

The London School of Economics and Political Science

Relationship with Distance: Korea, East Asia and the Anglo-Japanese Relationship, 1876-1894

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Declaration

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Abstract

Despite the fact that there is considerable literature in the English-language on East Asian history in the nineteenth century, there are very few works that focus on the international politics of the region in the thirty-five years or so between the end of the Arrow War and the outbreak of the First Sino-Japanese War in July 1894. As a result, the history of East Asia in this period is often understood as a period of brief moratorium for the Qing dynasty of China before it finally fell prey to Western and Japanese imperialism at the turn of the century.

In reality, the Qing was neither as passive nor as powerless as is often believed. On the contrary, the Chinese were successful in re-emerging as the most influential regional power in East Asia by the 1880s by making a conscious effort to reassert their influence in East Asia not only through domestic self-strengthening, but also by drawing on the traditional network between the Qing Empire and its neighbouring vassal kingdoms. This point has already been raised by some historians who have focused on Chinese policy towards Korea – a country which became the focus of imperial competition not only between Qing China and Japan but also Britain and Russia from the 1880s. However, little attention has been paid to how other states reacted to China's revival. Much light can be shed on this process by looking at how two of the most significant players, Japan and Britain, related to the reassertion of Qing power and to each other over the future of Korea in the period from 1876 to 1894. This dissertation will demonstrate that it was difficult for the Anglo-Japanese relationship to become closer when the international environment in the region required them to prioritise their respective ties with the Qing Empire.

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Dedicated to my family

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It is no one but myself who, as an author, is responsible for the criticisms that this dissertation deserves. At the same time, I would like to thank every one of my friends and colleagues, as every conversations and debates that I had with them have influenced me in so many respects. Without them this dissertation would have looked very different from the one that I have presented. This includes the people I met before starting the doctoral programme at the International History Department of the London School of Economics in 2011.

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Yu Suzuki
London, 23 September 2015

General Notes and Abbreviations

This dissertation will use the McCune-Reischauer format for Romanisation of the Korean language for most of the Korean words and pinyin for the Chinese. The Hepburn format will be used for Japanese, and prolonged vowels will be differentiated (eg. O and Ō, u and ū). There will be some exceptions, as there are several pronouns that are more commonly known in other Romanisation formats, such as Seoul (instead of Sōul), Hong Kong (instead of Xianggang), Tokyo (instead of Tōkyō), and Ryukyu (instead of Ryūkyū).

In the text, East Asian names will be presented in the order of surname first, given name next. However, when this dissertation is citing secondary sources written in East Asian language in the footnotes, the names of the authors will be presented in the order of given name first, surname last, to be consistent with the format of Chicago Manual Style.

Abbreviations for Footnotes

When this dissertation mentions “Itō,” “Inoue,” “Li” and “Hamilton” in the footnotes, it refers to Itō Hirobumi, Inoue Kaoru, Li Hongzhang and Sir Richard Vesey Hamilton. If it is mentioning other individuals with the same surnames, it will be specified (eg. Itō Miyōji, Inoue Kowashi, Li Shuchang and Lord George Hamilton). All sources with “FO,” “ADM” or “PRO” are from the National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom. Refer to the bibliography for translations of the titles of Japanese secondary sources.

BDFA	British Documents on Foreign Affairs, Part I From the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the First World War, Series E Asia.
BKS	Bōei Kenkyūjo Shiryōshitsu (Military Archives, National Institute of Defence Studies).
BL	British Library
Bodleian	Bodleian Library.
CAC	Churchill Archives Centre.
CLNMM	Caird Library, National Maritime Museum.

CAP	China Association Papers
CDP	Papers of Sir Charles Dilke.
CP	Papers of the 1st Viscount Cross.
CUL	Cambridge University Library.
DEWH	Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton, Vol. II.
DP LRO	Papers of 15th Earl of Derby, kept at the Liverpool Records Office.
EFP	Papers of Sir Edmund Fremantle.
ETMS	Enomoto Takeaki Mikōkai Shokanshū (Collection of Unopened Manuscripts Related to Enomoto Takeaki).
FYD	Fukuzawa Yukichi Den (Biography of Fukuzawa Yukichi).
FYZ	Fukuzawa Yukichi Zenshū (Collection of Fukuzawa Yukichi).
GS	Gaikō Shiryōkan (Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan).
HCH	House of Commons Hansard.
HPP	Papers of Sir Harry Parkes.
HSM	Hanabusa Shishakuke Monjo (Papers of Viscount Hanabusa).
HTKM	Hara Takashi Kankei Monjo (Papers Related to Hara Takashi).
IHKM	Itō Hirobumi Kankei Monjo (Papers Related to Itō Hirobumi).
IKDS	Inoue Kowashi Den, Shiryōhen (Biographical Sources of Inoue

	Kowashi).
IKM	Inoue Kaoru Monjo (Papers of Inoue Kaoru).
ITKM	Iwakura Tomomi Kankei Monjo (Papers Related to Iwakura Tomomi).
JACAR	Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, National Archives of Japan.
JMP	Papers of Jardine Matheson and Co.
JSP	Papers of John Swire and Sons Limited.
KP	Papers of the 1st Earl of Kimberley.
KS	Kunaichō Shiryōbu (Archives of the Japanese Imperial Household Agency).
KSKKT	Kensei Shiryōshitsu (Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room), at Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan (National Diet Library).
LP	Papers of the 5th Marquis of Lansdowne.
MBP	Papers of Maurice de Bunsen.
MaMKG	Matsukata Masayoshi Kankei Monjo (Papers Related to Matsukata Masayoshi).
MuMKG	Mutsu Munemitsu Kankei Monjo (Papers Related to Mutsu Munemitsu).
NGM	Nihon Gaikō Monjo (Official Correspondences of Japanese Diplomacy).
NGS	Nikkan Gaikō Shiryo (Documents on the Japanese-Korean Diplomacy).
NOP	Papers of Nicholas O'Conor

NP HRO	Papers of the 1st Earl of Northbrook, kept at the Hampshire Records Office.
NSP	Papers of Sir Nowell Salmon.
ŌSKM (MSV)	Ōkuma Shigenobu Kankei Monjo (Misuzu Shobō Version) (Papers Related to Ōkuma Shigenobu [Misuzu Shobō Version]).
ŌSKM (NSKV)	Ōkuma Shigenobu Kankei Monjo (Nihon Shiseki Kyōkai Version) (Papers Related to Ōkuma Shigenobu [Nihon Shiseki Kyōkai Version]).
PP	Papers of Ralph Paget.
RCP	Papers of Lord Randolph Churchill.
RP NLS	Papers of the 5th Earl of Rosebery, kept at the National Library of Scotland.
RVHP	Papers of Sir Richard Vesey Hamilton.
SEDS	Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō (Biographical Sources on Shibusawa Eiichi).
SM	Sanjōke Monjo (Sanjō Family Papers).
SMAZ	Shinshū Mori Arinori Zenshū (Complete Collection of Mori Arinori, New Edition).
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies Library Archives.
SP	Papers of the 5th Earl of Spencer.
SP HHA	Papers of the 3rd Marquis of Salisbury, kept at the Hatfield House Archives.
TMKS	Terashima Munenori Kankei Shiryōshū (Sources Related to Terashima

Munenori).

TTI Tani Tateki Ikō (Papers of Tani Tateki).

WGP Papers of William Gladstone.

YAI Yamagata Aritomo Ikensho (Minutes of Yamagata Aritomo).

YAKM Yamagata Aritomo Kankei Monjo (Papers Related to Yamagata Aritomo).

YHM Yamada Hakushakuke Monjo (Papers of Count Yamada).

YKKM Yoshida Kiyonari Kankei Monjo (Papers Related to Yoshida Kiyonari)

Introduction

A curious gap in the English-language literature on East Asian history is that it tends to offer little analysis of the international politics of the region in the thirty-five years or so between the end of the Arrow War and the outbreak of the First Sino-Japanese War in July 1894.¹ Those few historians who do look at this period usually treat it only in passing as their focus is on regional history over a longer timeframe.² As a result, the history of East Asia in this period is often understood within the conventional framework of China's 'century of humiliation,' beginning with its defeat in the First Opium War, and

¹ Works on mid-nineteenth century are; Paul Cohen, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860-1870*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963); W. C. Costin, *Great Britain and China, 1833-1860*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1937); John K. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports 1842-1854*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1953); Peter Ward Fay, *The Opium War 1840-1842: Barbarians in the Celestial Empire in the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century and the War by which they Forced Her Gates Ajar*, Paperback Ed., (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997; originally published 1975); Harry G. Gelber, *Opium, Soldiers and Evangelicals: Britain's 1840-42 War with China, and its Aftermath*, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Michael Greenberg, *British Trade and Opening of China, 1800-42*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1951); Glenn Melancon, *Britain's China Policy and the Opium Crisis: Balancing Drugs, Violence and National Honour, 1833-1840*, (Aldershot, Hampshire and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2003); James M. Polacheck, *The Inner Opium War*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); J. Y. Wong, *Deadly Dreams: Opium, Imperialism and the Arrow War (1856-1860) in China*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). For works on the period after 1895, see E. W. Edwards, *British Diplomacy and Finance in China, 1895-1914*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) ; T. G. Otte, *The China Question: Great Power Rivalry and British Isolation, 1894-1905*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); L. K. Young, *British Policy in China, 1895-1902*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

² Robert Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914*, (London: Allen Lane, 2011); James L. Hevia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China*, (Co-published by Duke University Press [Durham, NC] and Hong Kong University Press [Hong Kong], 2003); Peter Lowe, *Britain in the Far East: A Survey from 1819 to the Present*, (London: Longman, 1981); and Jürgen Osterhammel, "Britain and China, 1842-1914," in *The Oxford History of British Empire, Volume III: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Porter, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 146-169.

the inexorable rise of Meiji Japan.³

In reality, East Asian affairs in the late-nineteenth century were much more complex than this image would suggest, as the Qing dynasty in China was not as passive as is conventionally believed. On the contrary, during this period its government made conscious efforts to reassert Chinese influence in East Asia not only through domestic self-strengthening, but also by drawing on the traditional network between itself and its neighbouring tributary kingdoms. In this context it is worth noting that while the Westphalian principle of international relations was introduced to the Chinese by the Western governments after the conclusion of the First Opium War, the Qing officials and ministers referred to it only when they were dealing with the Western governments and diplomats. When interacting with local East Asian countries, other than Japan, the Qing continued to do so within the traditional framework, in which the Chinese empire acted as suzerain over its neighbours.⁴ From around the late 1870s, they even started to make conscious efforts to strengthen this influence by using the traditional suzerainty of the Celestial Empire to push for overt political and economic concessions from their vassals. This is a point that was first raised by the Japanese historian Banno Masataka in 1970, and then reasserted by Okamoto Takashi in 2004;⁵ meanwhile in English, Kirk Larsen has made the same point specifically in regard to Korea in 2008.⁶ However, their

³ Some of the few works that focus on Chinese foreign relations in the 1880s are; Lloyd E. Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins: China's Search for a Policy during the Sino-French Controversy 1880-1885*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967); G. V. Kiernan *British Diplomacy in China, 1880 to 1885*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939).

⁴ Masataka Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi – Vasuko Da Gama kara Goshi Undō made*, (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1971); Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast*.

⁵ Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*; Takashi Okamoto, *Zokkoku to Jishu no Aida: Kindai Shinkan Kankei to Higashi Ajia no Meiun*, (Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2004).

⁶ Kirk W. Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade: Qing Imperialism and Choson Korea*,

interpretation has not been reflected adequately within the English-language historiography on East Asian affairs in the late-nineteenth century.

These writers do not just point to the fact that the Qing introduced this new policy; they also argue that it was partly successful in expanding Qing power. They contend, for example, that one should not assume that the Qing was acting primarily as a benevolent suzerain working in vain to protect its traditional vassal, the Chosōn dynasty of Korea, from Japanese aggression, as Kim Key-hiuk has argued in his book on the international affairs surrounding Korea in the late-nineteenth century.⁷ Instead, they convincingly argue that the Qing policy towards Korea was neither as reactive nor benevolent as Kim argued.⁸ Instead the Qing regime often accomplished its objectives through imperialistic measures, such as sending military forces to Korea and signing a *de facto* unequal treaty with the Chosōn court. Using this argument, the Qing Empire can be portrayed as no less imperialist than the Western great powers or the Japanese in that it attempted to expand its influence in Korea in a manner that was decidedly in its own benefit.

¹⁸⁵⁰⁻¹⁹¹⁰, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008).

⁷ Key-hiuk Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order: Korea, Japan and the Chinese Empire, 1860-1882*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980).

⁸ Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoy: The Opening of Korea, 1875-1885*, (Published in the Republic of Korea, for the Royal Asiatic Society Korea Branch: University of Washington Press, 1977); C. I. Eugene Kim and Han-Kyo Kim, *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism, 1876-1910*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967); Yur-bok Lee, *West Goes East: Paul Georg von Möllendorff and Great Power Imperialism in Late Yi Korea*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988); George Alexander Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue: International Rivalry in Korea and Manchuria, 1884-1899*, vol. I, Foreward by John J. Stephen, (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1982); Young Ick Lew, "Yuen Shih-k'ai's Residency and the Korean Enlightenment Movement, 1885-94," *Journal of Korean Studies*, 5 (1984); Toshio Motegi, "Ri Kōshō no Zokkoku Shihaikan," *Chūgoku – Shakai to Bunka*, 2 (1987): 89-116; Robert R. Swartout Jr., *Mandarins, Gunboats, and Power Politics: Owen Nickerson Denny and the International Rivalries in Korea*, (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1985).

In addition, because historians know that the Qing was ultimately defeated in the First Sino-Japanese War, it is tempting to assume that Qing imperialism in the 1880s was a complete failure. Indeed, many historians have argued convincingly that the modernisation project that the Qing initiated from the mid-nineteenth century only had limited success in strengthening its power.⁹ This may be true, but it does not remove the fact that some contemporary foreign observers believed that the Self-Strengthening movement was leading to some significant improvements in the Qing's military capability, and that that perception consequently allowed the regime to cast a significant degree of influence over its neighbours in the 1880s. Far from being a powerless regime which was only waiting to be partitioned by the Western nations and Japan at the turn of the century, the Qing worked vigorously to expand its influence in East Asia from the late 1870s onwards, and was temporarily successful at reasserting itself as the most influential country in the region.

To date the research on this topic has focussed primarily on the ambitions and actions of China itself, with little attention paid to how this affected regional politics and how other states reacted to China's revival. Much light can be shed on this process by looking at how two of the most significant players, Japan and Britain, related to the Qing and to each other over one of the most important regional issues in the period from 1876 to 1894 – the future of Korea. The Kingdom of Korea had been under the rule of the Chosōn dynasty since the fourteenth century, but by the late nineteenth century it had become a weak regime, with the result that the Korean peninsula attracted the attention of a number of imperial countries. At one level, it emerged as the focus of competition

⁹ John K. Fairbank ed., *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 10: Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911, Part I*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), chs. 9 and 10.

between the two main powers in East Asia, Japan and China. After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Japan had started to take diplomatic manoeuvres to strengthen its influence in Korea, which resulted in the signing of the Japanese-Korean treaty (Treaty of Kanghwa) in 1876. Thus when the Qing began to reassert its influence towards that country from the 1880s, Korea inevitably became the main flashpoint between the two local powers in East Asia.

However, Korea in this period is also important because it became a pawn in the broader international environment that surrounded the region at that time, namely the rise of global imperial rivalry and especially that between Britain and Russia. As many accounts of the Western international and imperial history have argued, the competition between European great powers started to become more intense from the late 1870s onwards.¹⁰ This state of affairs began to have strong global implications in the 1880s, as the contemporaneous partition of Africa indicates. In this environment, a country such as Korea, which mattered very little in trade terms but possessed an important geostrategic position, could not remain unaffected. By looking at Korea, one can therefore come to a better understanding not only of the dynamics of international affairs within East Asia but also of the broader international environment that existed around the region at that time. Most of the works on the ‘era of high imperialism,’ which started from the late 1870s onwards, tend to focus almost exclusively on analysis of events in Africa, and thus overlook the fact that East Asia was also affected by this global trend in

¹⁰ M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1966); Michael Edwardes, *Playing the Great Game: A Victorian Cold War*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975); David Gillard, *The Struggle for Asia 1828-1914: A Study in British and Russian Imperialism*, (London: Methuen & Co., 1977); Barbara Jelavich, *The Ottoman Empire, the Great Powers, and the Straits Question, 1870-1887*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973).

the 1880s, as both the French colonisation of Indochina and Kōmundo incident indicate.¹¹

As Korea had begun to draw the attention of the Japanese and the British governments, it would be reasonable to assume that they reacted sharply and adversely to the Qing attempt to expand its influence in Korea. This is particularly the case as the Chinese were attempting to strengthen their foothold in that country by utilising the traditional suzerain-vassal relationship with the Chosōn court, a concept which was seen as anachronistic in relation to the Westphalian diplomatic principles adopted by Britain and Japan. Moreover, considering that Britain and Japan were at the start of the twentieth century to become allies, it might be tempting to assume that it was in these years that they first turned to each other for support.

This thesis will demonstrate that the reality was very different. It will show that, contrary to the conventional wisdom, both Britain and Japan conducted their respective diplomacy towards East Asia in the years between 1880 and 1894 in the clear recognition that the Qing constituted the most important regional power.¹² They therefore considered it necessary to accept de facto the Qing claim of suzerainty in Korea rather than objecting to it. Accordingly, there arose in the years before 1894 a unique international environment in East Asia in which the Westphalian and Sinocentric orders were able to exist in tandem.¹³ To a considerable extent this was for Britain and Japan a policy of expediency. It was based on their acknowledgement of the latent power of China, but it also had its roots in their own limited ability to project military influence in

¹¹ French colonisation of Indochina and the Kōmundo incident will be discussed in detail in chapters 2, 3 and 4. For partition of Africa, see, among many, Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan Press, 1981).

¹² Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*, ch. 9.

¹³ The works that offer detailed analyses of this 'dual structure' of international orders in East Asia in the late nineteenth century are; Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*; Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast*.

the region and their mutual distrust. By looking at the international affairs surrounding Korea between 1876 and 1894 one can therefore shed light on both the diplomatic relationship between Britain and Japan in this period and the complicated international environment that existed in and around East Asia, which is still overlooked by many historians today.

Historiography on the Anglo-Japanese Relations, East Asia and Korea, 1876-1894

Similar to the problem with the overall historiography on East Asian affairs from 1876 to 1894, there is little in the existing literature on the Anglo-Japanese relationship that sheds light on this period. The works that have been produced on the nineteenth century tend to concentrate either on the years around the Meiji Restoration of 1868, a time of domestic upheaval in Japan, or the period after 1895 in which the British and Japanese governments started to contemplate forming an alliance with each other.¹⁴ There is not much literature on the period in-between, and the few existing works that do exist tend to deal with economic relations or cultural interactions instead of the political and strategic

¹⁴ For works that touch on the Anglo-Japanese relationship around the Meiji Restoration in English, see Michael R. Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); William G. Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan, 1834-1858*, (London: Luzac and Co., 1951); William McOmie, *The Opening of Japan, 1853-1855: A Comparative Study of the American, British, Dutch and Russian Naval Expeditions to Compel the Tokugawa Shogunate to Conclude Treaties and Open Ports to their Ships*, (Folkestone, Kent: Global Oriental, 2006). For literature on the period after 1894, see Ian Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires 1894-1907*, (London: The Athlone Press, 1966); Ian Nish, “Origins of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance: In the Shadow of Dreibund,” in *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922*, ed. Philips Payson O’Brien, (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004): 8-25; T. G. Otte, *The China Question: Great Power Rivalry and British Isolation, 1894-1905*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

dimensions.¹⁵ Another problem with the existing works on Anglo-Japanese relations in this period is that they tend to focus on issues that were purely bilateral, and do not offer detailed analysis on how the relationship between these two countries was influenced by their respective diplomatic environments.¹⁶

In addition, there are several shortcomings in the literature on the British and Japanese policies towards East Asia and Korea, which are directly relevant to the topic of this dissertation. First of all, there are very few works on how the British government formulated its policy towards Korea. While there are some secondary sources in English language that look at the Russian and American policies towards Korea, there are almost no works that focus on the British side of the story.¹⁷ There are some studies on this

¹⁵ Perhaps the only exception to this rule is Olive Checkland, *Britain's Encounter with Meiji Japan, 1868-1912*, (London: Macmillan, 1989). For economic interactions, see, for example, Janet E. Hunter and Shinya Sugiyama, "Anglo-Japanese Economic Relations in Historical Perspective, 1600-2000: Trade and Industry, Finance, Technology and the Industrial Challenge," 1-109; Kanji Ishii, "British-Japanese Rivalry in Trading and Banking," 110-132, both in Janet E. Hunter and Shinya Sugiyama eds. *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations 1600-2000, Vol. 4: Economic and Business Relations*, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002). For cultural interactions, see, among many, Gordon Daniels and Chushichi Tsuzuki eds., *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600-2000, Vol. 5 Social and Cultural Perspectives*, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), parts I and II. Also see Toshio Yokoyama, *Japan in the Victorian Mind: A Study of Stereotyped Images of a Nation, 1850-80*, (Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: The Macmillan Press, 1987).

¹⁶ Works that represent this tendency are the five-volume series of *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations*, general editors Chihiro Hosoya and Ian Nish. See also Checkland, *Britain's Encounter with Meiji Japan*; Gordon Daniels, *Sir Harry Parkes: British Representative in Japan 1865-83*, (Richmond, Surrey: Japan Library, 1996); Grace Fox, *Britain and Japan, 1858-1883*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); H. J. Jones, *Live Machines: Hired Foreigners and Meiji Japan*, (Tenterden, Kent: Paul Norbury Publications, 1980).

¹⁷ For Russian policies towards East Asia and Korea, see Alexander Lukin, *The Bear Watches the Dragon: Russia's Perceptions of China and the Evaluation of Russian-Chinese Relations since the Eighteenth Century*, (Armonk NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003); Andrew Malozemoff, *Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, with Special Emphasis on the Causes of the Russo-Japanese War*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958); Yō Sasaki, "1880 nendai ni okeru Rochō Kankei – 1885 nen no 'Dai Ichiji Rochō Mitsuyaku o Chūshin toshite," *Han*, 106 (May 1987): 1-55; Yō Sasaki, "The International Environment at the Time of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895):

topic in the Japanese language, but they are still relatively few in number, and therefore historians have little knowledge about British policy towards Korea in the period between 1876 and 1894.¹⁸ Compared to the British side of the story, there is no shortage of literature on Japanese policy towards Korea, due to the fact that Japanese imperialism towards East Asia has drawn the close attention of historians from the 1950s onwards. A problem with these secondary sources, however, derives from the fact that they too are heavily influenced by the benefit of the hindsight. Historians know that Japan emerged as the most successful regional power in East Asia by the Edwardian era, and that it turned Korea into its protectorate in 1905 before annexation in 1910. As a result, many assume that Japan was always a powerful regional great power that could bully its neighbours in East Asia, and that it must have possessed a blueprint to annex Korea ever since the Meiji Restoration of 1868.¹⁹ Even Kirk Larsen, whose book offers a detailed and convincing analysis of Qing imperialism towards Korea, writes under the assumption that the Japanese had a long-term ambition to annex Korea.²⁰ Therefore, he argues, the Japanese

Anglo-Russian Far Eastern Policy and the Beginning of the Sino-Japanese War," *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, 42 (1984): 1-74; Seung Kwon Synn, *The Russo-Japanese Rivalry Over Korea, 1876-1904*, (Seoul: Yuk Phub Sa, 1981). For the American policy towards Korea, see Tae-Hwan Kwak ed., *US-Korean relations 1882-1982*, (Seoul: Institute for Far Eastern Studies, Kyungham University, 1982); R. T. Pollard, "American Relations with Korea, 1881-1895," *The Chinese Social and Political Science Review*, 16:3 (1932).

¹⁸ Yasuko Hirose, "Nisshin Sensōmae no Igirisu Kyokutō Seisaku no Ichikōsatsu: Chōsen Mondai o Chūshin toshite," *Kokusai Seiji*, 51 (Oct. 1974): 129-154; Kiernan, *British Diplomacy in China, 1880 to 1885*; Sasaki, "The International Environment at the Time of the Sino-Japanese War"; Takao Kobayashi, *19 Seiki Igirisu Gaikō to Higashi Ajia*, (Tokyo: Sairyūsha, 2012).

¹⁹ Deuchler, *The Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoy*; Akira Iriye, "Japan's Drive to Great Power Status," in *The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. 5: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Marius B. Jansen, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989): 721-782; Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*; Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade*; Lee, *West Goes East*; Jun Uchida, *Brokers of Empire: Japanese Settler Colonialism in Korea, 1876-1945*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011).

²⁰ Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade*, 272-3.

did not hesitate to push for annexation once they had managed to drive out their competitors, the Qing and Russia.²¹ Secondary sources in Japanese language have also, up until about the late-1970s, argued that the Japanese government in the early Meiji government possessed strong territorial ambitions.²²

This line of argument ignores the fact that Japan in the years before 1894 was a small regional power in East Asia working desperately to uphold its independence. Japanese modernisation was far from complete in the 1880s, and thus the Japanese decision-makers often had to devote more attention and resources to domestic reform rather than diplomacy, which inevitably restrained their ability to engage in overseas adventurism.²³

²¹ Ibid.

²² See, among many, Bokurō Eguchi, *Nihon no Rekishi 32: Gendai no Nihon*, (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1976); Michio Fujimura, *Nisshin Sensō – Higashi Ajia Kindaishi no Tenkanten*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973); Akira Nakatsuka, *Nisshin Sensō no Kenkyū*, (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1968); Chong-gün Pak, *Nisshin Sensō to Chōsen*, (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1982); Zezhou Peng, “Kōshin Jihen o Meguru Inoue Gaimukyō to Furansu Kōshi tono Kōshō,” *Rekishigaku Kenkyū*, 282 (Nov 1963): 36-44; Zezhou Peng, *Meiji Shoki Nikkanshin Kankei no Kenkyū*, (Tokyo: Haniwa Shobō, 1969); Takuji Shibahara, *Nihon Kindaika no Sekaishiteki Ichi*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1981); Takuji Shibahara, “Taigaikan to Nashonarizumu,” in *Nihon Kindai Shisō Taikei 12: Taigaikan*, eds. Takuji Shibahara, Takaaki Ikai and Masahiro Ikeda, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1989); Shigeki Tōyama, *Tōyama Shigeki Chosakushū, Dai 1 shū: Meiji Restoration*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1991); Takako Tsuda, “1880 nendai ni okeru Nihon Seifu no Higashi Ajia Seisaku Tenkai to Rekkyō,” *Shigaku Zasshi*, 91:12 (Dec 1982): 1787-1819; Kentarō Yamabe, *Nihon no Kankoku Heigō*, 2nd ed., (Tokyo: Taihei Shuppansha, 1970; originally published 1966). Takahashi Hidenao and Saitō Seiji offer the best analyses on the Japanese historiography on the origins of the First Sino-Japanese War, and this dissertation follows along the line that they forwarded as well. See Seiji Saitō, *Nisshin Sensō no Gunji Senryaku*, (Tokyo: Fuyō Shobō, 2003), 1-4; Hidenao Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*, (Tokyo: Tokyo Sōgensha, 1995), 311-3.

²³ There are many secondary sources that analyse Japanese Westernisation. For the work that offers the overview, see Jun Suzuki, *Ishin no Kōsō to Tenkai*, (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2002). There is no single work in English that offers a general overview. For the modernisation of political institution, see William Beasley, “Meiji Political Institutions,” in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 5, 618-673. For military reforms, see Edward Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 23-34; David C. Evans and Mark R. Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1997). For the economic aspects, see Hunter, and Sugiyama, “Anglo-Japanese Economic Relations in Historical Perspective, 1600-2000,” 1-35. For the impact that these reforms had on Japanese society, see the

It also ignores the fact, as noted above, that the Qing was recognised as the strongest regional power in East Asia for much of the period between 1876 and 1894. Historians, such as Tabohashi Kiyoshi and Hilary Conroy, raised these points before 1960, but their arguments were not adequately reflected within the historiography for a long time.²⁴ It was only after Takahashi Hidenao produced a series of articles in the late 1980s that the general line of argument on Japanese policy towards Korea before 1894 was revised.²⁵ Conroy, Tabohashi and Takahashi all point out convincingly that there was no consensus within the Japanese decision-making circle on the policy that they should pursue towards Korea.²⁶ They also point out that, while there were individuals who called for an aggressive policy, those who mattered the most in the Japanese decision-making circle largely kept their distance from such opinions. Peter Duus also forwarded a similar argument in 1995, although his book focuses primarily on the period after 1895 and thus discusses the period before that year only briefly.²⁷ Compared to Duus, Conroy is more useful because he offered a detailed depiction of the debates within the Japanese decision-making circle about policy towards Korea by devoting four chapters of his book to the period before the outbreak of the First Sino-Japanese War. He argues that, at least in the years immediately before the outbreak of that conflict, Japanese policy towards Korea was generally cautious and reactive, rather than vigorous and expansionist; the bottom

relevant chapters in Daniels and Tsuzuki ed., *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations 1600-2000*, vol. 5; Jansen ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 5.

²⁴ Hilary Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea: 1868-1910 – A Study of Realism and Idealism in International Relations*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960); Kiyoshi Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, 2 vols., ed. Chōsen Sōtokufu (Office of the Governor-General of Korea), (Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1973; originally published in 1940); Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*.

²⁵ See, among many, Yasuko Hirose, “Kōkatō Jiken no Shūhen,” *Kokusai Seiji*, 37 (Oct 1968/Special Issue): 23-40; Iriye, “Japan’s Drive to Great Power Status,” 721-782.

²⁶ Ibid; Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*.

²⁷ Peter Duus, *The Abacus and Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea 1895-1910*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

line was that there was no long-term blueprint for annexation. Takahashi has argued along the same lines, and has also added to the historiography by providing a detailed analysis of the environment that surrounded the Japanese decision-makers. Specifically, he has described how the Japanese domestic political situation affected policy towards Korea. Takahashi's argument has now become the orthodoxy within the Japanese-language historiography on Japanese policy towards Korea before 1894, but his argument, as well as those of Conroy and Duus, has not yet been adequately reflected within the English-language historiography.²⁸

Another shortcoming in the existing literature on the Anglo-Japanese relationship in the nineteenth century is that it tends to emphasise the cordial aspects of the interaction between these two countries. Grace Fox and Olive Checkland, for example, depict the British as benevolent instructors in modern civilisation, and the Japanese as zealous students trying to learn as much as possible from the British.²⁹ Many of the historians working on the origins of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, formed in 1902, also assume that Japan and Britain had many interests in common and that a strong mutual sympathy developed through the late-nineteenth century, so that by the late 1890s the formation of alliance was all but inevitable.³⁰

Without doubt, it is impossible for any two countries to cooperate effectively if they

²⁸ For literature that follow the line of Takahashi's argument, see the works by Ōsawa Hiroaki, his latest being "Chōsen Eisei Chūritsuka Kōsō to Nihon Gaiko – Nisshin Sensō Zenshi," in *Nihon no Gaikō, Dai 1 Kan: Gaikōshi Senzenhen*, ed. Toshikazu Inoue, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2013): 43-64.

²⁹ Checkland, *Britain's Encounter with Meiji Japan*; Fox, *Britain and Japan*.

³⁰ Yōichi Hirama, *Nichiei Dōmei: Dōmei no Sentaku to Kokka no Seisui*, (Tokyo: PHP Kenkyūjo, 2000), 3-7; Shigeru Kurobane, *Teikoku Gaikō no Kotsuzui – Nichiei Dōmei no Kiseki*, vol. 1, (Tokyo: Bunka Shobō Hakubunsha, 1987), 11; Shigeru Murashima, "The Opening of the Twentieth Century and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1895-1923," in *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, Vol. 1: The Political-Diplomatic Dimension, 1600-1930*, eds. Ian Nish and Yoichi Kibata, with Tadashi Kuramatsu, (London: Macmillan, 2000): 159.

completely lack any common interests. However, it also goes without saying that cordiality and cooperation are never the only constants in any diplomatic relationship.³¹ No bilateral relationship is that simple, as each country has its own interests. Whenever these interests coincide, they can lead to cooperation, but whenever they conflict, they alternatively can provoke friction. For Japan, it is clear that the local situation in East Asia, due to its obvious geographical proximity, inevitably cast a strong influence over its foreign policy; accordingly, the Japanese often prioritised relations with the Chinese and Koreans over their ties with the Western countries, including Britain. The situation was similar from the British perspective as well, because what they deemed as their most important interest in East Asia was their trade in China, and not their relations with Japan. Moreover, East Asia itself was considered much less important within British global interests than India or the Middle East, and also, as Britain was a European nation, its decision-makers naturally placed strong importance on their relations with the other Western great powers. One must always remember that the British government formulated its policy towards Japan within this broader context. This does not necessarily mean that the Anglo-Japanese relationship was hostile, as these two countries could cooperate when they had shared common interests in East Asia, but in many cases the pressures exerted on them kept them apart.

It must also be remembered that the most important diplomatic issue between Britain and Japan throughout the late-nineteenth century was the negotiations over treaty revision. Japanese decision-makers saw the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1858 as an agreement that imposed severe restrictions on their administrative and jurisdictional abilities, as it denied

³¹ Examples of some of the few works that make these points are: Antony Best “The ‘Ghost’ of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance: An Examination into Historical Myth-Making,” *The Historical Journal*, 49:3 (2006): 811-831; Yoshitaka Katayama, “Fukuzawa Yukichi no ‘Nichiei Dōmeiron Saikō,’ *Nenpō Nihon Shisōshi*, (Mar 2009): 1-11.

them tariff autonomy and granted extraterritoriality to the Western residents in Japan. They therefore wished to revise the existing treaty, which is often called an ‘unequal treaty’ by historians, in order to remove this obstacle.³² On the other hand, the British regarded the treaty as a necessary tool to protect and facilitate free trade in Japan, while the treaty-port population – whose livelihood depended on commerce in Japan – was strongly opposed to the idea of abolishing extraterritoriality and handing tariff autonomy to the Japanese government. Such views were shared by Sir Harry Parkes, the Minister Resident in Tokyo who originally had been a member of the consular service in China, and by senior officials in London who remained somewhat cautious about the idea of treaty revision until his departure in 1883.³³ Negotiations proceeded after Parkes’s departure, but – to the frustration of both the British and the Japanese – at a much slower pace than expected.

³² There are only a few works on treaty revision in the English language. See; James Hoare, “The Era of the Unequal Treaties, 1858-1899,” 107-130 and Yuichi Inouye, “From Unequal Treaty to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1867-1902,” 131-158, both from *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations*, vol. 1. Also Louis G. Perez, *Japan Comes of Age: Mutsu Munemitsu and the Revision of the Unequal Treaties*, (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999). More recently, Jacques Hymans has written on this topic from the perspective of international relations. See his “Why Recognize? Explaining Victorian Britain’s Decision to Recognize the Sovereignty of Imperial Japan,” *The Korean Journal of International Studies*, Vol.12, Special Issue (May 2014): 49-78. In contrast, the historiography on this topic is much more elaborate in Japanese. See, among many, Akihisa Fujiwara, *Nihon Jōyaku Kaiseishi no Kenkyū – Inoue Ōkuma no Kaisei Kōshō to Ōbei Rekkoku*, (Tokyo: Yūshōdō, 2004); Yasuko Hirose, “Inoue Jōyaku Kaisei Kōshō ni Kansuru Ichikōsatsu,” *Kindai Chūgoku Kenkyū*, 7 (1966); Tentarō Inao, *Jōyaku Kaiseiron no Rekishiteki Tenkai*, (Tokyo: Komine Shoten, 1976); Kiyoshi Inoue, *Jōyaku Kaisei*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Bunko, 1955); Kaoru Iokibe, “Jōyaku Kaisei Gaikō,” in *Nihon no Gaikō, Dai 1 Kan: Gaikōshi Senzenhen*, ed. Toshikazu Inoue, Sumio Hatano and Tetsuya Sakai, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2013); Kaoru Iokibe, *Jōyaku Kaiseishi: Hōken Kaifuku eno Tenbō to Nashonarizumu*, (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 2010); Takashi Ishii, *Meiji Shoki no Kokusai Kankei*, (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1977); Kazuo Komiya, *Jōyaku Kaisei to Kokunai Seiji*, (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1962); Kazuo Ōishi, *Jōyaku Kaisei Kōshōshi, 1887-1894*, (Kyoto: Shibunkaku, 2008); Shigeru Yamamoto, *Jōyaku Kaiseishi*, (Tokyo: Takayama Shoin, 1943). Note, however, that while these works analyse the Japanese stance on this issue, little has been written about the British perspective.

³³ Daniels, *Sir Harry Parkes*, chs. 4-6, 8-10.

These two countries also came from very different cultural backgrounds. The Japanese often could not understand many of the customs, rituals and beliefs that were shared by people from ‘Western society’ regardless of their nationality. Moreover, the decision of the Tokugawa Shogunate – the regime that placed the Japanese islands under *de facto* control from the early-sixteenth century to 1868 – to open up the country to the West in the 1850s made many Japanese dissatisfied, and this sentiment occasionally unleashed xenophobic violence against those uninvited aliens who looked and acted drastically differently from themselves; such incidents led the British to undertake two military operations against the Japanese in the 1860s.³⁴ After the 1860s, the Japanese made determined efforts to Westernise their society so that they could be better understood and respected by Westerners, but it took some time until Japan was recognised by the great powers as a member of their international community. It was also quite common for the British to view the Japanese people in racist terms.³⁵ Such practices were observed well into the twentieth century, and frustrated the Japanese. For their part, the Japanese occasionally engaged in xenophobic outbursts.³⁶ Finally, economic historians point out that as Japanese products started to be exported into East Asian markets from the late 1880s onwards, strong trade friction developed between Britain and

³⁴ Fox, *Britain and Japan*, ch. 2.

³⁵ Antony Best, “Race, Monarchy, and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922,” *Social Science Japan Journal*, 9:2 (Oct, 2006): 171-186; Antony Best, “The Role of Diplomatic Practice and Court Protocol in Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1867-1900,” in *The Diplomats’ World: A Cultural History of Diplomacy, 1815-1914*, eds. Markus Mösslang and Torsten Riotte, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): 231-253; Rotem Kowner, “Lighter than Yellow, but not Enough: Western Discourse on the Japanese ‘Race’ 1854-1904,” *The Historical Journal*, 43:1 (Mar. 2000): 103-133; Rotem Kowner, “Skin as a Metaphor: Early European Racial Views on Japan, 1548-1853,” *Ethnohistory*, 51:4 (Fall 2004): 751-778; T. G. Otte, “A Very Great Gulf”: Late Victorian British Diplomacy and Race in East Asia,” in *Race and Racism in Modern East Asia: Western and Eastern Constructions*, eds. Rotem Kowner and Walter Demel (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

³⁶ James E. Hoare, *Japan’s Treaty Ports and Foreign Settlements: The Uninvited Guests 1858-1899*, (Folkestone, Kent: Japan Library, 1994); Jones, *Live Machines*.

Japan.³⁷ Although this is not to argue that there was no aspect of cooperation in the Anglo-Japanese relationship, it is apparent that there were many issues that prevented the British and the Japanese from holding strong sympathy towards each other. In order for researchers to offer more objective historical analysis, they must shed light on both of these aspects and examine how they affected the relationship from a more holistic perspective.

This thesis will therefore examine the Anglo-Japanese relationship in the late-nineteenth century from a different perspective than the existing works by focusing on how the international environment surrounding East Asia affected the relationship between these two countries. This thesis will also address some of the conventional misunderstandings about East Asian and Korean affairs in the period between 1876 and 1894, which are prevalent especially in the English-language literature, to offer a more accurate analysis of how the relationship between Britain and Japan was influenced by the international environment than hitherto. By doing so, this dissertation will add to the existing literature on East Asian regional affairs and general international history in the late-nineteenth century by demonstrating the clear effect that China's revival had on two of the key regional powers.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation will be divided into six chapters. The first chapter will deal with the Anglo-Japanese relationship in the years before the outbreak of Imo mutiny in Seoul in

³⁷ Hunter and Sugiyama, "Anglo-Japanese Economic Relations in Historical Perspective," 1-109; Kanji Ishii, "British-Japanese Rivalry in Trading and Banking," 110-132.

July 1882. This was the period when the Japanese, who had conducted relations with their neighbours within a traditional East Asian framework until 1868, started to urge the Koreans to re-establish relations based upon Westphalian principles and tried to increase their foothold in the Korean peninsula. This demand led initially to a negative reaction from the court in Seoul, and the Qing officials started to see the Japanese with stronger suspicion, fearing that the latter might be interested in annexing the kingdom that lay in their frontier. The Chinese thus started to make stronger measures to retain their influence in Korea. Yet, despite all of these reactions, the Japanese managed to sign a treaty with the Chosōn, the Treaty of Kanghwa, in 1876, as it was deemed as the very important step to strengthen their influence in their neighbouring kingdom.

The chapter will also outline how the British started to become interested in signing their own treaty with Korea. From the late-1870s, the imperial competition between the European great powers became steadily more intense, and the British government started to feel the need to take some measures to check Russian encroachment into Asia, even into countries that were not particularly important in themselves, such as Korea. They therefore concluded a treaty with the Chosōn in June 1882 for this purpose. This therefore was a period when the East Asian and Western powers started to establish their respective footholds in Korea. Simultaneously, though, the negotiations over treaty revision progressed much slower than the Japanese wished, and it was therefore difficult for the Anglo-Japanese relationship to become cordial.

The second chapter will analyse the Anglo-Japanese relationship in the period between September 1882 and April 1884, when both the British and Japanese were starting to perceive that the Qing was emerging as the most important regional power in East Asia. Prior to these years, they did not consider the Chinese claim of traditional suzerainty over

Korea as particularly important. However, by the late-1870s, Qing decision-makers became concerned about the fact that various countries annexed, or were trying to annex, the regions which lay on their frontiers, and started to feel the need to be more assertive than they had been in the past to strengthen their foothold in these regions, including those that belonged to their traditional vassals. These actions started to make the British and the Japanese feel that they must understand that the Chinese placed significant importance in upholding their influence as a traditional suzerain of the neighbouring kingdoms.

This recognition became sharper after the series of crises which broke out in East Asia in the period between May 1884 and February 1887. During this period, the Japanese became entangled in the Kapsin coup, which broke out in Seoul in December 1884, and the British government instructed its squadron in East Asia to occupy Kōmundo in April 1885. These were both poorly planned military manoeuvres, which put both of these countries in diplomatic isolation, and unleashed destabilising war-scares in the region. In order to get out of these difficulties, both the British and Japanese governments had to make diplomatic concessions to the Qing so that the Chinese would use their influence to restore regional stability. Therefore, they both decided to engage in *de facto* recognition of the superiority of Qing influence in East Asia, and chose to turn a blind eye to Chinese attempts to expand their influence through reasserting their claim of traditional suzerainty over their neighbours, including Korea. As these events were important in establishing Qing China as the most important regional power, this thesis will devote two chapters on these years of crisis. The third chapter will deal with the period between May 1884 and October 1885, when the international tension in East Asia was at its peak. The fourth one will focus on the events which occurred from November 1885 to February 1887. By this time, the war-scare in East Asia had subsided, but the regional order had not yet been

fully restored, as the British launched a military expedition towards Upper Burma in November 1885, and also their squadron continued to occupy Kōmundo until early 1887. The British thus had to continue relying on Qing influence to get out of these troubles. The most important individuals in the Japanese decision-making circle also thought by this time that they could not dare to afford losing the goodwill of the Chinese officials if they wished to uphold their interests in East Asia.

The fifth chapter will analyse the Anglo-Japanese relationship in the years between March 1887 and July 1892, when both the British and Japanese decision-makers started to prioritise their relationship with the Chinese instead of each other. There is a scarcity of secondary literature about this period, perhaps because it was relatively uneventful. However, the events during this period were important in creating the international environment which made the outbreak of the First Sino-Japanese War possible. Then, the sixth chapter will investigate how the British and the Japanese conducted diplomacy towards each other in the years immediately before the outbreak of war – August 1892 to July 1894. It will look carefully not only at how the international environment influenced the Anglo-Japanese relations, but also at how the British and Japanese policies influenced the course of the Sino-Japanese crisis in the summer of 1894, which eventually led to the outbreak of a bilateral war between China and Japan over Korea.

It is necessary to stress that this dissertation will concentrate on the analysis of the diplomatic and strategic aspects of the Anglo-Japanese relations. This, of course, is not to deny the fact that the period from 1876 to 1894 is also interesting in the sense that Anglo-Japanese interactions at the non-political level increased significantly compared to the previous years. After all, Britain provided the largest number of *oyatoi* (hired

foreign employees) who were highly valued by the Japanese as tutors in modernity.³⁸ Japan also started to become recognised as a tourist destination for the British public by the late 1880s, and Japanese arts started to attract more attention by that time.³⁹ Reflecting this growing British interest towards Japan, the Japan Society of London was established in 1891, and it contained several influential writers and MPs in Britain, such as Sir Edwin Arnold, Trevor Lawrence and Edward Reed.⁴⁰ In return, there were many Japanese writers, such as Tsubouchi Shōyō, who were inspired by British literature and theatre.⁴¹ At the same time, the increased interaction between Japan and the British Empire also created tensions between these two countries; for example, the aforementioned Anglo-Japanese trade friction between emerged from the 1880s onwards as a result of increased Japanese economic activities in East Asia. Without question, these interactions were important aspects of the Anglo-Japanese relations in years between 1876 and 1894. However, they are also very complex and it is impossible to provide full details of these exchanges while focussing on the political interactions. As

³⁸ Noboru Umetani, *Oyatoi Gaikokujin*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2007; originally published 1965).

³⁹ Mamiko Itō, *Meiji Nihon to Bankoku Hakurankai*, (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2008); Yuko Kikuchi and Toshio Watanabe, “The British Discovery of Japanese Art,” in *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600-2000*, vol. 5, 146-170.

⁴⁰ Carmen Blacker, “Sir Edwin Arnold, 1832-1904: A Year in Japan, 1889-90,” in *Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits*, vol. 4, ed. Sir Hugh Cortazzi, (London: Japan Society, 2002): 224-232; Sir Hugh Cortazzi, “The Japan Society: A Hundred-Year History,” in *Britain and Japan 1859-1991: Themes and Personalities*, eds. Sir Hugh Cortazzi and Gordon Daniels, (London and New York: Routledge, 1991): 1-13; Henry Norman, *The Real Japan: Studies of Contemporary Japanese Manners, Morals, Administration, and Politics*, 2nd ed. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1892). On Japan Society, refer also to some of the primary sources, such as; “Prospectus,” in *Transactions and Proceedings of the Japan Society, London, Vol. 1: The First Session 1892*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1893), vi-vii; “The Japan Society – The First Annual Dinner,” *Times*, 25 June 1892: 9; “The Japan Society – The Second Annual Dinner,” *Times*, 29 June 1893: 10; “The Japan Society – The Third Annual Dinner,” *Times*, 22 May 1894: 5.

⁴¹ Daniels and Tsuzuki eds., *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations*, vol. 5, chs. 5 and 6. 103-117.

this dissertation will concentrate on the state-to-state interactions, it will also refrain from offering any detailed description of the non-political interactions between the people in Japan and the British colonies across the Pacific, unless they directly influenced Anglo-Japanese diplomatic relations

British and Japanese Policy-Making Process and Primary Sources

The arguments of the existing works on British East Asian policy in the nineteenth century are by and large based solely on the official records of the Foreign Office, which contain large volumes of correspondence sent by the British diplomats in the region. This is the most important archival source, as Cabinet ministers tended not to be heavily involved in the day-to-day policy-making process towards East Asia, and therefore often largely left matters to the Foreign Office. Many of the important diplomatic questions in East Asia, such as the question over the revision of Anglo-Japanese treaty, were dealt with primarily by the senior officials and diplomats of the Foreign Office. It should also be pointed out that the ministers and senior officials at the Foreign Office sometimes wrote minutes on the margins of the diplomats' reports that are useful in understanding how these individuals perceived the situation in East Asia. The senior officials formulated their policies based upon the information sent from their legations, and the British representatives in East Asia negotiated, in turn, based on the instructions that they received from London. It is impossible to understand the British East Asian policy at this time without looking at the official records of the Foreign Office.

At the same time, there is a danger when historians rely only on these archival materials. The biggest problem with the official records of the Foreign Office is that they do not

possess many materials that shed light on the discussions that took place between the officials in that bureaucracy, who actually carried greater weight within the British decision-making process than the diplomats. The individuals who served as the Permanent and Assistant Undersecretaries of the Foreign Office – Baron Tenterden, Julian Pauncefote, Philip Currie, Thomas Sanderson and Francis Bertie – all cast a significant degree of influence over the British East Asian policy-making process.⁴² Yet, the quantity and quality of the minutes written by the senior officials of the Foreign Office is not large enough to allow researchers to have a good understanding of their opinions. This shortcoming can only be addressed by looking at the private letter collections of the Foreign Office’s ministers and undersecretaries, which are stored at various archives in the United Kingdom. These contain the semi-official correspondence that the senior bureaucrats sent to and received from their colleagues to discuss political and diplomatic issues, and are useful in understanding the actual policy-making process in London.

It must also be remembered that there were other institutions that mattered in the making of British external policy. The armed forces always cast some influence over decision-making, and in this case it has been crucial to use the Admiralty’s records. Also, as the Qing shared a frontier with Central Asia and Burma, British East Asian policy had repercussions for the Government of India, and therefore both Calcutta and the India Office in London could not remain indifferent. This dissertation will also incorporate various other materials, such as corporate archives, to shed light on various groups of individuals that indirectly influenced the perceptions of the diplomats and decision-makers.

⁴² Keith Neilson and T. G. Otte, *The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1854-1946*, (New York: Routledge, 2009), ch. 2-5; T. G. Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), ch. 2-4.

It must also be remembered that Cabinet ministers could be important players in the British East Asian policy-making process on those rare occasions when the threat of war was in the air. After all, they held the highest authority within the government, and once the ministers made the decisions, the senior officials within the government bureaucracy could not overturn them. While it is true that for most of the time the ministers left matters in East Asia in the hands of the Foreign Office, they did intervene on some occasions, such as the East Asian crisis from December 1884 to February 1887, and the First Sino-Japanese War.

At the initial stage of the East Asian crisis in the mid-1880s, the issue was discussed by various ministers in the governing Liberal administration, such as William Gladstone (Prime Minister), Earl Granville (Foreign Secretary), Earl of Northbrook (First Lord of Admiralty), Earl of Kimberley (Secretary of State for India), and Sir Charles Dilke (President of the Local Administrative Board, who had previously worked as a minister at the Foreign Office). When the Conservatives took over the administration in the midst of the crisis in July 1885, the issue was handled primarily by the Marquis of Salisbury, who served as both the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, and Lord Randolph Churchill, the Secretary of State for India. The First Salisbury administration was short-lived, as it fell after the general election in February 1886, but the Conservatives returned to office in October of that year, and from that point on remained in power until August 1892. Throughout that period, Salisbury remained the most influential figure within the British foreign policy-making circle, but only occasionally noted his opinion in regard to East Asian issues in these years of peace. Meanwhile, when the Liberals took over the government in the period from February to October 1886, Granville stepped down from the position of Foreign Secretary, and was succeeded the

Earl of Rosebery. He and Kimberley cast a significant degree of influence over East Asian policy-making process during this short stint. They resumed these places within the Cabinet after the Liberals returned to office in August 1892, and then went on to become Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary respectively when the First Sino-Japanese War broke out in the summer of 1894. Again, the official records of the Foreign Office do not shed much light on the discussions within the Cabinet. The private letter collections of the ministers are therefore important as they are one of the only sources that can shed light on these discussions.

As for the Japanese side of the story, some historians have argued that the military cast strong influence over the policy-making process.⁴³ However, this view was revised by researchers from the late-1970s onwards, as they presented evidence that indicated that the military was largely willing to follow the leadership of the government throughout the period before 1894. While it is true that many military bureaucrats and officers supported hard-line policies towards East Asia, they were never able to dictate the decision-making process. This, of course, does not mean that military had no influence within the Japanese decision-making, but stresses that civilian control was dominant in the period before 1894.

Some other researchers have argued that the Japanese diplomats in Korea were successful in taking matters into their own hands on several occasions.⁴⁴ Indeed, as communications with Korea were still underdeveloped until the 1880s, the diplomats who were sent to this country enjoyed a fair degree of freedom. This was particularly the

⁴³ Fujimura, *Nisshin Sensō*; Seizaburō Shinobu, *Mutsu Gaikō – Nisshin Sensō no Gaikōshiteki Kenkyū*, (Tokyo: Sōbundō, 1935); Seizaburō Shinobu, *Nisshin Sensō – Sono Seijiteki/Gaikōteki Kansatu*, ed. Michio Fujimura (Tokyo: Nansōsha, 1970; originally published in 1934).

