

# Japan and Korea at the Turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>1</sup>

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For Japan, Korea is its closest neighbour, a distance of just 50 kilometres separating them at the narrowest part of the Korean Strait between the Korean port of Busan and the Japanese island of Tsushima. It was simply a natural course of events that mutual relations were formed between both countries over the millennia, which were marked by both fraternal friendliness and hostile competition. The opening of Japan to the world and the onset of imperialist mentality, however, transformed Japan's attitude to its closest neighbour. For Japan, Korea became a vision of a source of raw materials which the Japanese islands lacked, a market for products and a defensive and offensive military base. By annexing Korea, Japan succeeded in joining the other Western imperial powers, but at the same time alienated itself from the other Asian countries and disrupted previous relations with Korea. The years of 1868–1910 were a mere prelude to Japan's colonialism of the Korean peninsula which would continue for the next 35 years. It was, however, decisive in terms of Japan's transformation from a closed Asian nation to an imperialist and powerful state forming its own colonies. This transformation, however, meant for Korea the suppression of its own national identity and a growth in hostility towards Japan, which in certain respects still survives today.

Despite two attempts at a military invasion of Korea by Japan's great unifier, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1598) in 1592 and 1597 (also known as the "Imjin War"),<sup>2</sup> Japan-Korea relations were renewed in 1607.<sup>3</sup> Beginning in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, both countries had isolationist policies. This didn't mean, however, that mutual diplomatic relations



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  - <sup>2</sup> More on Toyotomi Hideyoshi's military expeditions to Korea can be found in R. KODET, *Války samurajů: Konflikty starého Japonska 1156–1877*, Praha 2015, pp. 312–335; R. H. P. MASON — J. G. CAIGER, *Dějiny Japonska*, Praha 2007, pp. 180–181, 190; E. O. REISCHAUER — A. M. CRAIG, *Dějiny Japonska*, Praha 2008, p. 79; C. J. ECKERT — K. LEE — Y. I. LEW et al., *Dějiny Koreje*, Praha 2001, pp. 107–111; J. JANOŠ, *Japonsko a Korea*, Praha 2007, pp. 87–88; CH. H. YI, *Korean Envoys and Their Relations with Japan in the 17th to 19th Centuries*, in: Korean National Commission for UNESCO (Ed.), *Korean History*, New Jersey / Soul 2004, pp. 289–306.
  - <sup>3</sup> YI, *Korean Envoys...*, p. 293.

ended. Just between 1607 and 1811, twenty Korean missions to Japan took place.<sup>4</sup> These missions were organised on a formal basis of mutual respect and equal sovereign status.<sup>5</sup> Mutual diplomatic and trade relations between Korea and Japan were secured by the S6 clan on the island of Tsushima. In 1868, however, after the Meiji Restoration when the shogunate ended and imperial power was restored, Japan decided unilaterally to change the previous protocol for mutual negotiations with Korea.<sup>6</sup> Previous delegation representatives were replaced, a new seal began to be used which had not been approved by Korea, and the term 'Emperor' (*hwange*) began to be used in official documents for the Japanese head of state. The original sinocentric system in Asia (termed *hua-yi*) meant that Korea considered its relationship with China to be tributary, such that even the King (or wang) of Korea's relation to the Chinese Emperor was a subordinate one. As such, the King's relationship to the Emperor was a vassal relationship. Until 1868, Japan had used the title of "Great Prince" (*daegun*) for the Shogun in official documents. Korea rejected the new title in official documents, which would mean on the basis of traditional relations within Asia that the Korean "King" had a subordinate status to Japan's "Emperor". The Koreans announced that they would not accept any further Japanese expeditions until previous diplomatic practices were restored.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Korea, in contrast to Japan which had begun to open itself to the world, moved ever more towards a policy of isolationism. In 1864, King Gojong (1852–1919) took the throne while still a minor, with his father the Daewongun (own name Yi Ha-eung, 1821–1898) holding real power as regent, a great proponent of such policies. He was strengthened in his conviction through violent conflicts with Western powers, in 1846 with France, in 1854 with Russia, and in 1866 a clash with a French Asian flotilla occurred and the American vessel *General Sherman* was sunk on the Taedong river, for which the USA sent an unsuccessful punitive expedition to Korea in 1871.<sup>7</sup> All these attempts at forcing the opening of Korea led to the growth of anti-Western conviction in the country and its closing in on itself, even to Japanese demands, which were considered by Korea to be rash and one-sided.

In contrast, Japan considered Korea's rejection a snub. Unsuccessful attempts at discussions became a tool in the hands of those who supported an aggressive foreign policy. In 1869–71, Japan's Foreign Minister was Sawa Noboyushi (1835–1873), a nationalist who supported the idea of an active foreign policy. Together with other supporters, he proposed the policy of "conquering Korea" (*seikanron*) using targeted weapons along the Western powers model. In spring 1870, Japanese official Sada Hakubo

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4 S. PARK, *Korea-Japan Relations and the History of Science and Technology*, in: Korean Journey, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1992, pp. 80–88.

5 MASON — CAIGER, s. 208. Korea's King considered himself equal to Japan's Emperor, not the Shogun, who was considered the Emperor's deputy. P. DUUS, *The Abacus and the Sword*, London 1995, p. 30.

6 T. J. YI, *Was Korea Really a 'Hermit Nation'?*, in: Korean National Commission for UNESCO (Ed.), *Korean History*, New Jersey / Seoul 2004, pp. 385–412.

7 ECKERT — LEE — LEW, pp. 142–146. Amongst others here, this included the case of Prussian adventurer, Ernst J. Oppert, who as a result of his failed attempts at opening Korea to the world in 1868, desecrated the grave of the Daewongun's father on the shore of Chungcheong province. *Ibidem*, p. 142.

proposed the conquering of Korea, which he thought should take no longer than 50 days.<sup>8</sup> Although Sada did not receive much support, he brought together reasons for an attack on Korea. Besides the already mentioned behaviour of Korea considered a snub by Japan, there were also fears that another power could occupy Korea.<sup>9</sup> Since France, Russia and the USA had previously attempted to open up Korea, these fears seemed real. A third reason was to provide a distraction and ease domestic unrest caused by the ending of previous feudal conditions and the dissolution of the Samurai nobility. In relation to the abolition of the traditional nobility, in 1871 the Sō clan lost its status as mediators in negotiations with Korea, with its previous role taken on by Japan's foreign ministry.<sup>10</sup> That year, Soejima Taneomi (1828–1905) became the new minister, and he also supported an active policy in South-East Asia. At the end of 1871, the Iwakura Mission occurred, a two-year study journey around the world with 48 official members including government members (named by statesman Iwakura Tomomi, 1825–1883). On the eve of the journey, a promise was signed by government representatives in December 1871 that remaining government members would avoid drastic measures and decisions. On 12 June 1873, the Japanese government discussed the issue of Korea, and Saigō Takamori (1828–1877) proposed sending emissaries to Korea.<sup>11</sup> Saigō and Soejima assumed a subsequent military expedition of 50,000 men.<sup>12</sup>

