

The Struggle for Korea, 1876–1882

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In February 1876, the so-called Kanghwa Treaty imposed by the Japanese on Korea had forced the Koreans to abandon their traditional policy of seclusion. However, vast majority of the Koreans considered it an unnecessary and humiliating step, and wished to prevent not only any Japanese encroachment, but, in fact, any Japanese activity in Korea. From the traditional Korean point of view, the Japanese were considered inferior and less civilized people, whose obedience of Confucian rites and knowledge of classical Chinese culture was much insufficient. In fact, since 1644, when the Manchu dynasty conquered Beijing, the Koreans considered themselves the real custodians of Chinese culture. The Koreans especially disliked the Japanese since 1590s, when Hideyoshi invaded Korea and caused enormous harm to the country. On the other hand, even traditional Koreans didn't wish to entirely abolish relationship with Japan and were content with time-honoured forms of relations with Japan.

Japan wasn't the only country which was interfering into the Korean matters. The Middle Kingdom was suzerain of Korea. The Chinese considered Korea their vassal country, whereas the Japanese claimed that Korea was fully independent. Several other countries, like the United States, Russia, and the United Kingdom, were interested in Korea as well. None of these countries had such a strong position in Korea in the period of 1876–1882 that it could dominate at the peninsula. In fact, these years were the last years when the Koreans were fully able to rule themselves, although not much well.

The last Korean king Kojong,¹ who became the king at the age of eleven in 1863 and assumed power in 1874, was a tragic person. In his late years he was a mere puppet of foreign powers, and he had shown lack of will to power. However, in the first phase of his rule, he was both willing and able to support moderate modernization of the country.² In 1875, he severely punished the most reactionary officials who were preventing reaching any agreement with Japan. Later, Kojong reformed Korean government and he chose its officials on his own will, not taking into account whether or not they were members of some influential faction.³

Despite the fact that Kojong was generally able to control state matters, Korean politics was dominated by two clashing factions. King's father Tae'wongun⁴ was a strong reactionary, fully dedicated to Confucian views.⁵ He was a mortal enemy of the powerful family of Min, whose most powerful member was Kojong's wife, Queen Min. In 1875, Tae'wongun had probably assassinated an important member of the Min clan (and his own brother-in-law) by a bomb, and attempted to kill the queen in the same manner.⁶ He was even suspected of poisoning Queen Min's first son, therefore his own grand-

son, by a poisoned ginseng, as well as of planning an elimination of Kojong.⁷ But it didn't seem that he could dominate Korean politics again.

Japan had a vital interest on Korea from many points of view. Korea was a "dagger pointed at the heart of Japan",⁸ and an occupation of its territory by a foreign power would pose a mortal threat to the Japanese. It is uncertain when the Japanese of the Meiji period started seriously to plan to annex or subdue Korea (unrealistic plans of discontent politicians not taken into account). The Japanese definitely wouldn't allow to turn Korea into an enemy base, as far as they had enough power to prevent it. As Count Inoue Kaoru, influential statesman of the Meiji period, who had concluded the Kanhwa Treaty, explained to progressive Korean patriot Kim Ok-kyun in early 1880s: "Our armament programmes are not solely for our own defence, but also aim to assist your country to achieve full independence."⁹ Japan wouldn't accept establishment of unfriendly regime in Korea. And they would welcome Korean self-strengthening, because it was the best way to prevent falling of Korea into hands of potential enemies of Japan. At this period, Japanese statesmen had fresh experience with thorough reforms of Japanese society, thus they had good reasons to believe that the Koreans were able to modernize their country, though slower. In 1870s, Japan experienced several uprisings of former leaders of the Meiji Restoration, who were discontent with the overall course of the reforms and especially with "weak" policy towards Korea. But the last and worst of them, Saigō Takamori's uprising in Satsuma, was crushed in 1877, and since then moderate attitude of Japanese government in Korea hadn't been questioned.

Today, we know that the Korean reforms failed. Korea was smaller than Japan and was in much worse geopolitical position. Traditional Korean financial system wasn't reformed and was unable to provide means for financing the reforms.¹⁰ Furthermore, in contrast to Tokugawa Japan, Korea didn't have even limited contacts with the modern world, therefore was absolutely unaware of Western knowledge and culture. From my point of view,

1) In 1864, Kojong was chosen the successor of King Chol'jong (died 1863). He abdicated in 1907 and was succeeded by his son Sunjong, but in 1905 he proclaimed himself emperor, therefore he was the last Korean king.

2) „Some historians insist that Kojong was a flexible, pragmatic, bold, and innovative reformer, at least in the late 1870s and 1880s. Others describe him as a weak, confused, secretive, and intrigue-minded ruler. Realistically, the negative description seems more valid for the period after 1895... Earlier... he was indeed a pragmatic, flexible and innovative reformer - probably not as much as his counterpart in Japan, Emperor Meiji, but more than Empress Dowager Tz'ushi of China.” Yur-Bok LEE, Wayne PATTERSON, *One Hundred Years of Korean-American Relations, 1882-1982*, Mobile 1986, p. 44.

3) Martina DEUCHLER, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys. The Opening of Korea, 1875-1885*, Seattle and London 1977, pp. 11-13.

4) His personal name was Yi Ha-üng, but he is generally known under his title „Tae'wongun“, which means „Prince-Regent“. He was born in the same generation as Chol'jong, therefore he couldn't succeed him instead of Kojong, because accordingly to Confucian views the new ruler should be one generation younger than his predecessor.

5) Despite this fact, he was unscrupulous enough to collaborate with the Japanese in 1890s, whenever it seemed opportune for him.

6) DEUCHLER, op. cit., note 13. on p. 236.

7) S. C. M. PAINE, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895. Perceptions, Power, and Primacy*, Cambridge 2003, pp. 39-40.

8) This phrase was for the first time used by German advisor K. J. von Meckel, who was in the second half of 1880s an advisor to Japanese General Staff.