⁴⁴ Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 147.

case for the special envoys that were sent to negotiate treaties or commercial regulations, and also the diplomats who had to deal with the situation on their own initiative whenever political disturbances broke out in Korea. It is the case that many of the diplomats sent to Korea often advised their superiors in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Gaimushō) that they should take more assertive measures against the Qing and Chosōn to uphold Japan's interests in Korea. However, as this dissertation will demonstrate, there were no occasions when these diplomats overtly breached their instructions from Tokyo in the period before 1894. Even in those situations when they had to act upon their own discretion, they did so within the framework of the instructions that they had received. Those who mattered the most within the Japanese foreign policy-making circle were the Cabinet ministers and the senior officials within the Gaimushō – the former in particular. While these individuals always had to be conscious about the hardliners who existed both within and outside of the government, they were by-and-large successful in establishing a cautious and conciliatory line of foreign policy. The advocacy of such a policy is primarily associated with key government ministers such as Itō Hirobumi and Inoue Kaoru.⁴⁵

As with the existing literature on British policy in the late-nineteenth century, the works on Japan written in English rely heavily on the official records of the Gaimushō, which are available in the Diplomatic Archives in Tokyo and in the *Nihon Gaikō Monjo* series, the published collection of diplomatic correspondence. Only a handful of historians have made use of the private papers of the various decision-makers and diplomats, but in Japan's case they are perhaps even more important for understanding the policy-making process than is the case for Britain, as it was not uncommon for the Japanese ministers

⁴⁵ For the influence of Itō and Inoue, see Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*.

and senior officials to exchange unofficial minutes and memoranda through private channels. The problem with these sources is that even for native speakers it is often difficult to read the handwriting in these late-nineteenth century private letters. In order to tackle this problem, Conroy utilised published collections of the private papers. It is common for Japanese historians to assemble private papers into published form after converting the handwriting into printed format in order to make them more accessible for the general public. They are indeed very useful aids to research. Since the publication of Conroy's work, more private letters have been made available to researchers at the archives, and more of them have also been assembled into printed collections. Papers of some of the influential entrepreneurs and individuals outside of the government, such as Shibusawa Eiichi and Fukuzawa Yukichi are also available in printed form, and therefore this dissertation makes as much use of them as possible.

Another problem about the existing historiography, including the works written in Japanese, is that not too many historians have looked at the sources available at the Military Archives of Japan. Perhaps the exception to this rule is a book by Saitō Seiji, but his work is geared towards analysing how the military influenced the Japanese policy-making process during the First Sino-Japanese War.⁴⁶ His book devotes only one chapter to the events before the outbreak of war, and this chapter focuses more on the analysis on the military reforms. This dissertation will therefore draw on these sources in order to analyse how the military affected decision-making before 1894.

⁴⁶ Saitō, *Nisshin Sensō no Gunji Senryaku*, ch. 1.

Chapter 1: Korea and the Anglo-Japanese Relationship until the Imo Mutiny

As discussed in the introduction, modern East Asian history from the mid-nineteenth century onwards is often depicted as a narrative centred upon the Japanese trying to fulfil their long-term ambition to establish regional dominance. According to this view, this process started in the early 1870s, immediately after the Meiji Restoration, when the Japanese government launched an expedition to Taiwan in 1874. The signing of the Japanese-Korean Treaty of Kanghwa of 1876 is also understood within this framework. It is often depicted as a conscious effort by the Japanese ministers and government officials, who saw China as the primary obstacle to realising their ambition, to reduce the Qing influence in Korea by recognising the latter as an independent state rather than a vassal of the Celestial Empire.¹ The treaty is also perceived as one of the events that influenced the long-term pattern of Japanese policy towards East Asia, which is typically characterised as a Machiavellian pursuit of self-interest; after all, the Treaty of Kanghwa was an unequal treaty that the Japanese forced upon the Chosōn dynasty through gunboat diplomacy.² Moreover, the initial years after the signing of the treaty are seen as a time when the Japanese tried to take advantage of the fact that there were no other foreign competitors to check their ambitions.

However, historians who have published studies after the mid-1980s have pointed out that this understanding of the East Asian affairs in the late-nineteenth century is inaccurate. It is true that there were a significant number of hardliners, both inside and outside of the government, who advocated launching a military expedition against their Korean

¹ Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, 47, 50; Kim and Kim, *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism*, 18, 29; Lee, *West Goes East*, 18.

² For this line of argument, see, among many, Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, chs. 4-5; Peng, *Meiji Shoki Nikkanshin Kankei no Kenkyū*.

neighbours from the earliest years of the Meiji era, and that they were occasionally successful in casting some influence over the decision-making process. It is also understandable that both the Chinese and Koreans became alarmed by the Japanese, who started to promote their interest in the region through gunboat diplomacy in the 1870s. Yet, the most important figures within the Japanese government were strongly against taking such a course.³ Ministers such as Ōkubo Toshimichi were well aware of the military weakness of Japan and were convinced that an ill-prepared expedition would lead to disaster. As this chapter will argue, the Japanese leaders were merely trying to re-establish a relationship with the Chosŏn regime by signing a treaty; they were not attempting to deconstruct the existing traditional East Asian order, based upon the traditional suzerain-vassal relationship between China and the neighbouring kingdoms, or establish regional dominance.

Ōkubo was assassinated in 1878, but the individuals who succeeded him as the leaders of the Meiji government, such as Itō Hirobumi and Inoue Kaoru, continued to follow his line of thinking. They conducted diplomacy with a strong determination to avoid any action that could lead to the outbreak of war. Gunboat diplomacy and punitive expeditions towards local Taiwanese tribesmen were the greatest risks that these decision-makers were willing to take, and they even refrained from that unless they were convinced that there was no other way to solve a diplomatic difficulty.⁴ The Japanese ministers

³ Duus, *The Abacus and Sword*, 29-51; Ōsawa “Chōsen Eisei Chūritsuka Kōsō to Nihon Gaiko,” 43-64; Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*, ch. 1, section 1. There are some works that made this point before the 1980s, such as Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, ch.1; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, chs. 3-15.

⁴ For the most recent accounts of the Japanese expedition to Taiwan, see the articles of Gotō Arata, his latest article being “Taiwan Shuppei ni Okeru Ōkubo Toshimichi: Futatsu no Hyōgi to Pekin Danpan o Chūshin toshite,” *Meiji Ishinshi Kenkyū*, 10 (Oct 2013): 38-55. In English, see Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 36-59; Robert Eskildsen, “Of Civilization and Savages: The Mimetic Imperialism of Japan’s 1874 Expedition to Taiwan,” *The American Historical Review*, 107:2 (2002): 388-418; Edwin

and bureaucrats in the Gaimushō also stressed the importance of conducting diplomacy towards Korea in a conciliatory manner, as they were convinced that the best way to promote Japan's interest in Korea was to win the goodwill and confidence of the Korean officials. As a result, the unique international order of East Asia, in which the Westphalian and traditional regional order co-existed side by side, remained intact well after the signing of the Treaty of Kanghwa. Both the Japanese and the British governments had to conduct diplomacy in this region within this framework, which also meant that they had to act with some discretion towards the traditional suzerain of East Asia.

The British government did not start to contemplate the idea of signing a treaty with the Chosōn court until around 1880. Their suspicion towards Russia started to become stronger after the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish War in 1878, and accordingly a treaty with Korea began to be seen as an effective measure to check Russian expansion in Northeast Asia. However, while the British signed a treaty in June 1882, the government chose to postpone its ratification until April 1884, and thus there were no British individuals in the Korean treaty ports until that year. As a result, there was very little common ground for any form of Anglo-Japanese relationship to develop over Korea in this period.

Japanese Policy towards Korea before Imo Mutiny

Throughout the history of the Chosōn dynasty, which ruled the Korean peninsula from

Pak-wah Leung, "The Quasi-War in East Asia: Japan's Expedition to Taiwan and the Ryūkyū Controversy," *Modern Asian Studies*, 17:2 (1983): 257-281.

1392, the regime conducted external relations in the recognition that the autonomy of the kingdom could be jeopardised if it failed to uphold peaceful relations with its powerful neighbours – China, Japan and the pastoral nomads scattered across the Asian steppe. It was through this lens that they saw the Japanese. The devastation that they suffered during Japan’s invasion of Korea in the late-sixteenth century left the strong impression that the Japanese were an aggressive people who needed to be handled with care.⁵ From the seventeenth century onwards, the Japanese-Korean relationship was maintained through the Sō family, the Japanese feudal lord in the island of Tsushima which lies in the middle of the Korean Strait. As well as being a subordinate of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the Sō family also paid tribute to the king of Chosōn, thus acknowledging the suzerainty of the latter.⁶ The king permitted the lord of Tsushima to build a *waegwan* (Japanese mansion) in the port of Pusan, where officials from the latter were permitted to reside and trade. While the Japanese officials were not permitted to visit Seoul, they could negotiate with the local officials whenever there were some issues that they wanted to raise. In addition, the Chosōn court sent missions to Edo (modern day Tokyo) whenever there was a new Shogun. Meanwhile, although the Japanese regime did not send tribute to China as the other East Asian kingdoms did, it utilised the concept of the suzerain-vassal relationship so that it could interact with its neighbours on a permanent basis; it thus interacted with the Qing dynasty through the king of Ryukyu, who paid tribute to both the Chinese emperor and Japanese feudal lord of Satsuma.⁷ Through this structure,

⁵ Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, xiii.

⁶ For Chosōn’s relationship with Japan before the mid-nineteenth century, see Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*, 377-9; Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, 1-5; Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, ch. 1; Lee, *West Goes East*, 9-12.

⁷ Kikō Nishizato, *Shinmatsu Chūryūnichi Kankeishi no Kenkyū*, (Kyoto: Kyoto Daigaku Shuppankai, 2005), 14-5.

peace in East Asia was maintained for about two and a half centuries.

After the overthrow of the Shogunate in late-1867 and 1868, the new Meiji government started to reform the domestic political structure, and also found it necessary to make some changes to how it conducted external relations.⁸ Due to its geographical proximity, many individuals within the decision-making circle saw the Korean peninsula as a region of strong importance. As many historians have pointed out, there were many Japanese who advocated an assertive policy towards Korea. Some stressed the importance of establishing a foothold in the peninsula in order to promote Japanese trade, while others argued that Japan should establish a military base. These individuals contended that as it was very important for the national interest of Japan to establish a foothold, the government should be prepared to go to war if the Chosōn authorities resisted these demands. There also were many who advocated the annexation of territory, such as Pusan and Ullüngdo, an island off the eastern coast of the Korean peninsula.

Debate over the policy towards Korea gathered momentum in the early 1870s within the Japanese decision-making circle just as the government was introducing a series of reforms that were considered necessary to prevent the country from falling prey to Western imperialism. These reforms led to serious disgruntlement among some of the feudal lords and former *samurai* (warriors), who were the privileged class in the

⁸ The information about the debate over the policy towards Korea and the political environment that surrounded the debate, that is discussed in the following two paragraphs, derives from; Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 17-60; Duus, *The Abacus and Sword*, 31-43; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, ch. 6; Hidenao Takahashi, “Kōka Jōyaku to Meiji Seifu,” *Kyoto Daigaku Bungakubu Kiyō*, 37 (Mar 1998): 46-9, 53-9, 69-70; Hidenao Takahashi, “Kōka Jōyaku Horon – Saigōha o Megutte,” *Bukkyō Daigaku Sōgō Kenkyūjo Kiyō*, 7 (Mar 2000): 51; Hidenao Takahashi, “Seikanron Seihen to Chōsen Seisaku,” *Shirin*, 75:2 (Mar 1992): 218-247; Hidenao Takahashi, “Seikanron Seihen no Seiji Katei,” *Shirin*, 76:5 (Sept 1993): 673-709; Steven Vlastos, “Opposition Movements in Early Meiji, 1868-1885,” in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 5, 382-400.

Tokugawa era. In this environment, the idea of taking aggressive action abroad to divert the dissatisfaction of the former samurais away from the new government attracted support from many decision-makers, including some of the most influential Meiji oligarchs such as Saigō Takamori. However, this opinion did not represent the view of the entire government. In particular Ōkubo argued that Japan at this stage was not strong enough to launch an overseas expedition. Ōkubo, though, recognised the need to deflate anti-governmental sentiment in 1874, and reluctantly authorised an expedition to Taiwan in order to punish the local tribesmen who had massacred shipwrecked fishermen from Ryukyu.⁹ However, that was as far as he was willing to go, as he believed that a war against Korea was beyond the military capacity of Japan, and was also convinced that his country would be powerless if the Western countries intervened. He therefore argued that Japan should pursue its interests in Korea without resorting to war, and also advocated that it should prioritise domestic reform instead of pursuing aggressive diplomacy. There were many individuals who sided with Ōkubo. Takahashi Hidemao has argued that out of all the newspapers that existed in the Tokyo area in the first decade after the Meiji Restoration, only the *Yokohama Mainichi Shinbun* (newspaper) can be identified as supporting an assertive policy towards Korea; the other major newspapers were all indifferent if not against such policy even in the mid-1870s.¹⁰ There was also little pressure from the economic sector, as most of the large-scale entrepreneurs were pessimistic about the commercial prospects of Korea.¹¹

⁹ See footnote 4 of this chapter.

¹⁰ Takahashi, “Kōka Jōyaku to Meiji Seifu,” 53-6.

¹¹ Duus, *Abacus and Sword*, 429-430; Kenji Kimura, “Meijiki Chōsen Shinshutsu Nihonjin ni tsuite,” *Shakai Keizaishi Gakkai*, 47:4 (Dec 1981): 450-465; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 2, chapter 21, section 60; Masakazu Shimada, “Daiichi (Kokuritsu) Ginkō no Chōsen Shinshutsu to Shibusawa Eiichi,” *Keiei Ronshū*, 9:1 (Dec 1999): 57; Uchida, *Brokers of Empire*, 35-47.

The Japanese government did, however, come to the conclusion that it should establish, through peaceful negotiation, a new diplomatic relationship with the Chosōn dynasty based upon Westphalian principles – namely that at least in theory nation-states are sovereign and equal with each other. Initially, the Korean regime refused the Japanese request. They found no reason to change the existing framework of the Japanese-Korean relationship, which had managed to keep their eastern neighbours at bay for two centuries and a half, especially when they had hitherto had minimal contact with the West and therefore possessed little understanding of the Western-style of diplomatic conduct.¹² Also, the Chosōn regime considered the traditional East Asian order as being very important in its maintaining a peaceful relationship with the Qing.¹³ When the pastoral nomads known as the Manchus had established the Qing dynasty in 1642, the Chosōn court had initially refused to acknowledge them as the legitimate rulers of the Celestial Empire, as the Manchus were not ethnic Chinese. Instead they chose to uphold loyalty to the Qing's predecessors – the Ming dynasty. The Manchus duly attacked the peninsula, forcing the Chosōn court to acknowledge the Qing dynasty as suzerain.

Being fully aware that the pastoral nomads of Northeast Asia were perceived as 'northern barbarians,' the Qing authorities recognised that the only way to legitimise their rule over the ethnic Chinese was through good governance. They therefore placed strong emphasis on abiding by Chinese traditions in terms of domestic administration and conducting external relations. This benefitted the Chosōn court in a number of ways.

¹² Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, ch.1; Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, 29-31; Kim and Kim, *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism*, 13; Lee, *West Goes East*, 18-22.

¹³ For an account of Sino-Korean relationship before the 1860s, see *ibid* and Hae-jong Chun, "Sino-Korean Tributary Relations in the Ch'ing Period," in *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, ed. John K. Fairbanks, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1968): 90-111.

The custom of the East Asian regional order was that even if the Chinese emperor claimed suzerainty, in practice he left governance in the hands of the king that he acknowledged as his vassal as long as the latter continued to pay tribute to the former. Moreover, the traditional suzerain-vassal relationship obliged the suzerain to offer at least moral support to his vassal when the latter was threatened by external force. Not only had this traditional framework kept the Japanese at bay, it was also useful in maintaining a good relationship with the Qing dynasty. Koreans were therefore naturally reluctant to alter this framework.

As the Koreans continued to procrastinate over their relations with Japan throughout the early 1870s, the Japanese gradually became frustrated as they perceived the former as being insincere.¹⁴ The Japanese government may have been determined to avoid war with Korea, but at the same time it started to feel that the Koreans would not come to the negotiating table without some display of military force. In May 1875, an official in the Gaimushō named Moriyama Shigeru begged his superiors to engage in gunboat diplomacy for this purpose, and they approved. There is some evidence which suggests that high-ranked ministers such as the Head Minister, Sanjō Sanetomi, the Minister of the Right, Iwakura Tomomi, and the Foreign Minister, Terashima Munenori, all saw this report, and that they did not raise any particular objection. Accordingly, the warship *Un'yō* was sent to Korea, and engaged in several drills off the Korean coast in September. When it tried to land some of its seamen on to Kanghwa island near Inch'ōn, the local coast guards opened fire, and the Japanese responded by successfully seizing the battery. The official and private letters that Inoue Yoshika, the commander of *Un'yō*, wrote to his

¹⁴ On Japanese policy during the *Un'yō* crisis and the negotiation over the Treaty of Kanghwa, see; Conroy, *Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 60-5; Duus, *Abacus and Sword*, 43-9; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*; vol. 1, 393-6; Takahashi, "Kōka Jōyaku to Meiji Seifu,"; Yamabe, *Nikkan Heigo Shōshi*, 24-5.

superiors in the Ministry of Navy before he left for Korea indicate that he was planning to provoke the Koreans to start a incident. He believed that by doing so he could show the Chosōn regime that it was inferior to Japan in terms of military strength, which consequently would convince the former that it might lead to serious consequences if it continued to refuse the Japanese requests to negotiate a treaty. Some of these letters were read by Navy Minister Kawamura Sumiyoshi, and although Inoue's superiors did not grant him definitive approval, neither did they openly disapprove of his initiative; it is therefore difficult to assume that the ministry was not aware of what he intended to do.

Subsequently, two government ministers – Inoue Kaoru and Kuroda Kiyotaka – were sent to Inch'ōn with an escort of warships to negotiate peace terms in early 1876. By this time, the Chosōn ministers were receiving advice from Li Hongzhang, the Chinese provincial governor of Zhili Haiwan (Capital District and Adjacent Waters) who wielded significant influence over the decision-making of the Qing dynasty.¹⁵ He argued that the Japanese would not start a war if the Chosōn regime agreed to sign a treaty, and thus strongly recommended the Koreans to do so. It must also be remembered that Korea was now ruled by King Kojong rather than his father, who had acted as the Prince Regent (Taewon'gūn) until his son came of age in 1873. Although Kojong was a conservative monarch who was inclined to uphold the traditional structure of domestic politics and external relations, he was not as hardline a conservative as his father was, and recognised that the situation rendered it necessary for his country to sign a treaty with Japan.¹⁶ These factors all helped the Japanese to accomplish their objective of peacefully

¹⁵ On the Chosōn decision-making during this crisis and the Qing influence over this issue, see; Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*, 379-380; Kim and Kim, *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism*, 17; Lee, *West Goes East*, 18-20; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, 393-6.

¹⁶ Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, 406-7; Takahashi, "Kōka Jōyaku to Meiji Seifu," 81-2.

establishing a relationship with Korea in the Western style of diplomatic conduct. The Treaty of Kanghwa was signed on 27 February 1876.

It is undeniably true that this was a treaty accomplished by gunboat diplomacy – a style of diplomacy which the Japanese had resented when the West had imposed it on them in the 1850s and 1860s. At the same time, as several Japanese historians have argued, the main objective of this expedition was to bring the Chosōn officials to the negotiating table, and not to start a war.¹⁷ The primary objective for the Japanese decision-makers in 1876 was to reach a peaceful settlement of the *Un'yō* incident before it excited the former samurai class, as the number of anti-governmental rebellions caused by this group of individuals was steadily increasing in the mid-1870s.¹⁸ In other words, the signing of the treaty was an objective in itself rather than a means to accomplish some other end. As a result, the clauses of the Treaty of Kanghwa inevitably became vague. The five main points that the Japanese and Korean governments agreed were that;

1. Chosōn would be recognised as an autonomous country which possessed equal rights to Japan;
2. The two countries should exchange missions, who could stay at their respective capital city after negotiations;
3. Chosōn would open Pusan and two other ports to commerce, and would permit consuls to reside in them;
4. Chosōn would acknowledge Japanese consular jurisdiction over its residents in Korea;
5. The treaty would come into effect immediately after the signing, and not wait for ratification.¹⁹

When the treaty was signed, the Japanese and the Koreans did not decide which two

¹⁷ Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, section 2; Takahashi, “Kōka Jōyaku to Meiji Seifu,” 45-102; Yamabe, *Nikkan Heigō Shōshi*, 25-7.

¹⁸ Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 59; Vlastos, “Opposition Movements in Early Meiji, 1868-1885,” 382-400.

¹⁹ Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, 45-8; Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*, 380-1; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, 504-8.

harbours, other than Pusan, should be made into treaty ports, and there was no agreement on commercial regulations. The Japanese negotiators also accommodated some of the Korean demands. Upon the request of the Chosōn delegates, the Japanese agreed not to use the words ‘independent’ or ‘sovereign’ in order to describe the international status of the Chosōn regime, and also avoided using the term ‘legation’ to describe the diplomatic institution in their respective capitals.²⁰ Although the Chosōn court was convinced that it could not escape the Japanese request to establish a diplomatic relationship based on the Western principles, they still wanted to avoid making it too radical a departure from the style of diplomatic conduct that they had hitherto followed. There were therefore many unsettled elements left even after the treaty’s conclusion. How far the Japanese would expand their interests in Korea thus depended on the negotiations that would take place after the signing of the treaty.

Without question, on many issues the Japanese pursued their interests in a selfish and opportunistic manner. In regard to the negotiations on Japanese-Korean commercial regulations, which immediately followed the signing of the treaty, the Japanese negotiators were successful in convincing their Chosōn counterparts that both countries should not extract any tariff.²¹ Before the negotiators were sent to Korea, they had been instructed by the Gaimushō that they should endeavour to keep the tariff rate below five percent *ad valorem*. However, as they realised during the talks that the Koreans were still ignorant about diplomacy based on Western principles, they decided to push for a

²⁰ Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 65-6; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, ch. 9. Takahashi, “Kōka Jōyaku to Meiji Seifu,” 71-102; Kentarō Yamabe, *Nikkan Heigō Shōshi*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966): 33-4.

²¹ For the signing of the Japanese-Korean commercial convention and its consequences, see: Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, 51-4; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, ch. 13 and vol. 2, pp. 55; Yamabe, *Nikkan Heigō Shōshi*, 39-42.

non-tariff clause and were duly successful. As industry in Korea was at a primitive stage, even compared to Japan in the late-1850s and the early 1860s, the only Korean commodity that could be exported was rice, for which there was significant demand in Japan. The increased demand resulted in inflation of the price of rice in Korea, and as a result most of the Korean peasantry, who were poverty-stricken already before the signing of the treaty, could not afford to buy staple food. Yet, due to the non-tariff clause there simply was no mechanism that enabled the Chosōn authorities to place any check on the outflow of goods to Japan. They belatedly realised the hazard of the non-tariff clause of the treaty, and requested the Japanese to alter this.²² When the Japanese procrastinated about this request, the frustrated local authorities in Pusan responded by extracting a tariff without the consent of the Japanese government, but the latter's diplomats complained that this was a violation of the treaty.²³ The Japanese requested the Chosōn officials to immediately return the self-imposed tariff to the Japanese merchants, and the Koreans reluctantly complied as the Japanese started sending gunboats to push their demand.²⁴

Over the issue of designating two treaty ports other than Pusan, the Japanese government requested the opening of one port each in the west (near the Kanghwa Island) and the northeast of the Korean peninsula.²⁵ The decision to demand the opening of a port in the northeast was made more from strategic considerations; a rumour about

²² Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, ch. 13, section 37.

²³ Ibid; Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 95-6; Yamabe, *Nikkan Heigō Shōshi*, 41-2.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ On the negotiations over which treaty ports were to be opened, see; Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 86-97; Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, 57-67; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, ch. 11-14; Hidenao Takahashi, “Jingo Jihen to Meiji Seifu – Kōka Jōyaku yori Jingo Jihen madeno Chōsen Seisaku no Tenkai,” *Rekishigaku Kenkyū*, 601 (Dec 1989): 3. This article is incorporated into Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*, chapter 1, section 1.

Russian interest in annexing Yǒnghŭngman (Port Lazareff) in the northwest was well-known by the Japanese decision-makers already before the signing of the treaty, because individuals such as Sir Harry Parkes, the British Minister to Japan from 1865 to 1883, and Enomoto Takeaki, the Japanese Minister to Russia from 1874 to 1878, had warned them about this. As the Chosŏn ministers did not raise strong opposition to opening a port in the northeast, the negotiations progressed relatively smoothly, and on 28 August 1879 the Japanese and Koreans agreed that Wŏnsan would be designated as the treaty port. While it is worth noting that security calculations started to be reflected more strongly in Japanese policy towards Korea by the late-1870s, it is important to observe that these strategic concerns were still addressed within the framework set up by the Treaty of Kanghwa, and that the Japanese government officials never contemplated the idea of occupying or annexing a territory. On the other hand, the negotiations on designating a treaty port in the west of Korea dragged on much longer.²⁶ The Chosŏn ministers were reluctant to allow foreigners any access to one of the most densely populated region of the country, but it was precisely because the west was the political and economic heartland of Korea that the Japanese were firm in their demand to open a port in this region. It was only on 28 February 1881 that the Koreans finally agreed to open Inch'ŏn within five years, but the precise date of the opening was not fixed at this stage.²⁷

There also were quarrels over other issues, which derived from the fact that the Japanese and the Koreans interpreted the terms of the Treaty of Kanghwa differently. As

²⁶ Wŏnsan was officially opened as a treaty port on 1 May 1880. See Official Announcement of Dajōkan, 28 Jan 1880, *NGM*, vol. 13, pp. 399-400.

²⁷ Hanabusa to Inoue (明治十四年公信第拾五號), sent from Seoul, on 28 Feb 1881, *NGM*, vol. 14, pp. 352-4.

the Japanese negotiators had agreed to an ‘exchange of missions’ in the treaty, the Chosōn ministers insisted that the treaty did not oblige them to host a legation in Seoul, and that diplomatic negotiations should be conducted through the mutual sending of occasional envoys, as was traditionally done between East Asian countries. Therefore, even after the signing of a treaty, the Japanese diplomats had to visit Seoul whenever they had some issue to negotiate with the Korean officials, and left the capital when the negotiations ended. The Japanese, of course, interpreted the term ‘mission’ as synonymous to ‘legation,’ and therefore pressed the Chosōn authorities to permit their diplomats to reside permanently in the capital. Eventually, the Koreans reluctantly approved this in December 1880.²⁸

Japanese negotiations with the Chosōn officials were often very difficult, due to the strong suspicion that the latter held towards the former. The assertive manner in which the Japanese pressed their demands led to strong resentment among the Chosōn decision-makers, just as the Japanese themselves had been frustrated when they were at the receiving end of the gunboat diplomacy of the Western nations in the mid-nineteenth century.²⁹ The inflation of the price of rice in Korea immediately after the signing of the commercial regulation also helped to spread anti-Japanese sentiment outside of the government.³⁰ In addition, there were many incidents in the 1870s that led to trouble between the local people in Korea and Japanese residents, just as there had been many

²⁸ For the negotiations over the establishment of a legation in Seoul, see Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, ch. 12, part 35; Takahashi, “Jingo Jihen to Meiji Seifu,” 3.

²⁹ For the Japanese reaction against the Western gunboat diplomacy, see, among many, Takashi Ishii, *Meiji Ishin no Kokusaiteki Kankyo*, revised ed. (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1966); Takashi Ishii, *Nihon Kaikokushi*, (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1972); Hiroshi Mitani, *Meiji Ishin to Nashonarizumu – Bakumatsu no Gaikō to Seiji Hendō*, (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1972).

³⁰ Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, ch. 15; Yamabe, *Nikkan Heigo Shōshi*, 41-2.

troubles between the locals and the foreigners immediately after the arrival of the Western residents in the Chinese and Japanese treaty ports.³¹

When Pusan was designated as a treaty port, two major entrepreneurs in Japan – Shibusawa Eiichi and Ōkura Kihachirō – displayed an interest in starting a business there. In particular Shibusawa showed strong enthusiasm, as he opened a branch of his firm, the Daiichi National Bank, immediately after the port was opened.³² It is tempting to assume from these cases that Korea attracted other entrepreneurs, but the evidence suggests that they were more of an exception rather than a rule. Alexander Allan Shand, the *oyatoi* (hired foreign employee in Japan) in the Ministry of Finance, strongly discouraged Shibusawa from starting a business in a country which seemed to offer limited economic potential, and the board of Mitsui – one of the largest investor groups in Japan which also held a majority of the stocks of the Daiichi National Bank – was unanimously against Shibusawa's plan.³³ Mitsubishi also did not agree to open a steamer line between Nagasaki and Pusan until the government guaranteed to pay it a hefty subsidy.³⁴

Shibusawa recalled in the twentieth century that his ventures in the early Meiji period were motivated by a strong sense of emotional affiliation towards Korea.³⁵ However,

³¹ Uchida, *Brokers of Empire*, 35-47; Yamabe, *Nikkan Heigō Shōshi*, 41-2. For accounts of the troubles between local people and foreigners in Japan, see Fox, *Britain and Japan*. For similar incidents in China from the 1830s to 1860s, see, among many, Bickers, *The Scramble for China*; Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast*.

³² Kimura, "Meijiki Chōsen Shinshutsu Nihonjin ni tsuite," 456; Shimada, "Daiichi (Kokuritsu) Ginkō no Chōsen Shinshutsu to Shibusawa Eiichi," 57; Uchida, *Brokers of Empire*, 35-47.

³³ "Fusan Kaikō Gojūnen no Kaiko (Reflecting on the Fifty Years after the Opening of Pusan) by Ōkura Kihachirō, *SEDS*, vol. 16, pp. 8-11; Shimada, "Daiichi (Kokuritsu) Ginkō no Chōsen Shinshutsu to Shibusawa Eiichi," 57.

³⁴ Kimura, "Meijiki Chōsen Shinshutsu Nihonjin ni tsuite," 455.

³⁵ Extract from the draft of *Daiichi Ginkō Gojūnenshi (Fifty Years of History of Daiichi Bank)*, *SEDS*, vol. 16, pp. 5-6.

most of the major Japanese entrepreneurs did not share this sentiment and instead made their decisions based upon economic calculations, they preferred to invest in domestic Japanese industries and businesses which were at the developing stage. Accordingly, those who decided to engage in business in Korea were usually only small-scale entrepreneurs with very limited capital, desperately seeking an opportunity to expand their fortunes.³⁶ Their desperation often led them to be very assertive, and they often tried to expand their operations outside of the treaty port without the permission of the local authorities, and yet the local officials could not punish these merchants due to extraterritoriality.³⁷ As the Chosōn officials were suspicious towards the Japanese, the former were reluctant about giving any concessions to the latter. The Japanese foothold in Korea therefore remained inevitably small even five years after the signing of the treaty. The commercial regulation and the opening of Wōnsan was as much as the Japanese could gain from the Chosōn court in the 1870s, and their diplomats had to negotiate very hard to win anything more.

In order to retain their small foothold in Korea, the Japanese officials did not dare to lose the goodwill of the Chosōn officials, and they were convinced that peaceful negotiation was the best means to nurture mutual confidence.³⁸ Especially after the Chosōn decision-makers agreed to make Inch'ōn a treaty port, there were no particular issues which tempted the Japanese to resort to gunboat diplomacy. The military personnel who were sent to Korea were “strictly instructed to avoid getting into

³⁶ See footnote 11 of this chapter. See also Yamabe, *Nikkan Heigō Shōshi*, 41-2.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ On the general Japanese policy towards Korea from 1880 to the outbreak of Imo mutiny, see Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 97-9; Duus, *Abacus and Sword*, 52; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, 747-8; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, ch. 15; Takahashi, “Jingō Jihen to Meiji Seifu,” 4; Yamabe, *Nikkan Heigō Shōshi*, 44-6.

unnecessary trouble with the local people,” and were also told to abide by the orders of diplomats in the treaty ports.³⁹ The Japanese decision-makers also tried to demonstrate their goodwill by trying to educate the Koreans in the need to modernise their country because it was the appropriate and rational measure for any country to take in order to maintain its independence in a modern international environment.

From this perspective, the Gaimushō and Hanabusa Yoshitomo, the Japanese Minister to Korea, encouraged Chosōn officials to send special missions to Japan in order to observe the progress of Japanese modernisation, so that they could convince the Chosōn court that they were “encouraging the modernisation not because of any ill thoughts but instead from a genuine belief that it is in the best interest of Korea.”⁴⁰ Their efforts did seem to pay off, as the Chosōn ministers sent missions to Japan in August 1880 and October 1881.⁴¹ Hanabusa also continued to advocate the importance of political and military modernisation to Chosōn officials, and the latter ultimately decided to accept Japanese military advisors in May 1881 in order to train and organise the Chosōn royal guard into a modernised military unit.⁴² The Chosōn decision in February 1881 to

³⁹ For the quote, see Enomoto to Inoue (往出第五百二十一号), 16 Apr 1880, HSM KK 36352. See also Enomoto to Kawamura (往第二号 外入第二十一号), Gaimushō, 13 Jan 1880, BKS 海軍省-公文類纂-M13-11-513 (JACAR Reference Code C09114126900); Inoue to Iwakura (甲第十四號), 29 Jan 1880. *NGM* vol. 13, pp. 431; Takino to Hayashi (城三第二号), sent from Warship Amagi (at Pusan), 4 Jan 1881, BKS 海軍省-公文類纂-M14-4-578 (JACAR C09114906100); Nakamuta to Enomoto (往入第一三〇号 天城第六号の二), 18 Jan 1881, BKS 海軍省-公文類纂-M14-4-578 (JACAR C09114906100).

⁴⁰ For the quote, see Hanabusa to Inoue (Unnumbered), Seoul, 10 Feb 1881, *NGM* vol. 14, pp. 343-7. See also Ueno to Sanjō (公第一六九九號), Tokyo, 23 July 1881, *NGM* vol. 14, pp. 307; Inoue to Sanjō (Unnumbered), 2 Nov 1881, *NGM* vol. 14, pp. 310.

⁴¹ For envoys in 1880, see the Report by Hanabusa, Written Sometime in 1880 Date Unknown, HSM KS 36361. In this document, it is stated that the Chosōn envoys stayed in Japan from 13 Aug to 8 Sept 1880. Also, see Inoue to Sanjō (甲第百七十二號), 17 Aug 1880, *NGM* vol. 13, pp. 389-396; Shibusawa to Hanabusa (Private), 26 Aug 1880, *SEDS*, add. vol. 4, pp. 167-8. For the envoys in 1881, see *NGM*, vol. 14, pp. 308-310.

⁴² Hanabusa to Inoue (Unnumbered), Seoul, 13 May 1881. Inclosure to Inoue to Sanjō (Private), 16 May 1881, KSKKT SM 48-12.

introduce some reforms to their governance structure by creating a new Board of Internal and External Affairs (T'ongni Amun), which was modelled on the Zongli Yamen (Board of External Affairs) of the Qing, was positively received by the Japanese as a sign that the Korean regime was showing interest in modernising the country.⁴³

In other cases, the Japanese officials relied on gifts in order to win the goodwill of the Koreans. Upon another recommendation of Hanabusa, the senior officials of Gaimushō agreed on 25 October 1880 to offer modern weapons to the king in order to show their goodwill.⁴⁴ The Japanese decision-makers in Tokyo also attempted diplomatic appeasement. For example, they became convinced by early 1881 that some diplomatic compromise must be made in order to accomplish the opening of Inch'ōn, and for this purpose they prepared to open negotiations for amending the non-tariff clause of the Japanese-Korean commercial agreement.⁴⁵ Also, when the Chosōn officials protested in August 1881 that Japanese fishermen were encroaching on Ullüngdo to engage in fishery and forestry despite the fact that such an action was not permitted in the Treaty of Kanghwa, the Japanese promised to punish the culprits and try to prevent such cases from happening again.⁴⁶ During the Tokugawa era some feudal lords had claimed possession of Ullüngdo, and a few individuals within the government pointed to these claims as a rationale to occupy the island. However, the Gaimushō concluded that the records

⁴³ Hanabusa to Inoue (Unnumbered), Seoul, 20 Feb 1881, *NGM*, vol. 14, pp. 290-1; Kondō to Inoue, Pusan, 8 Mar 1881. Enclosure to Ueno to Sanjō (Unnumbered), 28 Mar 1881, *NGM*, vol. 14, pp. 360-2; Hanabusa to Inoue, Seoul, 19 Mar 1881. Enclosure to Ueno to Sanjō (Unnumbered), 14 Apr 1881, *NGM*, vol. 14, pp. 362-5.

⁴⁴ Inoue to Iwakura (Unnumbered), 1 enclosure, 21 Jan 1880; Inoue to Sanjō (甲第三十號), 14 Feb 1880; Inoue to Sanjō (Unnumbered), 2 enclosures, 7 May 1880; Inoue to Sanjō (甲第二百十四號), 25 Oct 1880. All from *NGM* vol. 13, pp. 418-429.

⁴⁵ Hanabusa to Inoue (Unnumbered), 3 enclosures, Seoul, 2 Feb 1881, *NGM* vol. 14, pp. 331-342.

⁴⁶ For dispute over Ullüngdo, see; Ueno to Sanjō (Unnumbered), 2 enclosures, Tokyo, 27 Aug 1881; Ueno to Sanjō (Unnumbered), 1 enclosure, Tokyo, 7 Oct 1881. Both from *NGM* vol. 14, pp. 387-394.

indicated that the Japanese feudal lords had agreed to give up their claim over Ullüngdo in 1694, and they therefore thought there were no strong grounds for claiming possession of the islands. Thus, through persuasion and appeasement, the Japanese ministers and diplomats sought to win the goodwill of their Korean counterparts.

What lay beneath these policies was the conviction – which was shared by the majority of the Japanese ministers, the senior officials of the Gaimushō and the legation in Seoul – that there was a sizeable group of progressives within the Korean decision-makers. At this stage, the Japanese had some faith in the potential of these “young, competent and progressive” individuals to overcome the old and incompetent reactionaries “who came from a privileged background and know nothing about what is happening outside of their family,” just as the Meiji oligarchs had accomplished with the overthrow of the Tokugawa Shogunate.⁴⁷ This faith was strengthened by the fact that there also were many Korean individuals who unofficially came to Japan without the permission of the court to learn about the modernisation project of their neighbour.⁴⁸ Of course, this perception was based upon a gross underestimation of the suspicion that the Koreans held towards the Japanese. Accordingly, in the summer of 1882 the Japanese decision-makers received the news of the outbreak of an anti-Japanese riot in Seoul with great surprise. They were even more shocked when they learned that the Chinese were determined to draw on their authority as a suzerain power over the Chōson court to mediate this issue which was seen in Tokyo as fundamentally being a bilateral Japanese-Korean crisis.

⁴⁷ Hanabusa to Inoue (Unnumbered), 3 enclosures, Seoul, 2 Feb 1881, *NGM* vol. 14, pp. 331-342.

⁴⁸ Iwakura to Itō (Private), 17 Nov 1880, *IHKM*, vol. 3, pp. 95; Hanabusa to Inoue (機密信第十三號), Seoul, 15 Apr 1881, *NGM*, vol. 14, pp. 302-3.

British Policy towards Korea until the Imo Mutiny

Throughout the history of the Chosōn dynasty, its ministers and officials actively interacted with their East Asian neighbours, but there was very little contact between them and the Western world until the mid-nineteenth century. Not even a trading relationship with restrictions existed between the Europeans and the Koreans, and not a single port was opened to Western merchants. By the 1830s many Britons started to perceive overseas trade as something that could offer everyone in society an opportunity to expand their fortunes, and therefore believed that the chance to engage in such enterprises should be offered to everyone, not just a small number of chartered companies.⁴⁹ The Industrial Revolution enabled larger number of Europeans to travel across the world, and this outflow started to become apparent in East Asia. Most of them set their sights on China, which seemed to offer the biggest commercial potential. While some British individuals contemplated the idea of sending a mission to Korea, their priority was to negotiate with the Chinese first, and there was little reason for them to make similar attempts to open Japan and Korea before they had accomplished their objective in China.⁵⁰

After the 1830s, the British did not contemplate taking any initiatives to open a permanent trading relationship with Korea, because it seemed as if the Chosōn court was very determined not to end its policy of seclusion. In February 1866, nine French missionaries were arrested and executed by the Chosōn court, which recently had come under the regency of the xenophobic Taewon'gün and was suppressing Christians in

⁴⁹ John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," in *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire: The Ford Lectures and Other Essays*, by John Gallagher, ed. Anil Seal, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 1-18.

⁵⁰ Bickers, *The Scramble for China*; Lee, *West Goes East*, 11-2.

Korea.⁵¹ In a separate incident which happened in the same year, the entire crew of the American merchant schooner *General Sherman* were attacked and killed by the local Korean population near Pyongyang. When the regime refused to acknowledge responsibility for these incidents, the French launched naval expedition in October that year, and the Americans followed suit in 1871. The British, though, remained uninvolved in these issues, and the Koreans subsequently succeeded in resisting the half-hearted attacks by the Americans and the French.⁵² As there was already a functioning and profitable trade network in East Asia, there was no real incentive for the British to insist that the Chosōn government revise its seclusionist policy. Moreover, there was the danger that Korean resistance could lead to a military engagement that might, in turn, lead to a Parliamentary outcry and weigh down the Treasury. A strong degree of apathy thus characterised the British attitude towards Korea.

When the Japanese managed to sign the Treaty of Kanghwa, British diplomats in East Asia started to contemplate whether this might provide a chance for them to open relations with Korea.⁵³ However, they quickly realised that the officials in Seoul were unwilling to negotiate treaties with Western nations. Accordingly, the British diplomats in East Asia concluded that Britain would have to engage in gunboat diplomacy, just as Japan had, if it wished to bring Korea to the negotiating table. Parkes thought that such a measure would be justifiable, as he saw Russia's southward advance as a threat to the British trade network in East Asia, and viewed Korea as the region's weak link as it had

⁵¹ For these incidents involving the French and the Americans, see Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*, 378-9; Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, ch. 2; Lee, *West Goes East*, 14-17.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ On British decision-making before and after the Treaty of Kanghwa, see Daniels, *Sir Harry Parkes*, 157-164; Hirose, "Nisshin Sensōmae no Igirisu Kyokutō Seisaku no Ichikōsatsu," 130-1; Kobayashi, *19 Seiki Igirisu Seisaku to Higashi Ajia*, 92-4.

no power to defend itself from the Russians.⁵⁴ The best measure therefore to fill this vacuum was to open relations, as this would grant Korea recognition as an independent state, whose sovereignty would be respected at least in principle. When Russia signed a treaty with Japan on 7 May 1875 to end the border dispute in the northeast Asian waters, Parkes became perturbed that the dispute that had led these two countries into a difficult relationship for a long time had been resolved. He believed that Japan had come to this agreement in order to divert its territorial ambitions to elsewhere in East Asia, in other words by cooperating with the Russia it could annex some territory or ports from Korea. In order to prevent these two countries taking such course, Parkes advocated the occupation of Kōmundo; Vice-Admiral Sir Alfred Ryder, the Commander-in-Chief of China Squadron, and his predecessor C. F. A. Shadwell also agreed that the possession of these islands would grant Britain a great strategic advantage over the other powers in this region if war broke out.

However, Baron Tenterden, the Permanent Undersecretary of the Foreign Office, rejected such advice. He argued in July that he did “not much like the policy of occupying outlying places to what we have no little. If we set the example other Powers may be ready to follow it.”⁵⁵ Tenterden feared that if Britain set a precedent by seizing Kōmundo then Russia would use this to justify its own forceful occupation of territory in Korea, The Foreign Secretary, the Earl of Derby, agreed with him.⁵⁶ A private letter that Robert Bourke, the Parliamentary Undersecretary at the Foreign Office, sent to Derby in October summarised the opinion of the senior officials of the bureaucracy.

⁵⁴ For Parkes's opinion over this issue in 1875-6, see; Parkes to Derby (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Tokyo, 20 July 1875 (rec. 23 July), FO 46/192; Parkes to Tenterden (Private), Hong Kong, 9 Mar 1876, FO 363/2.

⁵⁵ Memo by Tenterden, 30 July 1875. Attached to Parkes to Derby (Telegraphic), Tokyo, 20 July 1875 (rec. 23 July), FO 46/192.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

On the whole I think: 1. It would be morally indefensible to take violent possession; 2) It is not reasonable to think that we could purchase these islands; 3) If we did they would be no use unless we fortified them strongly; 4) It is a matter of little consequence to us whether another... maritime power gains possessions of them or not. I will say nothing of the suspicions it would arouse and the jealousy it would excite in Europe, Asia and America if we were to do... a violent or unjust act in the Chinese Seas.⁵⁷

Above all, they all questioned whether there really was a Russian threat to British interests in East Asia as Parkes had argued. While the Commanders-in-Chief of the China Squadron agreed that the possession of Kōmundo would be strategically advantageous if an Anglo-Russian conflict broke out, they nonetheless reported that there were only a few warships and troops in Vladivostok and therefore it was very unlikely that Russia would go to war.⁵⁸ Bourke was also against the idea of attempting to open up Korea through gunboat diplomacy. The problem here was that even if the navy appeared off Korea simply to make a demonstration and the Koreans resisted, the Foreign Office would have only two options; it could authorise the Commander-in-Chief to engage with the opponents, and thus risk criticism in Parliament, or withdraw without firing back, thus compromising British prestige.⁵⁹ Neither option seemed desirable, especially when dealing with a country that offered very little commercial potential. British ministers and the senior officials of the Foreign Office therefore took every precaution not to throw themselves into an entangling situation. And as the

⁵⁷ Bourke to Derby (Private), FO, 16 Oct 1875, DP LRO, 920 DER (15) 16/2/9.

⁵⁸ Parkes to Derby (No. 141 Confidential), Tokyo, 18 Oct 1875 (rec. 6 Dec), FO 46/194; Ryder to the Secretary to the Admiralty, Audacious (Hong Kong), 8 Dec 1875 (rec. 24 Jan 1876), ADM 1/6343.

⁵⁹ For the Parliamentary outcry that occurred during the British military engagements with China and Japan, see Fox, *Britain and Japan*, 116-8; Gelber, *Opium, Soldiers and Evangelicals*, x.

governments of the other Western nations were also reluctant about taking the initiative with Korea, the British decision-makers found no particular reason to act unilaterally to bring the Chosōn regime out of its isolated status.

British thinking, though, began to change as the decade went on. The *Un'yō* incident and the subsequent signing of the Japanese-Korean treaty occurred just before the long-running Eastern Question escalated into a Russo-Turkish War in April 1877. The British government made manoeuvres to prevent the Russians from acquiring a foothold in the Balkans and Mediterranean in the late stage of this war and during the peace conference, and as a result, the Anglo-Russian relationship became increasingly tense.⁶⁰ After the conclusion of the war the British and the Russians started to quarrel over Central Asia more directly than before. For example, the British government raised strong objections when they learned that the Russians were planning to turn the port of Batum by the Caspian Sea into a military base.⁶¹ The British also watched the Russians suspiciously when the latter started to negotiate the delineation of their borders with the Ottoman Empire and Persia, in the fear that they would attempt to draw the frontier as far south as possible.⁶² Finally, the British government became alarmed when it learned that Russia had carried out a punitive military expedition against bandits who had harassed Russian residents in the region near Merv in Afghanistan in 1880.⁶³ Although mutual suspicion

⁶⁰ Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923*; Jelavich, *The Ottoman Empire, the Great Powers, and the Straits Question*; Dwight E. Lee, *Great Britain and the Cyprus Convention policy of 1878*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1934); W. N. Medlicott, *The Congress of Berlin and After: A Diplomatic History of the Near Eastern Settlement, 1878-1880*, 2nd ed., (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1963; 1st ed. published by Methuen & Co., 1938); Richard Millman, *Britain and the Eastern Question, 1875-1878*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

⁶¹ Barbara Jelavich, "Great Britain and the Russian Acquisition of Batum, 1878-1886," *Slavonic and East European Review*, 48:110 (Jan 1970): 44-66.

⁶² Northbrook to Granville (Private), 12 May 1880, PRO 30/29/137.

⁶³ Dilip Kumar Ghose, *England and Afghanistan: A Phase in their Relations*, (Calcutta: The World Press, 1960), 163-81. The memorandum written for circulation in the

between Britain and Russia was quite strong already by the mid-nineteenth century, it was quite rare for them to quarrel directly over territory in Asia.⁶⁴ However, after the Russo-Turkish War, the decision-makers of Britain and Russia started to become more sensitive about each other's actions wherever they took place, including in Asia.

It was in these circumstances that the British government started in 1880 to receive numerous reports about an increase in the Russian naval presence in East Asian waters. This came about as a consequence of a Sino-Russian territorial dispute over the Ili region, in modern-day Xinjiang, which threatened to lead to war.⁶⁵ In contrast to 1875-76, the Admiralty and the Foreign Office now received numerous reports which indicated that the Russians were actively reinforcing their military and naval forces in the Far East in order to prepare for the possible outbreak of war.⁶⁶ In July the Sino-Russian relationship deteriorated to the extent that it developed into a war-scare between these two countries, and this issue was raised in the Cabinet and Parliament on several occasions.⁶⁷

cabinet on 25 Feb 1884 summarises the development of the Merv question very well. See Memorandum by E. B. (unidentifiable author), 25 Feb 1884, PRO 30/29/365. For the Government of India's fear over Russian campaign to Merv, see Hartington to Granville (Private), 11 June 1880; Hartington to Granville (Private), 7 July 1880. Both from PRO 30/29/131.

⁶⁴ Anderson, *The Eastern Question*; Michael Edwardes, *Playing the Great Game: A Victorian Cold War*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975); Jelavich, *The Ottoman Empire, the Great Powers, and the Straits Question*; David Gillard, *The Struggle for Asia 1828-1914: A Study in British and Russian Imperialism*, (London: Methuen & Co., 1977).

⁶⁵ "Russia," *Times*, 2 Jan 1880; From Correspondent in Shanghai, "Russia and China," *Times*, Shanghai, 3 Jan 1880. For secondary sources on the Ili crisis, see Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *The Ili Crisis: A Study of Sino-Russian Diplomacy 1871-1881*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

⁶⁶ Memorandum by Admiral Ryder, Duke of Wellington (Portsmouth), 9 Dec 1879; Memorandum by Captain Fisher, Northampton (Portsmouth), 8 Dec 1879. Both are enclosures to the Secretary of the Admiralty to Coote (No. 81 Confidential), Admiralty, 23 Mar 1880, ADM 125/25. Also see Kennedy to Granville (No. 113 Confidential), Tokyo, 29 June 1880 (rec. 13 Aug), FO 46/257; Coote to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 263), Iron Duke (Yokohama), 30 June 1880 (rec. 23 Aug), ADM 1/6527.

⁶⁷ Commons Sittings, 27 May 1880, *HCH*, 3rd Series Vol. 252, pp.522; Commons Sitting, 1 July 1880, *HCH*, 3rd Series Vol. 253, pp.1260; Kennedy to Granville (No. 110), Tokyo, 3 July 1880 (rec. 13 Aug), FO 46/257; Wade to Granville (No. 97 Telegraphic), Beijing, 9 July 1880 (rec. 15 July), FO 17/831; Wade to Granville (No. 112

As a consequence, British diplomats and decision-makers became increasingly concerned about the Korean situation.⁶⁸ Already on 29 June 1880 J. G. Kennedy, the British Chargé d’Affaires in Japan, reported that there was a possibility that “Russia is bent on war with China in order to maintain her Eastern prestige and possibly with a view to the annexation of Corea (sic).”⁶⁹ Additionally, he reported that the Qing regime was becoming increasingly anxious about Japanese designs towards Korea. Kennedy observed that China’s anxiety was driving it to try to strengthen its influence over Korea in order to prevent the country falling under Japanese control.⁷⁰ The situation in Korea thus started to look increasingly dangerous, due to the concern that the power vacuum in the country might provoke its neighbours to scramble. Therefore, on 25 May 1880, Kennedy reiterated what Parkes had argued in 1875, and suggested that Britain should sign a treaty with the Chosōn regime in order to fill the vacuum.⁷¹

Britain did not take any immediate initiative to negotiate a treaty, because the Foreign Office knew that an American Commodore, Robert W. Shufeldt, was already trying to open communications with Chosōn officials over this issue in May 1880. They therefore chose to wait until they learnt of the outcome.⁷² However, despite the fact that Inoue Kaoru, who by this time was serving as the Foreign Minister, gave a letter to Shufeldt

Telegraphic), Beijing, 22 July 1880 (rec. 28 July), FO 17/832; Ripon to Hartington (Private, Telegraphic), 24 July 1880, PRO 30/29/131; Brett to Ripon (Private), 27 July 1880, PRO 30/29/131; Memorandum circulated in the Cabinet, 4 Aug 1880, PRO 30/29/118.