In October, a quarrel broke out between two factions within the Japanese government — Iwakura Tonomi, Kido Takayoshi, Ōkubo Toshimichi and Ito Hirobumi (also supported by Ōkuma Shigenobu, Inoue Kaoru, Yamagata Aritomo and Kuroda Kiyotaka, who did not take part in the Iwakura Mission) against supporters of a military mission to Korea, Saigō Takamori, Itagaki Taisuke, Soejima Taneomi, Etō Shimpei and Gotō Shōjirō.<sup>13</sup> Although Saigō was named Imperial Envoy for Korean Affairs on 17 August, the return of the Iwakura Mission thwarted any plans for a military expedition. The Naval Minister (Katsu Kaishū) and Army Minister (Yamagata Aritomo) both warned of the Japan military's unpreparedness for such an extensive military action.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Japan was then only just in the middle of its reforming efforts and besides domestic affairs also had to deal with its foreign relations with Taiwan (or China) and Sakhalin (or Russia). It wasn't so much opposition to the proposal itself, but rather to its inopportune timing. Most supporters of a military mission to Korea subsequently left the government as a result of their failure.

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<sup>8</sup> DUUS, p. 35.

<sup>9</sup> For Japan, Korea held a strategically important position, as German advisor in Japan, Major Jacob Meckel (who worked in Japan from 1885) said, it was a “*dagger pointed at the heart of Japan*”. Ibidem, p. 49.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> Saigō suggested himself as one of the emissaries, referring to the fact that if there was to be conflict on Korean territory, it would cause war. Sometimes his stance is interpreted as an attempt to sacrifice himself in order for war, sometimes as proof of his sincerity and endeavours to deal with political affairs without the use of force. DUUS, p. 40; KODET, p. 456.

<sup>12</sup> M. J. MAYO, *The Korean Crisis of 1873 and Early Meiji Foreign Policy*, in: *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4, 1972, pp. 793–819.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>14</sup> DUUS, p. 42.

In April 1874, Japan solved its dispute with Taiwan, where in 1871 54 shipwrecked Ryukyuan sailors had been murdered. The Tokyo government took control of the Ryukyu archipelago in 1872 and as such decided to send a punitive expedition of 3,600 men against the aboriginal population on the east coast of Taiwan.<sup>15</sup> China, to whom Taiwan belonged, was even forced to pay Japan compensation at the level of the costs relating to the expedition and money for the lost lives of the 54 Ryukyuan sailors. This meant the *de facto* recognition of Japan's claims to the Ryukyu archipelago, which was eventually declared the Okinawa Prefecture in 1879 (named after the largest of the islands. Japan also solved its dispute with Russia over the island of Sakhalin, where there had been repeated attacks by Russian settlers on the Japanese. At the beginning of 1874, Enomoto Takeaki (1836–1908) was sent to St Petersburg as ambassador, and in the following year he negotiated an agreement in which Japan gave up its claims to Sakhalin in exchange for the Kuril Islands.

In 1873, a year before King Gojong of Korea came of age, the Daewongun was forced to relinquish power as a result of pressure from the Min clan, of which the Queen was a member. Thus the main proponent of an isolationist policy left the political scene, and it was then that concessions were made on both sides, with Korea agreeing to establish diplomatic relations with Japan and also recognising the use of the term of “Emperor” (*hwangye*). For Japan's part, it forgave Korea for using this title in diplomatic documents. In the end, Japan provoked the so-called *Un'yō* boat incident, in which the warship *Un'yō* was illegally dispatched to the waters around the port of Incheon, leading to an armed response from the Korean island of Ganghwa.<sup>16</sup> The Japanese used this conflict as a pretext for implementing a policy in accordance with the Western model, sending a flotilla of six ships (three of which were warships) to the Korean shores in 1876 with 800 men on board under the command of Lieutenant General Kuroda Kiyotaka (1840–1900).<sup>17</sup> It was Kuroda, accompanied by Inoue Kaoru (1836–1915) who was to negotiate compensation for the conflict and a diplomatic treaty with the Korean government, which was facing the threat of war. On 26 February 1876, the Treaty of Ganghwa was signed under the threat of Japanese military action. The treaty used the American-Japanese Treaty of 1854 as a model, with Article 1 declaring that, “*Korea is an independent state enjoying the same sovereign rights as does Japan*”,<sup>18</sup> which rejected the idea of the traditional China-Korea tributary relationship. The remaining 11 articles provided Japan with one-sided benefits which

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15 KODET, pp. 457–458; REISCHAUER — CRAIG, p. 145.

16 There is no direct proof that it was deliberate provocation, but indirect evidence suggests so. It is not known why the Japanese warship would not have enough supplies, the alleged reason the *Un'yō* stopped at Ganghwa, located at the mouth of the Han river and guarding entrance to Korea's capital city, Seoul. Korea's aggressive response could also have been predicted, since until then Korea had responded in this manner to the French, Russians and Americans. Furthermore, the voyage took place just a few days after Moriyama Shigeru, who was to secure negotiations with Korea, was withdrawn from the country. DUUS, p. 44.

17 Y. LEW, *Japanese Challenge and Korean Response, 1876–1910*, in: Korean National Commission for UNESCO (Ed.), *Korean History*, New Jersey / Seoul, 2004, pp. 475–498; DUUS, pp. 44–47.

18 LEW, pp. 475–498.

included the right to trade in stipulated Korean ports,<sup>19</sup> the right of extraterritoriality for Japanese in Korea, the right to survey the Korean coast and an exchange of envoys between the countries. A supplementary treaty and memorandum was signed six months later in which Japan acquired additional concessions, including the right to use Japanese currency in Korean ports, and the exemption of Japanese imports from Korean customs duty.<sup>20</sup> The result was Japanese trade with Korea being exempt from duties until 1883, when customs tariffs were first determined in a trading treaty between Korea and Japan. The Treaty of Ganghwa was unequal and had a fundamental impact on the future course of Korean independence. Korea was opened to the world under military pressure, its previous isolationism was ended and as such it arrived on the international stage for the first time.

