed whether the Koreans should be treated as “enemy nationals” or “liberated peoples.” The conclusion was that the treatment shown toward Koreans

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<sup>4</sup> The *status quo* powers, such as the United States and Britain, even at their most insightful, officially forecast postwar international relations from a conventional viewpoint. They could not be expected to foresee the revolutionary developments after World War II, in which politically indoctrinated military forces emerged and fought against regular, Western style armies in guerrilla warfare. In this regard, the views of General Heinz Guderian, who created the *Blitzkrieg* tactics of the early stage of World War II, may provide a salutary lesson in protecting it from the chaos of Western military convention. In his autobiography, he mentions the achievements and failures of Hans von Seeckt, the Chief of the General Staff who shunned the political influence on the German military after World War I. By completely isolating the military from party politics, General von Seeckt succeeded in protecting it from the chaos of the Weimar Republic. However, he also made the military predisposed to pledging unconditional and blind loyalty to Hitler. [Guderian, Heinz, *Panzer Leader*, trans. by Constantine Fitzgibbon, (London: Michael Joseph, 1952), pp. 454–458.]

by the military government was likely to be different from that shown toward the Japanese.<sup>5</sup> Yet, in the actual postwar settlement, the particular situations of each region were disregarded, and the Americans acted completely in tune with “wartime international law.” For instance, the Italians had declared war on Germany and had been fighting with the Allies against the Axis since September 1943. Yet Italy’s attendance at the United Nations Conference in San Francisco in 1945 was denied, as Italy was still “under joint military control of the United States and Britain.”<sup>6</sup> Until Korea became an “independent state,” it was nothing more than an “enemy territory,” whose disposition was yet to be settled by the Allies. It was in this context that a British report stated that the Allies should exercise “sovereignty” over Korea. This was why the United States recognized the Japanese Government-General as the legitimate Korean government, and allowed Japanese technicians to work in the military government. For the Americans, this decision was based primarily on its military’s technical inability to deal with civil affairs in an advanced society, its moral inadequacy, and above all its lack of title to govern.<sup>7</sup> For Koreans, it seemed to be a reflection of their historical relations with Japan, and, moreover, an attempt to legitimize Japan’s past rule. It must be remembered that the members of the KPG, a government that at least held “legitimacy” for Koreans, were banned from early return. It was not until October 1945 that any mention of the issue was made, when George Atcheson, the political adviser in Tokyo Headquarters, suggested that members of the KPG be allowed to return home on a personal basis, to dissipate Korean discontent.<sup>8</sup>

All these factors posed great difficulties for the American military government when Korean employees, in response to Kim Ku’s instructions, initiated a strike against the use of Japanese technicians and against the trusteeship. Nonetheless, by this time, the 38th parallel had become the “frontier” between the Soviet and American zones of occupation. Now, for the U.S. government, the matter of eliminating the 38th parallel borderline, the application of the trusteeship principle, and the question of the creation of an independent

<sup>5</sup> SWNCC-77, Politico-Military Problems in the Far East: Treatment of the Koreans by the Military Government of Korea, March 1945, LM54, R.9. (date is not clear)

<sup>6</sup> Minutes of 68th Meeting of the United States Delegation, June 11, 1945, *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 1, p. 1238.

<sup>7</sup> The case was the same for the Allied military government of Italy and Germany. [Finer, S. E., *The Man on Horseback – The Role of the Military in Politics*, (London: Pall Mall p., 1962), pp. 15–17.]