⁶⁸ For British policy towards Korea from 1880 to the outbreak of the Imo mutiny, see Hirose, “Nisshin Sensōmae no Igirisu Kyokutō Seisaku no Ichikōsatsu,” 132-142; Kobayashi, *19 Seiki Igirisu Gaikō to Higashi Ajia*, 95-104, 111-4.

⁶⁹ Kennedy to Granville (No. 114 Confidential), Tokyo, 29 June 1880 (rec. 13 Aug), FO 46/257.

⁷⁰ Kennedy to Granville (No. 131 Very Confidential), Tokyo, 27 July 1880 (rec. 16 Sept), FO 46/257.

⁷¹ Kennedy to Salisbury (No. 90 Confidential), Tokyo, 25 May 1880 (rec. 14 July), FO 46/257.

⁷² Kennedy to the FO (No. 74), Tokyo, 30 Apr 1880 (rec. 25 June), FO 46/256.

which recommended the Korean government to negotiate a treaty, this overture failed. When Kennedy learned that the Chosōn officials had returned the letter without opening it and refused even to sit at a negotiating table, he, as well as other British diplomats in Japan, understood the strong suspicion that the Korean elites had towards not only the Japanese but also the Westerners.⁷³ As the senior officials of the Foreign Office were not inclined to resort to any form of gunboat diplomacy over this issue, Parkes, who was in London at this time, suggested that the Qing officials should be asked to mediate, as he was aware that the Qing had much stronger influence over the Chosōn court than Japan.⁷⁴ But from late-August 1880, the Foreign Office became more indifferent about the issue of a treaty with Korea as the Sino-Russian tension over the Ili crisis started to ease. British diplomats in East Asia reported that the negotiations between China and Russia had finally achieved a breakthrough and thus the crisis would be settled without resorting to war; Russia agreed to drop its territorial claim over Ili if the Qing would pay an extra indemnity, and the latter agreed.⁷⁵ The war-scare had certainly passed its peak after the summer of 1880, and a negotiated settlement – Treaty of St. Petersburg – was signed on 24 February 1881.

As Sino-Russian tensions eased, the strategic importance of signing a treaty with Korea declined. War in East Asia – its large expenditure and political risk – might be justifiable if it were for the protection of British imperial interests from Russian expansionism. Without it, British decision-makers were very reluctant to take coercive action in the region. After February 1881, the dialogue between London and its representatives in

⁷³ Kennedy to Granville (No. 135), Tokyo, 5 Aug 1880 (rec. 1 Oct), FO 46/257.

⁷⁴ Memorandum by Parkes, 22 Aug 1880, and Pauncefote's memos on the margin of this document; Parkes to Pauncefote, (Private), 24 Aug 1880. Both FO 46/257.

⁷⁵ Wade to Granville (No. 136 Telegraphic), Beijing, 16 Aug 1880 (rec. 24 Aug); Wade to Granville (No. 141 Confidential), Beijing, 22 Aug 1880 (rec. 14 Oct). Both FO 17/833. Kennedy to Granville (No. 159), Tokyo, 20 Sept 1880 (rec. 13 Nov), FO 46/258.

East Asia over this issue stopped, due to the fact that the Russian government started withdrawing the warships they had sent to the Far East.⁷⁶ While the potential for future Russian expansion into Korea continued to linger in the mind, and the British decision-makers continued to think it preferable to sign a treaty with the Chosōn regime, the issue now became less pressing.

From late 1881, Shufeldt made another attempt to negotiate a treaty with the Chosōn court, this time through the mediation of Li Hongzhang. By this point, Li too was starting to feel the need to induce the Chosōn and the Western government to open diplomatic relationship, so that the latter's influence could be used to check the possible Japanese or Russian expansionism into the kingdom.⁷⁷ The British felt no problem about waiting until they learnt the outcome of the negotiation. As Shufeldt was successful in signing the American-Korean Treaty of Peace, Amity and Commerce on 22 May 1882, the British government duly sent Vice-Admiral Sir George Willes, the Commander-in-Chief of China Squadron, to Seoul in order to negotiate its own commercial treaty with the Chosōn court. The Anglo-Korean treaty was duly signed on 6 June 1882, and the terms were identical to the American-Korean treaty.⁷⁸

However, this treaty provoked substantial opposition from the British community in

⁷⁶ Kennedy to Granville (No. 5 Most Confidential), Tokyo, 10 Jan 1882 (rec. 27 Feb), FO 46/284; Willes to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 320), Iron Duke (Vladivostok), 16 Aug 1881 (rec. 1 Oct), ADM 1/6576; Kennedy to Tenterden (Private), 3 June 1881, FO 363/1 Part 3.

⁷⁷ Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, 116; Lee, *West Goes East*, 22-3.

⁷⁸ For whatever reason, British diplomats in East Asia did not mention the Anglo-Korean treaty immediately after its signing. It was not until 21 June that Parkes reported about the signing of the treaty, and in this document he stated that the treaty was signed on 6 June. See Parkes to Tenterden (Private), Tokyo, 21 June 1882 (rec. 27 July), FO 46/285. A copy of the treaty was forwarded to the Foreign Office by Wade as an enclosure to his dispatch on 24 July, and it is also stated in this document that the treaty was signed on 6 June. See Wade to Granville (No. 51 Confidential), 1 enclosure, Beijing, 6 July 1882 (rec. 31 Aug), FO 17/896.

East Asia, for two main reasons. First, they were upset with the commercial regulations stipulated in the treaty. Parkes, who forwarded complaints to the Foreign Office on behalf of the treaty-port population, argued that the regulations prevented foreigners from shipping goods produced by Korean domestic producers between the treaty ports.⁷⁹ Also, the average tariff rate was set at about 10%, with some products set at 30%; this was much higher than that set by the Anglo-Chinese and Anglo-Japanese treaties, whose average rates were around 5%.⁸⁰ Finally, he thought it equally problematic to have a clause that obliged both the Chosōn and foreign governments to establish appropriate legislation on the strict supervision and regulation of opium trade – a clause that did not exist in the regulations with the Qing and Japan. Parkes feared that the Qing and Japanese governments might demand similar concessions if such terms were permitted to Korea, and if that happened it would have disturbing consequences for the British commercial position in East Asia.

The question of the Qing claim of suzerainty over Korea also sparked controversy. The traditional suzerain-vassal relationship was a difficult concept for the Westerners to understand, as the former did not exercise the degree of control which would have made the latter its protectorate or colony, but at the same time the latter was still short of being completely independent. The Western diplomats were therefore inclined to continue to adhere to the Westphalian system and clarify this vague status by signing a treaty with Korea as an independent nation, but in the summer of 1882 the Qing court insisted on making Westerners recognise its suzerainty. Before the American-Korean commercial treaty was signed, when Shufeldt entered into preliminary negotiations in Tianjin with Li

⁷⁹ Unless otherwise specified, the information in the next three paragraphs is derived from Parkes to Tenterden (Private), Tokyo, 21 June 1882 (rec. 27 July), FO 46/285; Parkes to Lord Tenterden (Private), Tokyo, 13 July 1882 (rec. 15 Aug), FO 46/286.

⁸⁰ Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*, 382.

Hongzhang before he negotiated with the Koreans, the latter attempted to insert a clause that would make the Americans accept Qing suzerainty over Korea.⁸¹ Li ended up facing a strong protest from Shufeldt over this request and agreed to drop it, but only on the condition that the American President would accept a letter from Kojong which stated that he recognised the suzerainty of the Qing.⁸²

As Willes had signed the Anglo-Korean treaty without making any amendments to the American-Korean original, the international status of Korea remained vague, and Parkes was not impressed by this point as well. He contended that if the Western countries recognise Korea as an equal nation to themselves by signing treaties while at the same time also acknowledging Chinese suzerainty over Korea, then the Qing might interpret this as meaning that the Western governments accepted its vassal status. Parkes also argued that if the Western countries accepted such a claim then the Russians might interpret it to mean that Korea was a colony or within the boundary of the Qing Empire, and use this to justify the occupation of Korean territory if war broke out between Russia and China. Parkes forwarded his complaint to the Foreign Office throughout late June to early July of 1882, and argued that the terms of the Anglo-Korean treaty must be renegotiated on the grounds that it would have negative consequences for the British strategic and commercial position in East Asia. But before the British government could decide on what to do, the Imo mutiny broke out in Seoul, thus bringing the problems raised by China's new pretensions to the attention of Japan as well.

⁸¹ Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, 117-8.

⁸² Ibid.

Japanese Policy During and Immediately After the Imo Crisis

The international environment that surrounded Korea in 1882 was quite different from that in 1876. In part this was because the British and the Russians had begun to see each other's actions in Asia with stronger suspicion after the late-1870s, but it was also different because the Qing policy towards Korea had started to change at around the same time. Before the late-1870s, the Qing had pursued a policy of non-intervention in the affairs of its vassals. It had chosen to stay out of the Franco-Annamese War from 1858 to 1861, and raised no particular objection when the French demanded that the Nguyen dynasty of Annam (modern-day Vietnam) – another kingdom recognised by the Qing as one of its vassals – cede Cochinchina after their victory.⁸³ Also, during the *Un'yō* crisis Li Hongzhang had guaranteed Mori Arinori, the senior official of the Gaimushō who was visiting Tianjin to discuss the situation in Korea, that the Qing would not intervene beyond the level of providing friendly advice.⁸⁴ Indeed, when the Chinese had exercised influence over Korea in the 1870s, they did so in a way that did not particularly upset the Japanese. After all, it was Li who played a role in convincing the Koreans of the need to sign a treaty with Japan.⁸⁵ To some extent, it was because the Japanese negotiators felt confident that the Qing would not intervene in Japanese-Korean affairs that they did not become desperate about clarifying the international status of Korea in the Treaty of Kanghwa.

⁸³ Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*, ch. 10, section 1.

⁸⁴ Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, 29-35; Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, 237-242; Okamoto, *Zokkoku to Jishū no Aida*, 368, section 2; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, ch. 10, section 29-30.

⁸⁵ Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*, ch. 9; Okamoto, *Zokkoku to Jishū no Aida*, 368; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, ch. 10, part 31; Takahashi, “Kōka Jōyaku to Meiji Seifu,” 80-4.

However, Qing policy towards its vassals started to change after the signing of the treaty. As already discussed in this chapter, the Qing experienced diplomatic difficulties with Russia over Ili in the late-1870s. By then, the French had also acquired more territory in Indochina, and had signed a treaty with Annam which stipulated that the latter would sever its traditional ties with the Qing and instead accept French protection.⁸⁶ Finally, the Kingdom of Ryukyu – another traditional vassal of the Qing – was incorporated into Japan in 1879.⁸⁷ As foreign powers annexed, or tried to annex, territories which the Qing officials considered as being within their sphere of influence, the latter started to feel the need to strengthen their strategic position on the frontier.⁸⁸ It should also be remembered that by 1880, the wide-scale domestic rebellions – the Taiping, Nian, Miao and Muslim revolts – that had ravaged the Qing Empire throughout the previous three decades had finally been quelled.⁸⁹ China was therefore in a better position to assert its influence abroad than before. It finally did so during the Imo mutiny which broke out in Seoul in July 1882.

The cause of the mutiny was the dissatisfaction that many soldiers and officers felt towards the inequality that existed within the Korean army.⁹⁰ As noted above, the

⁸⁶ Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*, ch. 10, section 2; Lewis M. Chere, *The Diplomacy of the Sino-French War (1883-1885): Global Complications of an Undeclared War* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Cross Cultural Publications, 1988), 13-5.

⁸⁷ Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*, 376; Nishizato, *Shinmatsu Chūryūnichi Kankeishi no Kenkyū*, 4.

⁸⁸ Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*, ch. 9-11.

⁸⁹ Kwang-ching Liu, “The Ch’ing Restoration,” in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 10, 409-490.

⁹⁰ For an account of the initial outbreak of the mutiny, see Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, 130-2; Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, 316-8; Kim and Kim, *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism*, 33-5; Larsen, *Tradition, Treaty and Trade*, 80-82; Lee, *West Goes East*, 34-7; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, ch. 16. For the Japanese response, see Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, ch. 16; Takahashi, “Jingo Jihen to Meiji Seifu,” 6-16. For primary source, see BKS 陸軍省-朝鮮事件-M15-1-130 (JACAR C06031037900) and 陸軍省-朝鮮事件-M15-1-131 (JACAR C06031038500). Also,

Chosōn government had embarked on the modernisation of its armed forces from May 1881, and invited Japanese military advisors to train the royal guards under modern Western military principles. The soldiers and officers in the Japanese-trained unit were equipped with modern military armaments. They were also well-paid, whereas it was not rare for the government to be very late in paying rice stipends to most of the other personnel in the army. When the latter soldiers found out that the army would not provide the expected stipends on 13 July 1882, some of them started a riot. The Taewon'gūn saw this as an opportunity to recoup the political influence that he had lost in 1873 by wiping out his political rivals, and thus escalated the riot into a large-scale mutiny. He provoked the soldiers and officers to attack the Japanese-trained royal guards and the Korean ministers who had supported developing such a unit. Since resentment towards the Japanese was shared by many Koreans regardless of their social background, some of the commoners joined the mutiny. In face of the riot, the Korean government was powerless and in no position to offer protection to the Japanese; the rioters set fire to the legation, and killed many of its members, students, and military advisors. Those who managed to survive the assault – including Minister Hanabusa – could do so only by scrambling to Inch'ōn for their life and jumping onto a boat. The news of the mutiny reached Japan only after the legation members managed to reach Nagasaki on 30 July 1882, having been rescued by a British warship sailing along the Korean coast. The Japanese decision-makers unanimously agreed that they must hold the court in Seoul responsible for the deaths, injuries and damage caused to the Japanese in Korea, with the clear understanding that they must be firm in making their demands to

Sasaki Takayuki, the Minister of Industry, wrote a good account of this incident in his diary. See Tokyo Daigaku Shiryō Hensansho ed., *Hogohiroi Sasaki Takayuki Nikki* (*Hogohiroi: Diary of Sasaki Takayuki*), vol. 11, (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1979).

the extent that they would declare war if the negotiations failed.⁹¹

On 31 July the government ministers agreed that they should demand;

1. Apologies for not being able to prevent the damage caused to Japanese lives and properties; 2. Punishment of the culprits within fifteen days after the signing of peace terms; 3. An indemnity for the Japanese victims and their families (in the cases which victims had been killed); 4. An indemnity to the Japanese government for violating the Treaty of Kanghwa, which clearly indicated that the host government must offer adequate protection to the Japanese residents; 5. Total indemnity should be about ¥500,000; 6. Permission to allow the Japanese government to station troops at the legation as guards for the next five years; 7. The ceding of Kōmundo and Ullüngdo to Japan if there was a clear evidence that the Korean government had supported the rioters.⁹²

In addition, it was decided that the negotiators should be escorted into Seoul by some soldiers and warships.⁹³ The hardliners were able to cast some influence over this episode. While many of the government ministers considered that the demand for ¥500,000 was quite extravagant and that the Chosōn ministers would be very reluctant to accept it, they nonetheless concluded that they must make that demand as the hardliners were calling for an indemnity of about ¥1 million. They feared that it could lead to a domestic outcry if the amount were lowered any further.⁹⁴ However, aside from the amount of the indemnity, the Japanese demands were relatively moderate and not too unreasonable. Kuroda Kiyotaka, who was seen by most of his contemporaries as a hardline minister, advocated that he should be appointed as a special envoy to negotiate the peace terms, but Inoue Kaoru was successful in convincing Kuroda that the Minister

⁹¹ Inoue to Hanabusa (Unnumbered), 7 Aug 1882. *NGM* vol. 15, pp. 226-8.

⁹² Inoue to Sanjō (Unnumbered), Undated, *NGS*, vol. 7, pp. 81.

⁹³ Inoue to Hanabusa (Unnumbered, Secret), 31 July 1882, GS 1-1-2-3-14 vol.1 (JACAR B03030180900). Also see Inoue to Tanabe (Unnumbered), 2 Aug 1882; Inoue to All of the Minister Residents in Tokyo, 3 Aug 1882, both from *NGM* vol. 15, pp. 159-162.

⁹⁴ See footnote 90 of this chapter.

to the Chosōn court should negotiate instead.⁹⁵ Thus Inoue managed to place Hanabusa, who had pursued a conciliatory line throughout the early-1880s, in charge of the negotiations. In addition, the Foreign Minister was able to keep the number of Hanabusa's escort to a minimum – about 450 soldiers and some officers – and these troops were ordered strictly to refrain from making any engagement unless they were attacked.⁹⁶

By early August, news of the mutiny reached Li Hongzhang in Tianjin through Li Shuchang, the Qing Minister in Tokyo, and the Chosōn officials in China, Kim Yun-sik and Ō Yun-chung.⁹⁷ Li Hongzhang's juniors immediately reported this to the Zongli Yamen, and on 4 August the latter ordered the former to mobilise the military. However, despite the fact that the Japanese government officials had received information that the Chinese might be interested in intervening over this issue citing their traditional claim of suzerainty over Korea, Japanese policy-makers did not see this as a serious concern. When Li Shuchang made an official communication to the Gaimushō on 5 August that his government was prepared to mediate over this issue,⁹⁸ Yoshida Kiyonari, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, simply replied the next day that “while [the Japanese government] appreciated the good offices of the Qing, the issue can be settled by itself without the help of third power.”⁹⁹ After this overture, Inoue instructed his diplomats in China and Korea to observe the actions of the Qing decision-makers and diplomats closely,

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ See footnote 93 of this chapter.

⁹⁷ For the Chinese response to the Imo crisis, see Deuchler, *Confucian Gentleman and Barbarian Envoys*, 132-4; Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian Order*, 316-327; Kim and Kim, *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism*, 37-40; Larsen, *Tradition, Treaty and Trade*, 83-88; Okamoto, *Zokkoku to Jishu no Aida*, ch. 3; Peng, *Meiji Shoki Nikkanshin Kankei no Kenkyū*, ch. 3.

⁹⁸ Li Shuchang to Yoshida (Unnumbered), Chinese Legation in Tokyo, 5 Aug 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 163.

⁹⁹ Yoshida to Li Shuchang (Unnumbered), 6 Aug 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 163-4.

but they did not see any particular reason to expect a serious counter-manoeuvre.¹⁰⁰ However, on 9 August Li Shuchang sent an official letter to the Gaimushō which stated that the Chinese government was preparing to make a military intervention in order to suppress the mutiny.¹⁰¹

Now that the Chinese showed much stronger determination to insist on their suzerainty than before, the Japanese decision-makers were put into a difficult dilemma. While the Japanese government was determined not to publicly accept the concept of suzerainty in relation to the Chosōn court,¹⁰² it became aware that the Sino-Japanese relationship could potentially deteriorate if the Japanese insisted too strongly that Korea was an independent country. As the Chinese were mobilising their military the situation could potentially lead to some kind of an armed engagement. Yet, most of the Japanese ministers were well aware that Japan was not prepared to launch a military expedition.¹⁰³ As the primary military concern for the new Meiji government in the 1870s had been the various anti-governmental forces within Japan, the military was trained and organised to respond to domestic rebellions rather than overseas expansion. Conscripts were assembled at the nearest camp to where they lived, and about two or three camps came under the command of a base (*chindai*); as one camp was roughly equal to the size of a regiment,

¹⁰⁰ Shiota to Inoue (第十一号), from Shimonoseki, 8 Aug 1882; Inoue to Shimamura (第一号), Shimonoseki, 7 Aug 1882; Inoue to Tanabe (第二号), Shimonoseki, 8 Aug 1882; Yoshida to Inoue (第十一号), Shimonoseki, 8 Aug 1882; Yoshida to Inoue (第七号), Shimonoseki, 8 Aug 1882. All from GS 1-1-2-3-14 vol. 1 (JACAR B03030180900). Also see Sanjō to Iwakura (Private), 1 Aug 1882. *ITKM*, vol. 2, pp. 187; Minute by Inoue Kowashi, 6 Aug 1882, *IKDS*, vol. 1, pp. 309-310; Yamagata to Sanjō (Private), 7 Aug 1882 KSKKT SM 76-5/YAI, pp. 116-8/*IKDS*, vol. 6, pp. 133-5.

¹⁰¹ Li Shuchang to Yoshida (Unnumbered), Chinese Legation, 9 Aug 1882. *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 164.

¹⁰² Inoue to Tanabe (Unnumbered), Shimonoseki, 10 Aug 1882, GS 1-1-2-3-14 vol. 1 (JACAR B03030180900).

¹⁰³ For the military situation in this period, see; Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, 23-34; Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*, ch. 1; Saitō, *Nisshin Sensō no Gunji Senryaku*, 16-36.

each base had the force of about a brigade, and there were six bases in Japan, excluding Hokkaido and Okinawa. Considering the fact that the bases had to suppress rebellions whenever they broke out within their jurisdiction, it was difficult to assemble them all at one place to engage in large-scale drills involving the coordinated action of more than one base, and therefore the commanders and senior officers of the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) did not have a clear idea about how to manoeuvre units larger than size of a brigade. Besides, the Meiji oligarchs did not have complete confidence in the discipline of the army, as a mutiny had broken out as recently as 23 August 1878.¹⁰⁴

It is true that the situation of the army in the summer of 1882 was better than it had been in the 1870s. During the Satsuma Rebellion, the government had had to rely heavily on former samurai volunteers as well as reinforcements from the police force to make up for the numerical shortcoming of the regular army, but by 1882 the size of the army had expanded due to the fact that the state was becoming increasingly efficient in regard to conscription. Also the standardisation of the army's equipment was complete by 1882, and the troops were trained and equipped the same regardless of the base to which they belonged. In 1878 an Army General Staff was established in order to create an independent bureau which specialised in military matters such as intelligence, war-planning, organising, training, deciding on what kind of equipment were necessary and in what numbers and so on. Lastly, the Japanese army in 1881 for the first time gathered all six bases at a single location and executed a drill, indicating that the Japanese decision-makers were becoming somewhat more confident that the domestic situation in Japan had stabilised to the degree that it was no longer necessary to have military units scattered across Japan on a permanent basis. However, the 'national army' of Japan was still at a

¹⁰⁴ Suzuki, *Ishin no Kōsō to Tenkai*, 219-224.

developmental stage, and there is no evidence to indicate that it had any war plans for an offensive on the Asian continent.

Moreover, the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) was still quite underdeveloped in 1882. It did not have an adequate amount of warships even to contemplate the idea of starting a war abroad. Additionally, due to the fact that the primary concern of the Japanese military in the 1870s was the suppression of domestic rebellion, the primary objective of the IJN in this decade had been to secure the lines of transport within Japanese waters and to patrol the treaty ports in Korea. It also did not have a general staff independent from the army's and did not possess a plan for engaging with foreign navies. Therefore, the Japanese ministers were too ill-equipped to respond when the Chinese suddenly showed a much stronger determination to insist on their traditional suzerainty than had been the case in the 1870s.¹⁰⁵

The only option left for the Japanese decision-makers therefore was to negotiate and conclude peace terms with the Chosōn government as quickly as possible before the Qing could intervene, and in the meantime to bite their tongue when the latter insisted on its claim of suzerainty. On 20 August Inoue instructed Hanabusa that “if the Qing agents in Korea offer to mediate the Japanese-Korean negotiation, then [Hanabusa] should thank the Chinese for their goodwill, but reject the offer at once as he is instructed by his government to negotiate only with the Chosōn delegates.”¹⁰⁶ However, Inoue also added that the Japanese government would not resist if the Qing would “use its influence towards the Chosōn court so that the Koreans would comply with the Japanese

¹⁰⁵ Inoue to Tanabe (Unnumbered), Shimonoseki, 10 Aug 1882, GS 1-1-2-3-14 vol. 1 (JACAR B03030180900); Itō to Yamagata (Private), 26 Aug 1882. *YAKM*, vol. 1, pp. 112-3.

¹⁰⁶ Inoue to Hanabusa (Unnumbered), 20 Aug 1882. *NGM* vol. 15, pp. 235-8.

demands.”¹⁰⁷ The Japanese utilised what they considered as carrots and sticks in order to sign the peace treaty as quickly as possible. When Hanabusa returned to Inch’ŏn on 12 August, *en route* to Seoul, he was confronted by Korean officials who politely tried to prevent him from entering the capital. Ultimately, on 16 August he forced his way into the court in Seoul with a battalion of infantrymen he had brought as guards.¹⁰⁸ The Chosŏn negotiators were frustrated by this high-handed attitude, and they also found it very difficult to accept the Japanese request to permit the stationing of their troops in Seoul as legation guards. However, Hanabusa argued that his government could not compromise on this issue, and on 22 August he went as far as withdrawing to Inch’ŏn after sending an ultimatum after the Chosŏn negotiators continued to procrastinate.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, Inoue authorised Hanabusa to compromise over the Chosŏn requests in regard to the tariff negotiations in the hope that this would win the latter’s goodwill and speed up the talks on the resolution of the Imo crisis.¹¹⁰

Ironically, what ultimately sped up the final stage of the negotiations was Qing intervention into this issue. When Ma Jianzhong, a Chinese official who worked as Li Hongzhang’s agent in Korea, met with Hanabusa in Seoul, he told him that both he and his superior were of the opinion that the Taewŏn’gun’s strong desire to usurp political power was the main reason why a small riot had escalated into a political crisis, and that the political situation would remain unstable unless he was removed from the scene.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Hanabusa to Inoue (第三号公信), Seoul, 17 Aug 1882. GS 1-1-2-3-14 vol. 1 (JACAR B03030180900).

¹⁰⁹ Hanabusa to Inoue (公信), Seoul, 30 Aug 1882. GS 1-1-2-3-14 vol. 1 (JACAR B03030181000); Hanabusa to Inoue (Telegraphic), Seoul, 2 Sept 1882 (rec. 2 Sept), *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 243-4.

¹¹⁰ Inoue to Hanabusa (Unnumbered), 20 Aug 1882, *NGM* vol. 15, pp. 235-8.

¹¹¹ Hanabusa to Inoue (公信), Seoul, 30 Aug 1882. GS 1-1-2-3-14 vol. 1 (JACAR B03030181000).

After this conversation, Ma returned to China and came back with troops on 23 August in Inch'ōn. On the same day, two Chosōn officials – Kim Hong-jip and Yi Yu-wōn – arrived at the port and promised Hanabusa that they would start negotiations soon; Hanabusa replied that he would wait at Inch'ōn for two or three days.¹¹² Within this time, Ma's troops abducted the Taewōn'gun from Seoul and took him to Tianjin, where he was placed under house arrest for the next four years.¹¹³ Despite the fact that the Qing had made such a blatant intervention into the domestic politics of Korea, there is no evidence that Hanabusa raised a serious protest. It is difficult to tell the reason behind this decision, but it probably was because this Chinese action provided a better environment within which to conclude the Japanese-Korean peace talks. Kim and Yi duly arrived at Inch'ōn on 28 August, and the Chosōn side agreed to accept the indemnity that the Japanese had demanded and also to allow the latter to station troops at their legation. Two days later the peace terms were signed at Chemulp'o, a small village on the outskirts of Inch'ōn.¹¹⁴

It was during – not before – the Imo crisis that the Japanese recognised that the Qing decision-makers were serious about maintaining their influence as the traditional suzerain over Korea. After this incident, the Japanese government became convinced that the Qing was no longer pursuing a policy of non-intervention towards Korea and that therefore it had to take some measures in Korea to counter Chinese influence. During the peace negotiations, Hanabusa told the Chosōn negotiators that he was prepared to reduce the indemnity if the latter would give Japan concessions in the form of some mines

¹¹² Hanabusa to Inoue (Unnumbered), Seoul, 30 Aug 1882 (rec 2 Sept), GS 1-1-2-3-14 vol. 1 (JACAR B03030181000).

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

or permission to set up a telegraph cable.¹¹⁵ The Koreans rejected this offer and preferred to pay ¥500,000 instead, and therefore Hanabusa dropped this clause; however, this was a clear sign that the Japanese were now interested in extending their influence in the country. Also on 15 August 1882 – in the midst of the Imo crisis – the Japanese government concluded that it must strengthen its military, with the clear objective of providing it with the means to counter the Qing in East Asia. It was after this point that the Ministry of Navy started drawing up detailed plans for expansion.¹¹⁶

However, it must also be stressed that the Imo incident did not unleash serious anti-Qing sentiment at the highest level of the Japanese government. It is true that the Qing insistence on exercising its influence over a bilateral Japanese-Korean problem issue did frustrate the Japanese government, and that the Chinese seemed to be breaching Chosŏn's independence when they abducted the Taewŏn'gun. However, this had been done at a stage when the Japanese-Korean negotiations had hit deadlock, and the talks proceeded satisfactorily after the abduction. At least in the summer of 1882, the Qing decision-makers were not utilising the claim of suzerainty in a manner that seriously harmed Japanese interests in Korea.

Therefore, Japanese policy towards Korea did not change too drastically after the Imo mutiny. They continued to rely on persuasion and appeasement in order to win the goodwill of the Koreans. Already during the negotiations, Hanabusa told the Korean ministers, who continued to be reluctant about allowing Japanese troops to be stationed in Seoul, that his government would withdraw the force after one year and replace them with the local guards if order had been restored by that time.¹¹⁷ When Inoue received a

¹¹⁵ Inoue to Hanabusa (Unnumbered), 27 Aug 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 238-243.

¹¹⁶ Aoki to Ito (Private), Berlin, 14 Aug 1882. *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 55-6.

¹¹⁷ Inoue to Hanabusa (Unnumbered), 13 Sept 1882 KS 37023.

report from Hanabusa about the signing of the Treaty of Chemulpo on 2 September, he went further and replied immediately that the Japanese government would reduce the number of the troops in Korea to the size of a company, and it would be further reduced to half that size once the Choson court managed to restore order.¹¹⁸

Closing Remarks on the Chapter

In the early-1880s, the decision-makers of Britain and Japan became more sensitive about the international environment that surrounded Korea than in the previous decade. First and foremost, they became aware that the Chinese were making conscious efforts to uphold their influence in that country by utilising the prestige and suzerainty that they had enjoyed in East Asia for centuries. They also started to be concerned that the Russian government might be taking measures to strengthen their influence in the region. British decision-makers became alarmed when they heard that the Russians were reinforcing their military strength in Vladivostok as a consequence of the Ili crisis, and this report began the momentum that drove the British to sign a treaty with the Choson court in June 1882. Concern over potential Russian expansion into Korea was shared by the Japanese decision-makers as well, and that was the major reason why they designated Wonsan as a treaty port. In addition, when the Russian government announced the coronation of the new Tsar in 1882, the Japanese government decided to send Prince Arisugawa Taruhito to the ceremony, and the Prince was asked to gain as much information as possible about Russian intentions towards Korea.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹; Aoki to Itō (Private), Berlin, 12 Aug 1882; Prince Arisugawa to Itō (Private), 20 Aug 1882, both from *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 109. Also see Iwakura to Prince Arisugawa (Private), 17 June 1882, *IHKM*, vol. 3, pp. 108. When the Japanese government

However, whether this common concern could develop into a cooperative relationship between Britain and Japan was a different question. It is very important not to overemphasise the Japanese suspicion towards the Qing. After all, they were not inclined to alter the existing international order in East Asia, in which the Westphalian and traditional principles co-existed. When the Japanese decision-makers signed the Treaty of Kanghwa, they did not place too much importance on clarifying the international status of Korea. Until the Qing intervention into the Imo crisis, the priority for Japanese policy towards Korea was to improve the bilateral relationship, instead of unilaterally strengthening their strategic foothold in the peninsula. Just as in the case of the British diplomats, the Japanese government thought that it would be in its best interests for Korea to be recognised as a sovereign and independent nation-state by the Western nations, but when it realised that the Chosōn court was extremely reluctant to open up the country to the rest of the world, it became cautious.¹²⁰ For example, when John Bingham, the American Minister in Tokyo, first requested Inoue to write a letter of recommendation to the Korean government for Shufeldt in March 1880, the Japanese government rejected this request.¹²¹ It was only after Bingham made several overtures following this initial Japanese rejection that the Gaimushō decided to write a letter, fearing that further rejection might lead to a deterioration of the American-Japanese relationship when they were in the midst of important negotiations over treaty revision.¹²²

decided to send Prince Arisugawa to Europe, the Russian government had not yet decided whether they would invite guests for the coronation ceremony, and in the end decided not to do so. Nonetheless, the government officials concluded that it was worth sending the prince to Europe on this occasion to exchange greetings through royal diplomacy. See Inoue to European and American Ministers in Tokyo, 12 June 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 116.

¹²⁰ *NGM*, vol. 9-12. See also Inoue to Bingham (No. 14), 7 Apr 1880, *NGM*, vol. 13, pp. 436-7; Inoue to Sanjō (甲第百三十號), 24 May 1880, *NGM* vol. 13, pp. 442-3.

¹²¹ Bingham to Inoue (No. 1179), Tokyo, 12 Mar 1880, *NGM*, vol. 13, pp. 435-6.

¹²² Inoue to Sanjō (甲第百三十號), 24 May 1880; Inoue to Kondō (Unnumbered), 29 May

Also, despite the fact that Shufeldt and Bingham considered the Koreans discourteous for returning the Japanese letter of recommendation without even opening it, the Japanese government did not feel insulted, arguing that the Koreans had the right to decide whether they should read what they received.¹²³

Meanwhile, while it is true that the senior officials in the Foreign Office did listen when their diplomats and naval officers in East Asia reported about possible Russian expansion, Korea remained a country located on the ‘fringe of the fringe’ of the empire for the British. Even if it were desirable to recognise Korea as an independent nation-state to check Russian expansion, the officials were still reluctant to take any move that might result in a military engagement. The Japanese suspicion towards Russia should also not be overemphasised. It is true that the Japanese decision-makers were frustrated when they had to give up control over Sakhalin to Russia, and that this experience resulted in the development of an image of Russia as a powerful expansionist empire. However, while this image lingered in the minds of the Japanese decision-makers, the relationship between Russia and Japan after the signing of the delineation treaty of 1875 was generally cordial. Over the question of treaty revision, the Japanese diplomats perceived that the Russian government officials were not particularly opposed to the demands, but that they were sensitive to the opinion of other Western countries, whose influence could not be ignored.¹²⁴ As a matter of fact, the Russo-Japanese treaty recognised mutual extraterritoriality – which acknowledged Japanese consular jurisdiction in Sakhalin as

1880, both from *NGM* vol. 13, pp. 442-6.

¹²³ Bingham to Inoue (No. 1326), Tokyo, 11 Sept 1880; Inoue to Bingham (No. 34), 18 Sept 1880, both from *NGM* vol. 13, pp. 451-6.

¹²⁴ Yanagiwara to Inoue (Unnumbered), St. Petersburg, 4 Sept 1880 (rec. 28 Oct), *NGM*, vol. 13, pp. 217-8; Yanagiwara to Inoue (Unnumbered), St. Petersburg, 12 Sept 1880 (rec. 6 Nov), *NGM*, vol. 13, pp. 218-222; Yanagiwara to Inoue (別信第五號 Extract), St. Petersburg, 17 Oct 1880, *NGM*, vol. 13, pp. 254-6; Yanagiwara to Inoue (十五年機密第八號), St. Petersburg, 19 Mar 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 13-4.

well as the same right for the Russians in the Kurile Islands – and therefore the Russo-Japanese relationship was regulated under the principle of equality at least in these areas. It provided an agreeable framework for the Gaimushō officials to solve disputes whenever they arose in the northern waters of Japan.¹²⁵

It should also be remembered that Anglo-Japanese relations were not particularly close. At this time, the Japanese tended to resent many of the rowdy Britons in the treaty ports because of the latter's high-handed manner.¹²⁶ To some extent, Parkes epitomised the attitude of such people, as he was quite notorious for his arrogant approach when negotiating with the Japanese decision-makers, and was bitterly opposed to the Japanese demand for treaty revision.¹²⁷ When the Japanese government succeeded in signing a convention with the Americans in 1873 – in which the latter agreed to grant tariff autonomy to the former – Parkes urged his and the other Western governments not to negotiate similar agreement.¹²⁸ As the convention was signed under the condition that it would not be ratified unless other Western governments would sign a similar agreement, it was turned into a dead letter. The Japanese could not help but feel that the British and their Minister in Tokyo were unfriendly, especially because they thought they were only demanding tariff autonomy and full administrative control over their own country, which was seen as a right that every civilised nation should enjoy. Some Japanese officials described the attitude of Parkes as being “aggressive, rude and cruel.”¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Inoue to Sanjō (Unnumbered), 25 Jan 1882; Kobayashi to Ueno (Unnumbered), Korsakov, 25 Jan 1882 (rec. 26 Jan); Inoue to Sanjō (公第八九號), 2 enclosures, 23 Mar 1882; Kobayashi to Ueno (第四號), 2 enclosures, 18 July 1882 (rec. 31 Aug), all from *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 356-367.

¹²⁶ Hoare, *Japan's Treaty Ports and Foreign Settlements*.

¹²⁷ See, for example: Record of Conversation between Inoue and the German Minister in Tokyo at Gaimushō, 10 July 1880, *NGM*, vol. 13, pp. 150-161. Iokibe, *Jōyaku Kaiseishi*, ch. 1.

¹²⁸ Iokibe, *Jōyaku Kaiseishi*, 313;

¹²⁹ For quote, see Takezoe to Ōkuma, Itō and Inoue (Private), Tianjin, 4 July 1881,

It was in early 1880 that the Western governments, including the British, finally agreed to hold a conference on treaty revision and receive a draft proposal of the revised treaty from Japan.¹³⁰ However, this did not mean that the Anglo-Japanese frictions over this issue were eradicated all of a sudden. The senior officials of the Foreign Office and the diplomats in Japan were often frustrated during this process, as they felt that the Japanese always asked for too much while not giving back enough in return.¹³¹ From the Japanese side of the story, the diplomats and senior officials at Gaimushō started to contemplate the idea of negotiating with Germany when they were preparing for this conference. While the Germans seemed, from the Japanese perspective, reluctant to sign any agreement with the Japanese that might put them at odds with Britain, they also did not seem to be as stubbornly against the Japanese draft on treaty revision as the British. The Japanese authorities thus hoped that the Germans could act as a counterweight against the British if they succeeded in winning the former's goodwill.¹³²

Of course, it should not be assumed that every Japanese resented the British. After

ŌSKM (NSKV), vol. 4, pp. 280-283. See also Sanjō to Yamagata (Private), 8 Apr 1881, *YAKM*, vol. 2, pp. 178; and the section on treaty revision of *NGM* vol. 14. For secondary source, see Iokibe, *Jōyaku Kaiseishi*.

¹³⁰ Mori to Inoue (別信第三十二號), London, 16 Apr 1880 (rec. 1 June), *NGM*, vol. 14, pp. 28-9; Mori to Inoue (Internal), London, 11 June 1880 (rec. 26 July), *NGM*, vol. 13, pp. 126-7; Mori to Inoue (機密信 第八十號), Mori to Inoue (Unnumbered), London, 17 Dec 1880, *NGM*, vol. 13, pp. 271-4.

¹³¹ Circular Addressed to Certain Chambers of Commerce, by Sir C. Dilke, FO, 22 July 1881; Glasgow Chamber of Commerce to Granville, 9 Sept 1881 (rec. 10 Sept); Manchester Chamber of Commerce to Granville, 9 Sept 1881 (rec. 13 Sept); Huddersfield Chamber of Commerce to Tenterden, 23 Sept 1881 (rec. 24 Sept); Matheson and Co to Pauncefote, 26 Sept 1881 (rec. 27 Sept); Birmingham Chamber of Commerce to Tenterden, 26 Oct 1881 (rec. 28 Oct); Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce to Granville, 11 Nov 1881 (rec. 12 Nov). All from *BDFA* vol. 3.

¹³² Aoki to Mori (Private), Berlin, 15 Apr 1881; Aoki to Itō (Private), Berlin, 24 June 1881; Aoki to Itō (Private), 25 July 1881, all from *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 48-54. Inoue to Mori (Unnumbered), 26 Sept 1881, *NGM*, vol. 14, pp. 68; Inoue to Mori (機密 第廿六號), 26 Sept 1881, *NGM*, vol. 14, pp. 68-9; Inoue to Sanjō (秘第三十九號), 20 Oct 1881, *NGM*, vol. 14, pp. 88-90.

all, the conference on treaty revision did lead to some progress in the negotiation over this issue, as the Western representatives, including Parkes, reacted positively when the Japanese declared in the spring of 1882 that they were prepared to grant the freedom to travel, live and engage in commercial activity throughout Japan if the treaty powers would comply with the Japanese demands.¹³³ In addition, the British political system attracted admiration from the activists of the *Jiyū Minken Undō* (Movement for Freedom and Popular Rights) in Japan, as the movement was becoming quite active by the early-1880s, and there were Meiji oligarchs such as Ōkuma Shigenobu, who supported this idea.¹³⁴ However, the individuals who took a more favourable view of the British were not the majority within the Japanese government at that time. The Japanese government decided in 1881 to adopt the Prussian constitutional model, and Ōkuma was ousted from his post as the Finance Minister that year for insisting on adopting the British model of constitution.¹³⁵ The level of mutual confidence between Britain and Japan in the summer of 1882 was thus not very strong.

¹³³ Inoue to Mori (無號別信), 31 Mar 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 20-1; Inoue to Mori (無號別信), 6 Apr 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 21; *BDEA* vol. 3.

¹³⁴ George Akita, *Foundations of Constitutional Government in Modern Japan, 1868-1900*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), ch. 2 and 3.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, ch. 3.

Chapter 2 – The Years between the Crises, September 1882-April 1884

Japanese Policy towards Korea

In the period between September 1882 and April 1884, Japanese decision-makers continued to follow the line of policy that they had pursued during and immediately after the Imo crisis, and formulated policies under the clear recognition that they could not ignore the Qing presence in Korea. Such a change of perception had several implications on the Japanese policies. First of all, they realised the need to make some adjustments so that they would not fall behind their Chinese competitors after observing the Qing intervention in the Imo crisis. As shown in the previous chapter, the Japanese government ordered the Ministry of Navy to draw up a plan for naval expansion during the crisis. Three months later, Kawamura Sumiyoshi, the Minister of Navy, submitted a detailed plan for naval expansion, which called for an addition of thirty-six warships within the next eight years, and a budget of 670,000 yen per warship on average.¹ Iwakura agreed that the nation must strengthen its navy by stating that;

The recent incident over Korea has been settled peacefully, but we must remain alert towards China. China had been sleeping for decades, but it has recently strengthened its military capability by making determined efforts to reform its services. ...The security of our country will be at risk if we do not make serious efforts to improve the quality of the naval service. ...It is [politically] difficult to increase taxation at this moment, but we must do this as we have no other means to finance [the naval expansion].²

¹ Kawamura to Sanjō (秘第七十二號), 15 Nov 1882, KSKKT SM 48-17.

² Minute by Iwakura, 20 Nov 1882, KSKKT SM 75-9. See also Junji Banno, “Jingo/Kōshin Jihenki no Gaikō to Naisei,” in *Nihon Rekishi Taikei 4: Kindai I*, eds. Toshiaki Ōkubo et al, (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1987): 583-611.

The Japanese decision-makers were aware by late-1882 that the Qing court was becoming more determined to uphold its influence in East Asia as a whole, not just in Korea, as the latter also reacted sharply when the French launched another military campaign in Tonkin in the northern part of modern-day Vietnam, which belonged to the Kingdom of Annam.³ This meant that the Ryukyu question could also potentially turn into a diplomatic issue that might trigger a military confrontation. There were therefore many reasons for the Japanese government to reiterate the importance of bolstering the military.⁴

Japanese decision-makers also took various other measures to stabilise the Sino-Japanese balance of influence in Korea in order to protect their interests. For example, when Takezoe Shin'ichirō, the new Minister in Korea from January 1883, advised his government to withdraw some troops from Korea immediately after his arrival at Seoul in order to improve the Japanese image in the Chinese and Korean eyes,⁵ his superiors

³ See *NGM* vol. 16. In particular, refer to; Enomoto to Inoue (機密第八號), Beijing, 1 Mar 1883 (rec. 22 Mar); Enomoto to Inoue (機密信第十三號), one enclosure, Beijing, 19 Mar 1883 (rec. 6 Apr), pp. 457-460. Also see Minute by Miyajima, written in Gaimushō, 19 June 1883; Yoshida to Sanjō (電親展第八七號), three enclosures, 19 June 1883; Shinagawa to Yoshida (機密第四十四號), one enclosure, Shanghai, 19 June 1883; From Japanese Legation in Britain to Gaimushō (第九號), 20 June 1883; Minute of conversation between Takezoe and Möllendorff, 21 June 1883, pp. 508-519.

⁴ Kawamura to Sanjō (秘第七十二號), 11 Nov 1882, KSKKT SM 48-17; Minute by Iwakura, 20 Nov 1882, KSKKT SM 75-9; Minute by Unknown Author (Takezoe Shin'ichirō?), written in 1882 after the conclusion of the Imo crisis, KSKKT SM 51-13; Minute by Yamagata, written in 1882 after the Imo crisis, KSKKT SM 51-14; Minute by Inoue Kowashi, 12 May 1883, *IKDS*, vol. 1, pp. 355-6; Minute by Yamagata, 5 June 1883, KSKKT IKM 675-6/YAI, pp. 137-8. Also see the following documents in *NGM* vol. 16; Enomoto to Inoue (機密第八號), Beijing, 1 Mar 1883 (rec. 22 Mar), pp. 457-8; Enomoto to Inoue, Beijing, 15 Apr 1883 (rec. 3 May), pp. 467-471; Azuma to Inoue and Yoshida, 2 May 1883, pp. 270-3; Li Shuchang to Inoue (第五十九號), 11 May 1883, pp. 267-8; Inoue to Enomoto, (公第四十號) 23 May 1883, pp. 224; From Japanese Legation in Britain to Gaimushō (第九號), 20 June 1883, pp. 516-8; Inoue to Hachisuka (機密第十九號), 14 July 1883, pp. 45-6.

⁵ Takezoe to Inoue (機密信第九十七號), Seoul, 25 July 1883 (rec. 5 Aug), *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 551-2; Shinagawa to Inoue (機密第六十四號), Shanghai, 31 July 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 561-2.

in the Gaimushō initially agreed, but then decided to resend the soldiers in mid-October when they learned that the Qing had not yet withdrawn its own forces.⁶ While the Japanese decision-makers were aware that its military presence raised the suspicion of the Koreans, it was equally important not to leave the Qing unchecked. They also tried to encourage Japanese investors to establish a foothold in Korea. Although they were very reluctant to offer economic aid to the Chosōn court directly from their treasury – due to the dire financial situation that the Japanese government was in during the first half of the 1880s – they understood that it was necessary to take some initiative to urge Japanese investors to start businesses, as they were aware that not too many of the large-scale entrepreneurs would head to Korea spontaneously.⁷ This situation seemed particularly worrying, as Japanese officials were conscious that the Chinese were interested in expanding their trade in Korea.

In 1882 a Sino-Korean Regulations for Maritime and Overland Trade agreement was signed. This agreement was important for two reasons. First in these regulations, the courts in Beijing and Seoul reconfirmed the hierarchical relationship between the traditional suzerain and vassal.⁸ Second, it set up conditions for Sino-Korean trade that privileged China. On the face of it, the Sino-Korean Regulations closely resembled the treaties that the Chosōn court had signed with other countries, in the sense that the

⁶ Hidemao Takahashi, “Jingo Jihengo no Chōsen Mondai,” *Shirin*, 72:5 (Sept 1989): 67. This article is incorporated in Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*, ch. 2, section 1. For the Qing decision not to withdraw troops from Korea, see also Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, 138-140; Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade*, 95-106; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, 873-6.

⁷ Ōkura to Yoshida (Private), 29 Aug 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 264-5; Shibusawa to Maeda (Private), 9 Apr 1883, *SEDS*, vol. 16, 18/add. vol. 4, pp. 261. Kimura, “Meijiki Chōsen Shinshutsu Nihonjin ni Tsuite,” 450-467; Shimada, “Daiichi (Kokuritsu) Ginkō no Chōsen Shinshutsu to Shibusawa Eiichi,” 55-69; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 2, chapter 21, part 60.

⁸ For this regulation, see Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, 140-164; Larsen, *Tradition, Treaty and Trade*, 88-94.

Chinese merchants were now permitted to trade in the treaty ports which were already opened to the other countries, although this agreement also opened another trading post on the Sino-Korean border. Tariffs were to be fixed at 5 percent *ad valorem*, and in these trading posts the Chinese merchants were to enjoy extraterritoriality. However, the regulations went further in some important areas. For example, they granted exclusive shipping rights over Sino-Korean maritime trade to the Chinese Merchants Steamship Company, and stipulated that a telegraph line between these two countries was to be built and maintained exclusively by the Qing. Moreover, around the time that the Sino-Korean Regulations were signed, Qing officials started to send military and political advisors to the Chosōn.⁹

In response, the Japanese government decided on 18 December 1882 that it would grant about 170 yen to the Yokohama Specie Bank so that it could be used as a loan to the Chosōn court, in the hope that such a measure would encourage the bank to offer long-term investment that would make the Japanese presence in Korea more permanent.¹⁰ Later, in November 1883, the Chosōn authorities signed an agreement with the Daiichi National Bank which allowed the latter to collect tariffs on behalf of the former, as the bank had opened branches in all three treaty ports in Korea. This negotiation was initiated by Takezoe, as he held informal talks with Paul Georg von Möllendorff, the German advisor to the Chosōn court, over this issue from the summer.¹¹ It is unlikely that the Japanese government instructed Takezoe to promote Japanese economic interests in Korea as enthusiastically as he did; when the Gaimushō learned that the bank and the

⁹ Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, 149-164; Larsen, *Tradition, Treaty and Trade*, 88-94; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, 867-872.

¹⁰ Matsukata to Sanjō, 16 Dec 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 283.

¹¹ Takezoe to Inoue (機密信第百七號), Seoul, 7 Aug 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 315; Shibusawa to Ōhashi (Private), 8 Aug 1883, *SEDS*, vol. 16, pp. 23-6.

Chosōn officials had entered official negotiations to sign an agreement over this issue from October 1883 they instructed the Minister that he should not take any part in the talks between the two parties, although he was permitted to act as a witness if the two parties asked him to do so.¹² However, the Gaimushō also did not entirely disapprove of Takezoe's action, and as the Chosōn court started permitting the Daiichi National Bank to purchase Korean alluvial gold around the same time,¹³ his actions did play a role in strengthening the Japanese foothold in Korea to some extent. The individuals outside of the government also thought some measures must be taken in order to strengthen the Japanese commercial presence in Korea. For example, Shibusawa noted that "Japanese trade in Korea is struggling in the first place. If the Chinese merchants would flood into Inchōn and Seoul, then our traders might be forced to close their business."¹⁴

After the Imo incident, many Japanese individuals started to watch the Qing actions in Korea with stronger suspicion than before. Takino Masatoshi, a naval officer who visited Seoul in December 1882, reported with alarm that the Qing officials in the capital were taking every measure to strengthen their foothold in Korea. According to Takino, these actions included direct forms of influence such as forcing the Chosōn officials to accept military advisors and loans from China, and indirect forms such as convincing the Korean officials to limit contact with the Japanese.¹⁵ It was also after the Imo crisis that the Japanese government began to be alarmed about King Kojong's letters to the heads of the Western nations which indicated that his country was under the suzerainty of the

¹² Daiichi National Bank to Inoue, 20 Oct 1883 (rec. 29 Oct), *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 315-7; Inoue to Takezoe (公第百十二號), 6 Nov 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 324.

¹³ Shimada, "Daiichi (Kokuritsu) Ginkō no Chōsen Shinshutsu to Shibusawa Eiichi," 58.

¹⁴ Shibusawa to Maeda (Private), 9 Apr 1883, *SEDS*, vol. 16, 18/add. vol. 4, pp. 261.