Korea's foreign policy also changed, its objective now being the modernisation of Korea through the acceptance of Western models and technologies, which was to result in the strengthening of the country. In autumn 1876, a 75-member Korean mission was sent to Japan led by Kim Gi-suem (1832–1893), whose objective was to study Japanese modernisation. This was the first mission attempting to strengthen mutual relations and trust between the countries since 1764. Two more such missions had occurred by 1881, all supported by King Gojong. The Japanese also profited from their monopoly position until the early 1880s with no other foreign nations operating here. Sea transport between Korea and Japan was secured until 1887 by the Mitsubishi Steamship Company operating as a monopoly. In June 1878, Japanese bank, Dai-ichi, opened a branch in Busan, opening up branches in Wŏnsan and Incheon once these ports were opened.<sup>21</sup> In 1880, Japan was the first foreign power to open a legation in Seoul (the first Japanese envoy in Korea was Hanabusa Yoshitada, 1842–1917), while King Gojong established the Office for the Management of State Affairs, which was to secure co-ordination of the government reform programme. Essentially, this was a prototype foreign ministry. In the same year, a new Special Skills Force was set up, and led by Japanese military officer, Horimoto Reijo, which was to be the model for modern troops. It was in relation to these troops that a mutiny of soldiers took place on 23 July 1882 (known as the *Imo Mutiny*), who felt at a disadvantage compared to the newly formed units as they had not received wages for 13 months.<sup>22</sup> They even received support from the anti-foreigner former regent, the Daewongun, killed the Japanese officer who was in charge of the Special Skills Force, and burned down the Japanese legation. They also entered the royal palace where Gojong submitted to the Daewongun's decision, leading to the abolishment of the elite units and the abolishment of the Office for the Management of State Affairs. In response to the Korean rebellion, Japan sent its own units to Korea, to which China responded by sending its own troops to Korea with the permission of the Korean emissaries in Tianjin. The

19 In 1876 the port of Busan was opened, Wŏnsan in 1880, Incheon in 1883, Mokpo in 1897 and Kunsan in 1899. C. ECKERT, *Offspring of Empire: The Koch'ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism, 1876–1945*, Seattle 1991, p. 9.

20 LEW, pp. 475–498.

21 Japan took advantage of Korea's ignorance of international prices and overvalued its goods by up to 1,000 percent. DUUS, p. 254.

22 ECKERT — LEE — LEW, p. 152.

Chinese, who significantly outnumbered the Japanese, captured the Daewongun and interned him for three years in Tianjin. King Gojong's powers were restored.

In the meantime, Japan signed the Treaty of Chemulpo (the old name for the port of Incheon) on 30 August 1882, gaining the right to position its troops in Seoul to protect its legation, and the right to compensation. With the support of the Min clan, China restored its sovereign status over Korea, with Chinese commander Yuan Shikai (1859–1916) taking control of the Korean army, Li Hongzhang (1823–1901) becoming the Chief Commissioner for diplomatic and commercial affairs in Korea, and German, Paul von Möllendorff (1847–1901) recommended as an advisor at the foreign minister by China.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the signature of the China-Korea sea and land regulations in October 1882 gave China a number of advantages and Japan's previous monopoly of Korean foreign trade began to be disturbed.<sup>24</sup> As such, Japan anticipated a future conflict with China, and this led them to increase military spending, which had amounted to 19 % of total national expenditure in 1880 and reached 25 % by 1896.<sup>25</sup>

With Li Hongzhang's consent, Korea concluded a number of treaties with foreign powers in the early 1880s, which according to the Chinese Chief Commissioner would protect Korea from any pressure from Russia or Japan.<sup>26</sup> On 22 May 1882, the United States-Korea Treaty was signed in Incheon, representing the first unequal treaty Korea signed with a Western power. This was followed by a number of further unequal treaties signed in 1883 with the United Kingdom and Germany, in 1884 with Italy and Russia, in 1886 with France and in 1892 with Austria-Hungary.

While the Min clan supported the policy going by the motto of “*Eastern ways, Western machines*”,<sup>27</sup> i.e. the implementation of Western technology while preserving traditional values with the help of China, the so-called Progressives (*Kaehwadang*) faction was formed whose motto was. “*Independence and modernisation of the nation*” and who demanded changes implemented quickly in accordance with the Japanese model.<sup>28</sup> Besides radicals such as, e.g. Kim Ok-kyun, Pak Yong-hyo, Sö Kwang-böm and Hong Yong-sik, this faction also included members of the so-called Independence Party, who were high-status politicians such as e.g. Kim Hong-jip, Kim Yun-sik and Ö Yun-jung. Many of them were involved in the increasing numbers of Korean-Japanese cultural and diplomatic exchanges of 1882–1884.<sup>29</sup> The Progressives' political lobbying led to a number of modernising reforms such as securing sea duties, creating a modern postal system, establishing a modern police service in the centre of Seoul, establishing modern trading and industrial businesses, supporting students and stu-

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23 A. C. NAHM, *Introduction to Korean History and Culture*, New Jersey 1993, p. 151.

24 For Korea, this treaty represented national humiliation, because the preamble speaks of Korea as a vassal state of China. Y. SHIN, *Modern Korean History and Nationalism*, Seoul 2000, p. 35.

25 DUUS, p. 62.

26 P. J. TREAT, *China and Korea, 1885–1894*, in: *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 4, 1934, pp. 506–543.

27 ECKERT — LEE — LEW, p. 153.

28 SHIN, p. 29.

29 Pak Yong-hyo created the Korean flag still used today on a visit to Japan in October 1882. NAHM, *Introduction to Korean History...*, p. 152.

dents' journeys abroad, etc.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, the first modern Korean newspaper, known as *Hanseong sunbo* began publication in October 1883.<sup>31</sup> In 1884, the Progressives decided to eliminate Chinese influence in Korea by taking advantage of the growing conflict between China and France which had led to China withdrawing 1,500 men from Korea in 1884 (1,500 Chinese soldiers remained in Korea).<sup>32</sup> On 4 December 1884, a coup which came to be known as the *Gapsin Coup* occurred at a banquet celebrating the opening of the new post office. Kim Ok-gyun and the other conspirators entered the Changdokkung Palace where they ousted the barracks commanders and a number of important officials from the conservative faction, and on 5 December they declared a fourteen-point programme demanding the return of the interned the Daewongun from China, the ending of Korea's tributary relationship to China, the restriction of the ruling classes' privileges, a revision of the land tax laws, equal rights for all, a central budget policy and central management of the military, the naming of officials in accordance with their merit and not their social origins, as well as other demands.<sup>33</sup> In brief, their objective was to create an independent and efficient modern state with an egalitarian policy. Their government, however, lasted just three days. The whole attempt at a military coup had been undertaken with the support of the Japanese envoy in Korea (Takezoe Shinichiro, 1842–1917), who in reality did not provide them with much backing when on 6 December Chinese units began a counteroffensive, the Korean revolutionaries were broken and the Japanese units fled to safety.<sup>34</sup> The Japanese envoy and eight leading Korean members of the Progressives including Kim Ok-gyun, Pak Yong-hyo and Sō Kwang-bōm escaped to Japan. In this manner, the first autonomous attempt at creating the powerful nation which the modernisation reforms were meant to lead to, failed as a result of an arbitrary attack from China.