9) Quoted in: Jerome CH'EN, *Yuan Shih-k'ai, 1859-1916. Brutus Assumes the Purple*, Stanford (Calif.) 1961, p. 22.

10) DEUCHLER, p. 106.

even more important is that, unlike Japan in the Tokugawa period, Korea wasn't divided into many principalities. Some of Japanese principalities have finally challenged the Tokugawa regime, and the side, which had better adopted modern methods and weapons, had won. There was no internal war in Korea, and contesting factions at the court were using only traditional methods of assassination. There was no opportunity to settle the quarrel between Korean traditionalists and progressive leaders (if there were any) by an open and total war, which would have affected entire Korean society. These faction struggles inside the Korean court were preventing any consensus. On the other hand, Japanese government after the Meiji Restoration, although dominated by several clans which supported the restoration, was able to maintain homogenous views. Those dignitaries who opposed general course of the reforms or of foreign policy have been excluded from the government, and thereafter they were unable to prevent the modernization of Japan by making obstructions inside the government. If they openly resorted to arms, they were totally eliminated, because the government was stronger. As a result, Japanese government was able to promote reforms despite any public disaffection.

Next to "strategic anxiety", another motive for Japanese engagement in Korea was the enormous humiliation of Japan by unequal treaties with the Western countries, and Japan wanted to enhance her prestige by reaching similar superior position in Korea. Although prestigious reasons were important, economic matters were crucial. At this time, developing Japanese industry definitely didn't need to sell its products at Korean markets, because Japanese factories weren't producing high quantities of goods yet. However, the Japanese companies were profitably re-exporting Western-made goods to Korea, and this profit was contributing to their further growth.¹¹ And Korea

was a vital source of grain and raw materials for Japanese factories.¹² Japanese statesmen did their best to interest Japanese merchants in trade with Korea. In August 1876, a merchant named Ōkura Kihachirō, persuaded by Ōkubo Toshimichi, arrived to Pusan and sold his wares profitably, composed mainly from foreign-made textile. Later, the Japanese government decided not to raise any duties on trade among Japan and Korea.¹³ Although the Kanghwa Treaty was signed, it was necessary to implement its stipulations relating to regulations of trade, opening of ports, and residence of Japanese settlers in Korea, as well as to establish Japanese legation in the Korean capital.¹⁴

Korea had to send an envoy to Japan in return. King Kojong appointed a traditional Confucian scholar Kim Ki-su. Between May 22 and June 28, 1876, Kim was abroad. He showed no interest in the Japanese factories and other modern facilities; after his return, this disappointed Kojong, who hoped to be informed about Japanese modernization. Kim with astonishment observed the influence of foreigners in the Japanese treaty ports, and he didn't understand economic changes in Japan.¹⁵

On July 30, 1876, Japanese negotiator Miyamoto Koichi arrived to Seoul to fulfill goals of Japanese government. On August 24, 1876, he concluded a supplementary treaty and trade regulations, which allowed Japanese settlers to move in a range of 10 Korean *ri* (2.5 miles) around treaty ports.¹⁶ It further stipulated that Japan would care of repatriation of any foreigners who would wreck on Korean coast.¹⁷ The Korean government strongly opposed permanent residence of Japanese envoys in Seoul. The treaty furthermore didn't open any new ports to Korean trade, partly due to lack of knowledge of the Japanese authorities about the most opportune places. The task of opening

11) Between 1877 and 1882, the Japanese exported to Korea goods worth of ¥4,603,337. Japan-made products were worth of ¥537,846. Among these, the most important was ironically a raw material - copper - worth of ¥197,909. Among re-exported, Western-made goods, which was worth of ¥4,065,591, was by far the most important shirting (¥2,305,990), followed by cotton cloth (¥296,937) and dyes (¥180,889). See Hilary CONROY, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea, 1876-1910. A Study of Realism and Idealism in International Relations*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 1960 p. 458.

12) Between 1877 and 1882, Japanese companies imported from Korea goods worth of circa ¥5,104,859. The most important of these goods was rice (circa ¥1,529,636), followed by gold (¥972,242), leather (¥829,131), soya beans (¥557,057) and other products. See *Ibid.*, p. 459.

13) DEUCHLER, p. 71.

14) Japanese government didn't expect immediate success at the last point, and was prepared to accept an establishment of temporal legation at Incheon or Kanghwa. See CONROY, p. 89.

15) DEUCHLER, pp. 51-53.

16) For Miyamoto's mission, see CONROY, pp. 87-89, and DEUCHLER, pp. 54-56.

17) Tyler DENNETT, *Americans in Eastern Asia. A Critical Study of Foreign Policy of the United States in the Far East in the Nineteenth Century*, New York 1963, p. 455.

Korean ports was entrusted to Hanabusa Yoshimoto,¹⁸ who had negotiated in vain with the Koreans already in 1872. Since October 1877, Hanabusa undertook a surveying mission on board of a steamer *Takōmaru*.¹⁹ He was surveying southern and western coast of Korea up to Inchon. He found local Korean authorities extremely uncooperative: “*The captain of the Takōmaru asked about the geography of the area. They said they knew nothing.*”²⁰

On November 25, 1877, Hanabusa entered Seoul. He showed Japanese friendliness by offering foodstuffs of Japanese rice for Korea, which was struck by famine, but the Koreans refused.²¹ Hanabusa tried to negotiate the opening of Mun’chōn at the eastern coast of Korea, but the Koreans refused under the pretext that there were sacred tombs of Korean kings.²² Finally, he was able to reach an agreement that coal may be temporarily deposited in the vicinity at the Mun’chōn Bay in order to facilitate further surveying of Eastern coast of Korea. When he was leaving Seoul, knowing that he will return, he left part of his luggage in the city in order to establish a precedent for permanent settlement of Japanese emissaries. However, the Koreans continued their play and with great effort they brought it to him when his ship was about to leave Korea.²³

In late 1878, the Koreans started further obstructions, when local officials at Pusan taxed trade with Japan. Hanabusa landed in the vicinity of the city, accompanied by Japanese marines, whose presence impressed the Koreans enough to rescind the duties. On June 13, 1879, Hanabusa visited

18) CONROY, p. 84 states that his personal name was Yoshimoto, whereas DEUCHLER, p. 57 claims that his name was Hanabusa Yoshitada.