¹⁵ Takino to Nire (普三五七〇 城三第百六十六号), Amagi (Shimonoseki), 30 Nov 1882. Enclosure to Nire to Kawamura (普三五七〇 旗進第七九号ノ二), 11 Dec 1882, BKS 海軍省-公文類纂-M15-13-634 (JACAR C09115585400).

Qing. Of course, the Japanese knew about these letters before the outbreak of the Imo mutiny, but the correspondence exchanged by the Gaimushō and diplomats over this issue now started to carry a stronger sense of concern and frustration than before.¹⁶ Takino went as far as describing the Chinese as “those pigtails who are notorious for being adept at deception” taking every measure to drive the Japanese out from Korea so that they could expand their interests.¹⁷

Their frustration towards the Qing also derived from issues outside of Korea. One of the diplomatic problems that they experienced during this period was the question of revision of the Sino-Japanese treaty, whose commercial clauses were about to expire.¹⁸ Japanese decision-makers hoped that they would be able to use the opportunity to abolish the clause on mutual extraterritoriality in return for allowing both the Chinese and Japanese nationals to travel and reside freely in each other’s countries. In other words, they wanted to amend the Sino-Japanese treaty in a manner similar to their blueprint for revised treaties with the Western countries, in the hope that such a success would make it easier to convince the latter to accept revision.¹⁹ However, the Qing negotiators procrastinated over this issue, and asked the Japanese to make some concession over Ryukyu if they wanted to revise the existing treaty between the Qing and Japan.²⁰ As

¹⁶ Ida to Itō (Private), 10 Mar 1882, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 113; Tanabe to Inoue (機密信第五號), Beijing, 31 May 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 370; Takahira to Yoshida (Private), 21 Sept 1882, *YKKM*, vol. 2, pp. 210-2; Iwakura to Sanjō, 6 Oct 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 253-4; Minute by Unknown Author (Takezoe Shin’ichirō?), written in 1882 after the conclusion of the Imo crisis, KSKKT SM 51-13; Minute by Yamagata, written in 1882 after the Imo crisis, KSKKT SM 51-14; Inoue to Aoki (機密内啓), 19 Jan 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 1-3; Enomoto to Inoue (Unnumbered), Beijing, 26 Mar 1883 (rec. 12 Apr), *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 467-471.

¹⁷ See footnote 15 of this chapter.

¹⁸ Iokibe, *Jōyaku Kaiseishi*, 112-126.

¹⁹ Enomoto to Inoue (機密信第六號), Beijing, 19 Feb 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 262-3.

²⁰ Ibid; Li Shuchang to Inoue (第五十九號), 11 May 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 267-8;

Inoue to Enomoto (公第四十號), 23 May 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 224.

the question of treaty revision with the Western nations was the most important diplomatic issue for the Japanese decision-makers, they were frustrated by the attitude of its Qing counterparts.

It is therefore tempting to assume that the Japanese started to take more assertive measures to push their interests in Korea after the Imo crisis in order to refute the Chinese claim to suzerainty. However, at this stage most of the Japanese decision-makers agreed that the best way to accomplish this objective was not to confront China but rather to develop a friendly relationship with the Koreans in order to protect and extend their influence through appeasement and negotiations in a cordial spirit. Therefore, whenever the Chosōn court made requests the Japanese diplomats made efforts to accommodate them as much as possible. For example, negotiations over the Japanese-Korean tariff agreement had begun already before the outbreak of the Imo mutiny as a result of a strong request from the Chosōn ministers, and they managed to hammer out an agreement on 25 July 1883, although the Japanese negotiators kept the tariff rate lower than the one their Chosōn counterparts had requested.²¹ The Gaimushō also continued to persecute their nationals who were engaging in fishery and forestry in Ullüngdo in a manner that was not permitted by the Treaty of Kanghwa, and reiterated to the Korean government officials that they considered the island to be under Korean jurisdiction.²² Finally, the Gaimushō avoided adopting the suggestions made by some entrepreneurs who wanted the Chosōn court to grant them rights to invest in Korean alluvial gold mines in return for nullifying

²¹ Inoue to Sanjō (親展第百六九號), one enclosure, 25 Sept 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 282-9. Lee, *West Goes East*, 55-9.

²² Matsukata to Sanjō and Ōki (上第五號), 20 Feb 1883; Yoshida to Soeda (機密第九號), 24 May 1883; Soeda to Inoue (第六十二號), Wōnsan, 20 June 1883; Inoue to Sanjō (親展第百五十九號); Inoue to Yamada (親展第百七十號), 15 Sept 1883; Inoue to the Legation in Seoul (機密第十八號), 16 Nov 1883. All from *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 325-336.

the Imo incident indemnity, as such a demand might alienate the Korean officials.²³

Instead, the Japanese government decided to cancel the indemnity in early-1883 without demanding anything in return.²⁴

In addition, while most of the Japanese decision-makers pointed out the importance of preparing for the worst case scenario after the Imo crisis, they did not necessarily think that a Sino-Japanese confrontation was inevitable. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Qing intervention into the Imo crisis was made in a form that did not undermine Japanese interests, and it was not seen as being deliberately confrontational. Li Hongzhang's relatively conciliatory manner during the negotiations over the Ryukyu question also reassured the Japanese that he was not interested in starting a war, even if the Qing did not officially approve the Japanese annexation.²⁵

Finally, there are several sources which indicate that there were many Japanese individuals, both inside and outside of the government, who thought the Qing, Chosōn and Japan were interdependent with each other. Many of them likened the relationship between these three countries to that between teeth and lips; it is impossible for anyone to digest their food without teeth, but at the same time teeth will be exposed to the external threats if they are not covered by lips. Neither teeth nor lips can exist without each other, and many politically-conscious Japanese individuals considered that the same relationship existed between three East Asian countries.²⁶ Due to their proximity to each

²³ Ōkura to Yoshida (Private), 29 Aug 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 264-5.

²⁴ Minute by Akinaga Ranjirō and Okamoto Kansuke, 24 Nov 1884 (it says on the document that it was written on this day, but the contents of this document indicate that the authors know about the Kapsin coup, and therefore it is likely that the document was written on 24 Dec rather than Nov), KSKKT SM 51-15.

²⁵ Nishizato, *Shinmatsu Chūryūnichi Kankeishi no Kenkyū*, 32-3.

²⁶ Memorandum by unknown author, date unknown. Enclosure to Inoue to Sanjō (Private), September 1880, HSM 12 (36352), KS; Minute by Inoue Kowashi, 9 Nov 1882, HSM 23 (36363), KS/IHKM, vol. 1, pp. 334-6/IKD, vol. 1, pp. 312-3, vol. 4, pp. 69-71; Iwakura to Sanjō, 6 Oct 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 253-4.

other, the social conditions of China, Korea and Japan were closely interlinked, and therefore they thought that the economic prosperity of Japan could not be achieved unless the interactions between these three countries become more active. Many Japanese ministers and officials also perceived that if any of their East Asian neighbours collapsed, then their country would become more vulnerable to the threat of Western imperialism. The experience of being at the receiving end of the Western gunboat diplomacy in the mid-nineteenth century had created a strong fear and suspicion towards Western nations, which lingered in the minds of the Japanese decision-makers even in the 1880s. Iwakura, for example, argued shortly after the Imo crisis that “teeth and lips should cooperate with each other so that they can both uphold their independence.”²⁷ It goes without saying that many of his colleagues agreed with such opinion.²⁸

Of course, the Qing and Chosōn decision-makers could not help but see this Japanese attitude as hypocrisy; despite calling for the unity of East Asian countries, what the Japanese were doing in reality was trying to create agitation in East Asia that suited their interests before those of the Chinese and Koreans, and they also often accomplished such objectives by mobilising their military and manipulating unequal treaties in that process. However, the fact that the Japanese decision-makers sought to develop a cooperative relationship with the Qing had an important influence on their East Asian policy. In the early-1880s, British diplomats in East Asia and Qing decision-makers had feared that the Japanese might come to closer terms with Russia and France – two European great powers that had experienced diplomatic difficulties with the Qing – in order to strengthen their bargaining position over the Ryukyu question, but there is no evidence that indicates that

²⁷ Iwakura to Sanjō, 6 Oct 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 253-4.

²⁸ Record of Conversation between Inoue Kowashi and Boissonade, 9 Aug 1882, *IKDS*, vol. 5, pp. 625-630; Azuma to Inoue and Yoshida, 2 May 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 270-3.

they contemplated such an option.²⁹ As a matter of fact, when the Sino-French dispute over Tonkin escalated in 1883, the French diplomats made several overtures to the Japanese in order to establish a military alliance, but the Japanese ministers were very consistent in refusing such offers.³⁰

This stance also influenced the Japanese policy towards Korea. While the Japanese decision-makers saw Korea as a region which was important for the security of Japan, and wanted to avoid it falling into the hands of hostile power, they were also aware of their own military weakness. Under such circumstances, they thought that the best way to accomplish their objective was to create an environment that prevented any single external power from controlling the peninsula, while meanwhile helping the Chosōn decision-makers to modernise, as such reforms would stabilise the domestic political situation and allow the Chosōn to resist external threats. Japanese decision-makers did not believe that the Qing presence would necessarily impede the Korean modernisation process, or that the Qing claim of traditional suzerainty would lead the Chinese to drive all the other external powers out of Korea.³¹ They also thought that they shared a common interest in preventing Russian encroachment into Korea, as they observed that

²⁹ Wade to Salisbury (Telegraphic), Beijing, 14 Jan 1880 (rec. 1 Feb), FO 17/829.

³⁰ Enomoto to Inoue (機密信第三十六號), Beijing, 29 July 1883 (rec. 23 Aug), *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 552-7; Hara to Itō (機密第三號), Tianjin, 23 Jan 1884 (rec. 22 Feb), *NGM*, vol. 17, pp. 509-511. For secondary sources, see Kazuki Nose, “Kōshin Seihen no Kenkyū (1),” *Chōsen Gakuhō*, 82 (Jan 1977): 133-160.

³¹ Iwakura to Sanjō, 6 Oct 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 253-4; Minute by Unknown Author (Takezoe Shin'ichirō?), written in 1882 after the conclusion of the Imo crisis, KSKKT SM 51-13; Minute by Terashima, enclosure to Inoue to Iwakura (Private), 8 Mar 1883, *TMKS*, vol. 1, pp. 198-201; Sugi to Terashima (Private), 12 May 1883, *TMKS*, vol. 2, pp. 559-561. Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 111-123; Ōsawa, “Chōsen Eisei Chūritsuka Kōsō to Nihon Gaiko,” 43-64; Hiroaki Ōsawa, “Chōsen Eisei Chūritsuka Kōsō to Kindai Nihon Gaiko,” *Seikyū Gakujutsu Ronshū*, (Mar. 1998): 179-229; Hiroaki Ōsawa, “Meiji Gaikō to Chōsen Eisei Chūritsuka Kōsō no Tenkai – 1882 nen-84 nen,” *Kumamoto Hōgaku*, 83 (June 1995): 289-341; Takahashi, “Jingo Jihengō no Chōsen Mondai,” 44-83.

the Qing's relations with Russia were still tense after the Ili crisis.³² The bottom line was that by late-1882 there was a near consensus within the Japanese decision-making circle that they must avoid pursuing any policy that would seriously upset the Qing decision-makers.

This is not to say that there were not different views in the decision-making circle, as some did argue that there was a need to take strong measures to counter the Qing influence in Korea. For example, Inoue Kowashi, the secretary of the Cabinet, advised the government to arrange an international agreement which would acknowledge Korea as a neutral state like Belgium or Switzerland.³³ While this suggestion should not be regarded as being aggressive, he nonetheless was suggesting that an effort should be made to ensure that Korea was recognised internationally as a state independent from the Qing claim of suzerainty. Senior officials of military went further. They argued that, considering the fact that both the Qing and Japan saw Korea as a region of vital strategic importance, it was inevitable that a war between these two countries would break out in the future, and argued that they should challenge the Qing earlier rather than later, before the latter strengthened its own military.³⁴ However, Yamagata Aritomo, a prominent Meiji oligarch who had a strong connection with the army, was much more cautious as he was well aware that Japan was not ready for such an engagement. While the Ministry of Navy had submitted its plan for naval expansion – which was deemed essential in order to protect and promote Japan's interest on the Asian continent – this required annual

³² Ibid.

³³ Inoue Kowashi to Yamagata (Private), 23 Sept 1882, *YAKM*, vol. 1, pp. 184-5; Inoue Kowashi to Yoshida (Private), 31 Oct 1882, *YKKM*, vol. 1, pp. 112-3; Minute by Inoue Kowashi, 9 Nov 1882, HSM 23 (36363), *KS/IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 334-6/*IKD*, vol. 1, pp. 312-3, vol. 4, pp. 69-71. Ōsawa, “Chōsen Eisei Chūritsuka Kōsō to Kindai Nihon Gaiko,” 179-229.

³⁴ Takahashi, “Jingo Jihengō no Chōsen Mondai,” 55.

budgets of 3 million yen for the next eight years, which was way beyond the capacity of the treasury at that time.³⁵ The navy's administration drew up a more affordable plan as an alternative, but the important military officers who had backed the initial plan, such as Ōyama Iwao (Head of the Army General Staff) and Kajiyama Sukenori (Undersecretary of the Ministry of Navy), raised strong objections, and the debate was not reconciled before the outbreak of Kapsin coup.³⁶ As a result, Yamagata argued that Japan must be careful not to take any action in Korea that might provoke a Qing reaction.³⁷ Inoue Kowashi also agreed that the Japanese government must deal with the Qing cautiously, at least for the time being.³⁸

What lay underneath the Japanese policies towards Korea after 1882 was the perception shared by the officials in Tokyo that they had not completely lost their foothold in Korea after the Imo mutiny. Despite the fact that the incident had resulted in a significant loss of influence for the radical progressive faction of the Chosón court, which was seen as being pro-Japanese, the members of that faction such as Kim Ok-kyun and Pak Yǒng-hyo still retained their position within the government, and both participated in a mission to apologise for the Imo incident in the autumn of 1882.³⁹ They also thought that the Koreans were not completely pro-Chinese, as the Qing abduction of the Taewon'gǔn had resulted in his son, Kojong, holding strong suspicion towards the suzerain power. Also many of the local population in Korea soon started to see the Chinese merchants and

³⁵ Hiroaki Ōsawa, "Tenshin Jōyaku Taisei no Keisei to Hōkai, 1885-94 (1)," *Shakai Kagaku Kenkyū* (Institute of Social Science, University of Tokyo), (Oct 1991): 51-2, 65.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Minute by Yamagata, written in 1882 after the Imo crisis, KSKKT SM 51-14.

³⁸ Inoue Kowashi to Yamagata (Private), 23 Sept 1882, *YAKM*, vol. 1, pp. 184-5.

³⁹ Takezoe to Yoshida (Private), 26 Dec 1882, *YKKM*, vol. 2, pp. 221. Shigenori Moriyama, *Kindai Nikkan Kankeishi Kenkyū – Chōsen Shokuminchika to Kokusai Kankei*, (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1987), 11; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, ch. 16.

soldiers in their country with resentment as they were no less rowdy than the Japanese residents.⁴⁰ This optimism was shared by individuals such as Fukuzawa Yukichi, one of the most influential non-governmental individuals in Japan at that time as an entrepreneur, educator and journalist. Thinking that there were a sizeable number of progressives in Korea, Fukuzawa held high hopes that Japan could strengthen its influence by acting as an instructor in modernity. Not only did he encourage his junior associates to go to Korea for that purpose, he also hosted a group of Korean students in the summer of 1883.⁴¹ Finally, by mid-1883, Japanese officials held the impression that, despite Li Hongzhang's mediation of the treaties between Korea and the Western nations, the latter preferred to treat the former as an independent nation-state rather than a vassal of the Qing.⁴² The Japanese decision-makers thought therefore that there were various forces at play that checked the Qing influence in Korea, and did not believe that their own influence in that country had been eliminated. It was therefore not necessarily the case that the Westphalian system was incompatible with suzerainty.

This perception, however, was based upon a serious misapprehension of the political situation in Korea. In reality, the radical progressives remained a small minority within the Chosŏn decision-making circle. It was difficult for a faction which was regarded as being pro-Japanese to expand its influence when the Chinese and Koreans remained, unsurprisingly, strongly suspicious of Japan after the Imo incident. The radical

⁴⁰ Hanabus to Inoue (第七號 機密), Seoul, 9 Sept 1882, GS 1-1-2-3-14 vol. 1 (JACAR B03030181000); Enomoto to Inoue, Beijing, 6 June 1883 (rec. 20 June), *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 497-8. Larsen, *Tradition, Treaty and Trade*, 106-127; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, 892-3.

⁴¹ Fukuzawa to Ushiba (Private), 14 Jan 1883, *FYZ*, vol. 17, 529-530; Fukuzawa to Inoue Kakugorō (Private), 1 July 1883, *FYZ*, vol. 17, pp. 559-561; Fukuzawa to His Sons (Private), 19 July 1883, *FYZ*, vol. 17, pp. 565-6. Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 124-137.

⁴² Inoue to Sanjō (公第二五〇號), one enclosure, 28 Nov 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 272; Azuma to Inoue and Yoshida, 2 May 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 270-3.

progressives also received no aid from the Japanese government, as the latter pursued a cautious policy towards Korea. It was against this background that the radical progressives became more desperate about retaining their foothold, eventually leading them to launch the Kapsin coup in December 1884.

British Policy towards Korea

Compared to the Japanese, the Imo incident had a limited effect on British policy towards Korea, at least in the short term. Although the incident caused British observers, both inside and outside of the government, to recognise that the Qing ministers took its claim of traditional suzerainty more seriously than they had expected, they remained quite uninterested in accepting this. The senior officials of the Foreign Office and their diplomats were unsympathetic to the concept of suzerainty and had hitherto carefully avoided signalling any sympathy towards the Qing over the diplomatic difficulties that the latter had experienced with Japan over Taiwan and Ryukyu.⁴³ In 1882 they did not see the Qing as having any more right to intervene in the Imo mutiny than the Japanese, whose legation members in Seoul had been attacked by the rebels.⁴⁴ Yet, by April 1884 they began to reformulate policy towards East Asia in the recognition that they had to take the suzerainty question more seriously in order to maintain the goodwill of the Qing.

⁴³ Parkes to Derby (No. 24 Confidential), Tokyo, 8 Feb 1875 (rec. 29 Mar), FO 46/190; Parkes to Derby (No. 33 Confidential), Tokyo, 22 Feb 1875 (rec. 10 Apr), FO 46/190; From an occasional correspondent in Yokohama, "Japan and Corea." *Times*, 30 Nov. 1875; Parkes to Derby (No. 116), Tokyo, 10 July 1876 (rec. 21 Aug), FO 46/207; Parkes to Granville (No. 30), Tokyo, 8 Mar 1882 (rec. 25 Apr), FO 46/284. Daniels, *Sir Harry Parkes*, chs. 5, 7; Kobayashi, *19 Seiki Igirisu Gaikō to Higashi Ajia*, ch. 2.

⁴⁴ From Correspondent in Shanghai, "Treaty with Corea." *Times*, 22 Aug. 1882; Wade to Granville (Separate No. 3), Tianjin, 25 Aug 1882 (rec. 14 Oct), FO 17/898; Parkes to Granville (No. 122), Hakone, 30 Aug 1882 (rec. 6 Oct), FO 46/287.

A series of events that occurred in East Asia over the period of a year and a half after the Imo crisis gradually changed the British perception of the Qing, and this change inevitably affected their policy towards Korea.⁴⁵

Just before the outbreak of the Imo mutiny, Sir Harry Parkes, the British Minister in Japan, had objected to the Anglo-Korean treaty that had been signed by the Commander-in-Chief of the China Squadron. While his criticism was directed towards both the commercial regulations and Chosōn's acknowledgement of Qing suzerainty, he raised a stronger objection towards the latter than the former.⁴⁶ There were some individuals who raised counter-arguments against Parkes. Sir Thomas Wade, the British Minister in Beijing, argued that the British government might jeopardise the goodwill of Qing decision-makers if it did not adequately acknowledge that the latter placed a strong stress on upholding the suzerain-tributary relationship with their neighbours, and therefore advised his government to ratify the treaty.⁴⁷ Wade was one of the individuals who had continually stressed the importance of cooperation with the Qing in maintaining British interests in East Asia, and often from the late-1870s he had tried to induce his government to take steps to build a more friendly relationship with the Chinese government. For example, Wade recommended his superiors in the Foreign Office in late 1879 that they sign an agreement with the court in Beijing which would allow British officers to act as instructors to the Qing's naval squadrons, and serve the Qing in the case of defensive warfare against any country except Britain.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ This point has already been raised by Kobayashi Takao. See his *19 Seiki Igirisu Gaikō to Higashi Ajia*, 271.

⁴⁶ Parkes to Tenterden (Private), Tokyo, 13 July 1882 (rec. 15 Aug), FO 46/286; Parkes to Granville (No. 117), Tokyo, 23 Aug 1882 (rec. 6 Oct), FO 46/287; Parkes to Granville (No. 128 Secret), Tokyo, 12 Sept 1882 (rec. 21 Oct), FO 46/288; Parkes to Granville (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Tokyo, 13 Sept 1882 (rec. 13 Sept), FO 46/291.

⁴⁷ Wade to Granville (No. 28), Beijing, 27 May 1882 (rec. 22 July), FO 17/895.

⁴⁸ Wade to Salisbury (Telegraphic, Confidential), Beijing, 5 Jan 1880 (rec. 27 Jan);

However, Wade did not represent the opinion of the majority. Wade's suggestion in late-1879 was rejected by the senior officials in Foreign Office, due to a recommendation by Parkes who at this time was recuperating from an illness in London. He argued that such an arrangement might result in making the Japanese feel isolated, as they were not in an easy relationship with the Qing. He argued that;

I do not believe that the Japanese Government entertain hostile designs against China for the furtherance of any aims purely Japanese. Their Treasury is empty, and though the patriotism of the people would enable them to resist invasion, they must be aware of their inability to make offensive war, upon a country possessed of resources so much greater than their own. But if China... contemplates – unwisely I presume – engaging in a struggle with Russia, the latter may certainly be expected to endeavour to obtain Japan as her ally, and it is not at all unlikely that the latter would be tempted by the inducements of such an alliance to take part in the contest.⁴⁹

Parkes noted that while the Japanese had not yet acquired military power that would allow them to pose a threat to the Qing or to British commercial interests in China, they were not completely powerless. He therefore concluded that it would cause a tremendous inconvenience to the British if the Japanese felt so isolated that they might choose to come on to better terms with Russia.

Besides, there were constant outbreaks of anti-foreign riots in China throughout the 1870s, including the Margary Affair in 1875.⁵⁰ These events were enough for many British observers to cast doubt on the validity of the arguments of Wade, and question the Qing constituted a natural ally.⁵¹ Whenever these violent incidents turned into

⁴⁹ Wade to Salisbury (Telegraphic), Beijing, 14 Jan 1880 (rec. 1 Feb). Both FO 17/829.

⁵⁰ Memorandum by Parkes, 30 Jan. 1880, FO 46/256.

⁵¹ For the Margary Affairs, see FO 17/695 to FO 17/702 and Shen-tsu Wang, *The Margary Affair and the Chefoo Agreement*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1940).

⁵¹ Hsü, *The Ili Crisis*; Liu, "The Ch'ing Restoration," 409-490.

diplomatic issues, the senior officials of the Foreign Office ordered their diplomats to deal with them by adhering to Western diplomatic practice rather than showing sympathy towards the Chinese tradition. They were instructed to insist that the Qing provide protection to foreigners as the treaties guaranteed, and that if the existing arrangements proved inadequate then they should insist on new supplementary treaties or agreements.⁵² Such perceptions also affected British policy towards Korea. When the senior officials of the Foreign Office concluded in late 1882 that the British government had to renegotiate the Anglo-Korean treaty, they placed more emphasis on amending the suzerainty clause than the commercial regulations.⁵³

However, their perceptions started to change immediately after making this decision. In late-November 1882 Parkes learned that the Qing had issued a large loan to the Chosōn court, leaving the impression that not only were the Qing trying to strengthen their influence in Korea but also that the Chosōn decision-makers were content to accept that influence; after all, it was also through Qing mediation that the Western countries had managed to sign treaties with Korea, something that could not be accomplished through the Japanese in 1876 or 1880.⁵⁴ Moreover, the British could not be indifferent to the situation in Southeast Asia, where the Qing court was now reacting sharply against the French attempt to make Annam its protectorate. In doing so, the Qing ministers were making it clear that they were prepared to mobilise the military to uphold their influence over their traditional vassals, even if that resulted in a war against a European great power.⁵⁵

⁵² Ibid. Also see Wang, *Margary Affairs and Chefoo Agreement*.

⁵³ Memorandum by Hertslett, 19 Dec 1882, *BDFA*, vol. 2; Memo by Jervoise, 22 Jan 1883, FO 17/900; Memo by Currie, 29 Jan 1883, FO 17/900; Memo by Pauncefote, 2 Feb 1883, FO 17/900.

⁵⁴ Parkes to Granville (No. 166), Tokyo, 25 Nov. 1882 (rec. 8 Jan. 1883), FO 46/290.

⁵⁵ For the Sino-French War, see Chere, *The Diplomacy of the Sino-French War*;

After observing these events, Parkes reported on 21 December 1882 that the Qing influence in Korea was so significant that one had to expect very strong resistance from the Qing authorities if British attempted to undermine it.⁵⁶ This despatch arrived at the Foreign Office on 29 January 1883 – immediately after its senior officials had decided to postpone the ratification of the Anglo-Korean treaty due to their concern about the suzerainty question – and thus too late to influence their decision. However, from February 1883 the officials shifted to focus more on amending the commercial regulations than addressing suzerainty, and this stance was approved by the merchant community in East Asia.⁵⁷ From mid-February to March 1883, the Foreign Office started to receive dispatches from the Chambers of Commerce in East Asia that argued in favour of the renegotiation of the commercial regulations.⁵⁸ Also a report from the embassy in Berlin, which reached London on 12 April 1883, further encouraged the Foreign Office to renegotiate the terms. In this dispatch, the ambassador stated that the German government wished to postpone ratification of its Korean treaty, whose terms were identical to the American-Korean and Anglo-Korean treaties, and was ready to renegotiate the terms together with a British plenipotentiary.⁵⁹ As a result, the Foreign Office authorised Parkes on 22 April 1883 to officially communicate to the Qing and the Chosōn officials that the British government wished to amend some of the clauses of the

Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins*.

⁵⁶ Parkes to Granville (No. 172 Confidential), Tokyo, 21 Dec 1882 (rec. 29 Jan), FO 46/290.

⁵⁷ Parkes to Tenterden (Private), Tokyo, 13 July 1882 (rec. 15 Aug), FO 46/286; Willes to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 274), Audacious (Yangzi), 30 May 1883 (rec. 23 July), ADM 1/6673; Willes to Parkes (Private), Vigilant (Shanghai), 4 Dec 1883, HPP CUL MS Parkes 1/W35.

⁵⁸ Yokohama Chamber of Commerce to Granville, 9 Jan 1883 (rec. 20 Feb); Shanghai Chamber of Commerce to Granville, 17 Jan 1883 (rec. 28 Feb); Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce to Granville, 20 Jan 1883 (rec. 20 Mar). All from *BDEA*, vol. 2.

⁵⁹ Ampthill to Granville (No. 126), Berlin, 10 Apr 1883 (rec. 12 Apr), *BDEA*, vol. 2.

Anglo-Korean treaty, and thus desired to postpone ratification. The Foreign Office subsequently instructed Parkes to draw up a new draft of the Anglo-Korean treaty, and in this document he placed much emphasis on amending the commercial regulations.⁶⁰

At this stage, there still were some individuals who remained sceptical about developing British East Asian policy on the basis of accepting Qing's strong emphasis on the suzerainty question. For example, Thomas Grosvenor, who temporarily served as the Chargé d'Affaires in Beijing after Wade had left the post in August 1882 after thirteen years of service, was not as pro-Qing as his predecessor. After he temporarily took charge of the legation, the Sino-French relationship deteriorated even further as the negotiations over the Annam question had resulted in deadlock, and brought these two countries closer to the brink of war. When the Foreign Office asked Grosvenor for his opinion on Chinese policy, he replied that the Qing claim of suzerainty should not be taken as an acceptable *casus belli*.⁶¹

But even those British observers who were unsympathetic towards Qing suzerainty came to the recognition by around September that, like it or not, they could not ignore China's claim.⁶² On 8 September 1883, *The Times* posted a long article in which the author argued that although Chinese modernisation was still a work in progress, the Qing's efforts had borne some fruit in improving its military capability.⁶³ He contended that the Qing capability to defend its borders from external enemies had been greatly

⁶⁰ Granville to Parkes (No. 3 Telegraphic), FO, 22 Apr 1883 (rec. 23 Apr), FO 46/304.

⁶¹ Grosvenor to Granville (No. 127 Confidential), Beijing, 29 Oct 1883 (rec. 20 Dec), FO 17/925. There were several articles in *the Times* that supported this stance. See Robert K. Douglas, "China and Tonquin," *Times*, 22 May 1883; A. R. Colquhoun, "France, China, and Tonquin," *Times*, 24 May 1883; Grosvenor to Granville (No. 98), Beijing, 2 July 1883 (rec. 28 Aug), FO 17/923.

⁶² Parkes to Granville (No. 4 Telegraphic), Beijing, 28 Sept 1883 (rec. 29 Sept), FO 17/928; Grosvenor to Granville (No. 18 Telegraphic), Beijing, 8 Nov 1883 (rec. 9 Nov), FO 17/928; Trench to Granville (No. 162), Tokyo, 26 Nov 1883 (rec. 31 Dec), FO 46/303.

⁶³ "The Chinese Army," *Times*, 8 Sept. 1883.

strengthened, and went as far as predicting that it might be even capable of making some success in offensive operations in Tonkin.⁶⁴ This was the most optimistic report yet about the military capability of the Qing. Prior to this, most other reports, including those by diplomats, had stated that while the Qing military capability was definitely improving, the Chinese were not strong enough to have success against the French.⁶⁵ In the light of this changing perception of China, when Parkes, who had been transferred to the legation in Beijing from September 1883, visited Seoul in November 1883 with the German plenipotentiary to negotiate the amended treaty he did not openly discourage Kojong from sending a letter stating that Korea was tributary to China to Queen Victoria. The treaty was signed on 26 November, and ratified on 28 April 1884.⁶⁶

British observers – the senior officials of the government bureaucracy, diplomats, and newspaper correspondents – therefore reappraised Qing power in the period between September 1882 and April 1884. This was not, though, just because of the revival in Chinese power, but also because of who they were opposing. It was the fact that the Qing were moderately successful in resisting two of Britain's European rivals, that caused the British to view the Chinese re-ascendance in a relatively positive light. As discussed

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Willes to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 261), Audacious (Woosung River), 18 May 1883 (rec. 2 July), ADM 1/6673; Willes to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 315), Audacious (Zhifu), 25 June 1883 (rec. 14 Aug), ADM 1/6674; Memorandum by Secretary Maude of the China legation, 12 Sept 1883. Enclosure to Parkes to Granville (No. 121 Confidential), Beijing, 13 Sept 1883 (rec. 9 Nov), FO 17/924; Willes to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 463), Iron Duke (Zhifu), 21 Sept 1883, ADM 1/6618. Also see "China," *Times*, 26 Dec. 1883.

⁶⁶ Parkes to Granville (No. 9 Telegraphic), Zhifu, 1 Dec 1883 (rec. 3 Dec), FO 17/928; Parkes to Granville (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Shanghai, 28 Apr 1884 (rec. 2 May), FO 17/954. For secondary sources on the process of renegotiation, signing and ratification of the new Anglo-Korean treaty, see Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, 167-170; Hirose, "Nisshin Sensōmae n Igirisu Kyokutō Seisaku no Ichikōsatsu," 141-2, 149-153; Kobayashi, 19 *Seiki Igirisu Gaikō to Higashi Ajia*, 105-126.

in the previous chapter, in 1881 the Qing had succeeded in upholding its territorial claim over Ili against Russia – a European empire which the British decision-makers and diplomats viewed with suspicion throughout the nineteenth century. This was very satisfactory for Britain, but so too was the Qing's strong reaction against the French attempt to establish a protectorate over Annam, to the extent that it was prepared to risk war if the French continued to reject its claim of suzerainty in this region.

To understand this, it is necessary to reflect on the nature of Anglo-French relations. While the British were often frustrated by the French activities in Europe and Mediterranean throughout the nineteenth century,⁶⁷ these two imperial powers had sometimes been able to cooperate in Asia. They had cooperated, for example, in their campaign against the Chinese in the Arrow War, and the British had raised no particular objection to the French acquisitions of Cochin China and Cambodia in the 1860s, despite their being adjacent to the Straits Settlements.⁶⁸ However, the British attitude towards France started to change after the former's occupation of Egypt in 1882. The Liberal administration had authorised a military expedition when they heard the news that European residents in Egypt had been massacred by military forces of Ahmed Urabi, who rebelled against the rule of Khedive Tewfik.⁶⁹ It was launched under the assumption that a limited military operation would be enough to defeat the rebels, but the expeditionary force faced a stronger reaction than they expected, and as a result they ended up escalating the operation which resulted in the occupation of the whole of

⁶⁷ Norman Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy, 1814-1914*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992).

⁶⁸ A. J. Stockwell, "British Expansion and Rule in South-East Asia," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume III*, 371-394; Wong, *Deadly Dreams*.

⁶⁹ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, 70-4; John S. Galbraith and Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The British Occupation of Egypt: Another View," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 9 (1978): 471-488; Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), chs. 4 and 5.

Egypt.⁷⁰ This unilateral occupation of Egypt resulted in unleashing anti-British sentiment in France, as a large amount of French capital had been invested in the Suez Canal, and also because the French saw the security of Mediterranean as an issue of great importance for the defence of their nation.⁷¹

The deterioration of the Anglo-French relationship started to affect British East Asian policy around late-1883. When British diplomats first began reporting about the Sino-French dispute over Annam from the summer of 1882, the reaction of the Cabinet ministers and the senior officials of the Foreign Office was relatively calm. Earl Granville, the Foreign Secretary, contemplated the idea of mediating the issue in order to improve the relationship between these two countries, but when he learned that neither side was interested in third-party mediation he decided to back down, fearing that continued intervention would only damage Britain's relationship with those two countries.⁷² But the perception of the British ministers towards France gradually changed due to a series of events that occurred after the Egyptian crisis. The vociferous French opposition towards the British actions in Egypt and Sudan frustrated the government, and it became even more alarmed when it learned that the French now aimed at seizing Madagascar.⁷³ The French, from their perspective, were only reacting against

⁷⁰ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, 74-9; Galbraith and al-Sayyid-Marsot, "The British Occupation of Egypt," 471-488.

⁷¹ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, 76-9; Robinson and Gallagher with Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*, chs. 4 and 5.

⁷² Granville to Grosvenor (No. 102), FO, 2 July 1883, FO 17/919; Parkes to Granville (No. 17), Beijing, 29 Sept 1883 (rec. 21 Nov), FO 17/925; Willes to the Secretary of the Admiralty (Unnumbered), Vigilant (Shanghai), 24 Nov 1883, ADM 125/29; The Secretary of the Admiralty to Willes (No. 317 Confidential), Admiralty, 30 Nov 1883 (rec. 5 Jan 1884), ADM 125/29; Granville to Trench (No. 11 Telegraphic), FO, 5 Dec 1883, FO 46/304; Trench to Granville (No. 8 Confidential), 25 Jan 1884 (rec. 11 Mar), FO 46/310. Chere, *The Diplomacy of the Sino-French War*, 98-100.

⁷³ Kimberley to Granville (Private), 13 Nov 1883, PRO 30/29/135. The private papers of Granville indicate that the Anglo-French diplomatic difficulty after the campaign in Egypt was the diplomatic priority in the Cabinet from the years from 1882 to 1884.

the British action in Egypt and Sudan; however the British could not help but perceive the French claim to an island that lay in the sea-lane between the Home Islands and India as being unfriendly. And, as the British observers became more frustrated towards the French, they started to see the latter's designs to strengthen their foothold in Southeast Asia – a region on the eastern flank of India – with more suspicion and concern.⁷⁴

The fact that the Qing decision-makers seemed to remain suspicious towards the Russians even after the resolution of the Ili crisis and were in a hostile relationship with the French over Annam made the British diplomats in East Asia somewhat relieved, as there was less likelihood for a cooperative relationship between the Qing and these European countries to develop.⁷⁵ Due to the fact that the Qing military strength was improving, the British decision-makers now began to contemplate the possibility of forming an alliance with China, as they thought that such an arrangement would be useful in checking Russia and France from making any further advances in Asia. Britain was adjusting to the China's revival, just as Japan was.

Closing Remarks on the Chapter

After the Imo crisis, the Japanese decision-makers realised that the Qing was now much more determined to uphold its influence over those kingdoms which it regarded as

See PRO 30/29/118 to PRO 30/29/152, PRO 30/29/315, and PRO 30/29/361 to PRO 30/29/367.

⁷⁴ The Sino-French difficulty dominated the conversation between London and Beijing from late-1882 to early 1884. See folios 919-920, 923-928, 947-950 and 954 of the series FO 17.

⁷⁵ Parkes to Tenterden (Private Letter), Tokyo, 13 July 1882 (rec. 15 Aug), FO 46/286; Parkes to Granville (No. 128 Secret), Tokyo, 12 Sept 1882 (rec. 21 Oct), FO 46/288; Parkes to Granville (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Tokyo, 13 Sept 1882 (rec. 13 Sept), FO 46/291.

traditional vassals than in the previous decades. In order to deal with this new circumstance, they were compelled to take some measures to check the growing Chinese influence in Korea, such as military expansion and encouragement of investments in that country. At the same time, one should not assume that the Japanese started to pursue an assertive policy towards Korea and China after the summer of 1882. The policy remained quite consistent with the line that they had pursued before the crisis, and the Japanese worked with a strong determination to avoid war against the Qing. For this purpose, they were quite happy to bite their tongue over the Chinese claim of suzerainty as much as possible.

The British did not feel the need to adjust their policies towards the Qing immediately after the Imo incident. However, they became convinced after observing the series of events that occurred afterwards that they must take account of the fact that the Chinese were placing strong emphasis on upholding their influence as the traditional suzerain of East Asia. Such determination was already visible from the way they dealt with the Ili and Imo crises, and in 1883 they chose to go to war with France to preserve their prestige in Annam and Tonkin. By April 1884, the British diplomats and their superiors in London became aware that they might also get entangled in a military confrontation with the Qing if they openly objected to the Chinese claim of suzerainty. As they were extremely reluctant to put Britain into such situation, they carefully chose not to do so when they were renegotiating some of the terms in the Anglo-Korean treaty in late 1883.

Both the Japanese and the British were therefore becoming aware that the Qing presence in East Asia was increasing rather steadily, and in many cases they had to prioritise their relationship with this important regional power. Furthermore, both of them actually thought that there was much to gain if they managed to win the goodwill

of the Qing. From the Japanese point of view, it should also be remembered that their policy-making process was heavily influenced by their strong fear towards the Western imperialism. Any positive images of the West as being a model of modern and progressive society were offset by the latter's resort to gunboat diplomacy, unequal treaties, colonisation and imperialism. In addition, by 1883 the Gaimushō was receiving numerous reports about Japanese migrant labourers being forced to work under very harsh conditions in various regions across the Pacific, which had the effect of making the Japanese see the West in general under a suspicious light.⁷⁶ Contrary to the conventional wisdom – which claims that the Japanese were driven by their will to acquire colony in the region from the early times of the Meiji era – they continued to place significant emphasis on maintaining, and improving, their relationship with the Qing and the Chosōn, with hope that they could cooperate with their neighbours to resist the potential Western expansionism.

Meanwhile, the British perception towards the Qing was influenced by their relations with the other great powers. They saw Russian actions across Eurasia with strong suspicion throughout the nineteenth century, and also the Anglo-French relationship had started to deteriorate around 1883 as a result of the Egyptian crisis that broke out in the previous year. The fact that the Chinese had experienced, or were in the midst of, diplomatic disputes with Russia and France allowed them to see the Qing as a potential ally against the European empires which were not in a good relationship with the British.

⁷⁶ In 1883, the Japanese government received request from a pearl fishing company in Australia and a Dutch company which ran plantation in the West Indies for Japanese workers, but Gaimushō officials remained very cautious. Asada to Oki (公第二八號親展), 31 May 1883, pp. 441-2; Asada to Oki (公第四六號), 6 Aug 1883, pp. 444; Sakurada to Inoue (機密第拾貳號), one enclosure, Amsterdam, 12 Oct 1883, pp. 450-4; Sakurada to Itō (機密第拾六號), two enclosures, Amsterdam, 22 Dec 1883, pp. 436-7. All from *NGM* vol. 16.

The bottom line was that it seemed unlikely, at least at the present, that the Qing would form some kind of anti-British alliance with these two powers. It was the Qing that the British government deemed as being the most important regional power in East Asia – not Japan.

In addition, the Anglo-Japanese relationship remained far from being cordial, as they remained frustrated by each other's attitudes over the question of treaty revision. The Japanese government and its diplomats in Europe still perceived that the British and the French – the two European nations that had established trading relations with Japan earlier than any other country – were reluctant to amend the existing treaty.⁷⁷ The Japanese government had already contemplating the idea of coming on to closer terms with Germany before 1882, but after the summer of that year they started to take this option more seriously, so that the latter could act as a wedge to divide Britain and France.⁷⁸ Aoki Shūzō, the Japanese Minister in Berlin, encouraged the government in taking such course on the grounds that Germany, as a latecomer to the European imperial competition, saw Britain and France as obstacles to its global expansion and therefore had an interest in cooperating with Japan against its rivals.⁷⁹ Japanese diplomats and decision-makers felt somewhat betrayed when the German government did nothing to prevent the British

⁷⁷ Mori to Inoue (機密信 第三拾四號), London, 22 Sept 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 78; Ida to Itō (Private), 10 Jan 1883, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 115; Inoue to Aoki (機密內啓), 19 Jan 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 1-3; Inoue to Ida (無號 私信), one enclosure, 25 Jan 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 4-6; Mori to Inoue (機密信第式拾一號), London, 6 Apr 1883 (rec. 19 May), *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 11-2; Inoue to Aoki (機密內信), 14 May 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 17-9; Hachisuka to Inoue (機第三十七號), one enclosure, Paris, 22 June 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 37-40. For secondary source, see Daniels, *Sir Harry Parkes*, 204-5.

⁷⁸ Aoki to Inoue (機密 第二十三號), Berlin, 16 Nov 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 80-1; Inoue to Aoki (機密內啓), 19 Jan 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 1-3; Aoki to Inoue (機密第十二號), Berlin, 19 Apr 1883 (rec. 4 June), *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 13-4; Inoue to Aoki (機密內信), 14 May 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 17-9; Aoki to Inoue (無號機密信), one enclosure, Berlin, 17 May 1883 (rec. 2 July), *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 22-5.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

from submitting a counterproposal to Japan in the summer of 1883, which denied some of the demands that the Japanese had made in their initial proposal.⁸⁰ However, the bottom line was that it was the British government that submitted this counterproposal, and therefore it was the British who still appeared to be the most unfriendly Western nation over this issue.⁸¹

The Russians meanwhile seemed much more reasonable over the question of treaty revision than the British.⁸² The Japanese did not experience any serious diplomatic difficulty with them before the outbreak of the Kapsin coup. The Japanese diplomats in Sakhalin often reported about the troubles that occurred between the Japanese fishermen and the local population, but by and large they argued that the Russian authorities had dealt with the issues cordially based on the framework of the Russo-Japanese treaty of 1875.⁸³ While it is true that many Japanese decision-makers continued to hold an image of Russia as being an expansionist empire which might have an interest in making territorial expansion in Korea,⁸⁴ one should not overemphasise this point and assume that the Japanese considered Russia as the primary and only Western threat.

This is not to say that there was absolutely no Anglo-Japanese cooperation in the early-

⁸⁰ Inoue to Aoki (機密内信), 14 May 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 17-9; Aoki to Itō (Private), 28 June 1883, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 61-2.

⁸¹ Inoue to Mori (機密信), 12 July 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 44-5; Marshall to Itō (Private), Bern, 15 Aug 1883, *IHKM*, vol. 9, pp. 43-44; Aoki to Itō (Private), 29 Aug 1883, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 62-4; Aoki to Inoue (機密第二十六號), Berlin, 4 Oct 1883 (rec. 19 Nov), *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 128; Mori to Inoue (機密信第五十二號), London, 5 Oct 1883 (rec. 19 Nov), *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 131-3.

⁸² Hanabusa to Inoue (機密信第三十一號), St. Petersburg, 4 Aug 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 74.

⁸³ Yoshida to Ōki (公第五三號), one enclosure, 23 May 1883, pp. 431-2; Yoshida to Ōki (公第六三號), 29 June 1883, pp. 436; Ōki to Yoshida (司法省第二六六五號), 31 May 1883, pp. 432-3; Yoshida to Ōki (公第六三號), 29 June 1883, pp. 436; Ōki to Yoshida (司法省第三三七七號), 4 July 1883, pp. 436-7; Ōki to Yoshida (司法省第三三七七號), 4 July 1883, pp. 436-7. All from *NGM* vol. 16.

⁸⁴ Kawamura to Sanjō (秘第七十二號), 15 Nov 1882, KSKKT SM 48-17; Minute by Wada and Imabashi (第百十一), 29 Jan 1883, KSKKT SM 48-18.

1880s. The fact that the negotiations over treaty revision had made some progress after the preliminary session of the treaty revision conference in May 1882 did lead to some improvement in the Japanese impression of the Western nations, including Britain. After Parkes had left Japan in the summer of 1883, British legation members in Tokyo, such as Ernest Satow, began to contend that it was necessary to comply with some of the Japanese requests for treaty revision.⁸⁵ Accordingly, the new Minister, Francis Plunkett, adopted a moderate line than his predecessor, and from that point on the legation and the Foreign Office were at least willing to discuss the Japanese proposals and work towards a new treaty that both the British and the Japanese could accept.⁸⁶

From the naval perspective, Britain was the country that the IJN had turned to its model for an ideal modern navy, and the Japanese officers and seamen were trained under a curriculum which was very similar to that of the Royal Navy.⁸⁷ Moreover, the Japanese naval academy had now started sending their cadets across the Pacific on training ships as part of their curriculum, and the officers and cadets were often satisfied by the cordial reception they received from the local officials at various ports – most of them being British colonies such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand.⁸⁸ Finally, as the Sino-French relationship had deteriorated to the brink of war by mid-1883, the

⁸⁵ Memorandum by Satow on the Revision of the Treaty with Japan, London, Dec 1883 (date unknown), FO 46/303.

⁸⁶ Ibid; Memorandum by Hatzfeldt (Translation), Berlin, 4 July 1883, communicated to Granville by Count Munster on 9 July; Count d'Aunay to Granville, London, 10 July 1883 (rec. 12 July); Stuart to Granville (No. 130), The Hague, 4 Oct 1883 (rec. 5 Oct). All *BDF*, Vol. 3.

⁸⁷ Hamish Ion, “Towards a Naval Alliance: Some Naval Antecedents to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1854-1902,” in *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, 26-47; Noboru Umetani, Noboru, *Oyatoi Gaikokujin*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2007; originally published 1965), 104-110.

⁸⁸ Kawamura to Sanjō (往出第一六六六号), 26 Dec 1882, 海軍省-公文類纂-M15-4-625 (JACAR C09115477500); Itō to Nire (龍第廿四号 旗計第六〇五号 受第二三四五号), Ryūjō (Shinagawa), 16 Sept 1883 (rec. 19 Sept), 海軍省-受号通覽-M16-17-17 (JACAR C10101125800). Both from BKS.

British decision-makers started to feel the need for making some arrangement with the other treaty powers in China in order to protect the commercial ships of neutral nations, and the Japanese agreed to cooperate with the British over this issue.⁸⁹

However, while it is inaccurate to assume that the Anglo-Japanese relationship in the early-1880s was hostile, it is also undeniable that there were more cases that led to friction than cooperation. Such was the state of the Anglo-Japanese relationship when the Kapsin coup broke out in December 1884.

⁸⁹ Yoshida to Inoue (機密信第六十號), Beijing, 19 Dec 1883 (rec. 9 Jan 1884), *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 673; Itō to Sanjō (Private), 2 Jan 1884, KSKKT SM 188-23.

Chapter 3 – East Asian Crises, Phase One: May 1884-October 1885

By the spring of 1884, both the British and Japanese officials started to recognise that the Qing Empire was becoming increasingly influential in East Asia. This impression was further enhanced after the East Asian crises from December 1884 to February 1887. After this series of events, they came to recognise that the Qing had emerged as the most powerful regional power in East Asia. It was accordingly during this time that the governments involved in East Asian affairs at that time, including Britain and Japan, started to formulate policies in the clear recognition that it would be very difficult to uphold their interests in the region if they put themselves at odds with the Chinese. This consequently led them to act in as conciliatory manner as possible towards the Qing claim of suzerainty over its traditional vassals, including Korea, as they considered it necessary to maintain the goodwill of the court in Beijing.

It is therefore necessary to offer detailed analysis of how the Qing consolidated its prestige within this region during these vital years. The period from April 1884 to February 1887 is therefore divided into two, as it is difficult to contain it in a single chapter. The third chapter will deal with the events that happened from April 1884 to October 1885 – the period when war-scares loomed over East Asia – and will analyse how the Japanese and the British decision-makers dealt with these crises by acknowledging the Qing superiority in East Asia. The fourth chapter will examine the period from November 1885 and February 1887, when the Chinese superiority in the region was further consolidated.

As the years between December 1884 and February 1887 were ones of crises, there is no shortage of secondary literature on the events which happened in this period. In

particular, there is an abundance of works on the Kapsin coup, due to the fact that Japanese imperialism towards Korea has attracted the interest of many historians in Japan.¹ The problem about the existing historiography, though, is that few of these works explain the importance of regional events after this incident. For example, despite the fact that there are a few secondary sources that deal in passing with the British occupation of Kōmundo, they only attempt to offer a descriptive analysis of why the British decision-makers authorised their squadron in East Asia to occupy the islands on 14 April 1885, and chose not to withdraw until 27 February 1887.² More detailed analysis is needed on how precisely this incident influenced East Asian regional affairs. This is important because it appears that after the British occupation of the islands, Japanese decision-makers became convinced that relations between Britain and Russia were so tense that a war between these two countries would probably break out sooner or later, and that Japan must make adequate preparations as East Asia lest its independence

¹ For general overviews of the Kapsin incident in English, see Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, ch. 11; Kim and Kim, *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism*, 46-58; Lee, *West Goes East*, 66-79; Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, 23-30. For the Japanese policies on this issue, see Banno, “Jingo/Kōshin Jihenki no Gaikō to Naisei”; Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 141-174; Nose, “Kōshin Seihen no Kenkyū (1)”; Peng, “Kōshin Jihen o Meguru Inoue Gaimukyō to Furansu Kōshi tono Kōshō”; Hidemao Takahashi, “Keiseiki Meiji Kokka to Chōsen Mondai – Kōshin Jihenki no Chōsen Seisaku no Seiji Gaikōshiteki Kentō,” *Shigaku Zasshi*, 98:3 (Mar 1989): 1-37; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, 904-923; Kentarō Yamabe, “Chōsen Kaikaku Undō to Kin Gyokukin – Kōshin Jihen ni Kanrenshite,” *Rekishigaku Kenkyū*, 247 (Nov 1960): 31-46. For the Qing policy, see Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi* 389-391; Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade*, 124-7.