Japan and China withdrew their troops from Korea, and Japanese statesman, Ito Hirobumi met his Chinese opposite number, Li Hongzhang on 18 April 1885 in Tianjin, where they signed a treaty which contained clauses that should either party send their troops to the Korean peninsula in future, they would inform the other party first of their intentions.<sup>35</sup> In 1885, China restored the Mongolian practice of sending a monitor to Korea, who on the recommendation of Li Hongzhang was Yuan Shikai, who acquired the title of General Resident and began consolidating China's position in Korea with the support of the pro-Chinese Min clan. This influence was also expressed in the economic sphere, with Chinese imports to Korea growing from 19 % of

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30 For more, see SHIN, pp. 33–34.

31 NAHM, *Introduction to Korean History...*, p. 153.

32 SHIN, p. 41.

33 ECKERT — LEE — LEW, p. 155; NAHM, *Introduction to Korean History...*, p. 154; The 14 points can be found in SHIN, p. 47. Originally, the manifesto contained 80 articles; these 14 are known to the public thanks to Kim Ok-gyun, who published them in 1884 in the magazine *Kapsin illok*. Ibidem, p. 46.

34 "The number of victims of the whole act was more than 180, 38 of whom were Japanese, and ten of whom were Chinese." Ibidem, p. 155.

35 Korea and Japan signed a treaty in Seoul on 9 January 1885 in which the Koreans promised to pay compensation and build a barracks in Seoul for 1,000 Japanese soldiers. LEW, pp. 475–498.

total imports in 1885 to 45 % in 1892.<sup>36</sup> In the meantime, a pro-Russian faction began forming in Korea, at whose head, paradoxically, was the originally Chinese-assigned German advisor, von Möllendorff, who maintained close co-operation with the Russian envoy in Korea, Karl Waeber (1841–1910). Möllendorff thought that Chinese and Japanese influence in Korea should be balanced by a third power — Russia.<sup>37</sup> China responded to this by repatriating the former Regent, the Daewongun, and replacing Möllendorff in his role as advisor for foreign affairs with American, Owen N Denny (1838–1900). It should be noted, however, that Denny became just as strong a critic of Chinese acts in Korea as Möllendorff had been. While Yuan Shikai prevented foreign powers from building their own legations in Korea, King Gojong attempted to stabilise Korea's fragile independence by founding a permanent legation in Tokyo in 1887 and in Washington in 1888.<sup>38</sup> Korea attempted to restore its independence by taking control of telegraph lines, the duties system and through loans from other powers.<sup>39</sup> There was also a gradual modernisation taking place in Korea during the 1880s which led to the development of the education system, missionary Dr Horace N Allen built the first modern medical clinic in Seoul in 1885, the military was modernised, gas lamps were introduced and a national mint was constructed. On the other hand, the costs related to modernisation and market corruption and incompetence within the governing Min faction led to citizens being faced with having to pay three to four times as much tax as they had previously had to.<sup>40</sup>

This led to the dissatisfaction of the local Korean population, who came together to enact the extensive peasant rebellion led by the *Donghak* (meaning Eastern Learning) religious sect. This movement had been founded in 1860 by Choe Je-u (1824–1864) and was based on the idea that all are equal before God.<sup>41</sup> Besides Christianity, it also drew on teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and traditional shamanism, and it was not merely a religious, but also a social, movement which endeavoured to improve the living conditions of ordinary people. In 1892–1893, members of the movement repeatedly requested the rehabilitation of Choe Je-U, who had been executed in 1864, and demanded the ending of the corrupt practices of government officials. In 1894, these endeavours grew into a peasant's revolt which began in the district of Gobu in the province of Ch'olla, and was led by Jeon Bongjun (1854–1895). Its objective was to overthrow the corrupt Min faction, expel the Japanese from Ko-

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<sup>36</sup> W. G. BEASLEY, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894–1945*, Oxford 1991, p. 45. For a comparison of Japanese-Korean and Chinese-Korean foreign trade in 1885–1893, see LEW, p. 484.

<sup>37</sup> ECKERT — LEE — LEW, p. 157.

<sup>38</sup> LEW, p. 483.

<sup>39</sup> TREAT, p. 539.

<sup>40</sup> Korea was also taken economic advantage of by Japan. Their economic activity during the first half of the 1890s reached an enormous level, and each of the open ports held a huge number of Japanese trading companies. “[...] in 1896, 210 of a total of 258 companies were Japanese. Japan also controlled freight transport in Korean waters: of 1,322 merchant ships weighing 387,507 tons which sailed into Korean ports in 1893, 9,856 ships weighing 304,224 tons sailed under the flag of Japan.” ECKERT — LEE — LEW, p. 158.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 138. Equality before God also applied to women, which was a radical departure from the Confucian tradition of division of the sexes. M. E. ROBINSON, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey*, Honolulu 2007, p. 191.



rean territory, undertake land reform, restore traditional values and abolish the social stratification advantageous to the *Yangban* class.<sup>42</sup> On 31 May, they conquered Jeonju, the capital of Chölla province. As such, an anti-feudal and anti-imperialist civil war broke out (also known as the Gabo Peasant War), whose objective was the creation of a modern nation state.<sup>43</sup> It was the largest peasant rebellion in Korean history. Because it became uncontrollable for the Korean government, the Korean King asked China for military assistance on the advice of Yuan Shikai.<sup>44</sup> On 7 June, Chinese troops numbering 3,000 men arrived at Asan near the port of Incheon, with the Chinese government having informed Japan of their act in accordance with the Tianjin Convention of 1885 (on 4 June).