19) CONROY, p. 86 calls this ship *Takōmaru*; DEUCHLER, 58 states that this ship was called *Takaomaru*.

20) CONROY, p. 90.

21) *Ibid.*, p. 91.

22) In 1868, an American named Jenkins tried to violate tombs of Korean kings at the island of Kanghwa in order to acquire sacred treasures, which he aimed to return to Korea in exchange for conclusion of a Korean-American treaty. He was unsuccessful, but after his return to Shanghai he wasn’t punished due to lack of evidence. See Hosea Ballou MORSE, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire. Volume III., The Period of Subjection, 1894-1911*, London, Bombay, Calcutta 1918, p. 3. Hanabusa in vain suggested that presence of Japanese settlers in Mun Chon would prevent any such violation of the aforementioned tombs, because these Japanese would be trustworthy for the foreigners. See CONROY, pp. 92-93.

23) For the first Hanabusa’s mission, see DEUCHLER, pp. 58-59, and CONROY, pp. 89-95.

Seoul again in order to demand compensations for Japanese merchants, and continued negotiating about opening of Korean ports. He succeeded in negotiating the opening of Wonsan instead of Mun’chōn. The treaty was concluded on August 30, and the port had to be opened until May 1, 1880. Hanabusa further pushed forward an opening of Inchon, but Korean government expected strong public resistance in case Inchon were opened, and refused the idea at least nine times, so even Hanabusa’s second visit, which was terminated on September 3, 1879, wasn’t entirely successful.²⁴

Kojong’s position towards China was ambivalent. Kojong wanted to strengthen Korea and didn’t wish an enhancement of Chinese influence in the country; however, he didn’t deny or dare to deny Chinese suzerainty over Korea.²⁵ As long as Chinese grip over Korea wasn’t strong, he inclined to accept Chinese help in modernization of his country. Li Hongzhang, Viceroy of the metropolitan province of Zhili, who was enormously influencing Chinese foreign policy, was afraid of Russian and Japanese designs,²⁶ and wished to strengthen Korea. Today it seems strange, but China at the turn of 1870s and 1880s looked like a relatively successfully modernizing country. Therefore since 1879 Kojong tried to send Korean students and artisans to China in order to educate them in modern methods. Despite Chinese goodwill towards this project, it was extremely delayed.²⁷ More important result of intercourse with the Chinese was Kojong’s faith in the United States.

Since 1879, Li Hongzhang was recommending that Kojong should conclude treaties with Western powers in order to strengthen Korean position towards Russia and Japan. For some time, the Koreans were yet inclined not to deal with the foreigners. Their enmity towards Christianity was shown again in 1878, when Korean authorities arrested some French missionaries,

24) For the second Hanabusa’s mission, see DEUCHLER, pp. 59-61, and CONROY, pp. 96-97.

25) In the Chinese eyes, Korea was “*a dependent state of China, yet free and responsible in the management of both its domestic and foreign affairs.*” CONROY, p. 110. This position “*was not only confusing, but, in fact, incompatible with the modern system of international law and relations.*” LEE, PATTERSON (eds.), p. 16.

26) At this time, Russia seemed much worse adversary of China, for it since the Moslem rebellion occupied large Chinese territories in Eastern Turkestan and the Chinese were afraid that this clash may result in a war. The Japanese, although they occupied and annexed the kingdom of Ryūkyū, which was Chinese vassal, were much less feared by the Chinese. The gradual annexation of Ryūkyū, however, undermined Korean faith in Chinese might.

27) DEUCHLER, pp. 92-93 and 99-100.

which were released next year due to intervention from Beijing.²⁸ But since the conclusion of the Kanghwa Treaty it seemed that the Korean government could be finally persuaded to conclude some treaty. In 1878, the Koreans at the island of Cheju have treated well British castaways, and young British diplomat (later Sir) Ernest Satow considered it a good pretext to visit Korea personally. He landed at Cheju, local officials treated him well, but they refused to accept any letter.²⁹ However, in 1880, ships of Western powers appeared at Korean shores, though not coordinated – in April, the Russians, in May, the Americans, in June, French ships, and in August, the Italians.³⁰ In the summer of 1880, Italian minister to Japan suggested joint naval demonstration of the powers in order to open Korea to foreign trade. Due to insignificance of Korean trade, the British refused to participate, and the plan didn't come into effect.³¹ All this effort was unsuccessful, as well as visits of Russian riders, who crossed the rover of Tumen and tried in vain to present the Koreans letters by Russian authorities.³²

The United States wasn't much interested in Korea from economic point of view, but its government wished to improve position of American sailors in case they shipwrecked at Korean shores. From the Christian point of view there was an opportunity to baptize the Koreans. The United Kingdom wasn't much interested in Korean trade, which was considered of low importance. Much more important were strategic considerations. The British were afraid of Russian ambitions in Korea, and were decided not to allow any Russian gain at the peninsula. As far as the Russians weren't using Korean bases, the British didn't much care who rules in Korea. Russia, on the other hand, planned to acquire at least ice-free naval bases at the Korean peninsula. Other Western countries didn't have real interest in Korea.