² Mon-pil Ahn, “Igirisu no Kyobuntō Senryō Jiken (1885-1887),” *Daitō Bunka Daigaku Keizai Gakkai Keizai Ronshū*, 26 (Mar 1977): 79-114; Young-Chung Kim, “The Kōmundo Incident, 1885-1887,” *Korean Observer*, 20:3 (1984); Kobayashi, *19 Seiki Igirisu Gaikō to Higashi Ajia*, ch. 4 section 3; Lee, *West Goes East*, ch. 5; Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, ch. 2; Takehiko Okuhira, “Eikan no Kyobuntō Senryō Jiken,” *Chōsen*, 215 (1933); Il-kūn Pak, “Kyobuntō Jiken to Ri Kōshō no Taikan Seisaku,” *Han*, 106 (1987): 56-95; Katsumi Watanabe, “Kyobuntō Gaikōshi,” *Fusei Senmon Gakkō Kenkyū Nenpō Fusen Gakkai Ronshū*, 1 (1934).

be threatened in such a conflict.³ One of the policies that they pursued in order to prepare for possible eventuality was to strengthen the military.⁴ But also, they became ever more convinced of the need to maintain a peaceful relationship with the Qing, in order to avoid any situation in which they would have to deal with a bellicose China and an Anglo-Russian war simultaneously.⁵

Another incident during this period that deserves close analysis is the British expedition to Upper Burma from November to December 1885, which resulted in its annexation of this region. As the Kingdom of Burma was another country that Qing claimed as its traditional vassal, the British had to negotiate very carefully in order to avoid losing the goodwill of the former, and to avoid falling into the same difficulty that the French and the Japanese had when they had intrigued in Annam and Korea. This incident reinforced the British decision-makers in their conviction that they had to formulate their East Asian policy in the knowledge that the Qing decision-makers placed tremendous importance on their claim of suzerainty. The Burmese affairs were therefore perceived as an important issue for East Asian politics at that time. Yet, only Hakoda Keiko and Kobayashi Takao have looked at the importance of the Anglo-Chinese negotiations over Burma in terms of East Asian international politics.⁶ This dissertation will offer detailed analysis of this

³ Hidemao Takahashi, “1880 nendai no Chōsen Mondai to Kokusai Seiji – Nisshin Sensō eno Michi o Megutte,” *Shirin*, 71:6 (Nov 1988): 47-67.

⁴ Ibid; articles by Hiroaki Ōsawa, the latest being “Chōsen Eisei Chūritsuka Kōsō to Nihon Gaikō.”

⁵ Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*, ch. 2; Ōsawa, “Tenshin Jōyaku Taisei no Keisei to Hōkai, 1885-94 (1),” 49-66; Hiroaki Ōsawa, “Tenshin Jōyaku Taisei no Keisei to Hōkai, 1885-94 (2),” *Shakai Kagaku Kenkyū (Institute of Social Science, University of Tokyo)*, 43:4 (Dec 1991): 79-101; Saitō, *Nisshin Sensō no Gunji Senryaku*, 16.

⁶ Keiko Hakoda, “Chūei ‘Biruma/Chibetto Kyōtei’ (1886 nen) no Hairei – Shimatsu Chūgoku Gaikō no Seikaku o Meguru Ichikōsatsu,” *Shirin*, 88:2 (2005): 233-258; Kobayashi, *19 Seiki Igirisu Gaikō to Higashi Ajia*, ch. 4, section 4. For works that offer analyses of the British motives behind the annexation of Upper Burma, see Aparna Mukherjee, *British Colonial Policy in Burma: An Aspect of Colonialism in South-East Asia, 1840-1885*, (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1998); D. P. Singhal, *The*

incident – based upon the primary research on the private papers of the British Cabinet ministers and diplomats at that time – in the fourth chapter.

It should also be noted that most of the existing literature tends to focus on just one of the various individual events that occurred in the period from December 1884 to February 1887.⁷ There are only a few historians who stress the importance of looking at these events as a whole and in sequence and examine how they influenced regional affairs generally during and after this period.⁸ By looking at the East Asian crises from this perspective, this thesis will argue that both the British and the Japanese governments made a definite shift from their previous ambivalence to prioritising their respective relationships with the Qing and choosing to react in a conciliatory manner to the re-emergence of its power. To some extent, they made that decision because they had no other option but to compromise on the suzerainty issue in order to avoid diplomatic isolation. However, while there were many individuals in Britain and Japan who saw this as humiliating, the individuals who mattered most within their respective diplomatic policy-making circles did not consider these concessions as coming at too high a cost if

Annexation of Upper Burma, (Singapore: Easter University Press, 1960); Nicholas Tarling, *Imperialism in Southeast Asia: 'A Fleeting, Passing Phase,'* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001); Anthony J. Webster, "Business and Empire: A Reassessment of the British Conquest of Burma in 1885," *Historical Journal*, 43 (2000): 1003-25. For works on the experiences of local Burmese population, see John F. Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1958); Myint-U Thant, *The Making of Modern Burma*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁷ There are many historians that start or end their books after analysis of the Kapsin coup, thus not engaging with the entire sequence of crises. See, for example, Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*; Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1. Also, while Lee Yur-bok's *West Goes East* deals with the events after 1885 to some extent, it is largely devoted to the analysis of Möllendorff's career in Korea, which ended in September 1885.

⁸ These few works include Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*; Kobayashi, *19 Seiki Igirisu Gaikō to Higashi Ajia*; Larsen, *Tradition, Treaty and Trade*; Okamoto, *Zokkoku to Jishu no Aida*; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, 2 vols; Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*.

they would help to re-establish long-term stability in East Asia. It goes without saying that such consideration inevitably influenced the Anglo-Japanese relations in those years.

The Kapsin Incident and Its Aftermath, December 1884-April 1885

Unlike in 1882, when Japan was the victim of a xenophobic riot in Seoul, there is ample evidence that the Japanese in Korea were involved in the coup organised by the radical progressive party of the Chosōn. Inoue Kakugorō, a protégé of Fukuzawa Yukichi who had set up a newspaper company in Korea, was involved in drawing up the plan with the radical progressives, as well as some other fellow Japanese residents in the capital.⁹

Whereas Hilary Conroy has argued that these Japanese collaborators participated in the plot without the approval of the government, most other historians do not think that this was the case.¹⁰ Just before Takezoe left Tokyo on 20 October 1884 to return to Seoul after a leave of absence, Foreign Minister Inoue Kaoru told his Minister to the Chosōn court that perhaps a “little shock therapy” against the pro-Qing camp might be effective in checking Chinese influence and improving the Japanese foothold in Korea, even if that might lead to some temporary friction.¹¹ The questions posed by the researchers circulate around why Inoue gave such an instruction when it was so inconsistent with the line of

⁹ For an overview on the outbreak of the coup, see Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 144-159; Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, 205-7; Kim and Kim, *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism*, 49-51; Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, 25-6; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, pp. 924-6; Takahashi, “Keiseiki Meiji Kokka to Chōsen Mondai,” 8-10.

¹⁰ Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 147.

¹¹ Takahashi, “Keiseiki Meiji Kokka to Chōsen Mondai,” 7-8. Takahashi cited Takezoe to Enomoto (Private), 22 Oct 1884, Enomoto Takeaki Kankei Monjo (Papers Related to Enomoto Takeaki), kept at KSKKT. Also see Peng, “Kōshin Jihen o Meguru Inoue Gaimukyō to Furansu Kōshi tono Kōshō,” 36. Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, 925-6. They cite Yoshida Kiyonari Monjo (Papers of Yoshida Kiyonari) 98, kept at Kyoto University Museum.

policy that the Japanese government had hitherto pursued. Until late-1884, the Japanese had been careful not to take any action that might lead to a serious deterioration of their relationship with the Qing. There is no evidence which indicates that Takezoe was already on close terms with the radical progressives and neither had the members of the Japanese legation in Chosōn previously endeavoured to improve its relationship with this anti-Qing faction.¹² In addition, it is important to observe that around the time that Takezoe departed from Japan, the Japanese government made an official declaration of neutrality in regard to the Sino-French War, which meant that the Japanese formally refused to cooperate with the war aims of a country that was in a hostile relationship with the Qing.¹³

To provide an answer to this question, historians have paid close attention to the international situation that surrounded East Asia in late 1884. In the autumn of 1884, the situation in Korea seemed somewhat more worrying for the Japanese decision-makers than earlier in that year. By this time, the Chinese merchants in Korea – who had started to arrive at Korea after the signing of the Sino-Korean commercial regulation in 1882 – were growing into a significant community.¹⁴ As their numbers increased, incidents between them and the Japanese also grew. One of those cases involved Inoue Kakugorō, who reported about the murder of a local Korean in Seoul by a Qing soldier in his newspaper on 30 January 1884. Chen Shutang, the Qing agent in Seoul, immediately

¹² *NGM*, vols 16 and 17. Most of the archival materials relevant to the Kapsin incident in GS 1-1-2-3-25 (JACAR B03030193100) are included in *NGM* vols 16 and 17. Unless specified, this chapter will use only the *NGM* when citing official diplomatic correspondence.

¹³ Inoue to Yamada (Private), 25 Oct 1884, *YHM*, vol. 7, pp. 212-9. This document also contains a draft of the declaration of neutrality as an enclosure. Also see Nose, “Kōshin Seihen no Kenkyū,” 133-160; Peng, “Kōshin Jihen o Meguru Inoue Gaimukyō to Furansu Kōshi tono Kōshō,” 36-7.

¹⁴ Larsen, *Tradition, Treaty and Trade*, 106-123.

raised a protest against what he considered as being a completely groundless accusation, and Inoue Kakugorō in the end had to resign his post as the editor.¹⁵

There were then good reasons for many Japanese individuals living in Korea to see the increase of Qing influence with a strong sense of concern. And, despite this, the Japanese foothold remained very small. In 1882, Chosōn officials had requested the Daiichi National Bank to support them in establishing a mint, and the latter had started purchasing machinery and the raw copper necessary for this, but in early 1884 the Chosōn court cancelled the project without providing any compensation, resulting in a significant loss for the bank.¹⁶ No matter how much the Japanese government and diplomats tried to encourage investment, the major entrepreneurs in Japan were still reluctant to invest in Korea as such incidents continued to ward them off.

Considering the fact that military reform had only begun in Japan, it is difficult to imagine that important decision-makers such as Itō and Inoue were bent on war. Yet, it seems that the escalation of the Sino-French dispute over Annam made the Japanese government think that the Qing would have to devote a significant degree of attention to Southeast Asia instead of Korea. Indeed, in August 1884 the court in Beijing ordered Li Hongzhang to withdraw some of his troops from Korea so that they could be transferred to Tonkin.¹⁷ This environment thus might have induced the Japanese decision-makers to assume that the Qing would not be able to respond if Japan took more assertive measures towards Korea than before.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid, 98-9; Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 140-1.

¹⁶ This incident is reported retrospectively in “25th Half-Annual Report of the Daiichi National Bank,” Jan 1886, *SEDS*, vol. 16, pp. 34-6.

¹⁷ Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*, 390; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, 877; Takahashi, “Keiseiki Meiji Kokka to Chōsen Mondai,” 8-9.

¹⁸ Banno, “Jingo/Kōshin Jihenki no Gaikō to Naisei,” 600-1; Peng, “Kōshin Jihen o Meguru Inoue Gaimukyō to Furansu Kōshi tono Kōshō,” 36-7; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, 904-5, 922-3, 927-930; Takahashi, “Keiseiki Meiji

When Takezoe learned immediately after his arrival on 30 October that the ministers within the Min faction, who were generally regarded as pro-Qing, were plotting a purge of the radical progressives, he became more convinced than ever that he must execute a strong shock therapy.¹⁹ He sent a dispatch on 12 November, which asked for approval to support a coup by the radical progressives, but when this reached Tokyo two weeks later the ministers and officials of the Japanese government considered this scheme as being too reckless and instructed him to refrain from taking such a course.²⁰ However, since the Japanese government had permitted Takezoe to engage in measures that were somewhat more assertive than in the past, he acted on his own initiative before the instruction reached him.²¹

The problem was that Inoue and Takezoe had grossly underestimated the Qing's military manoeuvrability. The radical progressives launched their coup on 4 December, and the Japanese Minister was present at the royal palace with his legation guards when they declared the establishment of the new government.²² But the regime lasted only for two days. After the Queen managed to escape from the scene, she requested support from Yuan Shikai, a commander of the Qing army in Korea, and his troops stormed the palace.²³ The Japanese government, which was completely unprepared to make a

Kokka to Chōsen Mondai," 8-10; Yamabe, "Chōsen Kaikaku Undō to Kin Gyokukin," 31-46.

¹⁹ Yoshida to Inoue (Unnumbered, draft of a telegraph instruction that he was about to send to Seoul under the name of him and Itō), Gaimushō, 28 Nov 1884; Takezoe to Itō and Inoue (Unnumbered), Seoul, 12 Nov 1884, both from *NGS*, vol. 3, pp. 3-6.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Itō and Yoshida to Takezoe, 28 Nov 1884, *NGS*, vol. 3, pp. 3-4.

²² Takezoe to Yoshida (特別機密第二號), Seoul, 9 Dec 1884; Takezoe to Inoue (特別機密第三號), 1 enclosure, Seoul, 12 Dec 1884, both from *NGM*, vol. 17, pp. 326-333. Also see the memoir of Kim Ok-kyun, 甲申日錄 (Kapsin Ilrok), available in *FYD*, vol. 3. Lee, *West Goes East*, 74; Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, 26-7; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, 946-957; Takahashi, "Keiseiki Meiji Kokka to Chōsen Mondai," 6.

²³ Ibid. Tabohashi cited telegraphs sent by the Commander Murakami, who was in

determined commitment, learned about the incident after the badly-outnumbered Japanese and the radical progressives had all been driven out.²⁴ After his efforts had failed, Takezoe denied any involvement in the coup and claimed that he had been at the royal palace with the troops only because King Kojong had requested protection from the Japanese legation, but no diplomat in Seoul took this argument seriously. Unlike in the case of 1882, the Western nations now had diplomats in Seoul, and all of them, including the British Consul-General William Aston, were convinced that the Japanese had pulled the strings behind the incident.²⁵ Takezoe's efforts resulted only in the complete elimination of the radical progressives – something that he desperately wanted to avoid – and the Japanese became isolated in Korea.

From this point on, the Japanese ministers and senior officials recognised that they were no longer in a position to strengthen their influence in Korea. All they could do was to minimise the damage incurred by their involvement in the failed plot and try to escape from diplomatic isolation as quickly as possible. It was therefore decided on 19 December in a ministerial meeting in Tokyo that Inoue would be sent to Seoul in order to negotiate a peace treaty, in which the Japanese government would demand an indemnity from the Chosōn court and an apology for the damages and deaths caused by the new

charge of the Japanese legation guards in Seoul, sent on 12 Dec 1884 as a source. This is now available at BKS 陸軍省-朝鮮事件-M15-3-132 (JACAR C06031039000). Tabohashi also cited Report by Wu Dachen, the Chinese agent in Korea available in 光緒朝中日交渉史料 (Guangxu Chaozhongri Jiaoshe Shiliao [Records of Korean-Chinese-Japanese Negotiations during the Guangxu era]) vol. 1 (276), annex 1, as the Chinese source. This source is now published.

²⁴ Inoue to Itō (Private), 7 Dec 1884, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 188; Yoshida to Inoue (Telegraphic), Gaimushō, 12 Dec 1884, *NGM*, vol. 17, pp. 328-9; Takahashi, “Keiseiki Meiji Kokka to Chōsen Mondai,” 11.

²⁵ Aston to Parkes, Chemulpo, 19 Dec 1884; Aston to Parkes (No. 1), Chemulpo, 2 Jan 1885. Both are enclosures to Aston to Granville (No. 1), Chemulpo, 3 Jan 1885, FO 17/996.

domestic insurrection in that country.²⁶ The ministers also agreed that they needed to negotiate with the Qing separately for the mutual and simultaneous withdrawal of troops from Korea, and would demand the punishment of the Qing military officials if there was clear evidence that they had initiated an assault. In other words, they decided to try shifting the point at issue to the Chosōn court's failure to prevent disorder and its inability to protect foreigners in Korea, so that they could avoid being held responsible for the outbreak of the coup.²⁷

The Chosōn negotiators were naturally reluctant to accept such terms, which essentially made them responsible for a coup that had in part been instigated by the Japanese.²⁸ Takahashi has also suggested that the domestic situation in Japan made the negotiations more difficult, as the Japanese government could not afford to compromise due to the fear that such an action could lead to an explosion of popular dissatisfaction.²⁹ By late 1884, the political awareness of the Japanese public was becoming much stronger than in the past. The government had already declared that it would issue a constitution and open a Diet by 1889, and also the *Jiyū Minken Undō* (Movement for Freedom and Popular Rights) was becoming increasingly popular. In October 1881 Japan had seen the birth of its first modern political party – the *Jiyūtō* (Liberal Party) – and six months later the

²⁶ Itō Miyoji to Itō (Private), 12 Dec 1884, *IHKM*, vol. 2, pp. 31-2; Inoue to Sanjō (Unnumbered), 4 enclosures, 20 Dec 1884, *NGM*, vol. 17, pp. 344-6; Reports by Inoue on the Korean Incident written after his return to Tokyo, Gaimushō, 19 Jan 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 351-8.

²⁷ For the secondary sources on the Japanese policy-making process over this issue, Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, 1020-2; Takahashi, “Keiseiki Meiji Kokka to Chōsen Mondai,” 13.

²⁸ For the secondary sources on the Japanese-Korean negotiations, see *ibid.* See also Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 154-8; Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, 208-9; Kim and Kim, *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism*, 49-53; Larsen, *Tradition, Treaty and Trade*, 124-7; Lee, *West Goes East*, 73-8; Lenssen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, 25-7.

²⁹ Takahashi, “Keiseiki Meiji Kokka to Chōsen Mondai,” 13.

Rikken Kaishintō (Constitutional Progressive Party) followed suit under the leadership of Ōkuma Shigenobu, who was looking for a means to recoup his influence after being ousted from the government.³⁰ The number of newspapers circulating in Japan also increased in the 1880s as the parties started to issue them as a means to win support.³¹ By this time, therefore, the Japanese decision-makers had to be more conscious about the opposition outside of the government. When the news about the Kapsin incident spread across Japan, many in the press argued that the Qing was imposing an obsolete tradition on the Chosōn court, thus impeding the progress of modernisation, and concluded that the influence of the former must be wiped out even if this required a military campaign.³² The Japanese ministers were aware that many individuals within the military were receptive to this opinion, and considered some of the ministers, such as Kuroda Kiyotaka, as long-term supporters of a hardline policy towards Korea.³³ Despite the fact that the bargaining power of the Japanese government was much weaker than it had been in 1882, they had to be firm about denying their responsibility for this incident.

By late-December, the negotiations hit deadlock. Although Inoue and most of his colleagues were not bent on war, the Japanese ministers believed that they had no alternative but to prepare for the mobilisation of the military and intimidate the Chosōn

³⁰ Takashi Mikuriya, “14 nen Seihen to Kihon Rosen no Kakutei,” in *Nihon Rekishi Taikei, 4. Kindai I*, 535-582.

³¹ Yoshitaka Katayama, *Nichiro Sensō to Shinbun – ‘Sekai no Naka no Nihon’ o dō Ronjitaka*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2009), 12-7.

³² Fukuzawa to His Son (Private), 21 Dec 1884, *FYZ*, vol. 17, pp. 708-9; Minute by Akinaga Ranjirō and Okamoto Kansuke, dated 24 Nov 1884 (but it is likely that it was written on 24 December, as the minute mentions the Kapsin coup which broke out on 4 Dec), KSKKT SM 51-15; Kuroda to Itō (Private), 20 Dec 1884, *IHKM*, vol. 4, pp. 386; Minute by Fujita Mokichi, Ozaki Yukio, Inukai Tsuyoshi and etc, 24 Dec 1884, KSKKT IKM 672-9/KSKKT SM 51-23. For the opinions of the press, see Banno, “Jingo/Kōshin Jihenki no Gaikō to Naisei,” 604.

³³ Itō to Sanjō (Private), 19 Dec. 1884, KSKKT SM 188-41, Mori to Yoshida (Private), 7 Jan 1885, *SMAZ*, vol. 3, pp. 120-1. Takahashi, “Keiseiki Meiji Kokka to Chōsen Mondai,” 13-4.

negotiators in order to succeed in the negotiations.³⁴ Ironically, it was the Qing officials who helped them to smoothen the talks, just as in 1882. On 4 January 1885, the Chosōn negotiators reluctantly agreed to draw up a draft peace convention based upon the Japanese demands, as they had learned three days prior that Li Hongzhang had no interest in using his military against the Japanese on their behalf. Instead he had advised them that they should avoid attempting to hold the Japanese government responsible for the outbreak of the Kapsin coup.³⁵ Inoue, in return, promised that he would limit the indemnity to 110,000 yen – much lower than the figure that had been demanded in 1882, despite the fact that the number of Japanese victims in 1884 was larger.³⁶ In addition, while Inoue never accepted responsibility in front of the Chosōn negotiators, he understood that the latter were extremely suspicious towards Takezoe and therefore ordered the latter to return to Japan for good.³⁷ While the Chosōn ministers could hardly accept this as a satisfactory compromise, it was enough to send a signal to them and the Qing that the Japanese government would not make further demands over this issue, and this message was duly recognised.³⁸ The Japanese-Korean peace agreement – the Hansōng Convention – was signed on 9 January 1885.

³⁴ Tanaka to Yamagata (Private), 27 Dec 1884, *YAKM*, vol. 2, pp. 326-7; Inoue to Itō (Private), Shimonoseki, 28 Dec 1884, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 189.

³⁵ For secondary sources on the Qing intervention and the signing of the Hansōng Convention, see: Takashi Okamoto, *Ri Kōshō – Higashi Ajia no Kindai*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2011), 156-166; Takahashi, “Keiseiki Meiji Kokka to Chōsen Mondai,” 18; Lee, *West Goes East*, 76-7; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, ch. 19, section 55.

³⁶ Inoue to Itō (Private), Shimonoseki, 28 Dec 1884, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 189; Inoue to Yoshida (Private), 2 Jan 1885, *YKKM*, vol. 1, pp. 104-5; Inoue to Yoshida (Private), Seoul, 8 Jan 1885, *YKKM*, vol. 1, pp. 105-6; Enomoto to His Sister (Private), Beijing, 14 Jan 1885, *ETMS*, pp. 169-170; Mori to Itō (Private), 25 Jan 1885, *IHKM*, vol. 9, pp. 168-9.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Minute of Conversation between Inoue and Kim Hong-jip, two enclosures, 8 Jan 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 342-9.

As the talks with the Chosōn court ended, the Japanese government started to prepare for the more important negotiations with the Qing. By this time, ministers and senior officials of the Gaimushō were receiving additional reports which indicated that some of the Japanese residents in Seoul had been killed not only by Korean mobs but also by Qing troops, and therefore thought that some form of resolution over this issue must be reached.³⁹ Moreover, they needed to negotiate with the Qing over the issue of a simultaneous withdrawal of troops from Korea, and also wanted to hammer out an agreement in order to avoid another similar outbreak in the future.⁴⁰

Yet, it was now becoming even more difficult for Itō and Inoue to maintain a conciliatory policy towards the Qing than it had been a month before because the popular outcry had become even stronger.⁴¹ On 18 January there was a rally of about 3,000 people in Tokyo calling for a war against the Qing, and the police narrowly prevented the protestors from setting fire to the headquarters of *Chōya Shinbun*, a newspaper which was regarded as being too conciliatory.⁴² Government ministers were also receiving memoranda from various individuals outside of the government who advocated war.⁴³ In addition, Itō and Inoue had to be sensitive about the hardliners within the government.⁴⁴

³⁹ Inoue Kowashi to Itō and Inoue (Private), 19 Dec 1884, *IKDS*, vol. 1, pp. 439-442; Takezoe to Inoue (Telegraphic), Seoul, 31 Dec 1884, *NGM*, vol. 17, pp. 351-362.

⁴⁰ Ibid; Inoue to Yoshida (Private), 2 Jan 1885, *YKKM*, vol. 1, pp. 104-5; Minute of Conversation between Inoue and Wu Dacheng (Chinese agent in Korea), Seoul, 11 Jan 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 350-1.

⁴¹ Takahashi, "Keiseiki Meiji Kokka to Chōsen Mondai," 23-4.

⁴² Fukuzawa to Kawamura (Private), 21 Jan 1885, *FYZ*, vol. 17, pp. 719-721.

⁴³ Ibid; Memorandum by Shōsuke Kodama and others, ca. Jan 1885, KSKKT IKM 672-14; Yoshioka to Inoue (Private), 3 Feb 1885, KSKKT IKM 672-11; Hori to Ōkuma (Private), 4 Feb 1885, *ŌSKM (MSV)*, vol. 9, pp. 281-2; Memorandum by Maki Naoto and others, Feb 1885, KSKKT SM 51-22; Fukuzawa to Asaoka (Private), 3 Mar 1885, *FYZ*, vol. 17, pp. 728-9.

⁴⁴ Ibid. There are many private letters sent from Itō to Sanjō which express strong concern over how Kuroda would react to the situation. See documents in KSKKT SM 188.

They were well aware that they were not universally popular, due to the fact that they had assumed leadership of the government as a result of the overthrow of Ōkuma and his supporters in 1881, and that this included many within the Satsuma faction.⁴⁵ Their opponents were thus looking for an opportunity to regain their influence, and an assertive policy towards Korea was one of the means to attack Itō's faction. Finally, as many of the individuals in the Japanese military were already of the opinion that a Sino-Japanese war over Korea was inevitable, they became more convinced after the Kapsin coup that they should start a conflict sooner than later, before the Qing could further utilise China's abundant resources and wealth to strengthen its military.⁴⁶

By around the first week of February, Itō and Inoue were finally able to suppress the hardliners.⁴⁷ The fledgling Japanese political parties were still powerless against newspaper censorship, police persecution and outright intrigue, such as bribery of the leaders of the parties.⁴⁸ Moreover, the hardliners within the government did not constitute a majority and thus could not cast an overwhelming influence over the decision-making process.⁴⁹ In addition, Saigō Jūdō, the Minister of Agriculture and Commerce who, as the younger brother of Saigō Takamori, wielded significant influence within the Satsuma faction, was able to act as a mediator between the hardliners and Itō.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Mikuriya, "14 nen Seihen to Kihon Rosen no Kakutei," 581-2.

⁴⁶ Memorandum by Takashima and Kabayama, Feb 1885, KSKKT SM 51-21; Takahashi, "Keiseiki Meiji Kokka to Chōsen Mondai," 23-4.

⁴⁷ Inoue to Enomoto (Telegraphic), 9 Feb 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 193-4; Takahashi, "Keiseiki Meiji Kokka to Chōsen Mondai," 24-5. Takahashi cites Saigō to Inoue (Private), 1 Feb 1885, Saigō Jūdōke Shokanchō (Letter Book of Saigō Jūdō and His Family), kept at Historiographical Institute, University of Tokyo.

⁴⁸ Banno, "Jingo/Kōshin Jihenki no Gaikō to Naisei," 593-611.

⁴⁹ Takahashi, "Keiseiki Meiji Kokka to Chōsen Mondai," 27-8.

⁵⁰ Itō to Sanjō (Private), 8 Feb 1885, KSKKT SM 188-45; Inoue to Sanjō (Private), 9 Feb 1885, KSKKT SM 179-18; Inoue to Saigō (Private), 12 Feb 1885, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 190-1; Inoue to Itō (Private), 15 Feb 1885, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 191; Inoue to Itō (Private), 16 Feb 1885, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 191. Takahashi, "Keiseiki Meiji Kokka to Chōsen Mondai," 24-5.

The government therefore managed to maintain the line of policy it wished to pursue, which was to re-stabilise the environment surrounding Korea by requesting the simultaneous withdrawal of troops and also by making some agreement that could serve as a basis to uphold the Sino-Japanese relationship in a peaceful manner. Still, Itō and Inoue had to make some compromises to the hardliners. First, they promised that if the Qing decision-makers would not agree to the mutual withdrawal of troops from Korea, then the Japanese government would send reinforcements so that the numbers of their troops in Korea would be roughly equal to that of the Qing.⁵¹ Second, they agreed to stiffen their attitude over the issue of the death of Japanese troops and residents in Seoul and to demand the punishment of the Qing commander who was leading the troops when the incident had occurred, instead of demanding that the Qing officials merely investigate whether the Qing soldiers had fired the first shot or not.⁵² On 28 February, Itō departed for Tianjin as an envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary and arrived on 14 March.⁵³

The negotiations proved to be very difficult.⁵⁴ The Qing negotiators were reluctant to accommodate the Japanese request to punish their military commander, when Takezoe's involvement in the Kapsin coup had by then become an open secret.⁵⁵ Also,

⁵¹ Inoue to Enomoto (Telegraphic), 9 Feb 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 193-4; Takahashi, "Keiseiki Meiji Kokka to Chōsen Mondai," 23-5. Takahashi cites Saigō to Inoue (Private), 1 Feb 1885, *Saigō Jūdōke Shokanchō* (Letter Book of Saigō Jūdō and His Family), kept at Historical Institute, University of Tokyo.

⁵² Hara to Enomoto (Private), Tianjin, 17 Feb 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 195-6; Takahashi, "Keiseiki Meiji Kokka to Chōsen Mondai," 23-5.

⁵³ Inoue to Enomoto (Telegraphic), 23 Feb 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 196-7; Inoue to Enomoto (機密第五號), 26 Feb 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 201-2; Hara to Inoue (公信第十號), Tianjin, 16 Mar 1885 (rec. 6 Apr), *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 211.

⁵⁴ For secondary sources on the Tianjin Convention, see Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 169-174; Deuchler, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, 212-4; Kim and Kim, *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism*, 56-8; Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, 27-30; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 1, ch. 19, section 57.

⁵⁵ Minute of conversation between Itō and the Ministers of Zongli Yamen, held at the Japanese Legation in Beijing, 30 Mar 1885; Minute of conversation between Itō and Li, Tianjin, 3 Apr 1885; Enomoto to Inoue (Telegraphic), Tianjin, 4 Apr 1885; Itō to Inoue

just as Itō and Inoue had had to suppress hardliners, Li Hongzhang, who acted as the chief negotiator at Tianjin, had to struggle against the influence of conservatives in the Qing decision-making circle in order to uphold his conciliatory policy towards Korea and Japan. The influence of those individuals who advocated taking a firm attitude against any external power that posed a threat to China's suzerainty over its neighbours had already become quite significant by the late-1870s.⁵⁶ After the hardliner Prince Chun had replaced his older brother Prince Gong – the former leading figure in the Zongli Yamen and a supporter of Li's conciliatory approach to foreign affairs – in mid-1884, Li's position within the Qing decision-making circle became more vulnerable than before.⁵⁷ At one point, the Sino-Japanese negotiations came to the verge of breakdown, when Li insisted on 12 April that there should be an agreement which obliged the King of Chosōn to consult his suzerain before anyone else when he was under threat.⁵⁸ This comment led to a strong reaction from Itō as he thought that such an agreement would allow Qing influence in Korea to become even stronger.⁵⁹

However, the negotiations did not break down as they were conducted by individuals who were determined to avoid the outbreak of war, even if both Itō and Li felt the need to accommodate some of the hardliners' sentiments. The former was fortunately supported by Inoue and the senior officials of the Gaimushō at home, while the Qing hardliners were not influential enough to dominate the decision-making circle.⁶⁰ Li and

(Telegraphic), Tianjin, 9 Apr 1885, all from *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 222-262.

⁵⁶ Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*, ch. 9; Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins*; Hsü, *The Ili Crisis*.

⁵⁷ Okamoto, *Ri Kōshō*, 156-166; Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*, ch. 9, section 4 and 5; Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins*.

⁵⁸ Minute of conversation between Itō and Li, held at Tianjin, 12 Apr 1885; Enomoto to Inoue (Telegraphic), Tianjin, 13 Apr 1885, both from *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 276-290.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Inoue to Itō (Telegraphic), 9 Apr 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 262-3. Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*, 360-1; Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins*, 13; Okamoto, *Ri*

Itō came to a preliminary settlement on 14 April, and the Tianjin convention was signed four days later.⁶¹ They agreed that:

1. Governments of Qing and Japan would withdraw their troops within four months; 2. They would encourage the Chosōn government to hire military advisors from Western countries while refraining from sending their own; 3. Both countries would retain the right to resend the troops when the situation rendered it absolutely impossible for the Chosōn to maintain its territorial integrity on its own. In such a case, they had to send a document to the other signatory which would state when the troops would be sent and in what quantity.⁶²

Over the issue of the punishment of the officer, Li told Itō that he could not punish his commander unless there was clear evidence that he had ordered his troops to open fire at the Japanese soldiers, but he nonetheless promised that the commander would receive some reprimand for his carelessness.⁶³

The Tianjin Convention came under strong popular criticism in Japan, but there were many reasons for Itō, Inoue and the Gaimushō to see it as being satisfactory. First and foremost, they were able to avoid war, and second, the Japanese government evaded being held responsible by the Qing and Chosōn for their involvement in the coup. They also received the right to send troops to Korea in case of an emergency if they informed the Qing in advance. As the Japanese had managed to avoid being punished despite

Kōshō, 146.

⁶¹ Itō and Li agreed on 16 April that the convention would be signed and ratified two days later. O'Conor to Granville (No. 27 Telegraphic), Beijing, 16 Apr 1885 (rec. 17 Apr), FO 17/987; O'Conor to Granville (No. 166), Beijing, 16 Apr 1885 (rec. 16 June), FO 17/979; Yoshida to Inoue (Private), 17 Apr 1885, KSKKT IKM 594-4. See also Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, 27-29.

⁶² Minute of conversation between Itō and Li, held at Tianjin, 15 Apr 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 290-305; Itō to Inoue (Telegraphic), Tianjin, 16 Apr 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 306; O'Conor to Granville (No. 166), Beijing, 16 Apr 1885 (rec. 16 June), FO 17/979.

Lee, *West Goes East*, 79.

⁶³ Ibid.

instigating a coup, and as the Qing had to agree to withdraw troops from Korea, Kirk Larsen argues that the Tianjin Convention was a diplomatic failure on Li's side.⁶⁴ However, this argument neglects the fact that the Japanese foothold in Korea – which was not so big to begin with – had already shrunk by the time Li and Itō sat down at the negotiating table, as the radical progressives had been driven out of the Chosōn court in December 1884. The Tianjin Convention in essence provided the written consent of the Japanese government to recognise the current position – in which the Qing enjoyed superiority in Korea – as the *status quo* and that it would not attempt to amend this situation through the use of force. Such an agreement was the price that the Japanese government had to pay to the Qing in order to get out of the diplomatic isolation that they had created for themselves as a result of their ill-prepared involvement in the Kapsin coup. For Li, who wanted to expand Qing influence in Korea without using the military, the result was quite satisfactory and all the compromises that he gave to the Japanese were tolerable. More importantly, the convention provided a basis to prevent future Sino-Japanese confrontation over Korea, which was something that Li, Itō and Inoue all wanted. The Sino-Japanese tension was further reduced as both of these countries acted upon the agreement and withdrew their troops by July 1885.⁶⁵

The Sino-Japanese crisis over Korea was thus settled satisfactorily. However, just as one war-scare subsided, another one started to threaten East Asia. An Anglo-Russian war-scare was unleashed as the result of a skirmish between Russian and Afghan troops in a region called Penjdeh in Central Asia in mid-March 1885. This development had a significant effect on East Asian affairs, as the British government authorised its squadron

⁶⁴ Larsen, *Tradition, Treaty and Trade*, 130-1.

⁶⁵ Takahira to Inoue (機密第百式號), Seoul, 11 July 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 143-4; Inoue to Sanjō (親展第二百九號), 31 July 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 375.

to occupy Kōmundo on 14 April.

The British Occupation of Kōmundo

There are some articles in Japanese language that argue that the British government had nurtured an ambition to seize Kōmundo ever since its diplomats and naval officers recommended occupation of these islands ten years previously.⁶⁶ This argument overlooks the simple fact that the latter's opinions had never convinced the decision-makers in London, and also ignores the general line of policy that Britain hitherto had pursued in Korea, if not East Asia. The British government had not placed any East Asian territory under even temporary control after it acquired Kowloon in 1860. Even in the late-1870s, when they started to see Russian activities in Asia with a stronger sense of suspicion, the senior officials of the Foreign Office were cautious about taking any action because they feared that this might provoke a negative reaction from the Chosōn court. Just as the Japanese decision-makers chose to undertake a policy in late-1884 which was markedly different than that they had pursued for much of the past five years, the decision made in April 1885 was inconsistent with Britain's long-term policy trend. To understand why the British government chose to undertake the occupation of Kōmundo, despite the fact that such an action was clearly highly provocative, one must shed light on the political environment that surrounded the Liberal administration at that time.

The direct cause of the British occupation of Kōmundo was the Anglo-Russian war-

⁶⁶ Ahn, "Igirisu no Kyobuntō Senryō Jiken," 79-80; Pak, "Kyobuntō Jiken to Ri Kōshō no Taikan Seisaku," 57.

scare which was unleashed across the British Empire from 30 March as a result of the Penjdeh crisis in Central Asia.⁶⁷ Already by the early-1880s, the territorial dispute between Russia and Afghanistan – a country which at that time was under heavy influence from British India – over Merv was becoming a serious diplomatic question between Britain and Russia. The British officials considered the region as an important buffer between Russian Central Asia and India, as the local rulers controlled a network of roads and paths through the rugged terrain. And when the British decision-makers learned that the chiefs of Merv had agreed at the point of a gun to be incorporated into Russia in February 1884, Anglo-Russian relations over Central Asia became inevitably tenser.⁶⁸ After being shocked by the news, the British concluded they should negotiate the delineation of Central Asian spheres of influence with the Russian government, and talks began from October 1884.⁶⁹

Despite wanting to avoid future complications over Central Asia, British Cabinet ministers were convinced that they must remain firm with the Russians. This in large part reflected the public mood. The British public was becoming increasingly critical towards the Liberal administration, as they believed that it was failing to make adequate preparations to prevent Russian encroachment towards British India.⁷⁰ It should also be remembered that the British campaign in Egypt by this point had escalated into an attempted occupation of Sudan. Not only did this continue to strain the Anglo-French relationship, but it was also becoming a huge drain on the Treasury. This campaign had

⁶⁷ Ahn, “Igirisu no Kyobuntō Senryō Jiken,” 81; Lee, *West Goes East*, 113; Pak, “Kyobuntō Jiken to Ri Kōshō no Taikan Seisaku,” 58-9.

⁶⁸ For the Russian seizure of Merv, see; Ghose, *England and Afghanistan*, 175-6; Rob A. Johnson, “The Penjdeh Incident 1885,” *Archives*, 24:100 (Apr 1999): 35-6.

⁶⁹ G. J. Alder, *British India’s Northern Frontier 1865-95: A Study of Imperial Policy*, (London: Longmans, 1963), 198; Johnson, “The Penjdeh Incident 1885,” 37; Ghose, *England and Afghanistan*, 181.

⁷⁰ Ghose, *England and Afghanistan*, 188-90.

started to excite public opinion, and there was a popular jingo sentiment which demanded that the government not withdraw before the local rebels had been thoroughly defeated. If the Liberal administration had ever dreamt of possible withdrawal from Sudan in the near future, this was now impossible. It could not afford to weaken its political base anymore – particularly when it was already facing difficulties in Parliament over the question of Irish Home Rule. This background made the administration even more reluctant to make compromises over the Central Asian negotiations.⁷¹ For example, the Earl of Kimberley, the Secretary of State for India, wrote several letters in late February 1885 which expressed his concern that the government had no other option but to go to war if the negotiations over Afghan boundary failed to produce a satisfactory result.⁷² In particular, the British and Russian negotiators disputed fiercely over whose sphere of influence Penjdeh belonged to, as it was adjacent to Merv and was considered to be a region of vital strategic importance.

In the face of this growing Anglo-Russian tension, the Foreign Office and the Admiralty started to examine what kind of consequences a war might create for British interests across the world. The situation looked worrying in East Asia due to the fact that the Kapsin coup had recently destabilised the regional order.⁷³ Under these circumstances, the Admiralty had already in December 1884 ordered Vice-Admiral Sir

⁷¹ For the Egyptian question, see WGP BL Add MS 44142, 44147-8 and 44178 and the diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton, the private secretary of Gladstone. For the secondary sources, see Robinson and Gallagher with Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*, chs. 4-5. For the Irish Home Rule, see, among many, CDP BL Add MS 43875-6 and 43891. For secondary sources, see the texts and bibliography of H. C. G. Matthew, “The Liberal Age” in *The Oxford History of Britain*, revised ed., ed. Kenneth O. Morgan, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 518-581.

⁷² Kimberley to Gladstone (Private), From India Office (hereafter IO), 21 Feb 1885, WGP BL Add MS 44228; Kimberley to Dufferin (Private, Telegraphic), IO, 23 Feb 1885, KP Bodleian MSS.Eng.c.4291.

⁷³ For reports on the Kapsin incident by British diplomats, see FO 17/953-4 and FO 46/317-8.

William Dowell, the Commander-in-Chief of China Squadron, to move some warships to the waters adjacent to Kōmundo with orders to report if Russian vessels were making any suspicious manoeuvres.⁷⁴ Around the same time, the Foreign Office asked the Admiralty whether it saw the islands as providing any strategic advantage, as Parkes had argued in 1875.⁷⁵ The survey was conducted by an officer under Dowell's command, Lieutenant-Commander Reginald Carey-Brenton, and his report, which reached London in mid-February, argued strongly in favour of occupation in case of the outbreak of war. He reported that Kōmundo lay in an important location, and then added that the topography of the islands rendered it quite easy for an occupying force to fortify.⁷⁶ The report by Carey-Brenton was deemed more comprehensive and detailed than the one that Sir George Willes had written in 1883 when he had been the Commander-in-Chief of China Squadron – a report that was highly sceptical about the strategic value of the islands – and senior officials in the Admiralty therefore argued that an occupation should be undertaken if war broke out.⁷⁷ By the end of February 1885 the Foreign Office was also convinced of the strategic importance of Kōmundo.

Meanwhile, the difficult negotiations over the delineation of the frontier between India and Russian Central Asia continued to strain the Anglo-Russian relationship. And when the news that Russian and Afghan troops patrolling the vicinity of Penjdeh had collided

⁷⁴ The Secretary to the Admiralty to Currie (No. M3122), Admiralty, 18 Dec 1884, ADM 116/70; Granville to Parkes (No. 308), FO, 31 Dec 1884, FO 17/947.

⁷⁵ Parkes to Granville (No. 50 Telegraphic), Beijing, 14 Dec 1884, (rec. 14 Dec), FO 17/954.

⁷⁶ Carey-Brenton to Commander Hippesley (Confidential), Merlin (Shanghai), 26 Dec 1884. Enclosure to; Dowell to the Secretary to the Admiralty (No. 12), Audacious at Hong Kong, 6 Jan 1885, ADM 1/6757.

⁷⁷ Ibid; Willes to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 463), Iron Duke (Zhifu), 21 Sept 1882, ADM 1/6618; Currie to the Secretary to the Admiralty, FO, 15 Jan 1885, (rec. 16 Jan), ADM 116/70; Thornton to Granville (No. 11), St. Petersburg, 19 Jan 1885, ADM 116/70.

with each other reached London on 30 March, it unleashed a war-scare across the British Empire.⁷⁸ As the possibility of an Anglo-Russian war started to look more realistic, senior officials of the Foreign Office started to consider whether the occupation of Kōmundo would be possible without causing a reaction from the Qing and Japanese governments. The reports that they received from Francis Plunkett, who served as the British Minister in Tokyo from 1884 to 1887, indicated that the Japanese government was perturbed by the recent intensification of the Anglo-Russian tensions. He observed that the Japanese were concerned that if an Anglo-Russian war broke out then the British and Russians might ask the Japanese government to open their ports to shelter or repair their respective warships and crews, and that if they allowed this for one side then the other would see this as a hostile act.⁷⁹ Yet, Japanese decision-makers were not confident about their military being strong enough to risk a war against either of the European great powers.⁸⁰ Compared to this, the response from the Qing officials seemed much more pro-British. Halliday Macartney, a British national who served as a secretary at the Qing legation in London, called on the Foreign Office on 8 April 1885 and told senior officials that “if Port Hamilton was to be occupied by Russia or England, China would prefer that England should be the Power to take possession of it.... [T]he matter could without difficulty be arranged with China.”⁸¹

Until 11 April, there are several documents that indicate that while the ministers felt that Anglo-Russian tensions had become very serious as a result of the Penjdeh incident,

⁷⁸ Johnson, “The Penjdeh Incident 1885,” 42-3; Ghose, *England and Afghanistan*, 197.

⁷⁹ Plunkett to Granville (No. 87 Very Confidential), Tokyo, 21 Mar 1885 (rec. 24 Apr), FO 46/329; Plunkett to Granville (No. 97 Very Confidential), Tokyo, 2 Apr 1885 (rec. 8 May), FO 46/329; Plunkett to Granville (No. 10 Telegraphic), Tokyo, 9 Apr 1885 (rec. 9 Apr), FO 46/336.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Granville to O’Conor (No. 75A), FO, 8 Apr 1885, FO 17/975.

they still thought that the outbreak of war could be averted.⁸² However, on that day it was decided at a Cabinet meeting that Kōmundo should be occupied if an Anglo-Russian war would break out.⁸³ The ministers and senior officials of the government bureaucracies then started to discuss the state of the Anglo-Russian relationship with a stronger sense of concern from that point on. On 12 April, the Foreign Office came to the conclusion that it must urge the Russian government to withdraw its troops from Pendjeh at once before any negotiations over the current Central Asian crisis could commence.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, senior officials in the Admiralty started to discuss the menace that an Anglo-Russian war would pose to British trade across Eurasia.⁸⁵ The Earl of Dufferin and Ava, the Governor-General of India, also wrote a long letter which argued that, considering the rugged terrain and harsh climate of Afghanistan, it would be very difficult to send an adequate number of troops swiftly to Penjdeh to confront the Russians.⁸⁶

There is, though, no document that offers a direct explanation of why the Earl of Northbrook, the First Lord of Admiralty, authorised Dowell to make a pre-emptive seizure of Kōmundo on 14 April.⁸⁷ When the Foreign Office explained the decision to Zeng Jize, the Qing Minister in London, it contended that as the Anglo-Russian relationship had deteriorated much quicker than they had expected, they had found it

⁸² Memo by Northbrook, 20 Mar 1885, written on the margins of Carey-Brenton to Hippesley (Confidential), Merlin (Shanghai), 26 Dec 1884, ADM 1/6757; Northbrook to Baring (Private), Admiralty, 10 Apr 1885, NP HRO 92M95/F5/39; Diary entry for 11 Apr 1885, *DEWH*, pp. 833-4.

⁸³ Memo on Cabinet Meeting, 11 Apr 1885, WGP BL Add MS 44646.

⁸⁴ Memorandum, FO, 13 Apr 1885, PRO 30/29/129.

⁸⁵ Admiral Sir A. Cooper Key to Northbrook (Private), 4 May 1885, NP HRO 92M95/F5/9.

⁸⁶ Dufferin to Kimberley (Private), 12 Apr 1885, IOR BL MSS Eur F130/3.

⁸⁷ The Secretary of the Admiralty to Dowell (No. 42 Telegraphic), Admiralty, 14 Apr 1885, ADM 116/70.

⁸⁷ Northbrook to Granville (Private), Stratton, 28 July 1885, PRO 30/29/22A/5.

necessary to swiftly occupy Kōmundo in order to prevent these islands, which had such a vital strategic importance in East Asia, from falling under Russian control.⁸⁸ However, Northbrook offered an alternative explanation. He argued retrospectively in July 1885 that he had authorised the occupation because there was no other way in which Britain could put pressure on the Russian government so that the latter would be discouraged to forward their troops in Penjdeh further to the south.⁸⁹

This explanation was linked to the fact that in the early-1880s, Otto von Bismarck, the German Chancellor, had managed to reconstruct the relationship between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia, which had become somewhat strained after the former two countries had failed to stand on the latter's side during the Russo-Turkish War.⁹⁰ It was therefore unlikely that the German and Austro-Hungarian governments would permit the British to send warships into the Baltic and Black Seas as a means of coercing the Russian government into pulling back from Penjdeh. Northbrook thus contended that Kōmundo was the only place that was available for the British government to take such action. It is also interesting to note that there is a journal article in *The Spectator* written in 1886 which also argued that the British government decided to occupy Kōmundo because it thought it was necessary to take a pre-emptive effective measure to check the Russian southward advance in Asia.⁹¹

However, the direct cause of the occupation remains unclear. While it is difficult to assume that Northbrook authorised the occupation without the approval of his colleagues in the Cabinet, there is also evidence that suggests that some of the important

⁸⁸ Granville to Zeng (Confidential), FO, 16 Apr 1885, FO 17/1000. Also see "Port Hamilton," *Westminster Review*, Apr 1887, Vol. 128 No. 1: 594-609.

⁸⁹ Northbrook to Granville (Private), 28 July 1885, PRO30/29/22A/5.

⁹⁰ Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 225.

⁹¹ "Port Hamilton," *The Spectator*, 23 Jan 1886, Vol. 59 No. 3004: 108-9.

ministers such as Kimberley and the Prime Minister William Gladstone were not necessarily supportive of the occupation, as they assumed that the Russians would not take such an action lightly.⁹² These documents imply that they were frustrated because Northbrook had demanded this action be taken, which unnecessarily raised the tension between them and the Russians, when they were negotiating hard to avoid war. What is clear is that the British decision-makers were under such tension in the days between 11 to 14 April that the environment could easily have induced the First Lord of Admiralty to demand that Britain had to take naval action as swiftly as possible.

The Anglo-Russian War-Scare and East Asia, April-September 1885

No matter what the reason behind the occupation, the fact was that Kōmundo was occupied by the China Squadron. As this event made Anglo-Russian relations even tenser, the British government became aware that it had to make various preparations lest war broke out. On 20 April the government duly asked Parliament to approve an additional budget in order to prepare for the possible outbreak of an Anglo-Russian war, which was approved immediately.⁹³ One of the measures that the Admiralty immediately took after the occupation was to build a coal depot, telegraph stations and lines, and fortifications in Kōmundo. The senior officials acted in the firm belief that possession of the islands would give them better command of the seas adjacent to the Korean coast, and therefore overruled the suggestion of Dowell, who, after visiting the

⁹² Gladstone to Granville (Private), 24 Apr 1885; PRO 30/29/129; Diary of Kimberley, 24 Apr 1885, KP Bodleian MSS.Eng.e.2793.

⁹³ The Secretary of the Admiralty to Dowell (No. 42 Telegraphic), Admiralty, 14 Apr 1885, ADM 116/70; Hartington to Gladstone (Private), House of Commons, 20 Apr 1885, WGP BL Add MS 44148.

Kōmundo for the first time on his own in May 1885, argued that the site did not possess the strategic merit that Carey-Brenton had argued.⁹⁴

Simultaneously Cabinet ministers and senior officials in Foreign Office discussed whether it might be possible to form an alliance with the Qing Empire and Japan.⁹⁵ In late-April, Philip Currie, the Assistant Undersecretary of the Foreign Office, wrote a memorandum indicating that Plunkett should be informed that the British government “attach importance to an alliance with Japan in the event of war with Russia and would be glad to have his opinion as to any steps it might be advisable to take now,” and some ministers such as Northbrook and Sir Charles Dilke were receptive to this proposal.⁹⁶ The idea of an alliance with Japan was attractive because it would allow the Royal Navy to use Japanese ports for logistics and repairs under the protection of the IJN. Moreover, the British naval observers thought that the quality of the IJN had improved significantly as a result of the latter’s determined effort to modernise.⁹⁷

However, it must also be said that when the British decision-makers and diplomats

⁹⁴ Memorandum by Northbrook, Admiralty, 20 May 1885, FO 405/35; Memo by Northbrook, written at the Admiralty, 22 May 1885, NP HRO 92M/95/F5/9; Memorandum, Admiralty Foreign Intelligence Committee, 25 May 1885, ADM 116/70; Dowell to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 233), Audacious (Nagasaki), 28 May 1885, ADM 1/6810. Also see a private letter calling for early withdrawal from Kōmundo written by Willes – the predecessor of Dowell who at this time was in London; Willes to Northbrook (Private), London, 22 Apr 1885, NP HRO 92M95/F5/9.

⁹⁵ Kobayashi, *19 Seiki Igitisu Gaikō to Higashi Ajia*, 165-6.

⁹⁶ Memo by Currie, attached to Plunkett to Granville (No. 87 Very Confidential), Tokyo, 21 Mar 1885 (rec. 24 Apr), FO 46/329. The memo is undated, but was probably written not too long after the dispatch had reached the Foreign Office. Dilke to Granville (Private), Local Government Board, 30 Apr 1885, CDP BL Add MS 43881; Memo by Northbrook, Admiralty, 22 May 1885, NP HRO 92M95/F5/9.