Japan responded on 9 June by sending 8,000 of their own soldiers from Hiroshima to Incheon. They did so in order to secure their own influence in Korea and to begin the long-expected conflict with China. Furthermore, the government of Japanese Prime Minister Ito Hirobumi (1841–1909) was facing a crisis which they wanted to ward off by drawing attention to foreign affairs and silencing the Japanese militarists who feared Russia's growing influence in Asia since 1891 when the Trans-Siberian Railway began construction across Chinese territory (Manchuria). The Korean government attempted to calm the overall situation by concluding a separate peace with members of the Donghak movement, which was signed in Jeonju on 11 June.<sup>45</sup> Korea's foreign minister subsequently requested the withdrawal of both foreign armies from Korean territory. Otori Keisuke (1833–1911), Japan's envoy in Seoul, refused to withdraw the Japanese units and demanded the Korean government implement satisfactory modernising reforms.<sup>46</sup> Japan's foreign minister, Mutsu Munemitsu (1844–1897) proposed co-operation with China on a reform programme in Korea.<sup>47</sup> On 22 June, China rejected this proposal, referring to Article 1 of the Treaty of Ganghwa in which Japan recognised Korean independence. Furthermore, Li Hongzhang also referred to the Tianjin Convention of 1885 in which both countries agreed to withdraw their forces after quelling a revolt or in cases where Korea no longer considers the presence of foreign forces to be necessary. In fact, the current Korean government headed by the pro-China Min faction suited China. On 26 June, Ótori proposed a set of reforms to King Gojong, who ignored the suggestion and demanded the immediate withdrawal of Japanese troops from Korea. On 23 July, Japanese units marched to

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42 ECKERT — LEE — LEW, p. 160.

43 Y. LEE, *The Peasant War in 1894 and the Growth of the Peasant Society*, in: Korean National Commission for UNESCO (ed.), *Korean History*, New Jersey / Seoul 2004, pp. 413–427.

44 Although Korea's army based itself on China's recruitment system where a certain number of families had to provide one soldier, with Korea's population of 16 million and 700–1,000 families per district, only a few hundred men were sent to the army. Korea did not even have a navy. In 1891, Korea had a total of 3 divisions with 5,407 men. See *The Armed Strength of Korea, 1892*, The National Archives, London-Kew (henceforth only TNA), War Office 106/6318.

45 The Donghak's 12-point programme approved in Jeonju can be read in NAHM, *Introduction to Korean History...*, p. 161.

46 Ótori met with Yuan Shikai on 13 June, and on 15 June both parties agreed to reduce the number of troops on Korean territory, although Ito's government rejected this. DUUS, p. 68.

47 The Japanese modernization programme is summarised in *ibidem*, p. 73.

the Royal Gyeongbokgung Palace and installed the Daewongun as head of the Korean government.<sup>48</sup>

Japan perceived him as a formal head of the political scene without real power, and as such created the Supreme Military Council, which was authorised to negotiate and discuss new laws and regulations. Here they took advantage of the participation of moderate Korean reformists such as Kim Hong-jip, Kim Yun-sik and Ō Yun-jung and Progressives returning from Japan such as Pak Yong-hyo and Sō Kwang-bōm. This marked the beginnings of the period of *Gabo* reform (July 1894 — February 1896)<sup>49</sup> initiated by Japan apparently in order to modernise Korea, but in fact in order to gain control over the Korean peninsula.<sup>50</sup> The reform programme itself involved a lot over too short a period, which led to the formation of opposition within Korea headed by the Daewongun. As such, Japan decided to discredit him by using a secret letter in which the Daewongun asked the Chinese commander for assistance against Japan. It should be noted that King Gojong, Kim Hong-jip and other ministers wrote similar letters. Through pressure from the government, the Daewongun withdrew from his position and under Japanese threat, the King was forced along with the Queen to officially promise on 7 January 1895 that they would consult ministers in advance of all their decisions and that the Queen and her family from the Min clan would no longer interfere with government affairs.<sup>51</sup>

While Japan was influencing the Korean government's internal politics, the First Sino-Japanese War broke out. On 25 July, there was a naval affray near the Korean port of Asan, and this became the first battle of the not yet declared Sino-Japanese War. On 1 August, war was officially declared by both sides. On 20 August, Japan forced the Korean government to sign a treaty under military presence,<sup>52</sup> which along with concluding a Korean-Japanese alliance led to Korean support for Japanese military action within Korean territory. On 16 September, Japan conquered Pyongyang and a day later beat the Chinese (Beiyang) fleet at the mouth of the Yalu River. On 21 November, Japan conquered Port Arthur. On 30 March 1895, a truce was signed between Japan (Ito Hirobumi) and China (Li Hongzhang), leading to the Shimono-seki Peace Treaty of 17 April. On the basis of this treaty, China gave up sov-

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48 This was a Japanese *faux pas*, with Japan presenting the intervention as a response to the Daewongun's plea for help in deposing the conservative Min faction and facilitating the modernisation of Korea. In fact, however, the Daewongun arrived at the palace up to three hours after the Japanese because he refused to co-operate with any foreign power. *Ibidem*, pp. 76–77.

49 For more on the *Gabo* reforms, see ECKERT — LEE — LEW, pp. 164–167; A. SCHMID, *Korea between Empires, 1895–1919*, New York 2002, p. 29. The name *Gabo* comes from the name for the year 1894. NAHM, *Introduction to Korean History...*, p. 162.

50 In his memoirs (*Kenken roku*), foreign minister Mutsu wrote: “The main aim of our national interest was to gain control over the Korean government; the idea of reforming the Korean government didn't come about because of the Koreans themselves.” S. K. SYNN, *Korean-Japanese Relations, 1894–1904 I*, in: *Korean Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1981, pp. 12–25.

51 DUUS, p. 87.

52 This treaty also gave the Japanese a concession to construct the strategically important railway and telegraph link between the cities of Seoul-Busan-Incheon. *Ibidem*, p. 81. For the treaty's contents, see SYNN, *Korean-Japanese Relations, 1894–1904 I*, pp. 12–25.

ereignty over Korea and recognised its independence. Japan acquired sovereignty of Taiwan,<sup>53</sup> the Pescadores islands and the Liaodong peninsula, and it was also awarded significant compensation by China to the sum of 200 million Kuping taels.<sup>54</sup> The objective of the peace treaty was first of all to secure the removal of Chinese influence from the Korean peninsula, and secondly to acquire the same advantages the Western powers had in China through concluding additional mutual agreements.<sup>55</sup> The Sino-Japanese war transformed the previously Sinocentric system in East Asia. Japan's status, however, was soon downgraded by the so-called Triple Intervention of Russia, France and Germany. These three countries feared Japan's status was too strong and "recommended" Japan give up the Liaodong peninsula in exchange for an increase in China's reparations of 30 million Kuping taels.<sup>56</sup> Japan realigned itself to a more moderate foreign policy, while China paid for its inability to defend its own sovereignty and began to break up through agreeing to a number of concessions awarded to Japan, Great Britain, France, Germany and Russia,<sup>57</sup> which had already agreed upon a secret alliance with China on 3 June 1896 against Japan as part of which Russia acquired the right to build the Chinese Eastern Railway (part of the Trans-Siberian Railway) in North Manchuria, and in 1898 they even leased the Liaodong peninsula for a period of 25 years.<sup>58</sup> In this manner, the original idea of a Sinocentric setup in East Asia came to an end.<sup>59</sup>