Among these foreigners, by far the Americans led by Commodore Shufeldt were the most important. Since late 1878, he undertook a great voyage around the world, and the American government empowered him to conclude a treaty with Korea. In early 1880, the Americans asked for Japanese mediation. It was quite logical, because in the second half of 19th century,

the United States maintained friendly relations with Japan. Earlier, the Japanese had promised to Korea not to transmit letters of any foreign government. They wished a treaty between Korea and the United States, but they did nothing which would irritate the Koreans, thus slow Hanabusa's negotiations with Korea. Of course, they didn't wish worsening the relations with the United States as well. Ironically, while the Chinese since 1879 recommended conclusion of treaties between Korea and the Westerners, the Japanese suggested the Koreans the same as a tool against the Chinese influence. When Shufeldt appeared at Pusan on May 4, 1880, he asked a Japanese consul for mediation, but the Koreans didn't accept this attempt. Thereafter the Americans persuaded the Japanese to enclose Shufeldt's letter in a letter by the Japanese government to the Koreans. Unfortunately, the Koreans returned the American letter unopened, because the enclosure was addressed to the Korean King instead to the Department of Rites³³ and Korea was called "Koryō" instead of "Chosōn."³⁴ When replying to the Japanese, the Korean government wrote literally: *"It is well known to the world that our foreign relations are only with Japan, neighbouring to us, which have been maintained since three hundred years, and that other foreign nations are not only situated far from us, but there has never been any intercourse with them."*³⁵

Shufeldt's unopened letter was returned by the second mission to Japan, which was led by Kim Hong-jip. This mission had an enormous effect on the Korean reforms. Inoue Kaoru advised Kim: *"The American motive is nothing but friendly foreign trade. Your persistence in isolation is bad. It will invite unexpected harm. Therefore accept the American offer."*³⁶ But this was with no effect. A treatment by the Chinese diplomat in Tōkyō, Huang Zunxi-an was much more important. The treatment was called "A Policy for Korea" and recommended negotiating with the United States and warned of Russian danger. Kojong was apprehensive of these advices.³⁷ The Koreans trusted the Chinese more than the Japanese, and in October 1880, members of the Korean court seriously quarrelled about reforms. Their main supporter suddenly became Yi Ch'oe-ung, Tāwongun's elder brother, who, however, wasn't

28) MORSE, p. 9.

29) DEUHLER, pp. 109–110.

30) Peter DUUS, *The Abacus and the Sword. The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895–1910*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1998, p. 50.

31) DEUHLER, p. 123.

32) Ibid., p. 126.

33) Accordingly to Chinese custom, this office was in charge of Korean foreign relations.

34) For the first phase of Shufeldt's mission, see DENNETT, pp. 455–457, and DEUHLER, pp. 110–112.

35) Quoted in DENNETT, p. 457.

36) Confidential documents of Japanese Foreign Office, quoted in CONROY, p. 100.

37) LEE, PATTERSON (eds.), pp. 13–14; DEUHLER, pp. 90–92.

close to ex-regent, because he was jealous of him, and became aligned with the Mins. The reform movement temporarily prevailed.

When Kim Hong-jip arrived in Tōkyō, he suggested that the third Hanabusa's missions to Korea should be postponed, because the Korean government was extremely annoyed by the suggestion to open Inchon. Therefore Hanabusa waited until mid-December, 1880. The Chinese warning bore an unexpected fruit, when the Koreans finally gave up. Kojong personally gave Hanabusa an audience, and on January 4, 1881, Hanabusa started negotiating with the Koreans again. Finally they gave up and in February 1881, Korea promised to open that port within September 1882.³⁸ Even more important was the fact that Hanabusa was present in Seoul permanently. He set up Japanese legation outside the city walls.

In January 1881, Kojong reorganized the Korean government and established so-called T'ongnigimu Amun, Office for the Management of State Affairs (later reorganized in January 1882). It was directing a wide range of functions, foreign relations as well as military affairs, industry and education. Although the Mins were holding important posts in this office, they were far from controlling it entirely.³⁹ King Kojong was aware that armoured clashes with foreign navies were always defeats of Korea, and wanted to reform not only military offices, but also the military itself. In 1880, Li Hongzhang recommended in vain that several thousand Korean troops should be trained at Tianjin.⁴⁰ In May 1881, military attaché of Japanese legation, Lieutenant Horimoto Reizō, was put in charge of training of some Korean soldiers instead.⁴¹ The training field of this unit, which was called *pyōlgigun*, had to be surrounded by a fence, because soldiers from traditional Korean units were observing and laughing their drill.⁴² In 1881, reform-minded officials of the Korean government secretly visited Hanabusa and even suggested that Korea would like to buy ships from Japan, but they were acting in top secre-

38) For the third phase of Hanabusa's negotiations relating to opening of Korean ports, see DEUHLER, pp. 62-64 and CONROY, p. 97.

39) DEUHLER, pp. 92-98.

40) Ibid., p. 103.

41) Ibid., p. 103 claims that Horimoto started training the Koreans in May 1881, whereas DENNETT, p. 467 states that this happened only in 1882.

42) CONROY, pp. 98-99.

cy and without knowledge of the government as such.⁴³ And, of course, Korea finally purchased no Japanese ships.

As well in Tokugawa Japan, some men of rare qualities were able to understand full meaning of the Japanese reforms. As well as the Japanese twenty years ago, some Koreans wanted to secretly visit some foreign countries, ironically Japan. Hanabusa was confronted with the Koreans, who asked him secretly to smuggle them from Korea.⁴⁴ In 1881, Kojong decided to send the third official, though secret, mission to Japan. Among twelve senior officials, who took part on it, were such prospective leaders as Hong Yōng-sik and Ō Yun-jung. Between May and August, 1881, the so-called "Gentlemen Mission" was thoroughly observing Japanese progress, and after they return they reported to Kojong.⁴⁵ Whereas most of the members of the "Gentlemen Mission" were sensitive of Japanese ambitions, some of their junior attendants, like Kim Ok-kyun and Sō Kwang-bōm (both later became leaders of the progressive movement), liked Japan and soon thereafter returned there.