⁹⁷ Already in 1875, Shadwell had reported that Yokosuka was the best dockyard in the station, and many naval officers in East Asia after him reported that the Japanese were building more dockyards of similar quality. See Shadwell to the Secretary to the Admiralty (No. 52), Iron Duke at Sea, 1 Mar 1875 (rec. 9 Apr), ADM 1/6342; Coote to the Secretary to the Admiralty (No. 258), Iron Duke (Yokohama), 29 June 1880, ADM 125/24; Unknown writer to Parkes (Private), Curacao (Hong Kong), 17 Mar 1883, HPP CUL MS Parkes 19/1.

discussed the prospect of an alliance with the East Asian countries, they placed much stronger emphasis on acting in common with the Qing Empire than Japan.⁹⁸ The British decision-makers in London were well aware of the fact that their army was much smaller than that of the Russians, and thus they considered it crucial to have the cooperation of a strong local country if they wished to protect their interests in Asia. A country like China, with its massive manpower, could provide a buffer to protect the Indian frontier from Yarkand to the Himalayas, and check the French at the Sino-Burmese border.⁹⁹ Although most British observers, both official and public, recognised that Qing military modernisation was not yet complete, they were nonetheless impressed that it had managed to accomplish limited success against the French army. This success encouraged the British decision-makers to seek an alliance with the Qing.¹⁰⁰ Finally, it was hoped that some Qing warships might be available for joint Anglo-Chinese operations in East Asian waters. Indeed, it was not uncommon for British officials in East Asia to discuss an Anglo-Chinese alliance without any Japanese involvement.¹⁰¹ The British decision-makers were almost unanimous that if they formed an alliance with the Japanese, then the latter would be included as a junior partner within a more important Anglo-Chinese alliance. Besides, there were many individuals, such as Nicholas O'Conor, the Chargé d'Affaires to Beijing from April 1884 to July 1885, who were pessimistic about the prospect of bringing the Qing and Japan together in a trilateral alliance. He believed that suspicion between these two countries towards each other

⁹⁸ Ibid; Plunkett to Granville (No. 12 Telegraphic), Tokyo, 3 May 1885 (rec. 3 May), FO 46/336; Plunkett to Granville (No. 138 Very Confidential), Tokyo, 11 May 1885 (rec. 15 June), FO 46/330.

⁹⁹ Memo by Northbrook, Admiralty, 22 May 1885, NP HRO 92M95/F5/9.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ O'Conor to Granville (Telegraphic, Secret), Beijing, 20 Apr 1885 (rec. 20 Apr), FO 17/987; O'Conor to Granville (No. 222 Secret), Beijing, 10 May 1885 (rec. 6 July), FO 17/980.

was still significant after the Kapsin coup.¹⁰² O’Conor therefore argued that the British government should not make any overtures to Japan, as such a gesture might discourage the Qing decision-makers from contemplating the idea of signing an alliance.¹⁰³

Before the British decision-makers could hammer out a concrete policy, the British experienced a near-miss incident with Russia. Captain Samuel Long, one of the officers under Dowell’s command, reported on 6 May that he had encountered a very hostile demonstration from a local Russian naval force when he was leading three warships into the port of Yokohama. According to Long’s report, he witnessed the guns of a Russian ironclad anchored in the port being loaded, opened and pointed towards the British warships entering the port, and that it seemed as if the Russian seamen were all assembled behind the guns ready to open fire at any moment.¹⁰⁴ Long, at first instance, thought that an Anglo-Russian war might have already been declared, but on second thoughts he fortunately concluded that such a case was unlikely, and decided to take his warships into Yokohama without making any counteraction; he also decided to withdraw his ships to Yokosuka the next day to alleviate the tension.¹⁰⁵ When Plunkett made an official complaint to Alexander Davidov, the Russian Minister in Tokyo, the latter replied that the recent increase of Anglo-Russian tensions in East Asia, had caused this dangerous encounter. He complained that the Russian naval personnel were extremely frustrated as the British warships had been shadowing their Russian counterparts in East Asia

¹⁰² O’Conor to Granville (Telegraphic, Secret), Beijing, 20 Apr 1885 (rec. 20 Apr), FO 17/987; O’Conor to Granville (Private), Beijing, 21 Apr 1885, NOP CAC OCON6/1/2; O’Conor to Granville (No. 222 Secret), Beijing, 10 May 1885 (rec. 6 July), FO 17/980.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Dowell to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 53 Telegraphic), Nagasaki, 6 May 1885 (rec. 6 May), ADM 1/6757; Plunkett to Granville (No. 13 Telegraphic), Beijing, 7 May 1885 (rec. 7 May), FO 46/336; Plunkett to Inoue (機密信), 5 enclosures, sent from the British Legation in Tokyo, 7 May 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 126-138.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

waters.¹⁰⁶ The Russian commander had not felt confident that he enjoyed the security normally guaranteed by international law to warships in the ports of a neutral country in Japan, due to the fact that the unequal treaties that Japan had signed with Western nations posed some restrictions on Japanese sovereignty, and therefore had decided to put his seamen on alert.¹⁰⁷ Plunkett argued that the British government could not accept such an interpretation of the treaties, and was of the opinion that no state should permit its military to engage in a hostile manoeuvre in a country that they recognised as an independent nation.¹⁰⁸ Plunkett and Davidov nonetheless concluded that the action that Long had taken was satisfactory, and were happy to call the case closed as neither the British and Russian governments wanted war.¹⁰⁹ However, it was an incident that was enough to make not only the British diplomats in East Asia but also the decision-makers of Qing and Japan recognise how strained the Anglo-Russian relationship had become, and realise that East Asia could not be unaffected if a war broke out.

The ill-prepared occupation of Kōmundo also caused difficulties for the British decision-makers in other ways. Ten days after the incident in Yokohama, British diplomats reported that the Chosōn court was making overtures to Russian diplomats in East Asia. The unilateral occupation of Kōmundo by Britain had naturally made the Chosōn officials extremely upset, and they started to protest from early-May onwards.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Plunkett to Inoue (機密信), 5 enclosures, sent from the British Legation in Tokyo, 7 May 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 126-138; Dowell to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 55 Telegraphic), Nagasaki, 7 May 1885 (rec. 7 May), ADM 1/6757.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Plunkett to Inoue (機密信), 5 enclosures, sent from the British Legation in Tokyo, 7 May 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 126-138; Plunkett to Granville (No. 14 Telegraphic), Tokyo, 8 May 1885 (rec. 8 May), FO 46/336.

¹⁰⁹ Plunkett to Granville (No. 14 Telegraphic), Tokyo, 8 May 1885 (rec. 8 May), FO 46/336; Dowell to the Secretary of the Admiralty (Telegraphic, Confidential), 8 May 1885 (rec. 8 May), ADM 1/6757.

¹¹⁰ O'Conor to Granville (No. 36 Confidential, Telegraphic), Beijing, 9 May 1885 (rec. 10 May), FO 17/987; O'Conor to Granville (No. 223 Confidential), Beijing, 10 May 1885

In particular, Georg Paul von Möllendorff, the German advisor to the Chosōn court, felt the need to come to closer terms with some other Western country so that the Chosōn could improve its bargaining power vis-à-vis the British, and he concluded that he should ask the Russians for support.¹¹¹ It is not clear if Kojong officially authorised the German advisor to contact the Russian diplomats in East Asia on his behalf, but the latter certainly indicated in his overture to the Russians that the Chosōn regime would be willing to cede some of its islands if the latter offered military support to maintain the autonomy of the kingdom.¹¹² This manoeuvre put the British decision-makers into a difficult position. They now became aware that, as they had made no effort to gain permission to occupy the islands from the Chosōn court beforehand it was difficult to justify the occupation within the eyes of other countries that were involved in East Asian affairs.¹¹³

In these difficult circumstances, the British decided to respond by making their own overtures to the Qing so that the latter would exercise its influence and silence the protest raised by its traditional vassal. As the previous chapters have indicated, there were many precedents which indicated that the Qing cast a significant degree of influence over the Chosōn. It was, furthermore, encouraging for the British ministers and the senior

(rec. 6 July), FO 17/980; The Secretary to the Admiralty to Currie (Confidential), Admiralty, 19 May 1885 (rec. 19 May), FO 405/35.

¹¹¹ For secondary sources on the Chosōn overture to Russia, see; Ahn, “Igirisu no Kyobuntō Senryō Jiken,” 109; Lee, *West Goes East*, 127-8; Pak, “Kyobuntō Jiken to Ri Kōshō no Taikan Seisaku,” 72-3; Yō Sasaki, “1880 nendai ni okeru Rochō Kankei – 1885 nen no ‘Dai Ichiji Rochō Mitsuyaku o Chūshin toshite,’ *Han*, 106 (May 1987): 19-23; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 2, 12-3.

¹¹² Carles to Granville (No. 15 Confidential), Hanyang, 18 May 1885 (rec. 13 July), FO 17/996.

¹¹³ Granville to O’Conor (No. 13 Telegraphic), FO, 17 Apr 1885, FO 17/987; Granville to Plunkett (No. 5 Telegraphic), FO, 17 Apr 1885, FO 46/336; Granville to O’Conor (No. 15 Telegraphic), FO, 23 Apr 1885, FO 17/987; Granville to Plunkett (No. 6 Telegraphic), FO, 23 Apr 1885, FO 46/336; Gladstone to Granville (Private), 10 Downing Street, 24 Apr 1885, PRO 30/29/129; Currie to Northbrook (Private), FO, 20 May 1885, NP HRO 92M95/F5/9; Granville to O’Conor (No. 24 Telegraphic), FO, 22 May 1885, FO 17/987. Also see Diary entry of Kimberley, 24 Apr 1885, KP Bodleian MSS.Eng.e.2793.

officials of the Foreign Office when Zeng informed them that the court in Beijing would not object to a British occupation as long as it was only temporary, and the British promised to uphold Qing interests and prestige in Korea.¹¹⁴ Finally, British decision-makers and diplomats also recognised that the Qing remained suspicious towards the Russians despite the fact that the Ili crisis had been resolved without a war.¹¹⁵

Before the British government made any specific overtures to the Qing to deal with this issue, Li Hongzhang pressed the Chosōn court through his agent in Seoul to immediately repudiate Möllendorff's offer to Russia.¹¹⁶ Li was fortunate in that Russia overplayed its hand when Alexei Speyer, the secretary of its Legation in Japan, threatened the Chosōn ministers during the talks in Seoul that the Russian government might authorise a military expedition if the Chosōn did not honour Möllendorff's promises in the preliminary conversations.¹¹⁷ This attitude seems to have alarmed the Chosōn negotiators and made them question whether the Russians would really act as a benevolent protector of the autonomy of their kingdom as their German advisor had insisted. The Chosōn ministers and Kojong, who by then were under strong pressure from Li, therefore dismissed Möllendorff from the position of government advisor on 27 June for trying to arrange a diplomatic agreement without approval, and also sacked him

¹¹⁴ Zeng to Granville (Confidential), Chinese Legation in London, 27 Apr 1885, FO 405/35.

¹¹⁵ O'Conor to Granville (Telegraphic, Secret), Beijing, 20 Apr 1885 (rec. 20 Apr), FO 17/987; O'Conor to Granville (No. 222 Secret), Beijing, 10 May 1885 (rec. 6 July), FO 17/980.

¹¹⁶ Carles to Granville (No. 15 Confidential), Hanyang, 18 May 1885 (rec. 13 July), FO 17/996; O'Conor to Granville (No. 260 Confidential), Beijing, 3 June 1885 (rec. 27 July), FO 17/981; O'Conor to Granville (No. 266 Confidential), Beijing, 5 June 1885 (rec. 1 Aug), FO 17/981. Lee, *East Goes West*, 127-8, 140-1; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 2, 12-3.

¹¹⁷ Lee, *West Goes East*, 135; Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, 38-47; Sasaki, "1880 nendai ni okeru Rochō Kankei," 27-31; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 2, 12-4.

from the customs two months later.¹¹⁸

After observing this development, the Marquis of Salisbury, the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary for the Conservative administration which succeeded the Liberals on 23 June, informed O'Conor on 10 July that the British government is “ready to make full acknowledgement of Chinese suzerainty” over Korea if the Qing in return would use its influence to prevent the Chosōn court from making further protests against Britain.¹¹⁹ There is no evidence in the Foreign Office records to indicate that O'Conor acted upon this instruction or how Li and the ministers in Zongli Yamen reacted. However, it was a significant moment, for the Foreign Office had never hitherto permitted their diplomats in China to communicate to the court in Beijing that they acknowledged the Qing claim of suzerainty over its neighbours as explicitly as this dispatch. It is an episode which indicates the degree to which British decision-makers were now convinced that they had to be on close terms with the Qing in order to get out of their present diplomatic difficulty over Korea. And the British decision-makers managed to get what they wanted, as O'Conor reported on 16 July that the Koreans had finally withdrawn their protest about British occupation of Kōmundo at least for the time being.¹²⁰

In mid-July there was also a breakthrough in the Anglo-Russian negotiations for the settlement of the Penjdeh crisis.¹²¹ On 10 September the British, Russians and Afghans struck an agreement that the Russo-Afghan border would be drawn 1,000 yards north of Zulfiqur pass.¹²² This agreement on the Russo-Afghan frontier was part of the broader

¹¹⁸ Lee, *West Goes East*, ch. 6; Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, 18-9, 52; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 2, 14-5.

¹¹⁹ Salisbury to O'Conor (No. 39 Telegraphic), FO, 10 July 1885, FO 17/987.

¹²⁰ O'Conor to Currie (Private), Beijing, 16 July 1885, NOP CAC OCON5/2/2.

¹²¹ Ghose, *England and Afghanistan*, 201, 204-5; Gillard, *The Struggle for Asia*, 146-7; Johnson, “The Penjdeh Crisis,” 45.

¹²² Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier*, 201; Ghose, *England and Afghanistan*, 205.

Anglo-Russian negotiations over the delineation of spheres of influence between India and Russian Central Asia, and these two countries continued to contest over this broader delineation until the 1890s.¹²³ However, there was a sense that the Anglo-Russian tension had eased in September 1885 at least to the extent that any immediate outbreak of war seemed unlikely. In a private letter that O’Conor wrote on 6 September he mentioned that Li felt that Anglo-Russian tensions were easing.¹²⁴ All eyes were now on what the British government would do with Kōmundo.

Closing Remarks on the Chapter

After December 1884, both the Japanese and the British governments engaged in military operations on Korean soil – the former in the form of involving itself into a coup d’etat that broke out in Seoul, and the latter by occupying Kōmundo. They did so in the hope that these respective actions would help to protect or expand their interests in that country. However, their hastily prepared interventions only resulted in destabilising the international environment in East Asia. The Japanese involvement in the Kapsin coup was poorly planned, and failed as a result of the Qing counter-manoeuvre. Consequently Japan became diplomatically isolated, and in order to get out of the situation, Inoue and Itō chose to give *de facto* recognition of the Qing’s superior influence – although not of its exclusive privileges – in Korea in the peace terms that they signed. In their own crisis, the British decision-makers permitted O’Conor to communicate that they acknowledged the Qing claim of suzerainty over Korea to get out of the difficulties that they had created

¹²³ Alder, *British India’s Northern Frontier*, ch. 5; Ghose, *England and Afghanistan*, 206-8.

¹²⁴ O’Conor to Aston (Private), Beijing, 6 Sept 1885, NOP CAC OCON 4/1/1.

for themselves as a result of the unilateral occupation of Kōmundo. In the end, both the Japanese and the British decision-makers could not settle these regional crises alone, and could emerge out of isolation only by making compromises with Qing China, the one country that was successfully reasserting its influence over East Asia.

To some extent, decision-makers of Britain and Japan were induced by the same circumstances to make these moves. However, it would be inaccurate to assume that they were necessarily reluctant to do so. From the British perspective, the need for an Anglo-Chinese alliance in case of a possible war with Russia outweighed any concerns about the suzerainty question. Similarly, the key individuals in Japan, such as Itō and Inoue, were quite happy to make concessions to the Qing over the Korean question if that would prevent the outbreak of war. Many studies argue that the setback in the Kapsin incident induced the Japanese government to embark on military expansion so that Japan could defeat the Qing, which was now identified as the biggest obstacle to fulfil their long-term ambition to colonise Korea. Takahashi Hidenao, however, convincingly argued in several articles published in the 1980s against such an assumption. He contended that the key individuals in Japan kept their distance from those who advocated reform in Korea through military intervention right up until the outbreak of the First Sino-Japanese War.¹²⁵ Takahashi also presented evidence which suggests that the Kapsin incident was an important event for the Japanese government precisely because it led to the Tianjin Convention, which provided both the Qing and Japanese governments with a basis for the peaceful conduct of Sino-Japanese relations over Korea. Indeed, from this point, the Japanese pursued policies which closely followed the spirit of the agreement after April 1885.

¹²⁵ Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*.

In addition, the occupation of Kōmundo reinforced the impression that the imperial competition between the great powers was intensifying, and was starting to have repercussions in East Asia. After observing the British action and the intensification of the Anglo-Russian war-scare in the summer of 1885, Inoue was convinced that “Western countries are expanding into the East with much stronger zeal than they did ten years ago,” and that a peaceful relationship with China was therefore essential to uphold Japan’s independence.¹²⁶ Already in September 1884, when Plunkett had contacted Inoue and asked if the Japanese government would declare neutrality over the Sino-French war and cooperate in offering naval protection to the neutral shipping, Inoue had answered in the affirmative, but questioned whether if his government could impose neutral rights on a country whose extraterritoriality in Japan was guaranteed by treaty.¹²⁷ It was under such conditions, with Japanese decision-makers feeling somewhat wary about their international status, that they heard the Russian commander explain why he had ordered his seamen to prepare to fire during the Anglo-Russian near-miss in Yokohama in May. This reinforced the Japanese recognition of how vulnerable their country was under the unequal treaties.¹²⁸ They could not dare enter into a hostile relationship with the Qing when a war between two European great powers might threaten the independence of Japan. On 10 June 1885, Inoue handed a memorandum on policy towards Korea to Xu

¹²⁶ Inoue to Itō (Private), 19 Oct 1885, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 194-6.

¹²⁷ Plunkett to Granville (No. 148 Confidential), Tokyo, 4 Sept 1884 (rec. 16 Oct), FO 46/314. This issue was debated quite intensively within the Japanese government from September 1884. See Inoue Kowashi to Itō Miyoji (Private), 11 Sept 1884; Inoue Kowashi to Itō Miyoji (Private), 12 Sept 1884; Memorandum by Inoue Kowashi, date unknown, all from *IKDS*, vol. 1, pp. 401-5. Also refer to Yoshida to Inoue (Private), 3 Sept 1884, KSKKT IKM 601-2.

¹²⁸ Inoue to Kawase (Unnumbered), 13 June 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 601-2; Hatano to Inoue (機密第五十八號), Tianjin, 7 Sept 1885 (rec. 21 Sept), *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 388-390; Inoue to Itō (Private), 19 Oct 1885, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 194-6. Also see *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 126-140.

Chengzu, the Qing Minister in Japan. In this memorandum he suggested that:

1. Any policy towards Korea by these two countries should be executed under Li's authority after it had been discussed by Li and Inoue; 2. The king of Chosōn should be turned into a mere figurehead; 3. The king should delegate all of the administrative issues to able individuals such as Kim Hong-jip, Kim Yun-sik and Ō Mun-jung, and the nomination of ministers by the king must be approved by Li; 4. The Chosōn should establish specialised institutions for foreign affairs, military and treasury; 5. The Chosōn should find an able American advisor to replace Möllendorff; 6. Li should replace Chen Shutang, his political agent in Seoul, as the Japanese government considered him incompetent; 7. The new Qing agent and the American advisor to Chosōn should visit Tokyo *en route* to Seoul and have interviews with Inoue; 8. The new Qing agent should also maintain a friendly relationship, and be in close communications with, the Japanese Minister in Seoul.¹²⁹

Li, who was facing pressure from the hardliners within the Qing decision-making circle, could not officially approve this memorandum, and his attitude frustrated many Japanese diplomats; nonetheless Li replied that he supported the principle and the spirit of this initiative.¹³⁰ By submitting the additional memorandum, Inoue showed that he had no objection to using the Tianjin Convention of April 1885 as the guideline for future Sino-Japanese relations in regards to Korea. It goes without saying that Li found no reason to reject such an offer.

It was also very difficult for Britain and Japan to come to closer terms when the Japanese fear of European imperialism – which was quite strong already before the crisis – had become stronger. If there was a possibility for an Anglo-Japanese alliance to form in the period before 1894, then it could not have happened in any period other than during the crisis of the mid-1880s, when the dual crises created an environment that might induce

¹²⁹ Inoue to Enomoto, 10 June 1885, KSKKT MuMKM 73-4.

¹³⁰ Enomoto to Inoue, 19 July 1885, KSKKT MuMKM 73-3.

the Russians to make an advance towards Korea. As the primary concern for the British government was the European encroachment towards its spheres of influences, there was no reason to reject the prospect of forming an alliance with as many local countries as possible, and the Foreign Office did contemplate the idea of making overtures to Japan as well as the Qing in the summer of 1885. However, at that time the latter was seen as being much more powerful and therefore more useful in checking the Russians than the former. Therefore the Japanese were only ever perceived as a potential junior partner in a much more important Anglo-Chinese alliance. Many of the British were also pessimistic about the prospect of bringing the Qing and Japan together in a trilateral alliance, as they believed that the suspicion between these two countries towards each other was still significant after the Kapsin coup. This environment discouraged them from making any substantial overtures towards Japan, as they feared that such a gesture might create a negative impression in Qing court. From the Japanese side of the story, the British occupation of Kōmundo created the impression that the British were no less imperialist than the other Western nations, and thus its actions were viewed with grave suspicion. Moreover, difficulties over the treaty revision negotiations continued to prevent these two countries from coming on to closer terms, especially after the Japanese government officials started to be aware of the danger that the claim of extraterritoriality could pose towards the security of their country.

Chapter 4 – The East Asian Crises, Phase Two: November 1885-February 1887

The British and Japanese governments salvaged themselves from the diplomatic isolation which had resulted from the Kōmundo and Kapsin incidents by acknowledging – more or less voluntarily – that China had become the most influential country in the region. By November 1885 this recognition started to emerge as the guiding principle of the regional order. In order to understand why this principle continued to prevail even after the initial crises had subsided, it is important to analyse how the sequence of events until February 1887 – when the British squadron withdrew from Kōmundo – influenced East Asian affairs, and this will be examined in this chapter.

Particular attention will be placed on the British side of the story, as they had to continue to rely on Qing influence to suppress Korean discontent about the British occupation. The British government also had to rely on its influence when Kojong made another overture to Russia in the summer of 1886 to drive the British out from Kōmundo. Also in November 1885 the British government launched an offensive into Upper Burma, which was another kingdom that the Qing decision-makers claimed as being their traditional vassal. The British government had to negotiate very carefully, in order to avoid the same difficulty that the French and the Japanese had fallen into when they intrigued in Tonkin and Korea, and in the end they were successful in keeping Qing goodwill.

From the Japanese side of the story, they were frustrated towards the Chinese when a brawl broke out between the local population in Nagasaki and the Qing seamen who visited the Japanese port. This incident resulted in stirring another wave of anti-Chinese sentiment in the Japanese public, but the government dealt with this issue based upon the

stipulations of the Tianjin Convention, and with a strong determination not to turn this into another serious diplomatic crisis. The series of events which occurred from November 1885 to February 1887 thus induced the British and Japanese governments to continue to prioritise upholding the goodwill of the Chinese, instead of focusing on their relationship with each other.

The British Annexation of Upper Burma

By November 1885 Lord Dufferin was consistently pressing the ministers and officials in London to launch a military campaign against Upper Burma.¹ He had received numerous reports from British merchants that the local Burmese were interfering with their business, and the Governor-General was convinced that the latter were doing so on the orders of King Thibaw.² In the beginning, some of the individuals in the British and Indian governments argued that their objective could be accomplished by dethroning the king instead of annexation. This debate continued even after the Indian Army began its campaign on 7 November 1885. There were several factors which made the British government take its time before making a decision on this issue. One of the main concerns was, of course, the cost, as it expected that a large budget would be needed to administer the region on a permanent basis. But there is also ample evidence to suggest that many British ministers, officials and diplomats were concerned that the annexation could upset the Qing authorities, as they were aware that the Kingdom of Burma was a

¹ Salisbury to Walsham (Private), 8 Sept 1885, SP HHA A/44/7; Pauncefote to Godley (Confidential), FO, 4 Nov 1885, FO 422/15; Salisbury to O'Conor (No. 51 Telegraphic), FO, 11 Nov 1885, FO 17/987.

² Ibid.

traditional vassal of Qing.³ For example, the British head of the Chinese Imperial Customs Service, Sir Robert Hart, recommended that the British government should ask Qing officials to mediate in the Anglo-Burmese dispute in order to show that it respected the Chinese claim of traditional suzerainty and thus win their goodwill.⁴ Most of the British decision-makers did not feel the need to go that far and thus rejected this opinion.⁵ Nonetheless, after observing the recent events in Tonkin and Korea, the British officials understood that the Chinese claim of suzerainty had to be handled very sensitively in order to maintain the goodwill of the Chinese, which was now vital due to the problems over Kōmundo.⁶ Therefore, they contemplated the idea of establishing a protectorate over Upper Burma after replacing King Thibaw with some other prince, which would allow the new king to continue sending tributary missions to Beijing.⁷

However, by early-1885, the British government perceived French manoeuvres across the world with increased suspicion and therefore could not help but be alarmed by reports indicating that the French were attempting to expand their influence in Southeast Asia to Upper Burma, a region that lay on the eastern flank of British India.⁸ By November, the

³ O'Conor to Salisbury (No. 445), 1 enclosure, Beijing, 29 Oct 1885 (rec. 24 Dec), FO 17/987; O'Conor to Currie (Private), Beijing, 2 Nov 1885, NOP CAC OCON4/1/1; Salisbury to Churchill (Private), 4 Nov 1885, RCP CAC RCHL 1/9; Walpole to Pauncefote, 3 enclosures, IO, 10 Nov 1885 (rec. 10 Nov), FO 422/15; Salisbury to Churchill (Private), 15 Nov 1885, RCP CAC RCHL 1/9; Eden to Salisbury (Private), FO, 29 Nov 1885, SP HHAA/36/15; Godley to Currie (Secret), 1 enclosure, IO, 7 Dec 1885 (rec. 8 Dec), FO 422/15; Currie to Godley (A and B Confidential), FO, 9 Dec 1885, FO 422/15.

⁴ Hart to Campbell (No. 292 Confidential for Pauncefote, Telegraphic), Beijing, 1 Nov 1885. Enclosure in Campbell to Pauncefote (Private), London, 2 Nov 1885 (rec. 2 Nov), FO 422/15.

⁵ *BDFA*, vol. 23, 3-5.

⁶ See footnote 4 of this chapter and; Godley to Currie (Secret), 2 enclosures, IO, 9 Dec 1885 (rec. 10 Dec); Currie to Godley (Confidential), FO, 14 Dec 1885, both FO 422/15.

⁷ O'Conor to Salisbury (No. 445), Beijing, 29 Oct 1885 (rec. 24 Dec), FO 17/987; Churchill to Dufferin (Secret, Telegraphic), IO, 5 Nov 1885, FO 422/15; Dufferin to Churchill (Secret, Telegraphic), 8 Nov 1885 FO 422/15; Salisbury to O'Conor (No. 51 Telegraphic), FO, 11 Nov 1885, FO 17/987.

⁸ Kimberley to Dufferin (Private), IO, 26 Mar 1885, IOR BL MSS Eur F130/3; Salisbury

idea of annexing Upper Burma started to appear as a better option than simple dethronement or the establishment of a protectorate. For example, the legal officer of the Foreign Office contended that it would be easier to annul all the arrangements that Thibaw had made with the French if Burma was annexed instead of turned into a protectorate, as it would then immediately be put under the legal and treaty obligations of British India.⁹ The decision-makers were also encouraged by a report sent by O'Conor, which argued that:

Although the link binding Burmah (*sic*) and China is very weak, duty to a tributary State, and, still more, a sense of what is required by her own dignity, may possibly compel China to interfere so far as to remonstrate in a manner likely to cause a coldness in her present friendly relations with England. I trust, however, that before this course can be taken, events will have so shaped themselves that China will think it is not worth her while to take up a cause which has already been judged and decided by a stronger and more energetic power.¹⁰

Along with Macartney, O'Conor noted that, despite the fact that the Qing officials placed emphasis on the importance of upholding its suzerainty over every kingdom that paid tribute to the suzerain, the Burmese had sent tribute only once in ten years – much less

to Churchill (Private, Telegraphic), 25 July 1885, RCP CAC RCHL 1/6; The Burmese Minister for Foreign Affairs to Bernard, Mandalay, 26 July 1885 (enclosure to Godley to Pauncefote [D], 5 enclosures, IO, 12 Nov 1883, [rec. 13 Nov]), FO 422/15; Bernard to Durand, Rangoon, 11 Aug 1885 (enclosure to Godley to Pauncefote [D], 5 enclosures, IO, 12 Nov 1883, [rec. 13 Nov]), FO 422/15; Kimberley to Dufferin (Private), 24 Dec 1884, IOR BL MSS Eur F130/3; Salisbury to Churchill, (Private), 21 Aug 1885, RCP CAC RCHL 1/7. See also Lyons to Salisbury (No. 720), Paris, 3 Nov 1885 (rec. 4 Nov); Lyons to Salisbury (No. 741 Ext. 45), Paris, 9 Nov 1885 (rec. 11 Nov); Godley to Pauncefote, IO, 9 Nov 1885 (rec. 9 Nov); Lyons to Salisbury (No. 763), Paris, 24 Nov 1885 (rec. 25 Nov). All from FO 422/15.

⁹ Salisbury to Walsham (Private), 8 Sept 1885, SP HHA A/44/7; Dufferin to Churchill (Secret, Telegraphic), 5 Dec 1885, FO 422/15; Godley to Currie (Secret), IO, 9 Dec 1885 (rec. 10 Dec), FO 422/15.

¹⁰ O'Conor to Salisbury (No. 445), Beijing, 29 Oct 1885 (rec. 24 Dec), FO 17/987.

frequently than the Koreans and the Annamese had done – and therefore China probably would be hesitant about taking strong action against the British.¹¹ In December, the officials of the Foreign and Indian Offices concluded that they should annex the region, and on 1 January 1886 it was declared that Upper Burma would be administered as a Crown Colony.¹²

The British ministers nonetheless understood that some agreement with the Qing decision-makers over the suzerainty question was necessary in order to uphold the latter's goodwill. On 9 November Salisbury wrote to his Secretary of State for India, Lord Randolph Churchill, that “it might be a hassle, but there is no sacrifice” in sending a special mission to Beijing over the issue of annexation of Upper Burma.¹³ In December 1885 the senior officials of the Foreign Office contemplated that this question could be settled by agreeing that the Government of India would allow envoys from the local Burmese population to go to Beijing even after the annexation – although they were of the opinion that any agreement should make it clear that the British and Indian governments considered these missions as strictly ceremonial with no political significance.¹⁴ The negotiations did not, though, proceed as smoothly as the Foreign Office expected. Contrary to the expectations of O'Conor and Macartney, the Qing officials immediately raised complaints against the British annexation of Upper Burma.¹⁵ In January, Currie asked Zeng if the court in Beijing would be satisfied if the Government

¹¹ See footnote 6 of this chapter.

¹² Godley to Currie (Secret), 2 enclosures, IO, 9 Dec 1885 (rec. 10 Dec), FO 422/15; Harris to Currie (Secret), IO, 23 Dec 1885, FO 422/15; Churchill to Dufferin (Private), IO, 31 Dec 1885, IOR BL MSS Eur F130/3.

¹³ Salisbury to Churchill (Private), 9 Nov 1885, RCP CAC RCHL 1/9.

¹⁴ Ibid; Currie to Godley (A and B Confidential), FO, 9 Dec 1885, FO 422/15; Currie to Godley (Confidential), FO, 14 Dec 1885, FO 422/15.

¹⁵ O'Conor to Salisbury (No. 1 Telegraphic), Beijing, 1 Jan 1886 (rec. 2 Jan), FO 17/1021; Zeng to Salisbury, Chinese Legation in London, 1 Jan 1886 (rec. 4 Jan), FO 422/16.

of India sent missions composed of Burmese Buddhist monks. However, there is no document that indicates that the Qing decision-makers accepted this idea as a basis for negotiation. The talks became difficult because whereas the Qing officials wanted the tributary missions to be conducted in a way that symbolised the traditional political suzerain-vassal relationship between Qing and Burma, the British were striving to ensure that the missions carried no political significance.¹⁶

By March, the India Office and the Government of India were becoming increasingly impatient, and Dufferin and Lord Kimberley expressed their exasperation towards the Qing negotiators. They saw the latter as procrastinating and constantly changing their demands, thus causing unnecessary delays, and also felt continuously demanding more concessions without giving anything in return.¹⁷ They also criticised their own diplomats for being too patient with the Qing, and were even more suspicious towards the British employees in Qing service, such as Hart and Macartney.¹⁸ After these experiences, Kimberley concluded that “I can hardly believe [the Chinese] differ from other Orientals so much that a humble tone is likely to succeed with them.”¹⁹

However, even these individuals could not deny that the Qing’s power and influence

¹⁶ Salisbury to Conor (No. 9), FO, 12 Jan 1886, FO 17/1012; Churchill to Dufferin (Private), IO, 14 Jan 1886, IOR BL MSS Eur F130/6; Godley to Currie (C), 27 Jan 1886 (rec. 28 Jan), FO 422/16; Memorandum by Currie, FO, 23 Feb 1886, FO 422/16; Memorandum by Currie, FO, 2 Mar 1886, FO 422/16; Kimberley to Dufferin (Private), IO, 5 Mar 1886, IOR BL MSS Eur F130/6.

¹⁷ Kimberley to Dufferin (Private), IO, 17 Mar 1886, MSS Eur F130/6; Kimberley to Dufferin (Private), IO, 6 Apr 1886, MSS Eur F130/6. Both IOR BL.

¹⁸ Kimberley to Dufferin (Private), IO, 6 Apr 1886, IOR BL MSS Eur F130/6; Kimberley to Dufferin (Private), IO, 28 Apr 1886, IOR BL MSS Eur F130/6; Salisbury to O’Conor (No. 44 Telegraphic), FO, 7 Aug 1885, FO 17/987; O’Conor to Salisbury (No. 432 Confidential), Beijing, 16 Oct 1885 (rec. 14 Dec), FO 17/985; Kimberley to Dufferin (Private), IO, 5 Mar 1886, IOR BL MSS Eur F130/6; Dufferin to Kimberley (Private), Calcutta, 29 Mar 1886, IOR BL MSS Eur F130/5; Dufferin to Kimberley (Private), Simla, 4 June 1886, IOR BL MSS Eur F130/5.

¹⁹ Kimberley to Dufferin (Private), IO, 5 Mar 1886, IOR BLMSS Eur F130/6.

were important. They therefore realised that they had to deal with this power carefully in order to avoid any unnecessary quarrel that might endanger British interests in Asia. The final stage of the negotiations was undertaken in Beijing. The Cabinet ministers and the senior officials of Foreign Office instructed O'Conor from late-May onwards that the missions should not be labelled as 'tributes' or 'offerings' as they feared that such terms would be interpreted by Qing as a sign of British acceptance of suzerainty.²⁰ Instead, the British side insisted to the Qing negotiators that they should agree "that the highest civil or spiritual authority shall continue to send the customary ten-yearly Missions sent from Burmah (*sic*) to China, members of Missions to be of Burmese race" if the court in Beijing would acknowledge British authority over Upper Burma.²¹ This was successful, but the British government had to make one compromise in order to make the Qing negotiators accept this agreement; it had to promise that it would not press the Qing to open Tibet to the merchants in India for an indefinite period of time, and would only start negotiations when both the British and Qing governments considered it as being the ideal moment.²² The declaration was not the most pleasant of compromises for a people who believed in the virtues of free trade,²³ but in the end, the British and Indian governments considered this compromise as acceptable, as the prospects for commerce in Tibet were not considered very significant.²⁴ After sorting out the minor details, the

²⁰ Kimberley to Dufferin (Private), IO, 28 May 1886, IOR BL MSS Eur F130/6; O'Conor to Rosebery (No. 28 Telegraphic), Beijing, 4 June 1886 (rec. 4 June), FO 17/1021.

²¹ Rosebery to O'Conor (No. 26 Telegraphic), FO, 24 May 1886, FO 17/1021; O'Conor to Rosebery (No. 26 Telegraphic), Beijing, 31 May 1886 (rec. 31 May), FO 17/1021.

²² Rosebery to O'Conor (No. 30 Telegraphic), FO, 5 June 1886, FO 17/1021.

²³ Parkes to Granville (No. 32), Beijing, 24 Jan 1885 (rec. 24 Mar), FO 17/977; O'Conor to Granville (No. 206), Beijing, 3 May 1885 (rec. 30 June), FO 17/980. Also see RCP CAC RCHL 1/5 to 1/12.

²⁴ Rosebery to O'Conor (No. 28 Telegraphic), FO, 3 June 1886, FO 17/1021; Currie to Rosebery (Private), 14 June 1886, RP NLS MS.10132.

Anglo-Chinese convention over Burma was signed on 24 July.²⁵

British Withdrawal from Kōmundo

As indicated in the previous chapter, critics of the government decision to place Kōmundo under occupation existed even when the Anglo-Russian war-scare was at its peak. For instance, Dowell raised doubts about the strategic merits of the islands as early as late April 1885. However, his opinion was overruled by the senior officials in the Foreign Office and Admiralty, as well as the Cabinet, who believed that the British should retain possession of Kōmundo at least until the Anglo-Russian war-scare subsided. Even after the signing of the Anglo-Russian delineation agreement in September 1885, the Foreign Office did not immediately embark on preparations for withdrawal from the islands. The Foreign Office could not hammer out a policy on what Britain should do with the islands because it faced a wide variety of different recommendations from its diplomats. For example, Plunkett argued that the government should purchase the islands as he believed that they would serve as a good stopover port for British merchants between the treaty ports in East Asia, and argued that this could enhance British trade with Korea.²⁶ Meanwhile, O'Conor suggested considering the option of handing the islands over to the Qing. He argued that as Korea was too weak to defend itself, Kōmundo would be under

²⁵ Rosebery to Walsham (No. 311), FO, 16 June 1886; Rosebery to Walsham (No. 317), 21 June 1886; Rosebery to Walsham (No. 336), FO, 24 June 1886; Walsham to Rosebery (No. 325), Beijing, 25 June 1886; Godley to Currie (No. 333), IO, 28 June 1886; Currie to Godley (No. 340), FO, 30 June 1886. All from FO 881/5381. See also Rosebery to Walsham (No. 39 Telegraphic), FO, 8 July 1886; Walsham to Rosebery (No. 51 Telegraphic), Beijing, 24 July 1886 (rec. 25 July). Both from FO 17/1021.

²⁶ Plunkett to Granville (No. 151 Very Confidential), Tokyo, 25 May 1885, rec. 30 June, FO 46/330. Also see Hamilton to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 40), Audacious (Hong Kong), 7 Dec 1885 (rec. 12 Jan 1886), ADM 1/6810, as this document indicates that Hamilton believed Plunkett had maintained this argument until early December.

the constant threat of possible Russian control if the islands were returned to that country, and continued that it might be better to hand them over to the Chinese; O'Conor added that this might also help to win the goodwill of the Qing decision-makers.²⁷

However, by the autumn of 1885 both O'Conor and Plunkett started to become convinced that the British government should withdraw from Kōmundo as soon as possible. O'Conor observed that Li Hongzhang – who had seemed receptive to the idea of taking over the islands from the British in the summer – was no longer interested in doing so by late September.²⁸ He therefore started to argue in favour of withdrawal from the islands as soon as the Foreign Office had made arrangements that would prevent the Russians from occupying any Korean territory after the China Squadron withdrew.²⁹ Also, Plunkett argued that as the Japanese government saw Korea as a country of vital importance for its security, it viewed any third party activity with strong suspicion.³⁰ Accordingly it was becoming increasingly suspicious towards the British government which would not withdraw from Kōmundo even after the Anglo-Russian war-scare had subsided.³¹ These arguments were supported by Vice-Admiral Sir Richard Vesey Hamilton, who succeeded Dowell as the Commander-in-Chief of the China Squadron in November 1885. He reiterated the argument of Dowell throughout 1886, calling for swift withdrawal from the islands from a naval perspective. He stated that it was

²⁷ O'Conor to Currie (Private), Beijing, 16 July 1885, NOP CAC OCON5/2/2; O'Conor to Currie (Private), 16 Sept 1885, NOP CAC OCON4/1/1; O'Conor to Barrington (Private), 23 Sept 1885, Circulated to Salisbury as well, SP HHA A/38/37.

²⁸ O'Conor to Barrington (Private), 23 Sept 1885, NOP CAC OCON4/1/1; O'Conor to Salisbury (No. 429 Confidential), Beijing, 14 Oct 1885 (rec. 20 Nov), FO 17/985; O'Conor to Salisbury (No.457), Beijing, 17 Nov 1885 (rec. 12 Jan 1886), FO 17/986; Currie to the Secretary to the Admiralty (Confidential), FO, 8 Dec 1885. FO 405/35; Salisbury to O'Conor (No. 59 Telegraphic), FO, 12 Dec 1885, FO 17/987.

²⁹ Ibid; O'Conor to Currie (Private), Beijing, 8 Feb 1886, NOP CAC OCON4/1/2.

³⁰ Plunkett to Salisbury (No. 259 Very Confidential), Tokyo, 18 Dec 1885 (rec. 25 Jan 1886), FO 46/335.

³¹ Ibid.

extremely difficult to erect fortifications on these islands due to their topography, and concluded that Kōmundo was not suitable for any kind of military base; he added that it would not be difficult for his squadron to remove Russian ships even if the latter decided to occupy them.³² In order to protect the islands, his fleet had to deploy two or three ships permanently around them, which consequently meant that the squadron had to reduce the number of warships that could be used to patrol East Asian waters.³³ Kōmundo was therefore nothing other than a burden.

By April 1886 the Foreign Office and Admiralty became convinced by these opinions.³⁴ But before withdrawing from Kōmundo, the senior officials of the Foreign Office thought that it was necessary to conclude an international agreement which would guarantee that foreign countries would respect the territorial integrity of Korea.³⁵ Needless to say, they turned to the Qing over this issue. They decided to request that the Qing should:

[P]ropose to Russia and to the other Powers interested, to enter into an international arrangement guaranteeing the integrity of Corea (*sic*). If this proposal is accepted, H[er] M[ajesty]'s Gov[ernmen]t would be ready to become parties to the arrangement, and to retire

³² Hamilton to O'Conor (Private), Audacions (Hong Kong), 24 Nov 1885, RVHP CLNMM VHM/3; Hamilton to Mr. O'Connor (Private), Audacious (Hong Kong), 29 Nov 1885, RVHP CLNMM VHM/3; Hamilton to the Secretary to the Admiralty (Confidential), Audacious (Hong Kong), 7 Dec 1885, ADM 1/6810 (circulated to the Foreign Office through; The Secretary to the Admiralty to Currie [Confidential], Admiralty, 20 Jan 1886 [rec. 21 Jan], FO 405/36); Hamilton to Hood (Private), Audacious (Hong Kong), 13 Dec 1885, RVHP CLNMM VHM/3.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ The Secretary to the Admiralty to Currie (Confidential), Admiralty, 20 Jan 1886 (rec. 21 Jan), FO 405/36; O'Conor to Salisbury (Private), Beijing, 4 Feb 1886, NOP CAC OCON4/1/2; O'Conor to Currie (Private), Beijing, 12 Apr 1886, NOP CAC OCON5/2/2; Memorandum, FO, 14 Apr 1886, ADM 1/6810.

³⁵ O'Conor to Salisbury (Private), Beijing, 4 Feb 1886, NOP CAC OCON4/1/2; O'Conor to Currie (Private), Beijing, 12 Apr 1886, NOP CAC OCON5/2/2; Memorandum, FO, 14 Apr 1886, ADM 1/6810.

at once from Port Hamilton on the understanding that it should be recognised as forming part of the guaranteed territory of Corea (*sic*).³⁶

O'Conor started contacting Li in late-March 1886 to examine whether the latter would be interested in inducing all of the foreign powers that had relations with Korea to agree that they would respect its territorial integrity, or, if that was not possible, then at least get an agreement that Yongheungman – which was widely rumoured to be the harbour that the Russians were most interested in annexing – would be turned into a treaty port.³⁷

It took a while for this negotiation to proceed, as at first, the British government was still busy with the Anglo-Chinese negotiations over the suzerainty question of Burma. It was only after August, when Li learned that the Korean government had made another secret overture to Russia, that he started to make a more determined effort to check the expansion of Russian influence.³⁸ This overture was almost identical to the one that Möllendorff had made a year before, as the Chosōn court sent a secret letter to the Russian legation in Seoul which offered to cede some territory to St. Petersburg if the latter would guarantee military support against any external power that threatened the territorial integrity of Korea.³⁹ When this plot was leaked by a Chosōn minister to the Qing

³⁶ Memorandum, FO, 14 Apr 1886, ADM 1/6810.

³⁷ O'Conor to Rosebery (No. 109 Confidential), Beijing, 27 Mar 1886 (rec. 17 May), FO 17/1016; O'Conor to Mr. Brenan (Private), Beijing, 27 Mar 1886, NOP CAC OCON5/1/3; O'Conor to Currie (Private), Beijing, 12 Apr 1886, NOP CAC OCON5/2/2; O'Conor to Rosebery (No. 197), Beijing, 10 June 1886 (rec. 9 Aug), FO 17/1017.

³⁸ For secondary sources on the second Chosōn overture to Russia, see; Lee, *West Goes East*, 156-165; Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, 63; Sasaki, "1880 Nendai ni okeru Rochō Kankei," 36-8; Yō Sasaki, "Roshia Kyokutō Seisaku to Nisshin Kaisen," *Saga Daigaku Kyōiku Gakubu Kenkyū Ronbunshū*, 30:1-1 (July 1982): 192-208; Sasaki, "The International Environment at the Time of the Sino-Japanese War," 8; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 2, 34-8.

³⁹ For the British intelligence reports over this issue, see; Walsham to Iddesleigh (No. 255 Confidential), Beijing, 11 Aug 1886 (rec. 1 Oct), FO 17/1019; Walsham to Iddesleigh (No. 262 Confidential), Beijing, 25 Aug 1886 (rec. 19 Oct), FO 17/1019; Walsham to Iddesleigh (No. 60 Telegraphic), Beijing, 31 Aug 1886 (rec. 31 Aug), FO 17/1021; Walsham to Iddesleigh (No. 268 Confidential), Beijing, 7 Sept 1886 (rec. 9 Nov), FO

political agent in Seoul, who at this time was Yuan Shikai, he and Li demanded that the Chosōn ministers immediately withdraw the offer; also the Russian Minister Karl Waeber was much more cautious than during the previous incident, and strictly abided by the instruction of his government not to respond to Korean offers precipitously. When Waeber learned that the plot had been leaked to the Qing, he immediately announced that the Russian legation considered the secret correspondence as a letter sent by an unauthorised individual and therefore had not taken it seriously.

Yuan was furious about this incident and suggested to his superior that Kojong should be replaced with the Taewon'gūn.⁴⁰ Li rejected this proposal, arguing that the unilateral removal of the king would provoke a reaction not only from the Chosōn officials themselves but also other countries. Nonetheless, he realised that some arrangement had to be made in order, first, to prevent further Russo-Korean arrangements from happening in the future, and second, to create an environment that would make it easier for the British to withdraw from Kōmundo. In particular, he was aware that the Russians saw any British advance in East Asia as threatening their interests. Therefore, as long as the British squadron remained in the islands, they would seek counter-concessions from Korea.⁴¹

The negotiations between Li and N. F. Ladyzhenski, the Russian Chargé d'Affaires in Beijing, commenced relatively satisfactorily and by the end of October were poised to produce a written agreement which would guarantee that the Russian government would

17/1019; Hamilton to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 564), *Audacious* (St. Vladimir Bay), 15 Sept 1886 (rec. 1 Nov), ADM1/6809; Walsham to Iddesleigh (No. 62 Telegraphic, Corea), Beijing, 27 Sept 1886 (rec. 27 Sept), FO 17/1021.

⁴⁰ For secondary sources on Yuan's suggestion of dethroning Kojong, see; Larsen, *Tradition, Treaty and Trade*, 166-9; Lee, *West Goes East*, 158; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 2, 38-9; Okamoto, *Ri Kōshō*, 146-8.

⁴¹ Sasaki, "1880 Nendai ni okeru Rochō Kankei," 27-34; Sasaki, "The International Environment at the Time of the Sino-Japanese War," 9-15.

not violate the territorial integrity of Korea.⁴² But then, Li announced that the court in Beijing would like to insert a clause that declared that the Russian government would approve its suzerainty over Chosōn.⁴³ As Ladyzhenski naturally rejected this request, these two parties failed to produce any written agreement over this issue, although the latter did reiterate that his government had no territorial ambitions in Korea.⁴⁴ When the senior officials in Foreign Office heard about these proceedings in early November from Sir John Walsham, the new Minister in Beijing, they were thrown into a dilemma, but in the end they concluded a month later that they provided a sufficient guarantee from the Russian authorities, and thus started to prepare for withdrawal from Kōmundo.⁴⁵ By the autumn of 1886, British diplomats and naval officers in East Asia were also conscious that the prolonged occupation had made the Russians extremely suspicious of Britain, and that this might induce them to take measures that would further destabilise the regional order.⁴⁶ The China Squadron completed its withdrawal from the islands on 27 February 1887.⁴⁷

⁴² For secondary sources on Li-Ladyzhenski Agreement see; Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, 63-7; Sasaki, “1880 nendai ni okeru Rochō Kankei,” 39.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid; Walsham to Iddesleigh (No. 65 Telegraphic), Beijing, 5 Nov. 1886 (rec. 6 Nov), FO 17/1021.

⁴⁵ Walsham to Iddesleigh (No. 65 Telegraphic), Beijing, 5 Nov. 1886 (rec. 6 Nov), FO 17/1021; Currie to the Secretary to the Admiralty (Confidential), FO, 4 Dec 1886, FO 405/36; The Secretary to the Admiralty to Currie (Confidential), Admiralty, 7 Dec 1886 (rec. 8 Dec), FO 405/36; Hamilton to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 9), Audacious (Hong Kong), 1 Jan 1887 (rec. 7 Feb), ADM 1/6861; Question asked in the House of Commons, 2 Feb 1887, FO 405/37. For secondary sources on the Britain's final decision to withdraw from Kōmundo, see Ahn, “Igirisu no Kyobuntō Senryō Jiken,” 113-4; Lee, *West Goes East*, 174-8; Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, 67-8; Pak, “Kyobuntō Jiken to Ri Kōshō no Taikan Seisaku,” 86-93.

⁴⁶ Walsham to Rosebery (No. 52 Telegraphic), Beijing, 30 July 1886 (rec. 23 July), FO 17/1021; Walsham to Rosebery (No. 245 Confidential), Beijing, 5 Aug 1886 (rec. 1 Oct), FO 17/1019; Walsham to Iddesleigh (No. 268 Confidential), Beijing, 7 Sept 1886 (rec. 9 Nov), FO 17/1019.

⁴⁷ Hamilton to the Secretary to the Admiralty (Telegraphic), 28 Feb 1887 (rec. 28 Feb). Enclosure to Admiralty to Foreign Office (Confidential), Admiralty 28 Feb 1887 (rec. 1 Mar), FO 405/37; Hamilton to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 142), Audacious

The Japanese Side of the Story and the Consequences for the Anglo-Japanese Relationship

Despite the fact that Itō and Inoue managed to establish the Tianjin Convention as the guideline for future Japanese policy towards Chosōn and Qing, the Kapsin coup had induced many Japanese – both within and outside of the government – to look at the Chinese with stronger suspicion. In particular, as indicated in the previous chapter, the incident led to an explosion of anti-Qing sentiment among the public. In November 1885 the Japanese police caught some political activists who were trying to sneak into Korea in an attempt to create another disturbance in that country in the hope that such an uprising would eradicate the pro-Qing ministers.⁴⁸ The events of 1886 did not help to improve the Qing image within Japanese eyes. On 13 August some of the sailors of the Beiyang Fleet, who were visiting Nagasaki, had a quarrel with the local people, and this ended up in a fight that led to a death on both sides. This incident provoked another anti-Qing outcry in Japan, and many of the media accused the Qing of intending to embark on a military expedition as a result of this clash.⁴⁹

While the Japanese government ministers and officials rejected such reports as being completely groundless, they were themselves frustrated by the Qing officials, who

(Hong Kong), 1 Mar 1887 (rec. 4 Apr), ADM 1/6861.

⁴⁸ Kiyoura to Asada (Private), 28 Nov 1885, KSKKT IKM 373-2; Plunkett to Salisbury (No. 253), Tokyo, 11 Dec 1885 (rec. 26 Jan 1886), FO 46/335; Plunkett to Salisbury (No. 258 Very Confidential), Tokyo, 15 Dec 1885 (rec. 25 Jan 1886), FO 46/335; Takahira to Inoue (機密號外), 5 enclosures, Seoul, 3 Jan 1886, *NGM*, vol. 19, pp. 513-5; Kurino to Inoue, 5 enclosures, 4 Jan 1886, *NGM*, vol. 19, pp. 521-535. For secondary literature, see Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 162-8.