<sup>8</sup> Atcheson to SS, October 4, 1945, LM80, R.4, 895.01/10-445; Memo by Vincent, November 16, 1945; Joint Declaration of Policy Concerning Korea, 895.01/11-1645.

government were all facets of the same problem; namely, the restoration of Korea as an independent state in the family of nations.<sup>9</sup> Under such circumstances, the U.S. military government succumbed, and cancelled the planned employment of Japanese technical officials. William Langdon, the acting political adviser to the military government, urged Washington to change its entire policy:

After observation in liberated Korea and with background of earlier service in Korea, I am unable to fit trusteeship to actual conditions here and we should drop it – scrap trusteeship idea... Our caution over becoming associated with the KPG in Chongqing seems unwarranted now, as Kim Ku's group has no rival for first government of liberated Korea, being regarded as quasi-legitimate by all elements and parties.<sup>10</sup>

The State Department could not help but reexamine the Korean question. By now, if adequate “specific guarantees” for the unification and independence of Korea could be obtained from the Soviet Union, it was possible that the United States might not wish to continue to advocate trusteeship. It was in such circumstances that President Truman charged Secretary of State Byrnes with having granted unnecessary concessions without the president’s knowledge or consent at the Moscow Conference. By early 1946, as its downright rivalry with the Soviet Union became clear, the United States no longer intended to implement a trusteeship in Korea. In Seoul, General Hodge privately told Kim Ku and Syngman Rhee that trusteeship was not an indispensable aspect of the Moscow agreement. Believing that discontent, social chaos and poverty had amplified resistance to military rule, and that Communist elements were taking advantage of it to expand their influence, the U.S. military government decided to reinforce its relationship with the conservatives, whose public support was based on ‘anti-trusteeship.’

This change of policy to compromise with the conservatives made it plain that the future direction of the military government would largely depend on the right-wing elements in Korean society, whose interests would predominate in the new Korea. This would have great implications for the lasting nature of the division. When the Soviet Union, in complete control of the northern half of the country, confronted the U.S. military government in the south, the conservatives came to wield considerable bargaining power. As a result, the military government

<sup>9</sup> Department of State, *United States Policy Regarding Korea 1834–1950*, pp. 120, 125.

<sup>10</sup> Langdon to SS, November 20, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, pp. 1130–1133. See also SS to Langdon, November 29, 1945, *ibid.*, pp. 1137–1138; Matray, pp. 67–68.

ended up being trapped by its own decisions, as the conservatives had become an indispensable factor in the smooth operation of the government in the south.

Such confrontations promised a tough road ahead for the United States. By this point, even if it had succeeded in making a compromise with the Russians, it would not have been easy to find a satisfactory resolution to the Korean question without somehow satisfying the rightists. In the early stages of the occupation, the United States had taken a cautious approach that did not provoke the Soviet Union. When China demanded that the United States recognize the KPG and return its members to Korea by U.S. air force carrier, the military government refused to do so for fear that such a demand would prompt Stalin to take firmer control of the northern part of the peninsula. When the Soviet Union insisted that Korea should rely on it, as a close neighbor, for future economic, social and political development, naming Syngman Rhee as a political figure hostile to this aim, the military government delayed Rhee's return to Korea. Nonetheless, as the anti-Communist and anti-Soviet interests of the conservatives had to be taken into account by the military government, the United States supported them and amalgamated them with its own. Then, as the Cold War continued to develop in Europe, and the Truman administration prepared itself for intensified rivalry with the Soviet Union in early 1946, the Soviets saw the Americans as trying to establish an anti-Soviet government in the south, and negotiation became out of the question. Amid this predicament, the U.S.–Soviet Joint Committee ended in failure, and the division of Korea veered toward its final phase.

For the United States, the most desirable solution to the Korean question was the establishment of a unified, democratic and pro-American independent state. The Soviet Union hoped for the same sort of thing, only pro-Soviet and with a different concept of “democracy.”<sup>11</sup> There is no evidence that the United States had planned a permanent division from the beginning. On the contrary, the Americans went out of their way to stress that, unlike in Germany, a unified government should be established in Korea at the earliest possible moment, as if they were trying to avoid any responsibility for a division. They believed, furthermore, that the new Korean government must correspond to the free and democratic ideals of