Although some individuals became convinced to support the reforms, in Korea there was no class capable of developing the country in the same direction as Japan. Popular masses were extremely reactionary and weren't interested in any reforms. Confucian scholars despised all non-Chinese influences, whereas Korean merchant class unlike their Japanese colleagues were totally insignificant.⁴⁶ The Chinese mainstream statesmen of the late Qing period usually thought that Confucian regime as such was splendid and that China just needed to adopt western technologies, such as modern weapons, but that Western culture and political forms were useless. Korean traditionalists were much more obscurantist. They didn't understand causes of defeats of Korean troops by expeditionary forces of Western countries prior to the Kanghwa Treaty (in fact, many of them considered these clashes victorious for Korea), and they didn't have use even for modern weapons.⁴⁷ The opposition of Confucian scholars resulted in an anti-reform

43) Ibid., pp. 97-98. However, the Imo mutiny of 1882 delayed this step, and Inchon had to be opened only on January 1, 1883. See DEUHLER, p. 64.

44) CONROY, op. cit., p. 97.

45) DEUHLER, pp. 101-02.; CONROY, p. 98, DUUS, pp. 52-53.

46) Carter J., ECKERT, *The Koch'ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism, 1876-1945*, Seattle, London 1991, p. 8.

47) For one leader of the reactionary movement, „the essence of victory and success lay in the right use of the soldiers and not in technology.” DEUHLER, p. 104.

movement in 1881. Confucian scholars were sending memorials and petitions and demanded punishment of reform-minded officials. An execution of one the main dissidents didn't solve this problem. Even Tae'wongun's illegitimate son tried to overthrow and replace the king, but he was betrayed and forced to commit suicide.⁴⁸ Despite this opposition, Kojong finally decided to conclude a treaty with the United States.

Japanese role in the first phase of Korean-American negotiations disappointed Shufeldt.⁴⁹ Li Hongzhang offered him good services of Chinese government, but Shufeldt had to refuse, because he was instructed to rely on Japanese mediation. However, in late August, 1880, he visited Tianjin and was impressed by Li Hongzhang, who even (perhaps not earnest) suggested that Shufeldt could one day hold an important position in the Chinese navy.⁵⁰ Thereafter Shufeldt returned to the United States, only to return directly to Tianjin in June 1881. Since early 1881, Li and Shufeldt started negotiating about stipulations of the prospective unequal treaty, although no official representative of the Korean government was present. Many of Li Hongzhang's suggestions were advantageous for the Koreans: import duties had to be 10 % (30 % in case of luxuries), export duties at 3 %, ⁵¹ import of opium and missionary activities had to be forbidden, extraterritoriality for foreigners had to be only temporal. However, Li had on mind acknowledgment of Korean position as a dependent country of China. Shufeldt opposed,

48) Ibid., pp. 104–106.

49) There is no consensus whether or not the Japanese wished opening of Korea to the foreigners. DENNETT, p. 457 claims that in 1880 “it was reasonably clear to Shufeldt that Japan was actuated by no earnest desire to have the trade of Korea thrown open to the world, and that the Japanese were manipulating the negotiations to serve their purposes.” Each government of course manipulates everything to serve its purposes. DEUCHLER, p. 110 writes that the Japanese “in their talks with Western representatives... tended to downgrade the value of Korean market. Toward the end of the 1870s, Japan became increasingly apprehensive of Russian designs and hesitantly began soliciting Western contacts with Korea... Political advantage seemed at this point to outweigh the possibility of commercial loss.” CONROY, p. 100 claims that “The evidence would seem to add up to Japan's having made a genuine effort to obtain a treaty. That she did not do more may have been due to... (the fact that) Japan had promised Korea not to transmit letters of other nations to her officials.”

50) DENNETT, pp. 458 and 462.

51) Ibid., p. 459 gives number 3 %, whereas DEUCHLER, p. 121 states that in the final version of the treaty, export duties were fixed at 5 %.

asked the then American Secretary of State for instructions, which he, however, never received. Finally he agreed upon a compromise that Kojong would after signing of the treaty write a personal letter to the American president, reassuring that Korea was a vassal state of China. The final version was agreed upon in Baojingfu and in May, Shufeldt, accompanied by the Chinese naval officials Ma Qianzhong⁵² and Ding Ruzhang, arrived in Korea. On May 22, 1882, the United States and Korea was concluded without any obstruction the co-called Shufeldt Convention.⁵³ Kojong had sent to the American president a letter which claimed that “Korea is a dependency of China, but the management of her government affairs, home and foreign, has always been vested in the sovereign.” On the contrary to Li Hongzhang's wish, this letter was dated prior to the conclusion of the treaty. The American State Department maintained the position that Korea was in fact independent.⁵⁴ On June 6, the British succeeded in concluding treaty with Korea containing the same stipulations, and the same was achieved by the Germans on June 30. Kojong again declared Korean dependency on China.⁵⁵

Since the conclusion of the treaty, King Kojong was extremely friendly towards the United States. He thought that the Americans, who had no colonies and were far from Korea, have no aggressive designs on mind.⁵⁶ This was absolutely right, but this also meant that they weren't much interested in Korea at all. Nevertheless, Kojong relied on American help and gradually he became persuaded that the Americans were “elder brothers” of Korea, while Washington was unaware of this fact.

Thus, in 1882⁵⁷ Korea entered into treaty relations with several powerful nations. Nevertheless, Japanese interest in Korea was by far incomparable to the interest of any foreign country. The amount of trade between Korea and Japan was steadily growing. Whereas in 1871, Korea exports to Japan totalled ¥52,382 and imports from Japan totalled ¥59,664, in 1879 these amounts were ¥677,061 and ¥566,953 respectively, and in

52) Ma was furthermore a respected scholar and actively participated on negotiating the Korean-American treaty.

53) For the genesis of the Shufeldt Convention, see DENNETT, pp. 457–462, and DEUCHLER, pp. 114–122.