⁴⁹ Fukuzawa to his sons (Private), 1 Sept 1886, *FYZ*, vol. 18, pp.53-4; Report on the Negotiation over the Nagasaki Incident, 31 Dec 1886, *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 529-565. Enclosure to Inoue to Ministers in the Cabinet [送第十二號], 13 Jan 1887, *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 529.

procrastinated over the negotiations for a peaceful resolution of this issue and made the talks unnecessarily complicated until a settlement was reached in February 1887.⁵⁰ Neither did they appreciate the fact that the Qing government was reluctant to revise the Sino-Japanese treaty of 1871, despite the fact that Japan had been pushing this issue since the early-1880s. By 1886, Japan and Western countries had finally reached a point in which they were about to draft a new treaty based on the principle that the Western governments would abolish consular jurisdiction in Japan if the Japanese government would permit foreign residents access to the interior of that country.⁵¹ The Japanese decision-makers feared, though, that the Western negotiators might reject abolishing consular jurisdiction if the Qing treaties remained intact. The Japanese government therefore placed high importance on this issue, to the extent that they had Shiota Saburō, one of the most important Gaimushō officials, who had been heavily involved in the negotiations with Western diplomats in Japan over treaty revision, as the Minister to Beijing from March 1886.⁵² Thus, the Japanese could not help but see the Chinese counterparts as being unfriendly due to the latter's apathy over this issue.

The Kapsin incident also convinced the Japanese decision-makers that they must immediately embark on improving the quality of their military. They had already decided to strengthen their armed forces after 1882, but before the outbreak of the coup

⁵⁰ Ibid. See sections on the Nagasaki incident in *NGM* vol. 19 and 20; Itō to Yamada (Private), 23 Aug 1886, *YHM*, vol. 2, pp. 102-3; Itō Miyōji to Itō (Private), 25 Aug 1886, *IHKM*, vol. 2, pp. 39-40; Nishioka to Yamada (Private), 14 Sept 1886 *YHM*, vol. 1, pp. 109-110; Inoue to Itō (Private), 18 Nov 1886, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 209-210; Inoue to Itō (Private), 31 Dec 1886, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 211-2; Nakata to Inoue (Private), 14 Jan 1887, Papers of Inoue Kaoru 628-45; Inoue to Itō (Private), 4 Feb 1887, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 212-3; Ōyama to Inoue (Private), 27 Feb 1887, KSKKT IKM 151-1; Tani to Yamada (Private), 24 Mar 1886, *YHM*, vol. 2, pp. 232-6.

⁵¹ Iokibe, *Jōyaku Kaiseishi*, ch. 5.

⁵² Ibid; Inoue to Shiota (機密送第九十五號), 11 Mar 1886, *NGM*, vol. 19, pp. 121-4; See sections on the revision of the Sino-Japanese treaty in *NGM* vol. 17 to 20.

they were still only at the stage of debating what kind of reforms they should engage in. But from 1885 onwards they sent orders abroad to acquire warships, and the army also began reforming its training methods in the Prussian style, under the instruction of Jakob Meckel.⁵³ As the Japanese started military expansion in response to the Kapsin incident, the ministers and military officials placed much emphasis on improving their military manoeuvrability overseas, and on being prepared should a war against the Qing would break out.⁵⁴ It was also in 1886 that members of the Army General Staff twice visited northeast China in order to understand the landscape better and gain information about the current state of the Qing military.⁵⁵ A report about these tours was submitted in February 1887, and the author, Ogawa Mataji, offered his opinion on the most efficient way to march on Beijing – for the first time in its history, the IJA drew up something that could be called as a war-plan against an external power.⁵⁶ Also, as the efficient communications between Qing officials in China and Korea had contributed to the speedy manoeuvring of the Chinese military during the Kapsin coup, the Gaimushō felt the need to improve its own communications, and urged the Chosōn court to permit the building of a telegraph line connecting Pusan and Seoul.⁵⁷ When the Japanese learned that Qing had started to extend its telegraph from Uiju – a Korean town near the Sino-Korean border – to Seoul, contrary to what the Chosōn ministers had told them, they raised a complaint and insisted that similar concessions should be given to the Japanese as well.⁵⁸ Over

⁵³ Saitō, *Nisshin Sensō no Gunji Senryaku*, 27.

⁵⁴ Miura to Ōyama (Private), Feb 1885 (date unknown), *YHM*, vol. 5, pp. 43-61; Inoue to Yamada (Private), 9 Oct 1885, *YHM*, vol. 2, pp. 120-2.

⁵⁵ Mataji Ogawa, “Shinkoku Seitō Sakuan (Proposal of Plans for Expedition to China),” Feb 1887. Available in Shirō Yamamoto “Ogawa Mataji Kō ‘Shinkoku Seitō Sakuan’ (1887) ni tsuite,” *Nihonshi Kenkyū*, 75 (Nov. 1964): 100-9.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Sasaki to Sanjō (第弐號), 19 Jan 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 141-2.

⁵⁸ See *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 141-173.

this issue, the Japanese decision-makers were clearly concerned that the Qing might gain an overwhelming strategic advantage over Japan and carve back the Japanese foothold in Korea even further if they did not make counter-efforts.

However, despite all of these events, the Japanese ministers and Gaimushō continued to formulate their policy towards East Asia along the lines of the Tianjin Convention. As indicated in the previous chapter, Itō and Inoue had in early 1885 managed to minimise the influence of the hardliners and had negotiated with a strong determination to avoid war. In 1886, the political activists outside of the government still remained relatively powerless, and their plot to create a new disturbance in Korea was quickly suppressed by the police. Also, despite being frustrated by the way in which the Qing officials negotiated over the Nagasaki incident, the Japanese government did not see any reason to change its previous stance towards the Qing, and kept to this line even in the face of the public outcry.⁵⁹ It also promised Xu that it would censor newspapers that circulated “groundless and intolerable slanders” about the Qing.⁶⁰ The Japanese remained patient towards the Chosōn as well, despite the fact that they were frustrated by the Korean officials over numerous diplomatic issues, such as the issue of the construction of telegraph lines between Pusan and Seoul.⁶¹ The latter did not embark on construction in June 1886 as they had previously promised due to the financial situation of the court in Seoul. Even then, the construction of the line took two years to complete, which was

⁵⁹ Fukuzawa to his sons (Private), 1 Sept 1886, *FYZ*, vol. 18, pp. 53-4. For the secondary sources on the public outcry over this incident, see Sachiko Asai, “Shinkoku Hokuyō Kantai Raikō to Sono Eikyō,” *Aichi Shukutoku Daigaku Gendai Shakai Kenkyūka Kenkyū Hōkoku* 4 (2009): 57-71; Akio Yasuoka, “Meiji 19 Nen Nagasaki Shinkoku Suihei Sōtō Jiken,” *Hōsei Daigaku Bungakubu Kiyō* 36 (1990): 41-94.

⁶⁰ Record of Conversation with Qing Minister in Japan, 31 Dec 1886. Enclosure to Inoue to Cabinet Ministers (送第十二號), 13 Jan 1887, *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 529-565.

⁶¹ For the issue over telegraph, see *NGM*, vol. 19, pp. 333-341; vol. 20, pp. 273-295; vol. 21, pp. 200-224.

much longer than they had anticipated. Yet, the Japanese never contemplated the idea of resorting to gunboat diplomacy to solve this diplomatic issue as they had done in the late-1870s.

It is also inaccurate to assume that Japanese military expansion was provoked only by concern about the Qing. There is a tendency for historians to see the military build-up during this era entirely in the context of these years being a prelude to the First Sino-Japanese War, but the Japanese government did not perceive the Qing as the only threat to their country.⁶² The recent developments over Kōmundo had made the Japanese concerned that the Anglo-Russian rivalry might have serious consequences for East Asia, to the extent that the outbreak of an Anglo-Russian war in the near future might even be inevitable. It would be difficult for the Japanese government to remain neutral in the face of such a conflict, and therefore it was faced with the difficult task of choosing with which country to align, and consequently which to fight against.⁶³

There also are some indications that it had also started to become more concerned about the actions of the other Great Powers in East Asia.⁶⁴ It was already paying close attention to the fact that the French had temporarily seized some ports in Taiwan during the last stage of the Sino-French War.⁶⁵ Moreover, the Japanese started to observe the

⁶² Ōsawa, “Tenshin Jōyaku Taisei no Keisei to Hōkai (1)”; Ōsawa, “Tenshin Jōyaku Taisei no Keisei to Hōkai, 1885-94 (2)”; Saitō, *Nisshin Sensō no Gunji Senryaku*; Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*.

⁶³ Inoue to Kawase (Unnumbered), 13 June 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 601-2; Hatano to Inoue (機密第五十八號), Tianjin, 7 Sept 1885 (rec. 21 Sept), *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 388-390; Inoue to Itō (Private), 19 Oct 1885, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 194-6.

⁶⁴ For the Japanese concern over British occupation of Kōmundo, see relevant section in *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 599-603; Inukai to Ōkuma (Private), 14 July 1886, *ŌSKM (NSKV)*, vol. 5, pp. 97-120/*OSKM (MSV)*, vol. 1, pp. 238-245.

⁶⁵ Enomoto to Inoue (Unnumbered), Shanghai, 8 Aug 1884, *NGM*, vol. 17, pp. 549; Andō to Inoue (Telegraphic), Shanghai, 11 Aug 1884, *NGM*, vol. 17, pp. 553; Enomoto to his wife (Private), Shanghai, 13 Aug 1884, *ETMS*, pp. 145-6; Yoshida to Inoue (Private), 3 Sept 1884, *KSKKT IKM* 601-2; Enomoto to Inoue (Unnumbered), Beijing, 22 Oct 1884, rec. 17 Nov, *NGM*, vol. 17, pp. 569-572; Hachisuka to Inoue (Private), Paris, 24 Oct

actions of Germany – a country that they had once perceived as a potential partner in the struggle for treaty revision – in the Pacific region with stronger suspicion than before. There are some reports that indicate that the Gaimushō was disturbed by Germany's recent acquisition of territory in the West Pacific and New Guinea, and they were also aware of the fact that one of the two Western firms that had established a foothold in Korea – under close cooperation with Li Hongzhang – was a German firm named Meyer and Company.⁶⁶ While it is unlikely that the Japanese decision-makers identified any one specific great power as the primary threat, the general international environment in East Asia in late 1885 was starting to look increasingly dangerous for the Japanese independence, perhaps to the extent that something similar to the recent partition of Africa might occur in their neighbourhood as well.

The Japanese government's decision to embark on military expansion was therefore directed at addressing this general threat – not just the one from the Qing – and to acquire bargaining power to the extent that it could at least choose which power to align with without being coerced.⁶⁷ In the eyes of many Japanese, their defensive infrastructure seemed grossly inadequate to address these concerns. They therefore prioritised the fortification of the five main ports of Japan and the acquisition of torpedo boats, which

1884, KSKKT IKM 628-21; Memorandum by Hanabusa, St. Petersburg, Nov 1884 (date unknown), KSKKT SM 49-14; Andō to Inoue (機密信第廿三號), Shanghai, 16 Apr 1885 (rec. 24 Apr), *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 563-4.

⁶⁶ For the Japanese concern over German actions in Asia-Pacific, see; Plunkett to Granville (No. 71 Secret), Tokyo, 1 Mar 1885 (rec. 10 Apr), FO 46/329; Kondō to Inoue (機密第五七號), Seoul, 28 Apr 1885 (rec. 8 May), *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 315-6; Kawase to Inoue (公第九十二號), London, 21 Aug 1885, *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 585-6; Shiota to Inoue (機密第二十四號信), 2 enclosures, Beijing, 2 June 1887 (rec. 15 June), *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 623-5. For the Japanese concern over the German firm in Korea, see Hisamizu to Aoki (機密第六號), Inch'ōn, 22 Jan 1887, *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 374; Suzuki to Aoki, Inch'ōn, 13 Apr 1887 (rec. 21 Apr), *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 277; Suzuki to Aoki (機密第十八號), Inch'ōn, 9 May 1887 (rec. 20 May), *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 245-6; Inoue to Takahira (機密送第五二號), 3 June 1887, *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 253-4.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

were considered as being a defensive weapon at that time.⁶⁸ There were sizeable number of military officers who argued that they should prioritise acquiring ironclads and building a strong navy that could match the Beiyang fleet instead of focusing on improving the defensive infrastructure. The ironclad advocates insisted that Japan could never ensure its security until it acquired the means of projecting power beyond its borders, but this argument was rejected by the government. The Japanese economy was only just emerging from the recession by the end of 1886, and the government could not afford to purchase expensive ironclads in large numbers. Moreover, it was not until 1893 that the Navy General Staff became independent from that of the Army, and therefore the bargaining power of navy within the Japanese decision-making circle was still relatively weak. In addition, when Itō and Inoue initiated ministerial reform in December 1885, they managed to keep the military officials who were calling for the acquisition of ironclads out of the new Cabinet as much as possible. Kuroda Kiyotaka was one of those individuals, but he declined to enter the Cabinet; thus Ōyama Iwao was the only individual chosen as a minister out of the ironclad advocates. Within the army, moderates, such as Miura Gorō, were placed in senior positions in the General Staff in order to restrain the influence of hardliners. This was not to say that the ministers did not understand the arguments of the individuals who called for the acquisition of ironclads, but there were budgetary restrictions to military expansion, and certain issues had to be prioritised over others in order for it to be financially sustainable in the long-term. In 1886, greater naval manoeuvrability off the Asian continent was not on the top of the list of priorities.

⁶⁸ Information in this paragraph derives from; Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*, ch. 1; Ōsawa, “Tenshin Jōyaku Taisei no Keisei to Hōkai (1),” 75-8; Ōsawa, “Tenshin Jōyaku Taisei no Keisei to Hōkai, 1885-94 (2),” 79-101; Saitō, *Nisshin Sensō no Gunji Senryaku*, 19-22; Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*, 200-212.

The events that occurred from November 1885 to February 1887 therefore tested the determination of Japanese decision-makers to some extent, but they found no reason to depart from the spirit of the Tianjin Convention. If anything, the proceedings of the East Asian crises from 1885 to 1887 made the Japanese even more cautious about their actions towards Korea and the Qing. As the Japanese observed the Anglo-Chinese cooperation over Korea, they feared that these two countries might have formed an *entente cordiale*. The news about the Anglo-Chinese convention over Burma only enhanced this perception, as they felt that the British government had approved the Qing claim of suzerainty over its neighbours in order to come on to closer terms with the Chinese.⁶⁹ The Japanese consequently thought that the British would side with the Chinese if a Sino-Japanese war broke out.

Closing Remarks on the East Asian Crises, and their Effects on the Anglo-Japanese Relationship

The policies that the Japanese and the British chose to adopt during and after the East Asian crises were not a complete diversion from their previous stances towards East Asia. Both of these countries had begun to recognise even before the outbreak of the Kapsin coup that they could not ignore the fact that the Qing Empire was becoming increasingly powerful and influential within the region. At the same time, these crises did mark an important phase in the 1880s because they sealed recognition of this fact. The environment after the East Asian crises certainly discouraged the Japanese and British decision-makers from making rash military manoeuvres as they had done in December

⁶⁹ Enomoto to Inoue (Private), Beijing, 31 July 1885, KSKKT IKM 232-3; Shiota to Inoue (Private), Beijing, 1 Mar 1887, IHKM, vol. 1, pp. 214-5.

1884 and April 1885 respectively; it also reaffirmed that the Russian decision-makers had to be more cautious towards Korea, if they were not already before. This reading of the situation continued to act as the guideline for both the British and Japanese East Asian policies for most of the time until the outbreak of the First Sino-Japanese War in July 1894.

These chapters on the East Asian crises have stressed the importance of seeing these events in sequence, and have argued that what happened after the signing of the Tianjin Convention contributed immensely to the emergence of an international order based upon recognition of Qing superiority.⁷⁰ This, of course, does not mean that the Kapsin coup was not as important as the existing literature claims. That incident was the first of the events in this sequence of crises and to some extent contributed to the following episodes. Moreover, its peace terms, the Tianjin Convention, provided the basis for avoiding future confrontations between the Qing and Japan over Korea. However, it must be remembered that the Tianjin Convention was only an agreement between the local East Asian countries, and there was no obligation for the Western great powers to abide by it. Thus to understand why all of the governments involved in East Asian affairs recognised the Qing as the most influential regional power in East Asia after February 1887 one has to look beyond the Kapsin incident and its immediate consequences.

The British and Russian governments would not have acknowledged Qing superiority in East Asia without the series of diplomatic issues related to the British occupation of

⁷⁰ This argument is based upon the discussion that the author of the dissertation had after his presentation on 18 October 2014 at Kokusai Renmei Kenkyūkai (League of Nations Research Seminar) at the Komaba campus, University of Tokyo. He would like to thank everyone who was present, and Mr. Obiya Shunsuke for giving me an opportunity to speak at that occasion. The author would like to express particular appreciation to Professor Motegi Toshio of Tokyo Woman's Christian University, as the arguments forwarded in the third and fourth chapters owe much to his comments during the discussion.

Kōmundo. This problem induced not only the British themselves but also the Japanese and the Russians to respond to the reassertion of Qing power in as conciliatory a manner as possible. The occupation of Kōmundo was also an issue that encouraged the British to act cautiously and patiently during the Anglo-Chinese talks over Burma, despite the fact that many of the decision-makers were frustrated by the manner in which the Chinese negotiated.

These incidents also cast a significant degree of influence on how the Japanese perceived their diplomatic environment. The Japanese decision-makers concluded, after observing the British occupation of Kōmundo, that a new imperial competition between the European great powers had started in East Asia and under such conditions they could not risk a further deterioration of their relationship with the Qing as they could not afford dealing with China and an Anglo-Russian war simultaneously. Without question, the Japanese policy-making process was affected by such a perception.

It must also be said that another reason behind the Chinese ascendance was that Li Hongzhang managed to restrain the influence of the hardliners in the Qing decision-making circle and conduct diplomacy in a cautious manner. Despite the fact that Li was willing to take measures that were more assertive towards Korea than China had traditionally attempted as a suzerain in the past, he always restrained himself and his colleagues from taking steps that would induce serious reactions from the other countries.⁷¹ Thus Li rejected Yuan's suggestion to remove Kojong in the summer of 1886 because such a measure would be interpreted as a Qing attempt to turn Korea into its protectorate, and provoke a reaction. Britain, Russia and Japan all recognised the superiority of the Qing over East Asia, and Li, at least, was willing to avoid taking up the

⁷¹ Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade*; Okamoto, *Ri Kōshō*, 146-8.

policies advocated by the hardliners, understanding that taking an unprovocative line was key to upholding an order that already favoured China.

As a result of the East Asian crises of 1884-7, both the British and the Japanese governments started to adopt a ‘Qing first’ approach towards East Asian affairs by the early autumn of 1885. The fact that the Japanese and the British governments made a definite shift to prioritise their relationship with the Qing inevitably restricted the room for Anglo-Japanese cooperation. Of course, this did not mean that they became hostile towards each other all of a sudden. Indeed, for the British decision-makers, who were concerned about the European encroachments towards their spheres of influences, there was no reason to reject the prospect of forming an alliance with as many local countries as possible. There was therefore room for contemplating making overtures to Japan as well as the Qing. However, in the summer of 1885 the latter was seen as being much more important, and the Japanese were only ever conceived of as a potential junior partner in a much more important Anglo-Chinese alliance. There were also individuals, such as O’Conor, who were pessimistic about the prospect of bringing the Qing and Japan together in a trilateral alliance, as they believed that the suspicion between these two countries towards each other was still too significant after the Kapsin coup and feared that any such move would alienate Beijing.⁷²

On the Japanese side of the equation the suspicion that an *entente cordiale* had been reached between Britain and the Qing made for caution towards Korea. It also led to some trepidation, as they feared that it might encourage the Qing officials to push their interests forward in Korea even further, beyond what had been agreed in the Tianjin

⁷² O’Conor to Granville (Telegraphic, Secret), Beijing, 20 Apr 1885 (rec. 20 Apr), FO 17/987; O’Conor to Granville (Private), Beijing, 21 Apr 1885, NOP CAC OCON6/1/2; O’Conor to Granville (No. 222 Secret), Beijing, 10 May 1885 (rec. 6 July), FO 17/980.

Convention.⁷³ Moreover, some of the bilateral Anglo-Japanese issues did not help to alleviate their suspicions towards Britain. There was a Japanese public outcry against the British over an incident on the British cargo ship *Normanton*, which sank off the coast of Wakayama on 22 October 1886. The Japanese public was particularly upset when they heard that the surviving crews were sentenced not guilty at the consular court over the charge of abandoning 25 Japanese passengers who all drowned.⁷⁴

In addition, it is important to note that, after the situation in Korea had stabilised, the priority of Japanese diplomacy shifted from East Asia and moved back once again to the question of treaty revision, as the negotiations over this issue resumed in May 1886 in Tokyo having come to a halt since the summer of 1882. Immediately after the negotiations recommenced, Plunkett proposed to the German Minister in Japan that they submit a joint proposal for a new treaty, as he feared that the Germans and the Japanese might otherwise sign a treaty that would grant exclusive privileges to the German merchants in Japan. This joint proposal was submitted on 15 June.⁷⁵ The Japanese negotiators resented the fact that the Germans had agreed to cooperate with the British over the question of treaty revision, but as this overture was initiated by Plunkett, they directed their criticism at the British. Moreover, they still saw Britain as the most reluctant to revise the treaties.⁷⁶ This alienated the Japanese decision-makers, especially as they had come to realise during the recent regional crises the degree to which the unequal

⁷³ See footnote 69 of this chapter.

⁷⁴ *NGM*, vol. 19, pp. 319-332; Fukuzawa to Shinjōji Temple (Private), 14 Nov 1886, *FYZ*, vol. 18, pp 62-3; Inoue to Itō (Private), 19 Nov 1886, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 210; Fukuzawa to Nagai (Private), 21 Nov 1886, *FYZ*, vol. 18, pp. 66-7.

⁷⁵ Inoue to Itō (Private), 19 June 1886, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 204-5; Plunkett to Rosebery (No. 104 Ext 8), Tokyo, 24 June 1886 (rec. 6 Aug), FO 46/345.

⁷⁶ Inoue to Itō (Private), 5 Mar 1886, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 201; Inoue to Itō (Private), 19 June 1886, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 204-5; Inoue to Kawase (機密第四二四號), 3 Aug 1886, *NGM*, vol. 19, pp. 78-80; Inoue to Shinagawa (機密), 3 Aug 1886, *NGM*, vol. 19, pp. 83-4.

treaties compromised their national security.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Inoue Kowashi to Itō (Private), 18 Dec 1886, *IKDS*, vol. 4, pp. 100-1.

Chapter 5 – The Post-Crises Order in East Asia, March 1887-July 1892

After the East Asian crises from December 1884 to February 1887, the governments involved in regional affairs started to formulate their policy in the clear recognition that the Qing had emerged as the most influential power. They were also now aware that it would be very difficult to preserve their interests in this region if they put themselves at odds with the Chinese, and for that purpose chose to bite their tongue as much as possible towards the Qing claim of suzerainty over its neighbouring kingdoms, including Korea. This chapter will show that the British and the Japanese governments continued to pursue their respective policies towards East Asia on these lines in the period from March 1887 to July 1892.

This period was not necessarily free from trouble, but nonetheless the governments involved in Korean affairs showed a continued determination to settle the problems that did arise through peaceful diplomacy. This was possible because the governments of Britain, Russia and Japan now appeared quite happy to accept Qing superiority in East Asia if that would stabilise the regional order. Stability had, after all, been the ultimate objective of the British East Asian policy since the early-1880s if not earlier. And although Japan had, on occasion, undertaken policies that were opportunistic, it nonetheless also agreed that stability was important. The Tianjin Convention had created a framework for avoiding any future repeat of the Sino-Japanese confrontation in December 1884 even if any further domestic disturbance in Korea necessitated the Qing and the Japanese governments launching a military intervention. The relative lack of major events perhaps is the reason behind the shortage of secondary literature in this

period, which makes it difficult to pick out disputed arguments or themes.¹

Yet, it is also important to remember that the Western and the Japanese governments were frustrated on many occasions by how the Qing government acted in Korea and East Asia. Despite the fact that these events did not lead the British and the Japanese governments to revise their ‘Qing first’ approach to the East Asian affairs, the Sino-Japanese relationship did not improve beyond the level of a mere rapprochement. Also, despite the fact that many Japanese decision-makers believed that Britain and China had entered a relationship of *entente cordiale* after 1887, British frustration towards the Qing prevented the evolution of any such arrangement. As the Western and Japanese governments started to exhibit a stronger determination to bite their tongue against the Qing claim of suzerainty, the dual character of East Asian order – in which the Westphalian principle and traditional suzerain-vassal framework coexisted – became more obvious than before. This also meant that the governments became more aware of the difficulties caused by the coexistence of these two principles, which were theoretically contradictory with each other, and this recognition led to new frustrations. This point should also be emphasised, in order to think about the origins of the First Sino-Japanese War, which broke out in July 1894.

Japanese Policy towards Korea, and Underlying Perception

In Japan, there were three changes of administration within the five years between March

¹ For Japanese policy towards Korea in this period, see Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, ch. 4. For Chinese policy, see Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade*, chs. 4-6. For Korean affairs during this period, see Kim and Kim, *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism*, ch. 4; Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 4; Okamoto, *Zokkoku to Jishu no Aida*, chs. 5-9.

1887 and July 1892, but government policy towards Korea remained quite consistent, and refrained from adopting any initiative that seriously diverted from the spirit of the Tianjin Convention. Such was the case even in the period when Kuroda – a minister who Itō and Inoue had identified as an advocate of a hard-line policy throughout the 1880s – became the Prime Minister from April 1888 to October 1889. Kuroda's relative moderation is also interesting considering that he was aided as Foreign Minister by Ōkuma, who had recouped his political influence by associating himself with the Jiyū Minken Undō. This party had often called for more active intervention in Korea in order to drive out Qing influence and to initiate reforms in that country. However, once Kuroda and Ōkuma took control of the administration they distanced themselves from taking this course, and instead closely followed the policies taken by the preceding Itō administration, in which Inoue had served as the Foreign Minister. Ōkuma contemplated the idea of recommending Charles LeGendre – his private advisor, who was of the opinion that the Chosōn must become independent from Qing – as an advisor to the court in Seoul, but that was as much as he did, and he stopped pushing this issue well before it aroused the suspicion of the Qing and Chosōn courts.²

Some of the ministers in the first Yamagata administration, which succeeded Kuroda's from December 1889, also made suggestions for taking new initiatives towards Korea, but they too were not overly determined to push their agenda. For example, Prime Minister Yamagata Aritomo himself advocated the idea that Korea should be internationally recognised as a permanently neutralised nation-state, just as Inoue Kowashi had earlier in the 1880s.³ Aoki Shūzō, who acted as the Foreign Minister,

² Ōsawa, “Tenshin Jōyaku Taisei no Keisei to Hōkai (2),” 129-135. LeGendre was a French-born American who was hired by the Gaimushō from 1875 to 1878, but chose to stay in Japan even after he resigned from his role in the government.

³ Memorandum by Yamagata, Mar 1890, *YAI*, pp. 196-200/*IKDS*, vol. 6, pp. 204-

developed the idea of Yamagata and Inoue into a broader proposal for an alliance. Aoki argued that the Japanese government should identify Russia as the primary threat to its interests in East Asia, and accordingly create an anti-Russian coalition with the Qing, Britain and Germany.⁴ Within this scheme, he placed the foremost importance on Sino-Japanese cooperation, which was deemed necessary not only to check the Russian expansion but also to pave the way for these two governments to initiate reforms in Korea.⁵ While neither of these policies could be considered as being aggressive, they nonetheless were measures to either persuade the Western nations to recognise Korea as an independent nation and thus detach it from Qing suzerainty, or improve the Japanese foothold in the peninsula by establishing a multilateral alliance. These were measures that did not necessarily abide by the Tianjin Convention, the *de facto* Japanese recognition of the superiority of Qing influence in Korea, and this perhaps was the reason why the Western nations did not take these proposals too seriously.⁶ Neither did the Japanese themselves push them too far.

Instead, all of the measures that Japan took towards Korea were made within the framework of the Tianjin Convention. The senior officials of the Gaimushō became somewhat more active in promoting commerce and investment in Korea than in the early-1880s, perhaps because it was seen as a useful means by which to restore their foothold

211/KSKKT MuMKM 69-2. This measure was discussed on some occasions by diplomats in East Asia throughout the decade. See Inoue to Yamagata (Private), 23 Sept 1882, *YAKM*, vol. 1, pp. 184-5; Plunkett to Granville (No. 32 Secret), Tokyo, 24 Jan 1885, (rec. 7 Mar), FO 46/327; Enomoto to Inoue (機密第十二號の内), Beijing, 6 May 1885 (rec. 22 May), *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 317; Hatano to Inoue (機密第五拾二號), Tianjin, 25 Aug 1885 (rec. 12 Sept), *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 386-8; Hatano to Inoue (機密第五十八號), Tianjin, 7 Sept 1885 (rec. 21 Sept), *NGM*, vol. 18, pp. 388-390.

⁴ Memorandum by Aoki, 15 May 1890, *NGM*, vol. 23, pp. 538-543/KSKKT MuMKM 67-1. For Inoue Kowashi's suggestions, see chapter 2.

⁵ Ibid. Memorandum by Yamagata, Mar 1890, *YAI*, pp. 196-200/IKDS, vol. 6, pp. 204-211/KSKKT MuMKM 69-2.

⁶ Ōsawa, "Tenshin Jōyaku Taisei no Keisei to Hōkai (2)," 151-2.

in Korea, which had shrunk as a result of the Kapsin incident, and if possible place some check on Qing influence without infringing upon the spirit of the Tianjin Convention. While the Japanese government had been encouraging overseas investment and trade as a measure to create a ‘Wealthy Nation, Strong Military’ already by the 1870s, they nonetheless placed an even stronger emphasis than before on encouraging large-scale entrepreneurs to invest in Korea by the late-1880s.⁷ For example, the Japanese legation in the Chosōn court reported in April 1887 that an entrepreneur called Umaki Kenzō was interested in investing in a mining company that the court in Seoul had recently established, and asked the Gaimushō to give him support so that the Chosōn ministers would grant such a right.⁸ The negotiations took some time to materialise, as the Chosōn officials were very reluctant to hand such rights to foreigners, but in the end the Korean company agreed to hire Umaki as a member of its board.⁹

Over commercial issues, the Japanese decision-makers often became assertive towards Korea. Aside from the issues over mining rights, it continued to press the Chosōn officials to permit Japanese to engage in fishing off the island of Cheju, as the latter had

⁷ *NGM*, vol. 19, pp. 383-395; vol. 21, pp. 311-2, 320-6; Machida to Aoki (機密信第四號), Hankou, 11 Feb 1889 (rec. 22 Feb), *NGM*, vol. 22, pp. 583-4; Kondō to Asada (機密第六十八號), Seoul, 14 Oct 1889 (rec 24 Oct), *NGM*, vol. 22, pp. 440-3; Okabe to Marks (送第七六號), 3 enclosures, Gaimushō, 27 Dec 1890, *NGM*, vol. 23, pp. 359-371; *NGM*, vol. 22, pp. 571-583; Okabe to Marks (送第七六號), Gaimushō, 27 Dec 1890, *NGM*, vol. 23, pp. 359-360; Nihashi to Okabe (第三十二號), Vladivostok, 25 Apr 1891, *NGM*, vol. 24, pp. 354-5; Hayashi to Okabe (公信第六五號), Inch'ōn, 13 May 1891 (rec. 20 May), *NGM*, vol. 24, pp. 360-1; Nakagawa to Hayashi (機密第三號), Pusan, 11 Mar 1892, *NGM*, vol. 25, pp. 448-9; Enomoto to Nakagawa (機密送第二八七號), 15 Apr 1892, *NGM*, vol. 25, pp. 451-2. Hunter and Sugiyama, “Anglo-Japanese Economic Relations in Historical Perspective, 1600-2000,” 7-35; Kimura, “Meiji-ki Chōsen Shinshutsu Nihonjin nit suite”; Shinya Sugiyama, *Nihon Keizaishi – Kinsei-Gendai*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2012), section II.

⁸ Takahira to Inoue (機密第四拾五號), Seoul, 18 Apr 1887 (rec. 28 Apr), *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 241-3.

⁹ *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 234-271; vol. 21, pp. 225-269. Takahira to Inoue (機密第七十三號) Seoul, 21 June 1887 (rec. 1 July), *NGM*, vol. 20, 258-9; Kondō to Itō (機密第一號), Seoul, 7 Jan 1888 (rec. 18 Jan), *NGM*, vol. 21, pp. 225-6.

agreed in 1884 that the Treaty of Kanghwa did grant the Japanese such rights. The enforcement of this stipulation was, though, delayed until 1893, due to the fact that the local residents – who the Chosōn officials described as being very violent and xenophobic – refused to allow any fishing in the vicinity of the island and attacked any Japanese who visited the area.¹⁰ In the mid-1880s the Gaimushō acted in a conciliatory manner to the Chosōn court over the Cheju issue, as the latter permitted the Japanese to engage in fishing in areas adjacent to Inch’ōn in return for the postponement, but as the Korean authorities continued to request further delays, the Japanese senior officials became more suspicious, and more assertive in demanding the opening of the island.¹¹

A dispute over a Chosōn embargo of rice export in 1887 was another issue that took time to solve, and frustrated both the Japanese diplomats and the Gaimushō officials. The issue arose when the Chosōn court announced to the Japanese legation in Seoul on 11 October 1889 that there was a famine in Hamgyōng province – a region adjacent to Wōnsan – and therefore a need to embargo rice exports from 23 November for the purpose of relieving the victims.¹² The Treaty of Kanghwa did not deny the rights of the Chosōn court to impose an embargo if this was notified a month before, but it became a problem when the latter sent a dispatch to the Japanese legation indicating that they would like to impose the embargo immediately, and introduced it on 7 November despite a Japanese protest.¹³ The Gaimushō decided to demand reparations, as there were many Japanese

¹⁰ *NGM*, vol. 17, pp. 377-385; vol. 20, pp. 296-328; vol. 22, pp. 370-380; *NGM*, vol. 23, pp. 258-307; vol. 24, pp. 272-303; vol. 25, pp. 370-398. Also see Aoki to Murota (Unnumbered), 2 enclosures, Gaimushō, 15 Dec 1887, *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 324-6; Kondō to Ōkuma (發第一九〇號), Seoul, 12 June 1888 (23 June), *NGM*, vol. 21, pp. 358-9; Aoki to Kondō (Unnumbered), Gaimushō, 3 Dec 1889, *NGM*, vol. 22, pp. 424.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Hisamizu to Aoki (Private), Wōnsan, 23 Nov 1889, KSKKT MuMKM 72-1; The Report on the Korean Rice Embargo Incident, written in 1893 (date and author unknown), KSKKT IKM 673-1/KSKKT MuMKM 72-2.

¹³ *Ibid.*; *NGM*, vol. 22, pp. 396-424; vol. 23, pp. 209-258; vol. 25, pp. 293-370; vol. 26, pp.

merchants who had borrowed money and arrived at the Korean treaty ports in the belief that they could purchase rice until 23 November. The negotiations over the amount of compensation to be paid dragged on until 1893.¹⁴

On some occasions, the Japanese also did not hesitate to raise their complaints over commercial issues in Korea with the Qing government. Whenever it seemed as if the Qing claim of suzerainty was infringing upon commercial rights that were guaranteed by the treaties that the Chosōn had signed with foreign countries, they made determined objections in order to protect their economic foothold. From the mid-1880s, Japanese diplomats in Korea frequently reported that many of the Chinese merchants were engaging in commercial activities in areas which were not designated as treaty ports, such as P'yōngyang and Mokp'o.¹⁵ The diplomats in East Asia insisted persistently to the courts in Seoul and Beijing, with the approval of the Gaimushō, that they should end practices that were not permitted in the treaties.¹⁶

It should be reemphasised that these initiatives were not intended to challenge the post-1887 East Asian order. While the Japanese government was not indifferent towards strengthening its foothold in Korea, it did so through measures that did not infringe upon the Sino-Korean suzerainty question. Besides, the measures that it took in Korea did

272-412; KSKKT IKM 673; KSKKT MuMKM 72.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Enomoto to Inoue (官甲第二〇號), 7 Aug 1886, *NGM*, vol. 19, pp. 372-3; Inoue to Takahira (送第五一七號), 4 Sept 1886, *NGM*, vol. 19, pp. 373; Sugimura to Inoue (機密第百七十四號), Seoul, 6 Dec 1886 (rec. 26 Dec), *NGM*, pp. 319; Watanabe to Aoki (機密第十七號), Wōnsan, 22 Aug 1888 (rec. 5 Sept), *NGM*, vol. 21, pp. 326-9; Hayashi to Okabe (機密第二二號), Inch'ōn, 13 Nov 1890 (rec. 1 Dec), *NGM*, vol. 23, pp. 336-8; Aoki to Kondō (機密 送第三七號), 23 Jan 1891, *NGM*, vol. 24, pp. 222-3.

¹⁶ Watanabe to Aoki (機密第十七號), Wōnsan, 22 Aug 1888 (rec. 5 Sept), *NGM*, vol. 21, pp. 326-9; Kondō to Asada (機密第六十八號), Seoul, 14 Oct 1889 (rec. 24 Oct), *NGM*, vol. 22, pp. 440-3. Kondō to Asada (機密第四十七號), Seoul, 4 Aug 1889 (14 Aug), *NGM*, vol. 22, pp. 381-2; Aoki to Yamada (送第三九號), 14 Mar 1890, *NGM*, vol. 23, pp. 513; Matsui to Aoki (機密第三十號), Seoul, 27 Mar 1891 (rec. 4 Apr), *NGM*, vol. 24, pp. 243-6.

not lead to any drastic improvement of the Japanese foothold. After Umaki was accepted as a board member of the Chosōn mining company, Furukawa Ichibē, who owned several mines in Japan, invested 30,000 yen in this company, but chose to withdraw from the venture shortly after.¹⁷ Korea remained an unattractive destination of investment for Japanese large-scale entrepreneurs, and as a result, trade in Korea continued to be carried out by small-scale merchants with limited amounts of capital.

However, the difficulties that the Japanese government experienced with the Qing and Chosōn over commercial issues were enough to make the Japanese frustrated. They were already feeling quite vulnerable towards the Chinese, who had a much stronger commercial foothold in Korea. In addition, the Gaimushō officials considered their merchants in Korea as being far too incompetent compared to those from China and the West.¹⁸ The Japanese government were also frustrated because they recognised by late-1888 that the negotiations over the revision of the Sino-Japanese treaty might be postponed indefinitely because of Qing procrastination, and their resentment was particularly strong as they had placed strong importance on this issue.¹⁹

Many of the Japanese were critical of the Qing also because they saw the latter as having a bad influence on the Chosōn officials by perpetuating obsolete traditions and impeding the progress of Korean modernisation. The East Asian crises were pivotal in the sense that they made more Japanese perceive Korea as a backward country that needed to make more determined efforts to modernise itself, just as Meiji Japan had been doing

¹⁷ Kimura, “Meiji Chōsen Shinshutsu Nihonjin ni tsuite,” 457.

¹⁸ Takahashi to Inoue and Yoshida (秘密第拾六號), New York, 8 Sept 1883, *NGM*, vol. 16, pp. 678-681; Takahira to Yoshida (Private), 13 June (1885 or 1886), *YKKM*, vol. 2, pp. 217-8; Watanabe to Aoki (機密第十七號), Wōnsan, 22 Aug 1888 (rec. 5 Sept), *NGM*, vol. 21, pp. 326-9; Kondō to Asada (機密第六十八號), Seoul, 14 Oct 1889 (rec 24 Oct), *NGM*, vol. 22, pp. 440-3.

¹⁹ *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 123-181; vol. 21, pp. 46-112.

for the past twenty years. This image was further reinforced as Japanese decision-makers experienced difficulty over Korea's demand for the extradition of Kim Ok-kyun and Park Yǒng-hyo, who had escaped to Japan after the Kapsin coup. The Japanese government rejected this request, arguing that it was against the principle of international law to hand over political prisoners who had fled from their own country.²⁰ After learning this, the Chosǒn regime chose to take matters in its own hands by sending assassins to Japan, which was interpreted by the Japanese – both within and outside of the government – as a grave breach of international law, and as an extremely uncivilised way of handling a criminal case.²¹ Resentment was particularly strong outside of the government, as Kim was perceived among the Japanese public as a tragic figure who had failed in his attempt to put his country towards the right path of progress.²² This environment induced many Japanese political activists to feel that their government should drive the Qing out of Korea through military intervention and exert more direct influence on Chosǒn politics in order to initiate domestic reforms. While the Japanese ministers and senior officials of the Gaimushō showed no interest in adopting such policies, they nonetheless did share, to some extent, the sense of frustration which lay behind these calls.

They also saw the Qing authorities with a good degree of suspicion because the latter had started to make more determined efforts to increase their influence in Korea, not only

²⁰ Takahira to Inoue (機密第二號), Seoul, 3 Jan 1886 (rec. 20 Jan); Kurino to Inoue (Unnumbered), 5 enclosures, Gaimushō, 4 Jan 1886, both from *NGM*, vol. 19, pp. 521-536.

²¹ *NGM*, vol. 19, pp. 534-586; vol. 20, pp. 329-332, 584-6.

²² Inukai to Ōkuma (Private), 14 July 1886, *ŌSKM (MSV)*, vol. 1, pp. 238-245/ *ŌSKM (NSKV)*, vol. 5, pp. 97-120; Iwata to Ōkuma (Private), 20 Aug 1887, *ŌSKM (NSKV)*, vol. 5, pp. 127-8. Also see Okayamaken Kyōdo Bunka Zaidan (The Trust for Okayama Prefecture Local Culture) ed, *Shinpen Inukai Bokudō Shokanshū (Papers of Inukai Bokudō, New Edition)*, (Okayama: Okayamaken Kyōdo Bunka Zaidan, 1992).

commercially but also politically. Many historians have already pointed out the degree of vigour that Yuan showed in promoting Qing power in Korea from the mid-1880s.²³ Yuan acted as the protector of the Chinese merchants in Korea as his predecessor Chen Shutang had, but did so with greater zeal. Yuan showed a determination even to protect those who were engaging in illegal commercial activities – such as trading in cities which were not designated as treaty ports and smuggling products which were not permitted to be exported from Korea. Yuan argued that the Chosōn officials did not have the right to punish the Chinese merchants as the latter were protected by extraterritoriality.²⁴ He was much more high-handed than Li towards the Chosōn officials. Indeed, Yuan was the individual who recommended that Li remove Kojong from the throne when he learned about the second Russo-Korean intrigue of the summer of 1886. Even after the East Asian crises, he continued to argue to Li that the Qing should impose stronger control over its vassal.²⁵ In addition, according to the Japanese diplomats in Korea, Yuan actively pressed the Chosōn ministers to avoid giving the Japanese commercial privileges as much as possible, while urging them to grant concessions to the Qing.²⁶ Japanese diplomats and residents in Korea could not help but see this with frustration, particularly because Chinese trade in Korea was expanding at such a rapid pace that it was set to overtake that of the Japanese by the mid-1890s.²⁷

²³ Larsen, *Tradition, Treaty and Trade*, chs. 5 and 7; Lew, “Yuen Shih-k’ai’s Residency and the Korean Enlightenment Movement”; Swartout, *Mandarins, Gunboats, and Power Politics*, ch. 4.

²⁴ Larsen, *Tradition, Treaty and Trade*, chs. 5 and 7.

²⁵ Okamoto, *Zokkoku to Jishu no Aida*, 368-9.

²⁶ Takahira to Inoue (機密第六十六號), Seoul, 13 June 1887 (rec. 21 June), *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 281-2; Takahira to Inoue (機密第八十二號), Seoul, 4 July 1887, *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 263-4; Kajiyama to Aoki (機密第百六號), 1 enclosure, Seoul, 9 Sept 1890 (rec. 17 Sept), *NGM*, vol. 23, pp. 206-7; Memorandum (probably submitted by Japanese Minister in China, Ōtori Keisuke), August 1891, KSKKTT MuMKM 67-6-2. Also see Larsen, *Tradition, Treaty and Trade*, chs. 5 and 7.

²⁷ Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 194-6.

Li was much more cautious than Yuan, and often reminded his agent in Seoul to refrain from taking overly assertive actions which could be interpreted as a Qing attempt to establish a protectorate over Korea, as he was aware that this would provoke an adverse reaction from the other countries.²⁸ In the end, Yuan did not take any action that was directly against the instructions of his superior. However, although Li was more cautious than Yuan and ministers in the court of Beijing, he did not assume that the Qing should merely act as a benevolent suzerain. After all, Li played a vital role in encouraging merchants to go to Korea, as he felt that the best way to increase Qing influence in Korea within the post-1887 framework was by strengthening its commercial presence in the country.²⁹ Also, when the Chosōn court sent Pak Chong-yang in November 1887 to the United States as the first Korean Minister to that country, the Zongli Yamen demanded that Pak visit the Qing legation in Washington before submitting his credentials to the State Department.³⁰ When Pak failed to act upon this instruction, the Qing court demanded his immediate recall, and in the end Pak left the United States in November 1888.³¹ What was worse was that the Chosōn Minister to Europe, who left Seoul after this incident, was detained at Hong Kong where he stopped over *en route* to his destination for about a year before being sent back to Korea.³² Such an assertion of

²⁸ Okamoto, *Zokkoku to Jishu no Aida*, 373.

²⁹ Larsen, *Tradition, Treaty and Trade*, 106-7. Suzuki to Ōkuma (機密第二十一號), Inch'ōn, 12 June 1888 (rec. 23 June), *NGM*, vol. 21, pp. 320-3; Kondō to Asada (機密第六十八號), Seoul, 14 Oct 1889 (rec. 24 Oct), *NGM*, vol. 22, pp. 440-3. Also see FO 17/1049, 1070, 1088 and 1102.

³⁰ Kim and Kim, *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism*, 66; Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade*, 180-1; Takashi Okamoto, "Pak Chong-yang no Amerika Hōshi o Megutte – 1880 nendaimatsu Shikan Kankei no Ichimen," *Kyoto Furitsu Daigaku Gakujutsu Hōkoku*, 54 (Dec 2002): 55-99. This article was incorporated into his *Zokkoku to Jishu no Aida*, ch. 6. Swartout, *Mandarins, Gunboats, and Power Politics*, 90-2.

³¹ Kim and Kim, *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism*, 66; Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade*, 179; Okamoto, "Pak Chong-yang no Amerika Hōshi o Megutte"; Swartout, *Mandarins, Gunboats, and Power Politics*, 94-5

³² Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade*, 189; Okamoto, "Pak Chong-yang no Amerika

power by the Qing led to a strong reaction from the Chosōn court, as it felt that the suzerain was breaching its autonomy. Owen Denny, an American advisor to the Chosōn court, wrote a pamphlet which argued that, considering the fact that the Chinese empire traditionally did not intervene in the domestic and diplomatic policy-making process of its vassals, the degree of control that the Qing had recently been imposing towards the Chosōn could not be justified.³³ In this pamphlet, he also publicised the overbearing attitude of Yuan. Many observers from the Western countries also frowned upon the Qing actions in Korea, even if they chose not to raise vocal objections.³⁴

Meanwhile, the strategic importance of Korea continued to grow within the eyes of the Japanese military officials, as the international environment started to look even more dangerous in the late 1880s than earlier in the decade. In a memorandum that Yamagata drew up in January 1888 and submitted to the cabinet in 1890, he pointed out that;

The tension between Britain and Russia has become so great to the extent that it seems possible that they can cause a great disturbance in the Orient. The Canadian Pacific Railroad and the Siberian Railroad would enable them to send troops to the Orient much quicker than before, and thus it is likely that a war will be fierce if it would break out in the future. In addition, the opening of the Panama Canal will connect the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, and provide an alternative channel to connect Europe and the Orient. Our country cannot remain indifferent about this situation, and must make every effort to strengthen our military capability as quickly as possible.³⁵

Hōshi o Megutte,” 55-6.

³³ Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade*, 164-6; Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, 88-9; Okamoto, *Zokkoku to Jishu no Aida*, ch. 7, section 2; Swartout, *Mandarins, Gunboats, and Power Politics*, 109-113.

³⁴ Hillier to Salisbury (No. 8), Seoul, 20 Nov 1890, rec. 12 Jan 1891, FO 17/1102; Hillier to Salisbury (No. 9), Seoul, 23 May 1891 (rec. 15 July), and Memo by Currie attached to this document, FO 17/1119. For the American response to the incident over the Korean Minister to the United States, see Takashi Okamoto, “1880 nendai Amerika no Shinkan Kankeikan,” *Kyoto Furitsu Daigaku Gakujutsu Hōkoku*, 55 (Dec 2003): 167-227.

³⁵ Memorandum by Yamagata, Jan 1888, YAI, pp. 174-185/ KSKKT MuMKM 69-1.

Moreover, in the famous speech that Yamagata made at the inaugural session of the National Diet on 25 November 1890 – which was based upon the memoranda that he had submitted – he argued that in order to protect Japan’s borders it must also secure what he called “the line of vital national interest.”³⁶ This is often cited by historians as the moment when the Japanese started to address the need to be capable of strengthening their strategic foothold in Korea in order to address what they considered as an increasing threat coming from the Qing.³⁷ Some who disagree with this argument point out that the Japanese were instead identifying Russia as their primary enemy.³⁸ However, it is more accurate to depict the period between the Kapsin incident and the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war as a time when the Japanese government perceived in general that the international environment in East Asia was becoming more dangerous rather than identifying one specific enemy.

Nonetheless, this environment induced the ministers and military officials to develop the military into a force that was capable not only of defending the country’s borders but also for launching an expedition into neighbouring regions. In May 1888, the IJA abolished the *chindai* system and reorganised the military into six divisions.³⁹ It adopted the Prussian training curriculum which emphasised mobility and speed as being essential for success in overseas operations.⁴⁰ Also, as Japan came out of the recession which had started in late 1881 at the end of 1886, the development of essential infrastructure sped

³⁶ Memorandum by Yamagata, Mar 1890, YAI, pp. 196-200/IKDS, vol. 6, pp. 204-211/KSKKT MuMKM 69-2.

³⁷ See, for example, Akira Iriye, *Nihon no Gaikō – Meiji Ishin kara Gendai made*, (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 1966); Nakatsuka, *Nisshin Sensō no Kenkyū*.

³⁸ See articles by Ōsawa Hiroaki, latest being “Chōsen Eisei Chūritsuka Kōsō to Nihon Gaikō.”

³⁹ Saitō, *Nisshin Sensō no Gunji Senryaku*, 16-7.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

up in the subsequent years. By the end of 1891 the fortifications of its major ports had been completed.⁴¹ Additionally, by the late-1880s more entrepreneurs started to invest in railroad construction, and the military officials exerted some influence over which lines should be prioritised; they were quite vocal about this issue as they perceived the railways as being vital for the swift mobilisation and transportation of soldiers.⁴²

As indicated in the previous chapter, there were many individuals who had already strongly advocated that the government should acquire ironclads by the mid-1880s, insisting that Japan could never ensure its security until it acquired the means to project power beyond its borders.⁴³ While many Japanese officials were aware that the financial situation rendered it impossible to acquire expensive warships in large quantities, this did not mean that they rejected the logic behind this argument. Accordingly in 1888, the Japanese government approved the acquisition of three heavy cruisers; these still were qualitatively inferior to the two ironclads that the Beiyang Fleet had possessed, but the Japanese decision-makers had now started to take clear, decisive steps to acquire the warships necessary to form fighting squadrons.⁴⁴ Once the government financial situation improved, the government approved an increase in the naval budget from 1889. In September 1890 it signed off on a seven-year plan for naval expansion that was submitted by Kabayama Sukenori, the Minister of Navy, which called for a budget of about 70 million yen altogether to add 70,000 tons of warships to the IJN.⁴⁵ Despite the fact that there was strong pressure from the Diet to reduce the national budget in order to

⁴¹ Ibid, 19-21.

⁴² Ibid, 22-4.