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<sup>11</sup> The declaration drafted by the Soviets at the Moscow Conference emphasized an independent and democratic Korea with phrases like “in the aim of restoring Korea as an independent state, [and] the creating of conditions for the country's development on democratic foundations.” (Memo by the Soviet Delegation, December 20, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, vol. 6, pp. 699–700.) The final declaration was based upon the Soviet draft



the United States. For the Americans, this should be the ideal for all humankind, and the ultimate direction in which any nation that they liberated from German Nazism and Japanese militarism should be headed. The establishment of a pro-American government would be far from the idea of trusteeship. Any power would have hoped for the establishment in Korea of a government that was favorable to itself. However, since the trusteeship concept assumed cooperation with the other nations concerned, it could not be expected that any new administration would be completely pro-American. In addition, the American interest in the peninsula was secondary compared to that of China or the Soviet Union. This meant that the establishment of a pro-American government could not be the basic objective of U.S. Korea policy. On the issue of forming a "friendly administration," the Soviet stance was much firmer. It may be added that any power puts its own interests first, and then tries to achieve its political aspirations and meet the demands of the native people. The last thing that the US was expecting was a pro-American government in the peninsula.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, when the Cold War began, the confrontation with the Soviet Union became the most important agenda of U.S. foreign policy. As a result, policy objectives in the peninsula had to take on different priorities. The Soviet Union was pushing for the "Sovietization" of the north, and the Joint Committee was failing to create a blueprint for a unified government in the peninsula. To most of the Americans, compromise with the Russians was now impossible. Consequently, although Harriman and some others advised that it was important to leave the door open for eventual unification,<sup>13</sup> the United States gave up on the fundamental objective of establishing a unified government. The choice now was to create a pro-American and anti-Soviet administration in the south, with conservative Koreans as its mainstay. The Americans, though fully aware of (and strongly opposed to) the reactionary nature of these conservatives, were unable to stop them or to push through much-needed reforms, which these particular Koreans resisted. They entered into an alliance with these conservative elements, nonetheless, and guaranteed various interests for them. As the Cold War became colder, a pro-American administration in Korea became the major goal of the military government.

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<sup>12</sup> See also the conclusion of Matray, James Irving, *The Reluctant Crusade – American Foreign Policy in Korea, 1941–1950* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985).

<sup>13</sup> Harriman, W. Averell and Abel, Elie, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941–1946* (New York: Random House, 1975), pp. 542–543. During his visit to Seoul in 1946, Harriman cautioned General Hodge against trying to form a Korean government in the south that would claim authority over the country as a whole. At his suggestion, Charles Thayer, who had experience in dealing with the Russians, was transferred from Bucharest to Seoul, as a political adviser to General Hodge.

On the one hand, this would reflect the “liberal” ideology of the United States; on the other, in the context of the Cold War, it was an expression of the U.S. sense of superiority, and of its confidence that the pro-American government, with its U.S.-led democratization and economic development, would eventually become a potent force for change as regarded the Communist administration in the north. As Communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe did not collapse until the 1990s, and it was only then that the situation in Korea fundamentally started to change, it took more than four decades even to begin to achieve this goal. The administration of Syngman Rhee certainly did not succeed in performing this great task during its twelve-year duration, instead becoming mired in authoritarian practices. Consequently, the United States had to remain satisfied with more meager successes.

#### CONCLUSION: THE DIVISION ESTABLISHED

The Korean question developed and was fundamentally settled in the very tangled context of World War II. As the “highest form of conflict” in international politics, wars do away with existing international orders and give birth to new ones. The Allies cooperated with each other for the ultimate goal of victory. At the same time, they tried to maximize their own national interests. The postwar design was thus based on a “concert system” that was to be characterized by cooperation, and would depend on checks and balances. When the goal of victory in the war was achieved, the world did not return to the same kinds of alliance politics and “balance of power” that it had previously known. Rather, two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, formed a bipolar system with distinct ideological tendencies. It was under such global conditions that the Korean question was resolved in the framework of the powers’ East Asia policies. The Koreans’ degree of ability in responding to the situation was a another limiting element. To understand the settlement of the Korean question means to examine these complex factors, and the context in which they developed.