54) CONROY, pp. 110–111.

55) DEUCHLER, pp. 124–125.

56) LEE, PATTERSON (eds.), p. 14.

57) DUUS, p. 50 erroneously states that these treaties have been concluded already in 1881.

1881, Korea exported to Japan goods worth of ¥1,882,657 and imported stuff worth of ¥1,944,731.⁵⁸ From Japanese, as well as from Kojong's, point of view, everything went well. Korea started military reforms, reformed its government, and the king established diplomatic relations with a Western country. Since 1881, several tens of Koreans started studying in Japan, and in January 1882, about seventy Korean students and artisans finally started studying at Tianjin.⁵⁹ Generally, it seemed that Kojong's moderate reforms were successful. However, the events of 1882 marked the end of this phase of Korean reforms.

Similarly to the Chinese, superstitious Koreans were persuaded that natural catastrophes were results of bad governmental policy. Serious drought in 1882, which had resulted into prospects of bad harvest, was considered a supernatural punishment for conclusion of the Korean-American treaty.⁶⁰ In July 1882, the so-called Imo mutiny broke out, and it had horribly affected Korean position towards the outside world. The Imo mutiny was caused by negligence of maintenance of traditional Korean troops. These soldiers hated especially military reforms, which were threatening existence of their units, and their wages hadn't been paid for a long time. It was due to extreme corruption of Korean officials. In mid-July, soldiers of one old-fashioned regiment have realized that their rice-rations were of poor quality and mixed with sand, and they rebelled. Nephew of the queen, Min Kyöm-ho, who was responsible for distribution of rice, arrogantly ignored their demands, so they attacked him, and he barely escaped.

At that time, discontent members of the army were already plotting in order to return Tae'wongun to power and to abolish reforms, and king's father was much popular among the soldiers. On July 23, he openly became leader of the insurgents,⁶¹ appointed his son their commander, and ordered them to attack mansions of his political enemies, above all the Mins, as well as the royal palace. His opponents, both Mins and others, were ruthlessly massacred. For some time it was generally believed that even Queen Min either poisoned herself or was poisoned on Tae'wongun's order, but in fact, her female servant sacrificed herself and pretended to be the queen,

58) CONROY, op. cit., p. 457.

59) DEUCHLER, pp. 100–101.

60) CONROY, op. cit., p. 101.

61) At that time, some 30,000 Korean soldiers were dislocated at the area of Seoul. Only some 10,000 of them joined the insurrection, but they were reinforced by many common people.

while Queen Min escaped the palace unharmed.⁶² But among the victims were both Min Kyöm-ho and Yi Ch'oe-üng, Tae'wongun's own elder brother.

Simultaneously the rebels switched their anger on the Japanese. On July 23,⁶³ Lieutenant Horimoto was killed at barracks of *pyölgigun*, and the same fate faced also several other Japanese who were outside their legation. The insurgents destroyed the barracks and even destroyed captured modern weapons. Mutinous soldiers attacked also the legation building; members of Hanabusa's staff were bravely defending, thwarted their attack and waited on help of loyal governmental troops, then hoped to hide in Seoul, but in late evening, Hanabusa realized the vanity of this hope and he decided to flee to Inchon. On July 24, Japanese fugitives reached the city, where they were attacked again, and took shelter on a boat. Thereafter they were found by British frigate *Flying Fish*, which was sent to survey Korean littoral waters, in fact to impress the Koreans. Its crew had realized that the Koreans, instead of being impressed by the foreigners, are killing them.⁶⁴ The frigate saved the Japanese, who on her board left Korea for Nagasaki.

For a short time, Tae'wongun controlled Korea again. His eldest son became commander of the insurgents.⁶⁵ King Kojong had to return Tae'wongun to power. T'ongnigimu Amun was abolished, Korean reform movement was halted. But reactionary forces were unable to "save" Korea from modern world; in fact, they invited foreign armies to Korea instead.

On July 30, Hanabusa's report about the incident reached Tokyo. The first reaction of Japanese government was extremely conciliatory. At a special governmental meeting it was remarked that "*this kind of affair is typical of the time of opening up diplomatic relations in Eastern countries, so*

62) CONROY, p. 101.

63) CONROY, pp. 101–102 states that both royal palace and Japanese legation were attacked on July 23, and that the palace was attacked first, whereas MORSE, op. cit., p. 10 state that the insurgents attacked Japanese legation on July 23 and the palace only the day after, i.e. on July 24.

64) In Seoul and Inchon, altogether 12 or 13 Japanese subjects were killed, and their souls are enshrined at the Yasukuni Shrine in Tōkyō.

65) CONROY, p. 102 quotes Japanese scholar Tabohashi: "*An attack on the Japanese legation... was planned and led by the eldest adopted (! – J.K.) son of the Taewongun, who hoped... to gain an important position,*" whereas DEUCHLER, p. 134 claims that they were "*under command of Tae'wongun's eldest son, Yi Chae-myön.*" Curiously, Yi Chae-myön already had been minister of punishment. See Ibid., p. 98.

*the incident should be given sympathetic consideration.*⁶⁶ It was absolutely right.⁶⁷ Hanabusa had to return to Inchon with a Japanese battalion,⁶⁸ but he had to act peacefully. If you think there is need to open fire, request instructions, was he told at meeting with Foreign Minister Inoue Kaoru.⁶⁹ This failure to pursue an aggressive policy in such a case of fatal violation of international law is a proof that Japan didn't intend to attack Korea at this time. Japanese peaceful attitude wasn't caused by fear from clash with the Chinese, because at that time the Chinese haven't reacted yet.