With victory, Japan acquired the space to influence reform efforts in Korea. By spring, Japan was in control of the Korean government through 40 of their own advisors in the highest state administration representative roles. In place of the original Supreme Military Council, they created a modern government with eight ministries, the Palace's financial affairs were separated from executive power, an independent judicial system was created, torture and slavery were abolished, territory was reor-

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53 Japan thus acquired its first colony — Taiwan. BEASLEY, p. 56. Article 5 of the Treaty of Shimonoseki allowed the citizens of Taiwan who did not agree with the annexation to move to Chinese territory within two years, although this was only done by 5,460 people by 8 May 1897 (from a total population of 2,800,000). E. I. CHEN, *The Attempt to Integrate the Empire: Legal Perspectives*, in: R. MYERS — M. R. PEATTIE (Eds.), *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945*, Princeton 1984, pp. 240–274. In fact, however, on 23 May an independent republic was declared and the fight against Japanese domination lasted for 6 months. Finally, the office of Governor General of Taiwan was created on 31 March 1896. S. MAKITO, *The Sino-Japanese War and the Birth of Japanese Nationalism*, Tokio 2011, p. 169.

54 V. LIŠČÁK, *Dějiny Číny, Taiwanu a Tibetu v datech*, Praha 2008, p. 391.

55 Japan was to be exempt from internal transit tax (*likin*), and 7 new ports were to be opened for Japanese trade. Japan also acquired the status of most favoured nation, amongst other benefits. The final document was signed on 21 July 1896. BEASLEY, p. 64.

56 Due to international protest, on 5 May 1895 Japan lost most of its concessions in Korea. DUUS, p. 97.

57 For the division of Chinese territory, see LIŠČÁK, pp. 379–380, 391–395.

58 The USA, which could not take part in the "division of China" due to war with Spain, announced the Hay doctrine, which called for an "open door policy", i.e. the same opportunities and rights for all powers, or equal exploitation of Chinese resources. *Ibidem*, pp. 379–380.

59 ROBINSON, p. 20.

ganised with 13 provinces replacing the original eight, on 1 April 1896 the Gregorian Calendar was introduced, and many more reforms took place.<sup>60</sup> These reforms resulted in the country's modernisation, but because they were imposed by a foreign state, they were considered a breach of national sovereignty and in general perceived negatively by the Korean population as they disrupted the traditional society. Even within government circles, an anti-Japanese, or pro-Russian, faction began to form headed by Queen Min. Miura Goro (1846–1926), who was Japanese envoy in Korea at the time, decided on his own initiative to act without receiving exact instructions from the Japanese government, but with its awareness, and in collaboration with Japanese troops and supported by the Daewongun he seized the Royal Palace and murdered Queen Min,<sup>61</sup> whose body was burned in the palace gardens that same day. The Korean population's natural response was a growth in anti-Japanese feeling, which led to the creation of the so-called Righteous Armies (*ūibyōng*). This feeling was multiplied by the unpopular reforms of Kim Hong-jip's government.<sup>62</sup> The Japanese government issued a declaration to Great Britain, the USA, Germany and Italy stating that Japan was merely defending its interests in Korea, but in reality none of the powers supported Japan's actions. On 11 February 1896, King Gojong accompanied by Crown Prince Sunjong managed to escape from the Japanese-guarded Royal Palace dressed as women to the Russian legation. That day, the government of Kim Hong-jip was dissolved and its members were either beaten by the irate crowds,<sup>63</sup> or managed to escape to Japan.

A new pro-Russian and pro-American cabinet was formed whose leading members were Yi Pōm-jin and Yi Wan-yong. Japan, which realised that without agreement with Russia it could no longer assert itself in Korea, signed the so-called Komura-Waerber Memorandum on 14 May 1896 in which Japan recognised Russia's interests in the peninsula.<sup>64</sup> In June, the Yamagata-Lobanov Agreement was signed in St Petersburg in which Japan gave its permission for Russia to send advisors to Korea, provide loans and construct telegraph lines. The agreement also included a deal that each party could send troops to Korean territory if the other party was informed.<sup>65</sup>

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60 NAHM, *Introduction to Korean History...*, pp. 163–165; ROBINSON, pp. 18–19.

61 Her assassins were Adachi Kenzo and Kunimoto Shigeakira, whom Miura Gorō paid 6,000 yens for killing the Queen. Fifty Japanese including Miura Gorō were arrested and tried in Hiroshima. None of the Japanese, however, were punished for their violent act against the Korean Royal Family. S. K. SYN, *Korean-Japanese Relations, 1894–1904 II*, in: *Korean Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 4–20. According to Peter Duus, the number of Japanese tried in Hiroshima was 40, DUUS, p. 112.

62 For Koreans, one of the least acceptable reforms was accepting Western hairstyles and the cutting of traditional hair buns, which were not just a symbol of national and cultural identity, but also a symbol of maleness. *Ibidem*, p. 116.

63 Prime Minister Kim Hong-jip, Finance Minister Ō Yun-jung and Agriculture Minister Chōng Pyōng-ha were killed. A. C. NAHM, *Korea and Tsarist Russia*, in: Korean National Commission for UNESCO (Ed.), *Korean History*, New Jersey / Soul 2004, pp. 499–523; DUUS, p. 118.

64 For the memorandum contents, see DUUS, pp. 120–121; NAHM, *Korea and Tsarist Russia*, pp. 499–523.

65 The agreement included Yamagata's proposal to divide the peninsula into two spheres of influence along the 39<sup>th</sup> parallel. The Russians, however, rejected this. SYN, *Korean-Japanese Relations, 1894–1904 II*, pp. 4–20.

As such, Russia acquired the same rights as Japan in Korea. Russia subsequently sent a large number of military and financial advisors to Korea and further consolidated its influence in the country with a number of concession agreements.<sup>66</sup> Too much reliance on foreign powers led on 2 July 1896 to the creation of the Independence Club (*Tongnip hyōphoe*) of Korean nationalists (founded by Sō Chae-pil, 1864–1951), which demanded the King's return to the Palace and an independent Korean government.