The first question goes to the heart of the newly emerging international system: in which of its contexts was the Korean issue primarily handled? Was it through big-power collaboration or through the Cold War? As we have seen, there is not one, definitive answer to this question. One thing that seems obvious, however, is that the first steps toward settlement of the Korean question were determined at a time when the powers were still trying to maintain and implement a “concert system.” Such cooperation continued until at least the end of 1945, as far as the Korean question was concerned. This fact was corroborated

by the decision on trusteeship taken at Moscow in December 1945, as well as by the various wartime conferences, whether in Cairo, Tehran, Yalta, or Potsdam. However, by the time of the Moscow conference the positions of the powers had begun to differ from those that they had expressed during the previous conferences. From this point on, each power started to deal with the Korean question in light of the emerging Cold War. This was why the planned four-power trusteeship was reduced to a two-power trusteeship plan. The Soviet Union was also losing its former interest in the concept of trusteeship itself, and the United States had become more concerned with its global objective of preventing "Soviet expansion." Yet, even though the Korean question was being swept away in the rapid currents of the wider Cold War, one cannot justifiably conclude that the powers' policies during and immediately after the war manifested the same standpoints as those that would characterize the fully fledged Cold War.

The next question is about the relationship between East Asian politics and the Korean peninsula. Historically, the powers concerned with East Asian affairs had had trouble coordinating their views of Korea's "geopolitical value." It was because of this difficulty that certain powers had tried to resolve the problem through the *ultima ratio* of war, as seen in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese conflicts that preceded the annexation of Korea by Japan. The peninsula was thus an essential factor in any realignment of the regional order in East Asia. This time, the East Asian order was largely determined in Yalta, when the United States agreed to Stalin's "political conditions" for Russia's entry into the war against Japan, which included, among other things, the restoration of former Russian interests in Manchuria. This coincided with the U.S. prediction in the early stages of the Pacific war that the Korean question would ultimately be decided in accordance with the settlement of Manchurian affairs.

Under such circumstances, the United States took the initiative in settling the Korean question. For the United States, there were three main considerations that had to be taken into account in doing so. The first was the broad framework for the postwar settlement; namely, the establishment of a system of peace and trusteeship. The second was having a common approach, in collaboration with China and Britain. The third involved the interests of the Soviet Union, a potential power in the region. Nonetheless, it remained unlikely that the powers would find a common denominator that would satisfy both their major interests and the wishes of the Koreans, thereby reaching a definite agreement. In the end, the powers were confronted by the end of the war before they had come up with a detailed "action plan," and at a time when they had only managed to agree in principle to a four-power trusteeship.

Yet it was obvious from the start that a four-power collaboration had little chance of success. Regardless of China's actual capabilities, the United States, despite opposition from Britain and the Soviet Union, had made China one of "the Big Four," and a partner in the postwar settlement of East Asian affairs. The American approach was in line with its traditional policy of maintaining a balance of power in East Asia. Nevertheless, this policy failed adequately to reflect the changes in international relations after the war. As Herbert Feis commented, it became only "wishful thinking" on the part of the United States.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, for a concert system to be successful, both ideological affinities for supporting the said system and a coordination of interests were needed. Robert Jervis insists, purely from the viewpoint of power politics, that "concert systems occur and take form after, and only after, a large war against a potential hegemony because such a conflict increases the incentives to cooperate... [A] concert system has occurred three times in modern history – from 1815 to 1820, 1919 to 1920 and 1945 to 1946."<sup>15</sup> The "Cold War," on the other hand, originated from the Allies' differing world views and security considerations, whose differences intensified as the war neared its end. It is therefore doubtful whether a "concert system," in the strict sense of the term, actually existed at that point. As a result, a postwar structure planned on the basis of an imaginary concert system could only be a fiction, and the birth of either a four-power or a two-power trusteeship in Korea was ultimately aborted.