Chinese overlords of Korea undertook a more aggressive stance. It was in accordance with temporal relief of the Qing government in 1880s. Rebels were defeated, the self-strengthening movement seemed to be effective, and boundary disputes with Russia in Chinese Turkestan resulted in recovery of part of territories occupied by Russia. The Manchu dynasty started expanding modern fleet, and several years later, China even dared to ask Russia for retrocession of the Possieta Bay, which was surrendered to Russia in 1860; the reason was that the Chinese wanted to build a naval base at the Japan Sea.⁷⁰ Shortly, Chinese leaders started to feel false self-confidence.

66) CONROY, p. 102.

67) In 1862, such prospective prominent statesmen as Itō Hirobumi, Inoue Kaoru and other members of the Chōshū clan attacked and burned British legation in Edo. See Iwao (ed.) SEIICHI, *Biographical Dictionary of Japanese History*, Tokyo, New York (N. Y.) 1978, pp. 251, 351 and 361. In contrary, Marius B. (ed.) JANSEN, *The Cambridge History of Japan. Volume 5, The Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge 1989, p. 333 claims that this attack took place in 1863 and that British legation had been attacked for the first time in 1861. In 1863, other attackers burned also American legation in Edo. See DENNETT, p. 398. As far as China is concerned, let's mention just the Tianjin Massacre of 1870.

68) CONROY, p. 110 claims that Hanabusa's escort consisted of 800 Japanese soldiers, whereas Hyun-Cho MYUNG, *Korea and the Major Powers. An Analysis of Power Structures in East Asia*, Seoul 1989, p. 67 states that there were 1,500 Japanese. DUUS, op. cit., p. 67 states that the Japanese planned to send to Korea a Mixed brigade (some 8,000 soldiers), but then gave up this plan because of quick Chinese reaction. But it doesn't seem that Japanese government had such aggressive scheme on mind, because in case the Japanese were willing to send more troops to Korea, they had enough time to do that.

69) CONROY, p. 103.

70) Andrew MALOZEMOFF, *Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881–1904. With Special Emphasis on the Causes of the Russo-Japanese War*, Berkeley, Los Angeles 1958, p. 23.

A group of Korean officials who were abroad asked for Chinese help. They were motivated both by natural fear from Japanese retaliation and by desire to dispose of reactionary clique.⁷¹ Viceroy Li Hongzhang was accordingly to traditional custom mourning for one year in temporal retirement, because his mother had died. But he didn't fail to recommend immediate armoured action. Deputy Viceroy Zhang Shusheng sent three warships and one brigade⁷² of the Huai Army, which was created by Li Hongzhang and was the best Chinese military unit. On August 10, 1882, Chinese warships appeared in front of Inchon. At that time, Hanabusa, accompanied by one battalion of Japanese troops, was returning to the peninsula. On August 12, he landed at Inchon and proceeded to Seoul. He reached Korean capital on August 16, on August 20 he negotiated with Kojong and Tae'wongun, presented Japanese demands,⁷³ but in vain, and three days later he "violently angry" left Seoul for Inchon. Meanwhile, on August 20, several thousand Chinese troops from Shandong landed in Masampo. Naval commanders Ding Ruzhang and Ma Qianzhong, as well as General Wu Zhangqing and his subordinate Yuan Shikai, advanced on Seoul, secretly resolute to crush the rebels by force. Although their troops were numerically weak, they had a significant advantage over Korean insurgents, who lacked discipline, firm leadership, as well as modern training.⁷⁴

The main obstacle to the Chinese plans was Tae'wongun. On August 25, Ma, Ding, and Wu visited him in his residence and were impressed

71) They were led by Ō Yun-jung, who thereafter cooperated with the Japanese, and was killed in 1896 as a Japanese puppet.

72) Different authors give different numbers of Chinese soldiers. CH'EN, p. 18 gives the figure of 3,000 troops, whereas DEUHLER, p. 133 states that "With an advance force of two thousand men, Wu arrived at Masampo on August 20." CONROY, p. 104 claims that "Three to four thousand (Chinese - J.K.) troops poured in." DEUHLER, p. 138 states that "After the 1882 incident, three thousand Chinese soldiers were stationed in and around Seoul." MYUNG, p. 67 states that Chinese forces totalled 5,000 men.

73) For these demands, see DEUHLER, pp. 135–136.

74) Although Chinese troops in Korea were among the best soldiers China had at that time, even their behaviour was poor, they were plundering, and Yuan Shikai ordered to execute several of them in order to discipline them. See CH'EN, pp. 18–19.

by his refined knowledge of Chinese culture. On the next day,⁷⁵ the Korean leader was invited to the Chinese camp, where he was captured, escorted to Masampo, and on board of Chinese warship *Dengyinzhou* sent to Tianjin. He was held captive in China for more than two years.⁷⁶ The capture of Tae'wongun struck the morale of the insurgents, and the majority of them fled. The remaining rebel soldiers were handily defeated by Chinese troops led by Yuan Shikai, and some of the captives were executed. In contrary to Confucian sacred principle of filial piety, Kojong rewarded the Chinese who have captured his father and deported him to China.⁷⁷

While these events happened in Seoul, the Koreans started negotiating with Hanabusa at Inchon. The Chinese commanders tried to undermine Japanese claim that Korea was an independent country and offered to the Japanese their mediation, but Hanabusa resolutely refused. Since August 28 he negotiated with the Koreans aboard Japanese warship *Hiei*, and soon thereafter the Treaty of Chemulp'o plus an additional convention were signed.⁷⁸ They stipulated swift punishment of culprits;⁷⁹ funeral of the Japanese victims; ¥50,000 indemnity for families of these victims; ¥500,000 indemnity for the Japanese government; stationing of one battalion of legion guards at the Japanese legation; Korean mission had to be sent to Japan in order to apologize for the Imo mutiny; the Japanese representatives were granted unrestricted travel in Korea; other Japanese subjects in treaty ports

were allowed to travel in much wider range; and a new treaty port Yanghwa-jin had to be opened.