Under pressure from his own people, King Gojong returned to his palace on 1 February 1897. The years 1897–1904 are referred to as the Gwangmu Reform, when Korea found itself in a position of not being dominated by a foreign power for the first time since the 1880s, and attempted to modernise itself through reforms to the tax and finance system, introducing a modern army, centralisation and building up an autonomous nation state. All this was done in order to strengthen the Royal court, state bureaucracy and Korean nationhood. The Korean King himself (titled *wang*) was crowned Emperor (*hwangwe*) on 12 October 1897 making him equal to the Chinese and Japanese Emperors, and the Kingdom of Chosen became the Empire of Taehan, with a number of the symbols of Korea's vassal relationship to China abolished, and Korea's own alphabet of *hangŭl* supported.<sup>67</sup> In 1899, a constitution consisting of nine articles was created which placed an absolutist Emperor at the head of the state,<sup>68</sup> and in 1902 national symbols were created — a national anthem, a flag for the King, Crown Prince and army. This period, however, was not marked by political stability with the Emperor naming 27 Prime Ministers over the 1897–1907 period.<sup>69</sup>

In September 1897, Alexey Shpeyer (1854–1916) was named new Russian chargé d'affaires in Korea and he began an aggressive campaign to boost Russian influence in Korea. His reckless actions led not just to international conflict,<sup>70</sup> but also to Russia's withdrawal from Korea.<sup>71</sup> The Japanese government decided to take advantage of the situation and on 19 March adopted the *Man-Kan kokan* policy, recognised Russia's sphere of influence in Manchuria in return for Russia's recognition of Japan's sphere of influence in Korea. The result of the first negotiations was the Nishi-Rosen Agreement of 25 April 1898 in which both countries recognised Korea's independence, promised not to interfere in the country's internal affairs, the naming of advisors was to occur only with the knowledge of the other party, and both countries

66 For more, see NAHM, *Korea and Tsarist Russia*, pp. 499–523. A Russian-Korean secret agreement was signed, for example, on Russian protection and military and financial support for a number of military and economic advantages. Ibidem.

67 For more on the Gwangmu Reform, see JANOŠ, p. 129; K. J. KIM, *The Road to Colonization: Korea under Imperialism*, in: Korean National Commission for UNESCO (Ed.), *Korean History*, New Jersey / Soul 2004, pp. 525–550; ROBINSON, p. 23; SCHMID, p. 29.

68 For the contents of the constitution, see DUUS, p. 131.

69 Ibidem, p. 129.

70 Shpeyer removed Briton John McLeavy Brown from the position of Head of Korea's Customs Department and replaced him with Russian, Kiril Alexeev, and Great Britain responded by sending a flotilla to Incheon. McLeavy was later returned to his role. Ibidem, p. 123; SYNN, *Korean-Japanese Relations, 1894–1904 II*, pp. 4–20.

71 The removal of Korea's foreign minister, Yi To-jaeho, led to strong anti-Russian feelings and the unexpected acceptance of Russian threats regarding Russia's withdrawal from Korea. DUUS, p. 124.

agreed not to obstruct each other in building up trading relations with Korea.<sup>72</sup> At the turn of the century, Japan endeavoured especially to acquire a concession for railway construction. Besides this, “*Japan was responsible for an average of 60 % of Korean imports and 80 % of Korean exports*”.<sup>73</sup>

The Boxer Rebellion in China, however, led to a deterioration in relations between Japan and Russia. The very beginnings of the Boxer Rebellion date back to 1898 when an anti-foreigner uprising took place in northern China, reaching Beijing in June where it threatened the foreign powers’ embassy district. Once the situation had calmed down, the so-called Boxer Protocol was signed in September 1901 which allowed powers including Japan to locate their troops in Beijing.<sup>74</sup> For Japan, however, a fundamental danger was the occupation of Manchuria by a Russian army of 50,000 men, something it considered a threat to its own interests not just in Korea, but also in northern China in Manchuria. Great Britain also perceived Russia’s actions as a threat, and it signed a treaty of alliance on 30 January 1902 with Japan. Although Russia signed an agreement with China on 8 April 1902 that it would withdraw its soldiers from Manchuria, the agreement was never fulfilled.<sup>75</sup> The mutual hostility between Russia and Japan grew worse over the course of talks from August 1903 to February 1904 regarding Korea and Manchuria.<sup>76</sup>

On 1 January 1904, Korea’s Emperor Gojong declared neutrality in the anticipated conflict between Russia and Japan. On 7 February, Japan broke off diplomatic relations with Russia, then on 8 February they attacked the Russian Pacific Fleet and the port of Port Arthur without declaring war. On 2 January 1905, Port Arthur fell into Japanese hands after a siege of almost eight months. On 7 March, Russia suffered a decisive defeat at Mukden, and on 27 May the Baltic fleet was almost annihilated in the Battle of Tsushima. On the initiative of American President, Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919), peace negotiations were held in Portsmouth in the state of New Hampshire,<sup>77</sup> which resulted in the signing of a peace treaty on 5 September 1905.<sup>78</sup> Russia was forced to recognise China’s restored sovereignty in all areas of Manchuria, Japanese interests in Korea, the lease of the Liaodong peninsula and the South Manchuria Railway to

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72 DUUS, s. 126; SYNN, *Korean-Japanese Relations, 1894–1904 II*, pp. 4–20, NAHM, *Korea and Tsarist Russia*, pp. 499–523.

73 BEASLEY, p. 75.

74 For the terms and conditions of the Boxer Protocol, see V. HILSKÁ, *Dějiny a kultura japonského lidu*, Praha 1953, p. 268; LIŠČÁK, pp. 381, 404.

75 LIŠČÁK, p. 405.

76 For a more detailed report on Russo-Japanese negotiations regarding Korea and Manchuria, see DUUS, p. 173–178; Japanese Proposals to Russia concerning Korea and Manchuria, 1903, TNA, Cabinet Office 37/65; NAHM, *Korea and Tsarist Russia*, p. 499–523; To and from Korea, Tokio and Wei-Hai-Wei, 1904, TNA, Foreign Office (further only FO) 228/1556.

77 Theodore Roosevelt was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for mediating peace in 1906. ROBINSON, p. 32.