The proposal of an international trusteeship for Korea demonstrates that the social perceptions of human beings can be simultaneously subjective and historical. Analyses of the subject made thus far have tended, whether consciously or unconsciously, to ignore or overlook such aspects of the proposed trusteeship. Admittedly, it was the social forces unleashed by the Cold War that played the decisive role in the division of Korea. The idea of trusteeship, although the Cold War had not truly commenced at its inception, already implied the probability of division for the Koreans. Such an institution was to be based on the conventions of Western colonial history, while such complex elements as the powers' East Asia policies, the geopolitical value of the Korean peninsula, and the perceived necessity of keeping a "balance of power" also came into play. The "negative historical experiences" of the West in Korea were a particularly important background factor.

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<sup>14</sup> Feis, Herbert, *Churchill Roosevelt Stalin – The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 253.

<sup>15</sup> Jervis, Robert, "From Balance to Concert: A Study of International Security Cooperation," *World Politics*, 38–1 (October 1985), pp. 59–60.

This is where the concept of trusteeship proved to be self-contradictory. Its contradictions can be corroborated both logically and empirically. The “capacity for independence,” as the Western countries defined it, meant that the people or nation concerned should have democratic political institutions to reflect the interests of its people; should develop its resources to the maximum to promote their welfare; and should contribute to the peace of the world based on these prerequisites. In terms of a democratic political system, neither Hitler’s Germany, nor Jiang Jieshi’s China, nor Stalin’s Soviet Union, nor a militarist Japan could truly qualify as being an “independent state.” In terms of managing a modern state, all the less developed countries in the world might well have been unqualified. Some would insist that, whenever a weaker nation such as Korea became domestically unstable, its more powerful neighbors would be likely to intervene, thus threatening the peace of the region. Global peace will only be “jeopardized” when a power with the capacity to change the existing order pursues a revisionist policy. No matter how well-equipped with stable political institutions a weaker nation might be, and no matter how intently it might hope for peace, its sovereignty can be trampled on by the ambitions of stronger nations.

Historically and empirically, the trusteeship idea proved to be inappropriate. Roosevelt, an ardent advocate of such an institution, used to say that it took fifty years to equip the Philippines with the capacity for independence. And what conclusion can we draw from the situation in that country today? In the late 1940s and 1950s, as successive administrations began and ended smoothly, the Philippines seemed to be the very quintessence of democracy in Asia. The American claim therefore seemed legitimate at the time. Yet when Ferdinand Marcos appeared in the 1960s, his prolonged regime, nepotism, a sharply unbalanced distribution of wealth, and economic recession made the country into an example of a failed modern government.

Meanwhile, what happened to Korea, a country some Americans had claimed would require forty years of training for independence? The earlier cited American or Western notions regarding the “capacity for independence” that were developed in 1945 (including the in-depth analyses of Toynbee) clearly lacked universality, and not just in relation to Korea. Among the capacities for independence, the United States even included contribution toward the defeat of the Axis foes. Be it an “imperial view” that defined the Koreans as being the least militant of people, standards shaped by the circumstances of a given age will necessarily be hard to “fit” with other times and circumstances. Western perceptions of Korea were shaped through a limited channel of diplomats, missionaries and merchants during a very short period beginning in the late Chosŏn Dynasty. These persons were

prone to understand Korea through the lens of Japan, rather than by thoroughly learning about Korean history or traditions. Or, based on an “imperial” spirit of “civilization versus barbarism,” they tended to define Korea as barbarian or uncivilized. They were unable and unwilling to understand the currents of its history, including issues of long duration between Korea and Japan, the over-indulgence in Neo-Confucian ethics by Korea’s pre-modern society, the nationalist impulses of the Korean people, and the anti-foreign feelings that were reinforced by its modern history.