Not only the Chinese were Korean suzerain; they started to counterweight the Japanese influence in other respects. The attempt to educate Korean students and artisans at Tianjin was a disaster, because they were suffering so many obstacles that they were finally forced to return home. As a consequence of the Imo mutiny, a pathetic attempt to establish an arsenal or other modern facility in Korea was for some time thwarted as well. But, instead of the Japanese, Yuan Shikai started training Korean troops, and whereas the Japanese were training fourteen cadets, seventy Korean cadets departed to Tianjin. The Chinese were prepared to strengthen their position in Korea, and this indeed happened in the next ten years. However, in the long-term development, corrupt Qing regime was unable to utilize these gains.

The events of 1882 forced the Japanese to compare Japanese might with the might of China. At this time, China was still a formidable opponent to Japan. Its newly built Beiyang Squadron, protecting North China coast, was as strong as the entire Japanese fleet. Already in 1882, a member of Wu Zhangqing's staff recommended an annexation of Korea,⁸⁰ another Chinese official, other Chinese official Zhang Beilun recommended war with Japan. Li Hongzhang was more cautious, as usually.⁸¹ Foreign residents at the Far East were expecting that a war between China and Japan was likely, and that the Chinese would win.⁸² Even the Japanese military leaders realized that Japanese might didn't suffice to guarantee victory in case of war, thus they started to plan strengthening of Japanese armoured forces. Whereas in 1880 military expenses had amounted 19% of Japanese national budget, in 1886 they had risen to 25% and in 1890, to 31%. Both army and navy have enormously grown. The state of the Japanese military had improved so much

75) DEUCHLER, p. 133 claims that Tae'wongun was captured on August 26, when he "*repaid Ma's visit of the previous day.*" CONROY, p. 104 claims that he was captured on August 25, whereas CH'EN, p. 19 claims that Chinese troops reached Seoul on August 25, the day after they visited Tae'wongun, invited him to their camp, kidnapped him, and that they reached Masampo on August 27.

76) DUUS, p. 54 states that Tae'wongun was held captive in Tianjin, whereas MORSE, p. 10 claim that he was deported to Baojingfu, the capital of Zhili. The Chinese treated him well and considered him useful puppet in case of necessity, and they released him in 1885, when they felt the necessity to counterweight Japanese influence.

77) DEUCHLER, pp. 133–134.

78) CONROY, p. 105 claims that the treaty was signed on September 3, whereas DEUCHLER, p. 137 states that this treaty was concluded already in the evening of August 30. Of course, both scholars list its stipulations.

79) CONROY, p. 105 states that they had to be punished within fifteen days, but DEUCHLER, p. 137 states that this had to be done within twenty days.

80) It was not an isolated madness. In 1886, Yuan Shikai, then Chinese General Resident in Korea, allegedly wished to convince foreign representatives that Russia plans to replace China as Korean suzerain. Thus he probably wanted to gain consent of the powers to "*take possession of the king, queen, and crown prince and deport them to China, placing the Taiwan-Kun again in power. Thus it was hoped to accomplish the next step in the annexation of the peninsula.*" See DENNETT, op. cit., p. 483.

81) DEUCHLER, pp. 138–140; Zhang's and Li's memorandums from late 1882 are quoted in *The Secret Memoirs of Count Tadasu Hayashi*. Ed. by A. M. POOLEY, Basingstoke 2002, pp. 311–322 (Appendix A).

82) DENNETT, footnote on p. 468.

that the Japanese gradually started feeling they could defeat China. From this point of view, temporal victory of Chinese policy in 1882 had caused an enormous defeat.⁸³

Thus, the events of the summer of 1882 were a tactical victory for the Chinese, who strengthened their position in Korea, and a strategic victory for Japan, which was motivated to enhance her military preparedness. For the Koreans it was undoubtedly a grave defeat, because both of their Asian neighbours have realized weakness of Korean reform efforts, as well as growing interest of their opponent. Both China and Japan have stationed their soldiers on Korean soil, and the growth of their rivalry forced them to interfere into the Korean matters much more intensively than before. Before July 1882 Kojong was able to direct the course of the matters, but after the Imo mutiny he couldn't feel safe. The position of the Mins was shaken as well. Despite bloodshed among members of the clan, the Mins remained an important faction. But whereas prior to July 1882 they were generally reform-minded, since that time they owed their return to power to Chinese intervention, thus became allies of Chinese representatives. This caused deep enmity between them and fanatic reformers, which were admiring Japanese progress and relied on Japan's assistance. Without this unnecessary struggle, the advance of Korea might have continued even despite Sino-Japanese tensions, but the clash between Korean factions gave to China and Japan the best pretext to infringe into Korean internal matters. And even worse things had to come.

Revival of British Liberal Party 1902–1905

PETER SKOKAN

In the general election in January 1906, the British Liberal party defeated the Unionists distinctively. The Liberals gained 397 seats and were supported by 29 Labour MPs and 82 Irish Nationalists. The Unionists shrunk to a minority of only 156, whereas they won in the previous general election as many as 402 seats. The considerable shift in composition of the Commons indicates that a significant change, both in political practice of parties and in popular perception of politics, occurred. The shift is more evident from a fact that the Liberal Party was in a deep crisis since 1886 and the revival itself took place only in last four years after the end of the Boer War. I suppose, it could be said, that the change related to two basic phenomenon. A slow and painful exchange of generations in the Liberal party since 1880s was the first; the second was a slow reintegration of the Liberal Party, which was arising from an absence of theme that could alienated various frictions amongst the Liberals and from opposition to proposed solutions to domestic reforms of the Unionists.

Generation exchange

Since the mid-1880s, the Liberal party faced a deep crisis that was caused by a stubborn endeavour of its leaders to solve the Irish question at any cost. It led to a split in 1886, which weakened the Liberals strongly. However, it cannot be claimed that the party lost considerable number of popular votes, because Francis Schnadhorst's activities in the National Liberal Federation prevented

83) DUUS, pp. 60–65.