78 Theodore Roosevelt himself supported the idea of Japanese sovereignty over Korea, which was confirmed in the secret Taft-Katsura Memorandum of 27 July 1905. The USA agreed to the Japanese sphere of influence in Korea in return for the recognition of American moves in the Philippines. Similarly, Great Britain recognised Japanese control over Korea through signature of the Second Anglo-Japanese Alliance on 28 August 1905.

Japan, and in place of war reparations, Japan received the southern half of Sakhalin.<sup>79</sup> While the Sino-Japanese War had lasted nine months and cost Japan 200 million yens, the Russo-Japanese War lasted twice as long and cost 1.73 billion yens and led to Japan having a large debt.<sup>80</sup> Five times as many men fought against Russia as did against China, and losses were six times as high. Japan's international status also changed, which as a result of the Triple Intervention after the Sino-Japanese War had not been equivalent to the Western Powers' status. After the Russo-Japanese War, however, the Western Powers began to treat Japan as their equal.

Already during the course of the Russo-Japanese War, Japan forced Korea to sign a number of unequal treaties which led to the creation of a protectorate.<sup>81</sup> Japan sent a so-called Temporary Military Contingent to the Korean peninsula at the start of the war,<sup>82</sup> which later became the Permanent Military Force in Korea, whose task it was to help enforce Japanese demands on the Korean government. Right at the start of the war on 23 February 1904, Japan forced the Korean government under military threat to sign a Protocol which allowed Japan to use Korean military bases and construct new ones within the Korean peninsula. In return, Japan promised in Point 3 that: "*The Japanese Imperial Government guarantees the Korean Empire's independence and territorial integrity*";<sup>83</sup> a clause which Japan was soon to break. As such, Japan took absolutely no account of Korea's declaration of neutrality. Although Emperor Gojong had attempted to implement military conscription before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, he had been unsuccessful due to insufficient funds. Korea was thus unable to defend itself from Japan's military threat. The protocol itself did not meet necessary legal procedures as its full text was only sent to Japan's envoy in Korea, Hayashimu, on 25 February, two days before it was signed. Japan's successes in battle and a financial 'gift' of 200,000 yens from Ito Hirobumi convinced Emperor Gojong to end diplomatic relations with Russia on 19 May.<sup>84</sup> On 31 May, the Japanese government authorised a plan to act within Korea to ensure Japan's military, political, economic and administrative involvement on the peninsula.<sup>85</sup>

The First Japan-Korea Agreement was signed on 22 August 1904, which sent Japanese advisors to the Korean government,<sup>86</sup> who were to have the final say in Korean diplomatic affairs. As for the above-mentioned protocol, this also violated legal re-

79 M. ŠVANKMAJER — V. VEBER — Z. SLÁDEK et al., *Dějiny Ruska*, Praha 2004, pp. 292–293.

80 R. KOWNER, *The War as a Turning Point in Modern Japanese History*, in: R. KOWNER (Ed.), *The Impact of Russo-Japanese War*, London 2007, pp. 29–46.

81 Besides the treaties mentioned in the article, more in Pamphlet Containing Japanese and Korean Agreements Concluded since the Beginning of the War, 1906, TNA, FO 372/20.

82 For the exact composition of Japanese military forces on the Korean peninsula, see T. YI, *Forced Treaties and Japan's Annexation of the Great Korean Empire: An Argument for Illegality of the Annexation*, in: *International Legal Issues in Korea-Japan Relations*, Seoul 2008, pp. 11–60.

83 Ibidem.

84 DUUS, p. 182. The King's spouse also received 20,000 yens.

85 For the approved government plan of 31 May 1904, see BEASLEY, p. 86; DUUS, pp. 184–186.

86 American, Durham Stevens (1851–1908), was chosen as advisor for foreign affairs, who upon his return home to San Francisco led a campaign to support Japanese policy in Korea. On 23 March 1908, two young Koreans living in California, Jang In-hwan and Jeon Myeong-un, made an assassination attempt on him, and on 25 March Stevens died of his injuries. LEW, pp. 475–498.

quirements such as through its title being added after it was signed, presenting the agreement first as a memorandum, and not sending the full text to the Japanese envoy until 4 September. On 17 November, Japanese troops were positioned at key positions throughout Seoul including in close proximity to the Kyōngun'gun Royal Palace (currently Tōksugung Palace). Japanese armed guards were even present in the meeting room and were not called out even on Emperor Gojong's express protest.<sup>87</sup> It was under this pressure that a Convention was signed on 17 November 1905 which dissolved Korea's Foreign Ministry, transferring its powers to a new Resident-General. Not only did this break the Protocol of 23 February 1904 which promised Korean sovereignty, but it was also originally a forced 'agreement' yet documents entitled "agreement" or "convention" are not meant to deal with affairs of such international significance. Names such as the Second Japan-Korea Agreement, the New Japan-Korea Treaty and the Protectorate Treaty began to be used later.<sup>88</sup> Most surprising, however, was that Ito Hirobumi added the official seal of the Foreign Minister taken from Korea's Foreign Ministry without the permission of Emperor Gojong. The agreement itself did not even contain the Emperor's authorisation or ratification.<sup>89</sup> It was this agreement, however, which resulted in Korea becoming a Japanese protectorate, with all foreign envoys returning to their countries of origin on Japan's demand. As such, the path for Japan's dominance over Korea was opened, giving rise to the country's annexation in 1910.

#### JAPAN AND KOREA AT THE TURN OF THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY ABSTRACT

The Meiji Restoration in Japan prefigured a change of mutual relations with Korea. Through coerced Ganghwa Treaty by Japan was Korea opened to the world in 1876. Subsequent three decades Japan sought to consolidate its position on the Korean Peninsula, which became not only economically but also strategically important territory for Japanese government. These efforts led to disputes with China (1894–95) and Russia (1904–05), of which Japan emerged as victor. The signing of the Protectorate Treaty of 1905 was a significant step forward for the strengthening of Japanese dominance over the Korean Peninsula. Five years later was Korea annexed.

#### KEYWORDS

Japan; Korea; China; Great Britain; Diplomacy; Sino-Japanese War; Russo-Japanese War; Annexation of Korea

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<sup>87</sup> For the course of the talks, see DUUS, pp. 190–194; P. PARK, *Discussions Concerning the Legality of the 1910 'Annexation' of Korea by Japan*, in: *Korean Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 4, 2010, pp. 13–41.

<sup>88</sup> For more on the content of the agreement and its legal shortcomings, see T. YI, *The Illegality of the Forced Treaties Leading to Japan's Annexation of the Great Han Empire*, in: *Korean Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 4, 1996, pp. 55–84.

<sup>89</sup> T. YI, *Forced Treaties...*, pp. 11–60.