The Korean resistance to the idea of trusteeship was also based on the historical experience of the Japanese protectorate, which had resulted in the “annexation.” To explain such a Korean reaction as utterly irrational also did not help at all in resolving the Korean question. If postwar international relations had been managed like the “concert system” of the early nineteenth century, the powers might have been able to overcome (or pacify) the Korean people’s resistance to the idea, and then it might have been possible to enforce an effective trusteeship under conditions that looked toward its prearranged objective, i.e., an independent and unified Korea. It might have been possible, at the very least, to avoid planning the division of the peninsula. Yet in the political, economic and social conflict of the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union chose to maintain the *status quo* of division, and abdicated any responsibility for the Korean resistance to the trusteeship idea.

Finally, there remains the problem of the responses of the Korean people, especially their political leaders. Although the Koreans were not predisposed to be favorable to the concept of “trusteeship,” the general idea was not a new one. Within Republican China’s paradigm of successive stages of military revolution, tutelage, and constitutional government, the “tutelage” stage was very much akin to the concept of trusteeship (although the Chinese concept of tutelage did not presuppose a “foreign” presence). Some political leaders, including Cho Pyŏng’ok and Song Chin’u, did believe that Korea would need a certain period of “tutelage” after such a long period of colonial rule.<sup>16</sup> However, with the liberation, the nationalist Koreans who had worked abroad returned home, and gained popularity with their advocacy of immediate and complete independence. These leaders now took the initiative in the liberated administration. It would have been impossible to expect them to understand the political and his-

<sup>16</sup> Sim, Chiyŏn, *Mi-so kongdong wiwŏnhoe yŏn’gu* (A Study on the U.S.-Soviet Joint Committee) (Seoul: Ch’ŏnggye, 1989), pp. 1, 27. The immediate cause of the assassination of Song after the Moscow Conference was his advocacy of the proposed trusteeship. (Ch’oe, Sangyong, pp. 201–202, 207.)

torical context of trusteeship, especially at an emotional level. Those few who felt the necessity of some sort of tutelage in establishing a truly competent, internationally acceptable and independent state failed to obtain the political high ground among the Korean people. In the political situation that followed the liberation, they could not easily expect to survive with such gradualist or moderate proposals as "tutelage." As the Cold War settled over Korea and the people were bisected into pro-trusteeship/Communist and anti-trusteeship/nationalist camps, their capacities for unified statesmanship became more circumscribed. The division of Korea was rushed to its conclusion as the powers continued to misunderstand Korean nationalism and the Koreans, as well as the political currents of the wider world. In the end, as two Korean states were established in the north and the south, the international and domestic mechanisms that might have prevented the division were completely eliminated. The division then became a fixed and even bitterer reality with the outbreak of the Korean Civil War.





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(See also abbreviations)

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- (1) As primary resources, this study has referred primarily to both published and unpublished diplomatic documents of the United States and Great Britain. As the author reviewed the British documents first, only one source, a British one, is identified in the footnotes in cases where both countries' files covered the same subjects and described them in the same manner.
- (2) The British documents quoted in this study are preserved at The National Archives (TNA, former Public Record Office), Kew, London.
  - Most of the documents related to Korea, Japan and China belong to the Class Number 371 series.
  - Of the British documents, some important ones, which are called "Confidential Papers," were internally circulated within the Foreign Office and sometimes to certain other departments.
  - All such papers in printed format are in Class Numbers 405 and 420. For documents concerning East Asian countries, mainly China and Japan, the major sources are published documents such as *Documents on British Foreign Policy*.
- (3) American documents quoted in this study are preserved at the National Archives, Washington, D.C.
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- C0012: Records of the Office of Chinese Affairs, 1945–1955 (partially researched)
- M976: Japan and China 1930–1944; M424: Japan; RG256: Negotiating Peace, 1918–31, and other sources.

### **Published documents and abbreviations**

- *FRUS* (*Foreign Relations of the United States*) is annually published by the U.S. State Department.
- *NGB: Nihon gaikō bunsho* (Japanese Diplomatic Documents), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tokyo.
- *DBFP* (*Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919–1939*) is a record between the two World Wars by the British Foreign Office, and is the British equivalent of *FRUS*.
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