⁴³ Evans and Peattie, *Kaigun*, ch. 1; Ōsawa, “Tenshin Jōyaku Taisei no Keisei to Hōkai (1),” 28-61; Ōsawa, “Tenshin Jōyaku Taisei no Keisei to Hōkai (2),” 79-101; Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*, 200-227.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Memorandum by Kabayama, submitted to the Cabinet, Sept 1890, KSKKT MuMKG 69-3. Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*, 261-3.

lower the heavy tax burden, the political parties did not disagree with Yamagata about the need to acquire military strength and overseas manoeuvrability, and his speech did not lead to any sort of outcry.⁴⁶

Of course, it was impossible for the military reforms which had started in the late-1880s to bear fruit by the summer of 1892. The naval expansion slowed down temporarily when the first Matsukata administration, which succeeded Yamagata, failed to satisfy the Diet over the latter's demands for budgetary cutbacks in December 1891.⁴⁷ It also was not until October 1892 that the Japanese military conducted an offensive army-navy coordinated drill along the lines of an overseas expedition; the military had conducted its first army-navy coordinated drill for the first time in the Meiji era in 1890, but this was conceived as training for a defensive operation against an external military trying to attack the home islands.⁴⁸ The military power of Japan in the summer of 1892 was thus still grossly inadequate to fight a war against the Qing on the Asian continent, especially considering that many of the Japanese decision-makers continued to think that Britain would side with the Qing in such a case.⁴⁹ However, the Japanese military was taking steps so that it could launch an expedition towards the Asian continent, even if it was not necessarily specifically addressing the Qing.

The late 1880s was also a period in which the negotiations over treaty revision started to attract strong resentment towards Western countries among the public. This coincided with the revival of the issue of Asian migrant workers in the white settlers' communities in the pan-Pacific region. While many Gaimushō officials identified part

⁴⁶ Takashi Sasaki, *Meijjin no Rikiryō*, (Tokyo: Kōdasha, 2002), 62; Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*, 261-3.

⁴⁷ Sasaki, *Meijjin no Rikiryō*, 79-80; Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*, 272-3.

⁴⁸ Saitō, *Nisshin Sensō no Gunji Senryaku*, 16.

⁴⁹ Memorandum by Kabayama, submitted to the Cabinet, Sept 1890, KSKKT MuMKG 69-3.

of the problem as arising from the quality of many of the migrant workers, as these immigrants often initiated trouble with the local population, the officials also frowned upon the racial prejudice that the people of these regions showed to the Japanese, and upon the fact that there still were many cases in which these workers were forced to labour under very harsh conditions.⁵⁰ Their concern was further amplified by the fact that the governments in these regions had started to approve discriminatory laws designed to restrict Chinese immigrants, as they feared that these governments might apply the same legislation to the Japanese as well.⁵¹

Within this environment, the idea of forming an *entente cordiale* with the Qing for the sake of the common interest of East Asian peoples started to attract attention from political activists outside of the government. There were many individuals who believed that the Japanese, as the first East Asian people to have made a determined effort to modernise their nation, should persuade the Qing and Chosōn to utilise their massive resources and wealth more efficiently so that these two countries could cooperate to reach an unprecedented level of prosperity.⁵² This agenda was definitely ethnocentric if not

⁵⁰ Sufu to Enomoto (官甲一七九号), Hyogo, 7 July 1891, KSKKT MuMKM 67-3. It was because of these issues that the Gaimushō showed strong interest in regulating the Japanese immigration across the Pacific. See the section on the government-initiated immigration to Hawaii, *NGM*, vol. 18-25, and the Memorandum by Sakurai Shizuka, 2 Feb 1888, KSKKT SM 49-16.

⁵¹ Marks to Aoki (No. 27), Melbourne, 26 Sept 1887, *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 627-9; Mutsu to Ōkuma (第五十三號), Washington, 1 Sept 1888 (rec. 26 Sept), *NGM*, vol. 21, pp. 687; Sugimura to Okabe (第二十八號), Vancouver, 28 Feb 1891 (rec. 20 Apr), *NGM*, vol. 24, pp. 455-6. Discriminatory head tax to the Chinese immigrants had been introduced throughout Australia by August 1887, and the provincial government of British Columbia, Canada, did so in February 1891. The American Federal anti-Chinese immigration law was passed in August 1887.

⁵² Itō Yūtoku to Ōkuma (機密信第八号 送第二四一号), Hankou, 20 Mar 1889 (rec. 5 Apr), *NGM*, vol. 22, pp. 590-1; Arakawa to Yoshii (Private), Tianjin, 15 July 1890, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 103-4; Kawakami to Tsuruhara (送第四九九號), Gaimushō, 27 Aug 1890, *NGM*, vol. 23, pp. 398; Arao to Matsukata (Private), Shanghai, 16 Aug 1891, *MaMKM*, vol. 6, pp. 29-33. Some of the associations established under such spirit were *Kōakai* (Association for Prosperity of Asia), which was founded in 1880 but

arrogant in seeing the Japanese as more progressive than the Qing, but should not be regarded as being completely aggressive.

Despite all the events that induced many Japanese to see the Qing and Chosōn negatively, the decision-makers were still determined to abide by the Tianjin Convention as the guideline for their policy towards East Asia. However, these events were sufficient to prevent the Sino-Japanese relationship from improving beyond the rapprochement of 1885. In addition, even if the Japanese were not identifying the Qing as the only menace, they nonetheless saw it as one of the more dangerous threats that surrounded them, and thus strived to build a military with a stronger overseas manoeuvrability to address their concern. The events in the period between March 1887 and July 1892 thus contributed to create an environment in which China and Japan could potentially fight a war. The Japanese military reforms fed by this environment would be prepared by the summer of 1894.

British Perceptions of China and Its Effect on Policy towards Korea

From the late-1880s onwards, the Japanese government feared that Britain and Qing had entered into an *entente cordiale*. While this perception strongly influenced them in adopting a cautious policy towards Korea, it must be questioned whether this perception was correct. Before February 1887, the international environment had induced British observers, both within and outside of the government, to make a reappraisal of Qing power in a relatively positive light, as the latter had apparently experienced some strategic

renamed as *Ajia Kyōkai* (Asia Association) in 1883, *Nisshin Bōeki Kenkyūjo* (Research Group for Promotion of Sino-Japanese Trade, founded 1886) and *Tōhō Kyōkai* (Oriental Association, founded 1893). See Masatoshi Sakeda, *Kindai Nihon ni okeru Taigaikō Undō no Kenkyū*, (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1978), 61-5.

success against the Russians and the French – the two European powers which troubled Britain most in this and other quarters of the world. But even within this environment, the British were frustrated on many occasions by the actions the Qing government took against them in Asia.

It is true that there were individuals who considered that the British government should take every measure to win the goodwill of the Qing ministers, as it was essential for expanding British trade and gaining a valuable ally to protect its interests against possible encroachments by the other European empires. One of those individuals were Sir Robert Hart.⁵³ Being a British official working in the Chinese civil service and engaging its officials on a day-to-day basis, Hart understood the interests and customs of China better than other Britons, and therefore held a pro-Chinese sentiment than many other British individuals in East Asia.⁵⁴ O’Conor, who served as the Chargé d’Affaires in Beijing from April 1885 to June 1886, was of the opinion that when the British government wanted something from the Chinese, it must do so with a very firm attitude – firm to the extent of using threats – but he nonetheless shared Hart’s belief that an alliance with Qing would be extremely valuable.⁵⁵ However, there were many individuals who were equally sceptical even during the years of crises in the mid-1880s. In fact, as the crisis in Asia subsided, the environment made a positive reappraisal of the Qing more difficult. The peaceful resolution of the Penjdeh crisis and the annexation of

⁵³ Hart to Salisbury (Private), Beijing, 27 Sept 1885, SP HHA A/38/39.

⁵⁴ Ibid; John Fairbank, Katherine Bruner and Elizabeth Matheson eds., *The I.G. in Peking: Letters of Robert Hart, Chinese Maritime Customs, 1868-1907*, vol. 1, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1975). Hart and Campbell also acted as a mediator of peace negotiation of the Sino-French War, and thus was not a politically insignificant figure. See Chere, *The Diplomacy of Sino-French War*, ch. II.

⁵⁵ O’Conor to Salisbury (Private), Beijing, 4 Feb 1886, OCON4/1/2; O’Conor to Currie (Private), Beijing, 12 Apr 1886, OCON5/2/2. Both NOP CAC. For O’Conor’s attitude towards the Chinese authorities, see NOP CAC OCON/4, 5 and 6 series, and also Otte, *The China Question*, 25.

Burma in 1885 and 1886 reduced the tensions between the European great powers at least to the extent that an immediate outbreak of war in Asia seemed unlikely. As a result, there emerged an environment which made the British government less desperate to seek local allies in East Asia. This consequently discouraged the British observers from seeing the Qing in as positive a light as they had in the former half of the 1880s, especially when the relationship between Britain and China was far from easy.

For example, the Admiralty's remarks on the Chinese remained very discouraging throughout the period from January 1880 to July 1894. Most British observers held the Qing naval service in low esteem, arguing that the state of discipline on its ships was lamentable. Seamen did not wear their uniforms correctly, they loitered on deck when they did not have orders, the state of hygiene was very poor, no drills were carried out, there were no assemblies except at morning and night, and neither did the officers seem to care.⁵⁶ The image of the Qing naval service within the eyes of the Admiralty deteriorated even further after June 1890, when Captain W. M. Lang, the British naval advisor to the Chinese Beiyang Fleet, resigned from his post due to an issue that he had experienced with the Qing crews. He reported that when he had assumed command of the fleet in the absence of the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Ding Ruchang, the Chinese junior officers and seamen had refused to obey his orders, and also, that despite his

⁵⁶ Hamilton to Plunkett (Private), Audacious (Hong Kong), 2 Mar 1887, RVHP CLNMM VHM/5; Hamilton to the Secretary to the Admiralty (No. 252), Audacious (Hong Kong), 22 Apr 1887, RVHP CLNMM VHM/4; Hamilton to Lord George Hamilton (Private), Alacrity (Xiamen), 1 Dec 1887, RVHP CLNMM VHM/6; Hamilton to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No.53), Audacious (Hong Kong), 20 Jan 1888, ADM 125/32. For some of the earlier evaluations of the Chinese navy, most of which argued in a similar directions as the reports submitted in the latter-half of the 1880s, see; Allen to Wade, Ningbo, 5 Apr 1882, enclosure to Wade to Granville (No. 5), Beijing, 5 May 1882, rec. 3 July, FO 17/895; O'Conor to Granville (Private), Beijing, 21 Apr 1885, NOP CAC OCON6/1/2; Currie to the Secretary to the Admiralty, FO, 23 June 1886, ADM 125/30.

complaint, Li Hongzhang did not think the Qing crews had made any offense.⁵⁷ Accordingly, the Admiralty decided not to send advisors to the Qing navy anymore, and even refused to accept Qing naval cadets into the Naval College in Greenwich, and on British warships.⁵⁸ Despite the significant efforts of the Qing authorities and O'Conor to remedy the relationship, the Admiralty argued that there was no need to restore the relationship with the Qing, who they deemed as not being gentlemen; this attitude was not remedied before the outbreak of the First Sino-Japanese War.

What made the Admiralty particularly distrust the Qing naval service was that it perceived the latter's attitude as representative of the Chinese tendency to look down on Western people and resent the Westernisation of their society. This perception was shared by many British in China, including many merchants and missionaries. When large-scale anti-missionary riots broke out in 1889, the British observers perceived, with a sense of lamentation, that there were still many Chinese people who treated the Westerners as lesser beings.⁵⁹ In addition, two of the biggest British firms in China, Jardine Matheson and John Swire, raised a complaint about the sale of food intended for the relief of victims of the Yellow River flood in 1888 and 1889. These two companies argued that, prior to 1888, the Qing court had lifted the duties on foreign foodstuff whenever its empire suffered from any kind of natural disaster for the purpose of victim

⁵⁷ Unidentifiable Captain to Salmon, Tianjin, 18 June 1890, rec. 28 June, ADM 125/36; Walsham to Salisbury (No. 13 Telegraphic), Beijing, 3 Aug 1890, rec. 4 Aug, FO 17/1100.

⁵⁸ Fremantle to the Secretary to the Admiralty (No. 286/1112 Confidential), Alacrity (Shanghai), 4 Nov 1892, rec. 12 Dec, ADM 1/7109; Rosebery to O'Conor (No. 1 Telegraphic), FO, 13 Jan 1893, FO 17/1159; O'Conor to Rosebery (No. 70), Beijing, 2 Mar 1893, rec. 1 May, FO 17/1155; The Secretary to Fremantle (No. 10), Admiralty, 8 Jan 1894, rec. 11 Feb, ADM 125/42; O'Conor to Fremantle (No. 3381), Beijing, 3 Feb 1894, rec. 10 Mar, ADM 125/44; Fremantle to the Secretary to the Admiralty (No. 243/3382), Alacrity (Shanghai), 25 May 1894, rec. 11 June, ADM 1/7199.

⁵⁹ See FO 17/1085-6 and ADM 1/6966.

relief.⁶⁰ However, this had not happened during the floods of the late 1880s. Instead, the China Merchants Steamship Company was allowed to enjoy the exclusive privilege of selling food.⁶¹ As a result, the British companies were able to sell far lesser quantities of foodstuffs than during the previous disasters. Upon receiving this complaint, O'Conor informed the ministers of the Zongli Yamen that they should refrain from taking such a discriminatory attitude against the British merchants, which was against the principles of the Anglo-Chinese treaty.⁶² In the end, O'Conor received a letter with the Imperial Sanction from the Qing court to thank the British merchants for the sale of foodstuff, but he also noticed that the language of this letter sounded as if the Qing emperor was thanking a subordinate rather than the diplomatic representative of an equal power.⁶³

A further problem, which foreign diplomats had already begun to recognise in the mid-1880s, was that Li sometimes found it difficult to suppress the opinion of the hardliners within the decision-making circle. These individuals had started to approach the young emperor more frequently in order to influence him, and by the late-1880s were quite successful in turning the emperor into their own political powerbase within the court.⁶⁴ The Empress Dowager declared in July 1886 that she would step down as a regent when the Guangxu Emperor came of age in the following year.⁶⁵ She remained a very

⁶⁰ The case was reported retrospectively from the summer of 1893 onwards. O'Conor to Rosebery (No. 200), Beijing, 30 Aug 1893, rec. 16 Oct, FO 17/1157; O'Conor to Rosebery (No. 226), Beijing, 10 Oct 1893, rec. 1 Dec, FO 17/1158; O'Conor to Kimberley (Foreign Secretary) (No. 63), Beijing, 14 Mar 1894, rec. 30 Apr, FO 17/1192.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² O'Conor to Rosebery (No. 200), Beijing, 30 Aug 1893, rec. 16 Oct, FO 17/1157.

⁶³ O'Conor to Rosebery (No. 96), Beijing, 12 Apr 1893, rec. 29 May, FO 17/1156.

⁶⁴ Okamoto, *Ri Kōshō*, 177-8.

⁶⁵ Ibid; Walsham to Rosebery (No. 227), Beijing, 14 July 1886, rec. 4 Sept, FO 17/1018.

In reality, the Guangxu Emperor was not completely free from the influence of the Empress Dowager until his wedding in March 1889. See Walsham to Salisbury (No. 41), Beijing, 8 Sept 1888, rec. 29 Oct, FO 17/1067.

influential individual within the court even after, but she no longer was able to act in place of the emperor.

Another source of frustration for the British decision-makers was the delineation of the Sino-Burmese boundary. Talks on this issue commenced soon after the Anglo-Chinese agreement on the suzerainty question was signed. In particular, the British and the Qing negotiators clashed over possession of Bhamo in the Upper Irrawaddy basin, and the difficult talks that soon ran into a stalemate only worsened the image of the Qing in the eyes of many British officials in India and the India Office.⁶⁶ A year and a half later, the Anglo-Chinese relationship became even tenser when the Government of India authorised an expedition to incorporate Sikkim into its territory, as the Qing also claimed possession of this territory.⁶⁷ Finally, the British diplomats and senior officials were starting to fear by the late-1880s that the French and Chinese governments were contemplating signing an agreement that would exclude merchants from countries other than their own from the frontier between China and Tonkin.⁶⁸

The British also observed Sino-Russian interactions in Central Asia with strong suspicion. As the Qing reincorporated Kashgar, the territory located in the eastern flank of the band of khanates in Central Asia, this region came to be perceived by the officials

⁶⁶ Memorandum by Currie, FO, 23 Feb 1886, FO 422/16; Kimberley to Dufferin (Secret and Telegraphic), IO, 2 Mar 1886, FO 422/16; Dufferin to Kimberley (Secret and Telegraphic), Madras, 3 Mar 1886; Rosebery to O'Conor (No. 10 Telegraphic), FO, 5 Mar 1886, FO 17/1021; O'Conor to Rosebery (Unnumbered, Confidential, Telegraphic), Beijing, 7 Mar 1886, rec. 9 Mar, FO 17/1021; Kimberley to Dufferin (Private), IO, 31 Mar 1886, IOR BL MSS Eur F130/6.

⁶⁷ Walsham to Salisbury (No. 77 Confidential), Beijing, 12 Nov 1887, rec. 9 Jan 1888, FO 17/1043; Walsham to Salisbury (No. 13 Telegraphic), Beijing, 22 Apr 1889, rec. 23 Apr, FO 17/1046.

⁶⁸ Walsham to Salisbury (No. 18 Telegraphic, Confidential), Beijing, 20 July 1887, rec. 20 July, FO 17/1044; Hamilton to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 122), Audacious (Hong Kong), 14 Feb 1888, rec. 19 Mar, ADM 1/6861; Walsham to Salisbury (No. 4 Telegraphic), Beijing, 2 Feb 1889, rec. 2 Feb, FO 17/1086; Salisbury to Walsham (No. 67 Telegraphic), FO, 17 Dec 1891, FO 17/1115.

of British India as being increasingly important for the defence of India. Thus, the British were alarmed in the early-1880s when they heard that Qing had agreed that Russia could trade some goods without duty with the result that commercial interaction between Russian Central Asia and Kashgar grew.⁶⁹ There was a British trade representative who was permitted to reside on a permanent basis in Kashgar, but his information was often inaccurate and therefore India wished to have agents and a diplomatic establishment that could watch Russian activities in the region more closely.⁷⁰

However, despite the efforts of the Governments of Britain and India, the dominant position that the Russians established in this region in terms of trade remained unmoved, and the Qing proved very hesitant about approving the establishment of the British consulate.⁷¹ There also were reports that raiders from a Central Asian region called Hunza – a khanate where the Russians were intriguing very actively in the 1880s – were disrupting British trade across Himalayas, and that the Qing officials were deliberately turning a blind eye to this.⁷² Walsham nonetheless continued to negotiate patiently with the Chinese government over not only Central Asia but also the Sino-Burmese border and was rather optimistic about the prospect of success, but unfortunately, he could not accomplish anything before his departure.⁷³

⁶⁹ Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier*, 57-9, 79-99.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 82. Parkes to Granville (No. 25), Beijing, 28 Jan 1884, rec. 25 Mar, FO 17/948; Kimberley to Dufferin (Private), IO, 5 Dec 1884, IOR BL MSS Eur F130/3; Granville to Parkes (No. 56 Secret), FO, 17 Mar 1885, FO 17/975; Kimberley to Dufferin (Private), IO, 15 May 1885, IOR BL MSS Eur F130/3.

⁷¹ Walsham to Salisbury (No. 63 Confidential), Beijing, 23 Aug 1887, rec. 17 Oct, FO 17/1042; Salisbury to Walsham (No. 4 Telegraphic), FO, 29 Jan 1889, FO 17/1086; Salisbury to Walsham (No. 38), FO, 18 July 1890, FO 17/1099; Salisbury to Walsham (No. 19 Telegraphic), FO, 15 Aug 1890, FO 17/1100; Walsham to Salisbury (No. 15 Telegraphic), Beijing, 6 Sept 1890, rec. 7 Sept, FO 17/1100; Salisbury to Walsham (No. 25 Telegraphic), FO, 8 May 1891, FO 17/1115. Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier*, 79-99.

⁷² Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier*, 160.

⁷³ See FO 17/1013-1134. For specific documents on Walsham's negotiation on this

Thus, a series of issues that developed in the late-1880s and the early-1890s made many Britons in the East Asian policy-making circle question whether they should regard the Qing as their natural ally. There also were many individuals such as Sir Richard Vesey Hamilton, the Commander-in-Chief of the British China Squadron from 1884 to 1888, who feared that if the British government gave any sign that they would like to come to closer terms with the Qing, then it would make the Chinese more likely to become aggressive in the region rather than restraining their power, and this might cause unnecessary disturbances.⁷⁴ Yet, these developments did not lead the British government to revise their policy towards East Asia and Korea. Even if the British decision-makers were frustrated by the Qing on many occasions, they were unanimous in acknowledging that the latter had greater influence over East Asia than any other country, and that they still needed the political and military cooperation of such a power to maintain order within the region.⁷⁵

Besides, if the British image of Qing was not necessarily positive, the British perception towards the Chosōn officials was much worse. When British individuals started to enter Korea after the opening of diplomatic relations in the early-1880s, British diplomats and naval officers started to send reports about the Korean people and their regime. Many of them were surprised by the courteous and friendly reception they

issue, see; Walsham to Salisbury (No. 52 Very Confidential), Beijing, 19 July 1887, 6 Sept, FO 17/1042; Walsham to Salisbury (No. 77 Confidential), Beijing, 12 Nov 1887, rec. 9 Jan 1888, FO 17/1043; Walsham to Salisbury (No. 14 Telegraphic), Beijing, 29 Mar 1888, rec. 29 Mar, FO 17/1068.

⁷⁴ Hamilton to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No.53), Audacious (Hong Kong), 20 Jan 1888, ADM 125/32.

⁷⁵ Lieutenant Commander Maitland-Dougall to Salmon (No. 14), Rattler (Chemulpo'), 9 Aug 1888, rec. 4 Sept, ADM 125/34; Salmon to the Secretary to the Admiralty (No. 430), Alacrity (Weihaiwei), 30 Oct 1888, rec. 24 Dec, ADM 1/6916; Hall to Richards (No. 58), Severn (Kobe), 23 Nov 1891, rec. 26 Dec, ADM 125/40; Captain MacLeod to Richards (No. 43), Pallas (Nagasaki), 26 Apr 1892, rec. 21 May, ADM 125/41.

received during their visits, but also lamented the level of poverty that these likeable people had to endure.⁷⁶ They cited the oppression of the Chosōn court as the reason, and argued that it imposed strict restrictions on the commercial activities of the people and monopolised all goods or resources that were profitable.⁷⁷ What seemed worse, was that from the British perspective, the Chosōn officials seemed to be more interested in using the money they gained through those monopolised goods to advance the political interests of themselves and their cliques and indulging in factional strifes.⁷⁸ Such opinion was shared by the agents of Jardine Matheson, who were stationed in Korea to explore the country's commercial potential.⁷⁹ By the late-1880s, British observers started to use negative words to describe the characteristics of not only the Chosōn decision-makers but also the Korean people in general. During this period, they described the Koreans as being innocent people who could be hospitable and curious but were also easily deceived.⁸⁰ Words such as "indigence, laziness, and squalor" became used more frequently in the early-1890s to describe them.⁸¹ Meanwhile, the British

⁷⁶ Report by Spence (Secretary of the legation in Beijing) of his Visit to Corea with His Royal Highness the Duke of Genoa, Shanghai, 9 Sept. 1880, FO 17/857; Wade to Granville (No. 63), Beijing, 28 July 1882, rec. 26 Sept, FO 17/896; Willes to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 435), Iron Duke (Cape Clonard), Korea, 2 Sept 1882, rec. 25 Oct, ADM 1/6618; Captain Pasley to Willes (No. 28), Champion (Shanghai), 25 Oct 1882, rec. 4 Nov. Enclosure in Willes to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 526), Vigilant (Shanghai), 8 Nov 1882, rec. 19 Dec, ADM 1/6618; Willes to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 463), Iron Duke (Zhifu), 21 Sept 1883, ADM 1/6618; Hamilton to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 151), Audacious (Hong Kong), 2 Mar 1887, rec. 7 Apr, ADM 1/6861.

⁷⁷ Notes of a Journey from Seoul to Songdo by Aston, Seoul, 13 Aug 1884. Enclosure in Parkes to Granville (Corea No. 31), Beijing, 12 Sept 1884, rec. 4 Nov, FO 17/952.

⁷⁸ Aston to Parkes (Private), Seoul, 19 Sept 1884, HPP CUL MS Parkes 1/A43.

⁷⁹ Gubbins to Paterson (Private), 21 July 1883. JMP CUL JM/B9/1.

⁸⁰ Trench to Currie (Private), Tokyo, 23 June 1888, rec. 27 July, FO 46/380; Unidentifiable Captain to Salmon (No. 38), Leander (Chemulpo), 3 July 1888, rec. 11 July, ADM 125/34; Salmon to the Secretary to the Admiralty (No. 267), Audacious (Yokohama), 16 July 1888, rec. 1 Sept, ADM 1/6916.

⁸¹ Hillier to Salisbury (No. 10), Seoul, 23 Dec 1890, rec. 24 Feb 1891, FO 17/1119; MacLeod to Richards (No. 43), Pallas (Nagasaki), 26 Apr 1892, rec. 21 May, ADM 125/41; Fremantle to the Secretary to the Admiralty (No. 286/1112 Confidential),

officials continued to describe the Chosōn officials as corrupt and despotic, and feared that their rule might result in the Korean populace expressing anger towards the government in a very violent manner.⁸²

J. Y. Wong argues that the British decision-makers in the late-nineteenth century were economic Machiavellians, who pursued their interests without making any moral judgement about what kind of consequences their actions might bring to the local population, and were willing to do so as long as no other power could coerce them to act otherwise; Wong argues that the idea that free trade was moral, which was the predominant philosophy within Victorian Britain, was a blatant declaration of such a spirit.⁸³ Indeed, the vices that the British opium trade brought to the Chinese society from the mid-nineteenth century onwards have already been pointed out by numerous historians, and this dissertation does not deny that realistic calculation was a very important factor in the British East Asian policy-making process.⁸⁴ However, it disagrees with historians who argue that the British were amoral – it would rather argue that they were ethnocentric. Most British observers saw the Chosōn government as a regime which prevented its own people from engaging freely in commerce in order to improve their material condition, and consequently saw it acting as an immoral despot who deserved very little sympathy. Neither did Korea offer much commercial potential. The merchant company John Swire and Sons chose not to start a business in Korea, while Jardine Matheson closed its office in Seoul as early as 1884; both firms were convinced

⁸² Alacrity (Shanghai), 4 Nov 1892, rec. 12 Dec, ADM 1/7109.

⁸² Hillier to O'Conor (Confidential), Seoul, 19 Nov 1892. Enclosure in O'Conor to Rosebery (No. 127), Beijing, 16 Dec 1892, rec. 20 Feb 1893, FO 17/1133.

⁸³ Wong, *Deadly Dreams*.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Ibid; Shin Kawashima, “Higashi Ajia no Kindai Jūkyūseiki,” in *Iwanami Kōza Higashi Ajia Kingendai Tsūshi*, 1. *Higashi Ajia no Kindai*, eds. Haruki Wada et al (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2010): 7-47.

that they could not make any profit in this country.⁸⁵

Under such conditions, the British became extremely apathetic about the Chosōn dynasty, and thus their eyes focused instead on the repercussions of the international struggle for supremacy over the peninsula. As the strategic position had developed in such a way that relying on an external power, China, to stabilise the domestic and international environment of Korea was better than trusting the court in Seoul, they were quite happy with the *status quo*. And as long as the Chinese influence provided regional stability, the British felt no need to raise vocal opposition against its claim of traditional suzerainty, which was one of the most important sources of the Qing prestige. For the same reason the British decision-makers felt no particular need to challenge the dual structure that characterised the international order in East Asia. Although the Anglo-Chinese relationship was far from being as cordial as the Japanese assumed, there was no reason for the British government to change the policy it had pursued during and immediately after the East Asian crises.

The Anglo-Japanese Relationship, March 1887-July 1892

The British and the Japanese governments had thus both recognized that Qing influence in East Asia had strengthened in the early-1880s, and after 1887 they acknowledged that the Chinese had emerged as the most powerful regional power in East Asia. An international environment thus existed in which they had to prioritise upholding their own respective good relationships with the Qing, for the sake of retaining their interests in the

⁸⁵ Butterfield and Swire to Mr. Paterson (Private), Shanghai, 25 Mar 1884, JMP CUL JM/B2/23; Keswick to Parkes (Private), Shanghai, 9 Aug 1884, HPP CUL, MS Parkes 1/K6; Keswick to Clarke (Private), Shanghai, 13 Sept 1884, JMP CUL JM/C45; Keswick to Unidentifiable (Private), Shanghai, 2 Oct 1884, JMP CUL JM/C45.

region. This inevitably meant that the British and Japanese governments devoted much less attention on relations with each other. Besides, the Anglo-Japanese relationship continued to be strained as a result of the continued difficulty over the treaty revision. The negotiations over this matter became more difficult particularly for the Japanese government, because this issue started to catch public attention.

By the late-1880s, the political awareness of the Japanese people was developing to the extent that there was a steady growth of nationalism. It continued to grow as the date for the promulgation of the constitution and the opening of Diet approached, and created a political force that was potentially strong enough to topple an administration. By around 1887, political activists outside of the government also started criticising the government's modernisation project as a mindless imitation of the West, conducted under the blind assumption that things originating from the West were inherently progressive.⁸⁶ These individuals often raised their opposition in a violent manner. Mori Arinori, who at this time was serving as the Minister of Education, was one of the unfortunate victims, as he was assassinated on 11 February 1889.⁸⁷

In this environment, the fact that the Japanese nation-state could not exercise its judicial rights over foreigners started to be perceived as a grave injustice by many Japanese, and they began to feel that the complete abolition of consular jurisdiction was necessary. Consequently, the proposal for a revised treaty submitted by Inoue in 1887 was considered by many individuals within the government to be unsatisfactory. In the negotiations that Inoue had held with the Western representatives, he had promised that if the latter would agree to abolish consular jurisdiction the Japanese government would;

⁸⁶ Kenneth B. Pyle, "Meiji Conservatism," in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 5, 674-720; Suzuki, *Ishin no Kōsō to Tenkai*, 324-342.

⁸⁷ Suzuki, *Ishin no Kōsō to Tenkai*, 334-5.

first, use Western judges instead of Japanese for criminal cases involving Westerners in Japan; second, not sentence the foreigners to the death penalty, and prepare separate prisons for foreigners; and third, show the Western governments the complete draft of Japanese legal codes before the terms of the revised treaty would be put into effect.⁸⁸ Gustave Boissonade, the French legal advisor for the Japanese government, raised his vocal opposition against this from May 1887 onward, arguing that such a compromise was a fundamental contradiction of the spirit of constitutionalism.⁸⁹ Inoue Kowashi, who was heavily involved in the process of drawing up the constitution and modern legal codes, agreed with Boissonade.⁹⁰ Already by early-1880s, Japanese ministers and senior officials were using the pronouns such as 'India,' 'Egypt' or 'Turkey' as examples of non-Western countries that had permitted the Westerners to establish a foothold and had then gradually been subjugated by the West.⁹¹ After the recent East Asian crisis, the Japanese decision-makers became more aware of the threat that the unequal treaties posed to the security of their country, and started to feel the need for the unconditional abolition of consular jurisdiction in order to avoid the fate that the above three non-Western countries had fallen into.⁹² When Tani Tateki, the Minister of Agriculture and

⁸⁸ Minute of a conversation between Inoue Kowashi and Boissonade, 10 May 1887, *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 17-24/IKDS, vol. 5, pp. 696-700; Memorandum by Boissonade, 1 June 1887, *YHM*, vol. 7, pp. 338-368.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*; Inoue Kowashi to Inoue (Private), 12 July 1887, *YHM*, vol. 7, pp. 16-31; Inoue Kowashi to Inoue Kaoru (Private), 17 July 1887, *YHM*, vol. 7, pp. 32-44; Inoue Kowashi to Itō (Private), 30 July 1887, *IKDS*, vol. 1, pp. 550-2.

⁹¹ Memorandum by Yamagata, 30 Nov 1880, KSKKT IKM 675-5/YHM, vol. 5, pp. 109-122/YAI, pp. 91-9; Mori to Inoue (Unnumbered), London, 4 Feb 1882, *NGM*, vol. 15, pp. 7-9; Inoue Kowashi to Itō (Private), 18 Dec 1886, *IKDS*, vol. 4, pp. 100-1.

⁹² Memorandum by Boissonade, 1 June 1887, *YHM*, vol. 7, pp. 338-368; Inoue to Itō (Private), 18 July 1887, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 218; Inoue Kowashi to Itō (Private), 30 July 1887, *IKDS*, vol. 1, pp. 550-2; Inoue to the Japanese Ministers in Europe and the United States, 29 July 1887, *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 52-3; Anonymous Memorandum on Treaty Revision, 1888 (Date Unknown), KSKKT SM 52-4; Inoue to Yamada (Private), 16 Sept 1889, *YHM*, vol. 2, pp. 156-8; Hara to Inoue (Private), 19 Sept 1889, KSKKT

Commerce, raised his opposition against Inoue's proposal in early-July, it caught the attention of the media and led to a popular outcry.⁹³ Facing harsh criticism from both within and outside of the government, Inoue had to postpone the negotiations later in that month, and he resigned in September.⁹⁴ When, later in the decade, Ōkuma resumed the negotiations for treaty revision without making any fundamental amendments to Inoue's draft, he was badly wounded by a political activist who attempted to assassinate him on 18 October 1889.⁹⁵

As a result, when Aoki, the next Foreign Minister, resumed the negotiations for treaty revision he had to request the withdrawal of all three of the compromises that Inoue had made.⁹⁶ He also had to request that the Japanese government be allowed to impose some restrictions on foreigner's rights to invest and own property in the interior, as there was strong opposition against permitting the latter to engage in commercial activities on completely equal terms with Japanese nationals even after the abolition of consular jurisdiction.⁹⁷ While it is true that the Meiji government was not free from opposition in the 1870s, what they confronted in that decade were rebellions launched by former

IKM 241-4; Members of the Prefectural Assembly of Kyoto, 15 Oct 1889, KSKKT SM 52-9; Kaneko to Yamada (Private), 20 Oct 1889, *YHM*, vol. 2, pp. 28-30; Hara to Inoue (Private), 18 Dec 1889, IKM 241-4; Memorandum by Nishimura Shigeki, 4 Dec 1890, KSKKT SM 52-17.

⁹³ Memorandum by Tani, July 1887 (date unknown), KSKKT SM 52-3/TTI, vol. 3, pp. 89-121; Itō to Inoue (Private), 23 July 1887, KSKKT IKM 289-8; Fukuzawa to Nakakamigawa (Private), 4 Aug 1887, *FYZ*, vol. 18, pp. 142-3; Inoue to Japanese Ministers in Europe and the United States, 6 Aug 1887, *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 58-62; Miyoshi to Yamada (Private), 31 Aug 1887, *YHM*, vol. 1, pp. 171-3.

⁹⁴ Inoue to the European and American Ministers in Japan, 29 July 1887; Inoue to the Japanese Ministers in Europe and the United States, 29 July 1887, both from *NGM*, vol. 20, pp. 51-3.

⁹⁵ Inoue to Yamada (Private), 17 Oct 1887, *YHM*, vol. 5, pp. 160-1.

⁹⁶ Memorandum of the Cabinet Meeting, 2 enclosures, 10 Dec 1889, *NGM*, vol. 22, pp. 329-334; Aoki to Kawase and Tokugawa, 10 Jan 1890, *NGM*, vol. 23, pp. 1-2; Aoki to Toda (電送第七號), 10 Jan 1890, both from *NGM*, vol. 23, pp. 2.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

samurais who were interested in retaining the privileges that they had enjoyed in the Tokugawa era, and the decision-makers, determined to create a modern nation-state in which every Japanese felt a sense of belonging regardless of their social backgrounds, could take a very firm attitude against them. The Meiji government also at that time had a clear strategic superiority over the rural population and the early *Jiyū Minken Undō* activists, and therefore could suppress uprisings with relative ease. However, it was precisely because these decision-makers were determined to create a Japanese nation-state that they could not ignore the nationalism that emerged in the late-1880s. Despite the fact that on many occasions the government forcefully suppressed these political activists, who they often branded as extremists, it sometimes had to compromise or else endure criticism, and when they did so there were often consequences for diplomacy.

The growing sense of nationalism also had the effect of amplifying the lingering fear of Western imperialism. This exploded when Tsarevich Nicholas of Russia – who would later become Nicholas II – visited Japan in May 1891. Upon hearing the news, many jingoistic newspapers reported without foundation that he was coming to Japan for a tour of inspection to gain information necessary for a future military expedition, and in the days prior to his arrival the Russian legation received several threats from individuals who believed this.⁹⁸ Aoki gave a verbal guarantee to Dmitri Schevich, the Russian Minister in Japan, that any assault against a foreign prince would be punished as high treason under the new Japanese civil code, in which a convict would be sentenced to the death penalty.⁹⁹ Unfortunately, Tsuda Sanzō, a policeman who was guarding the parade

⁹⁸ *YHM*, vol. 7, pp. 397-404; Sonoda to Okabe (親展號外), 8 May 1891, *NGM*, vol. 24, pp. 124-5.

⁹⁹ Aoki's guarantee was revealed by Schevich later in the month. See; Minute of the conversation between Okabe and Schevich, 28-9 May 1891, *NGM*, vol. 24, pp. 172-3; Enomoto to Nishi (Telegraphic), 29 May 1891, *NGM*, vol. 24, pp. 175-6; Nomura to Inoue (Private), 17 June 1891, KSKKT IKM 467-2.

of Tsarevich in the Japanese town of Ōtsu, believed the reports in the media and chose to attack Nicholas on 11 May. Aoki then realised that the guarantee was precocious. Despite the government's pressing for Tsuda to be sentenced for high treason, as they believed that the execution of this fanatic would bring a satisfactory ending to the incident, Kojima Korekata, the chief judge, sentenced him to indefinite imprisonment, as he interpreted that high treason could be applied only to cases when the Japanese imperial family had been attacked.¹⁰⁰ While Nicholas managed to escape without being killed and the Russian government acted upon this incident with prudence and restraint – never seriously contemplating the idea of demanding reparations or preparing for a war of revenge as the Japanese feared – Aoki had to resign for putting the government into such an embarrassing position in the eyes of the Russian Minister with his precocious guarantee.¹⁰¹ It also triggered the resignation of three other veteran ministers from the first Matsukata administration, which was inaugurated just five days before the incident, and led to another postponement of the negotiations over treaty revision.¹⁰² Many Japanese officials heard Kojima's sentence with resentment, but they were also aware that Japanese constitutionalism would be in jeopardy if the government made any attempt to overturn the decision.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Hara to Inoue (Private), Ōtsu, 28 May 1891, KSKKT IKM, 24-5.

¹⁰¹ Minute of the conversation between Okabe and Schevich, 28-9 May 1891, *NGM*, vol. 24, pp. 172-3; Enomoto to Nishi (Telegraphic), 29 May 1891, *NGM*, vol. 24, pp. 175-6; Nishi to Enomoto (機密報告第九号) St. Petersburg, 3 June 1891, KSKKT MuMKM 71-8; Memorandum by Enomoto, Oct 1891, *NGM*, vol. 24, pp. 54-63. For Russian policy towards East Asia in this period, see Sasaki "The International Environment at the Time of the Sino-Japanese War," 15-24.

¹⁰² Memorandum by Enomoto, Oct 1891, *NGM*, vol. 24, pp. 54-63. Sasaki, *Meijjin no Rikiryō*, 70-3.

¹⁰³ Hara to Inoue (Private), Ōtsu, 28 May 1891, KSKKT IKM, 24-5; Minute of the conversation between Okabe and Schevich, 28-9 May 1891, *NGM*, vol. 24, pp. 172-3; Enomoto to Nishi (Telegraphic), 29 May 1891, *NGM*, vol. 24, pp. 175-6; Higashikuze et al to Matsukata (Private), 30 May 1891, *MaMKM*, vol. 11, pp. 320-4.

The first Matsukata administration was unstable right from the beginning. It was perhaps because the ministers were fully aware of its weakness that they did not start negotiations over treaty revision during this period of time, and instead chose to nominate Itō, Kuroda, Inoue Kowashi and Terashima Munenori to a committee to prepare a new draft of the revised treaties.¹⁰⁴ What was worse was that, as many of the ministers anticipated, the Diet made strong attacks against the government, criticising it for continuing military expansion and not cutting unnecessary spending.¹⁰⁵ It also vetoed the government's final proposal for the Japanese legal codes, as the members thought that the draft did not adequately reflect the Japanese tradition of how they maintained order in society.¹⁰⁶ The government could not reconcile all of the pressure from the Diet, and in the end declared its dissolution on 25 December 1891.¹⁰⁷ In the following general election on 15 February 1892, the Ministry of Interior mobilised the police to intervene

¹⁰⁴ Terashima did not hold an official post in the government at this time, but he served as the Minister to Britain and the United States before becoming the Foreign Minister from 1873 to 1879. He was called up to this committee due to his experience in dealing with the question over treaty revision. Terashima to Enomoto (Private), 26 Mar 1892, *TMKS*, vol. 2, pp. 337; Hijikata to Terashima et al, 12 Apr 1892, *TMKS*, vol. 2, pp. 621; Memorandum by Terashima, 13 Apr 1892, *TMKS*, vol. 1, pp. 218-220; Memorandum by Inoue Kowashi, 13 May 1892, *IKDS*, vol. 2, pp. 512-9. If one looks at the private papers of the Japanese ministers at this time, it becomes clear that they were busy dealing with the domestic instability rather than diplomatic issues. See, among many, *IHKM*, vol. 1, pp. 221-267, 405-442; vol. 2, section on the private letters from Itō Miyoji in the 1890s; vol. 4, pp. 27-58, 347-350; vol. 5, section on the private letters from Suematsu Kenchō in the 1890s.

¹⁰⁵ For secondary sources on Japanese domestic politics during this period, see Akita, *Foundations of Constitutional Government in Modern Japan*, 91-105; Junji Banno, *Establishment of the Japanese Constitutional System*, trans. J. A. A. Stockwin (London: Routledge, 1992; trans. of book originally published 1972), ch. 1, ch. 2 section 1-2; Takashi Sasaki, *Hanbatsu seifu to Rikken Seiji*, (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1992), chs. 3-4.

¹⁰⁶ Fraser to Salisbury (No. 9), Tokyo, 26 Jan 1891, rec. 2 Mar, FO 46/406; Isobe to Yamada (Private), Tokyo, 2 June 1891, *YHM*, vol. 2, pp. 85-6; Fraser to Salisbury (No. 30), Tokyo, 30 Mar 1892, rec. 5 May, FO 46/417; Mimasaka to Yamada (Private), 17 May 1892, *YHM*, vol. 1, pp. 159-160; Fraser to Salisbury (No. 53), Tokyo, 28 May 1892, rec. 27 June, FO 46/417.

¹⁰⁷ Sasaki, *Hanbatsu Seifu to Rikken Seiji*, 201.

in the election, leading to clashes between them and voters across the country, killing 25 and injuring many more.¹⁰⁸ Such action only weakened the government even further. Constitutionalism and the rule of law had been adopted to create a framework in which every Japanese could participate in society as equally and freely as possible by providing rules by which everyone must abide. But what the government officials quickly realised was that even within that framework it was not easy to draw a line between extremism and the freedoms guaranteed by the constitution.

It goes without saying that many British observers in Japan frowned upon such developments. Already in 1874, Parkes had reported that the domestic opposition against the Japanese government was quite sizeable, and that they often criticised the government for failing to adopt aggressive expansionist policies in the neighbouring regions; he argued that it was this group that had ultimately succeeded in pushing the government to launch an expedition to Taiwan.¹⁰⁹ Throughout the period from 1880 to 1894, he and his successors in Tokyo feared that the Japanese government would be forced to take a similar course, this time towards Korea.¹¹⁰ After observing three Japanese foreign ministers being forced to resign due to violent public opposition against the government, Hugh Fraser, the Minister in Tokyo from 1889 to 1894, sent a report

¹⁰⁸ Akita, *Foundations of Constitutional Government in Modern Japan*, 98; Sasaki, *Hanbatsu Seifu to Rikken Seiji*, 214.

¹⁰⁹ Parkes to Derby (No. 33 Confidential), Tokyo, 22 Feb 1875, rec. 10 Apr, FO 46/190.

¹¹⁰ Wade to Granville (No. 17 Confidential), Tianjin, 12 May 1882, rec. 22 July, FO 17/895; Wade to Granville (Separate No. 2), Tianjin, 25 Aug 1882, rec. 14 Oct, FO 17/898; Dowell to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No. 460), (Audacious) Hong Kong, 23 Dec 1884, rec. 28 Jan, ADM 1/6713; Aston to Parkes, Inch'ön, 19 Dec 1884. Aston to Parkes (No. 1), Inch'ön, 2 Jan 1885. Both enclosures in Aston to Granville (No. 1), Inch'ön, 3 Jan 1885, FO 17/996; Plunkett to Rosebery (No. 85 Secret), Tokyo, 2 June 1886, rec. 9 July, FO 46/344; Fraser to Salisbury (No. 66 Very Confidential), Tokyo, 23 June 1890, rec. 24 July, FO 46/399; Hillier to O'Conor (No. 32), Seoul, 10 Oct 1891, enclosure in Hillier to Salisbury (No. 18), Seoul, 13 Oct 1891, rec. 30 Nov, FO 17/1119. See also Hamilton to Plunkett (Private), Audacious (Hong Kong), 8 Mar 1887, RVHP CLNMM VHM/5.

which contained very critical comments about the Japanese on 13 January 1890.

[Japan] contains a population of from thirty to forty millions of people of a distinctly warlike characters. Although they have had little to do with foreign wars, I suppose no land on the globe has... so long or so barbarous a record of civil war to its history. ...[O]ne cannot rely very confidently upon the common sense of the Japanese. They are an attractive people on the whole, and have many good qualities, but they are eminently shortsighted, fierce, vain-glorious, and excitable, and there is always danger of their committing a “coup de tête,” doing childish wrongs... in serious affairs.¹¹¹

Fraser reported that the problem was that the Japanese newspapers produced ignorant and violent articles which advocated reckless foreign adventures, and that the audience was not a small minority. Fraser described the Japanese as a very warlike people, with a history marred by never-ending domestic conflicts; the Japanese military had concentrated the nation’s resources with astonishing efficiency after the Meiji Restoration, but there was a tendency for these people to call for war out of short-sighted passion rather than rational calculation and common sense.¹¹² Additionally, British merchants were frequently complained that the Japanese did not abide by Western commercial ethics, such as respecting the trademarks of the products that they imported, and not only the diplomats but also the officials in the Foreign Office were somewhat receptive to these complaints.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Fraser to Salisbury (No. 10), Tokyo, 13 Jan 1890, rec. 20 Feb, FO 46/398.

¹¹² Fraser had continuously sent reports arguing in similar direction until he returned to London for a temporary leave in 1892. Refer to FO 46/398-400, 405-8, 416-9. For specific examples, see; Fraser to Salisbury (No. 59 Very Confidential), Tokyo, 11 June 1891, rec. 9 July, FO 46/407; Fraser to Salisbury (No. 6), Tokyo, 26 Jan 1892, rec. 5 Mar, FO 46/417.

¹¹³ Plunkett to Salisbury (No. 66), Tokyo, 16 Mar 1887, rec. 22 Apr, FO 46/366; Salisbury to Plunkett (No. 49), FO, 18 May 1887, FO 46/364; Salisbury to Trench (No. 24), FO, 6 Oct 1888, FO 46/378; Trench to Salisbury (No. 95), Tokyo, 17 Dec 1888, rec. 25 Jan 1889, FO 46/380; Fraser to Salisbury (No. 12), Tokyo, 6 Feb 1892, rec. 10 Mar, FO 46/417; De Bunsen to Salisbury (No. 65), Tokyo, 8 July 1892, rec. 17 Aug, FO

However, it would be incorrect to assume that the British perceptions toward the Japanese were always negative. It is true that there were individuals such as Salisbury, who served as the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in years from 1888 to 1892, who believed that the Japanese could not improve their judicial system to the level of that of the Western nations. For this reason, he at first vetoed the suggestions of the diplomats in Japan and the senior officials of the Foreign Office who were supportive of abolishing consular jurisdiction.¹¹⁴ Salisbury finally yielded to the opinion of his diplomats and senior officials in October 1889, but that was not because he was finally convinced that the Japanese could modernise like the Western countries; it was because he had learned that the American and German governments were ready to abolish consular jurisdiction, and that therefore Britain could seriously jeopardise its relationship with Japan if it did not do likewise.¹¹⁵ Still, the number of individuals who argued along the same lines as Salisbury was definitely decreasing in London. Despite all the negative reports that Fraser sent about the Japanese, he never advocated that the British government should refuse negotiations with the Japanese over treaty revision as Parkes once had done. While the Foreign Office occasionally received reports that foreigners had been assaulted by the Japanese, such incidents occurred much less frequently than they did in China, and also the scale of these incidents was nowhere near the anti-foreign or anti-missionary riots in China. Most of the private letters that Cecil Spring-Rice and Maurice de Bunsen, who served as junior members of the legation in Japan, sent during the early 1890s indicate that they were relatively idle unless they were dealing with the

46/418.

¹¹⁴ Trench to Salisbury (No. 2 Telegraphic), Tokyo, 16 Jan 1889, rec. 17 Jan, FO 46/388; Memorandum by Pauncefote, FO 28 Jan 1889, FO 46/388; Fraser to Salisbury (No. 112 Confidential), Tokyo, 10 Sept 1889, rec. 21 Oct, FO 46/387; Memorandum by Sanderson, FO, 14 Sept 1889, FO 800/1.

¹¹⁵ Salisbury to Fraser (No. 46 Telegraphic), FO, 7 Oct 1889, FO 46/388.

negotiations over treaty revision – thus indicating that things were somewhat quiet, despite this being an eventful period for Japanese domestic politics.¹¹⁶

Additionally, when the naval officers compared the Qing and Japanese navies, they were often more impressed by the latter than the former. After comparing the state of military modernisation, Hamilton went as far to argue that if Britain were going to form an alliance with Qing, then “we must be prepared for the obloquy we should incur from the barbarities which they would undoubtedly perpetrate. The Japanese would be far more useful allies, and their statesmen, Naval, and Military Officials and their Naval and Military systems are far more in unison with our own than are the Chinese.”¹¹⁷ The senior officials of the Admiralty and the China Squadron were impressed by the Japanese, who were very efficient in using modern weapons and had adopted Western ways of command and administration, drawing a sharp contrast with their very disparaging remarks on the Qing naval service.¹¹⁸

The Anglo-Japanese relationship was thus not easy, but there were many incentives for the Japanese to uphold these ties at least to the extent that they would not become hostile. The bottom line was that the Japanese decision-makers were well aware of the risk if the relationship did become hostile, as they, just as with most of their contemporaries throughout the world, realised that Britain possessed the strongest navy. When Ōkuma advocated telling the British that Japan might unilaterally abrogate the existing Anglo-

¹¹⁶ These letters mention more about what they did for leisure than discussing political issues. The private papers of de Bunsen are kept at the Bodleian Library, and the Spring-Rice papers are in the Churchill Archives Centre.

¹¹⁷ Hamilton to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No.53), *Audacious* (Hong Kong), 20 Jan 1888, ADM 125/32.

¹¹⁸ See ADM 125/24-50, and relevant documents in series ADM 1. Also see Hamilton to Lord George Hamilton (Private), *Alacrity* (Xiamen), 1 Dec 1887, RVHP CLNMM VHM/6; Hamilton to the Secretary of the Admiralty (No.53), *Audacious* (Hong Kong), 20 Jan 1888, ADM 125/32.

Japanese treaty if the latter could not agree with the Japanese proposal for revision, most of the decision-makers immediately dismissed the idea as it might give Britain a *casus belli*.¹¹⁹

The same could be said for British perceptions towards Japan. Some individuals held more positive sentiments towards Japan, whereas others were somewhat more negative.¹²⁰ British society too was not monolithic. It was not completely antipathetic towards Japan, and decision-makers were aware of the difficulties that an administration must be prepared for if the Anglo-Japanese relationship turned hostile. When the senior officials of the Foreign Office heard that the Japanese government might be contemplating the idea of unilateral abrogation, they had to confront a harsh reality. If the British decision-makers wished to be firm against such a declaration, they had to risk war against Japan, a country which had made a determined effort to strengthen its military at least to the extent that it could not be as easily defeated now as it had been in the 1860s. Since any campaign would become a tremendous burden for the Treasury, and probably lead to a Parliamentary outcry this was not a comfortable prospect. While the British decision-makers felt no problem in prioritising the Qing, it is difficult to assume that the consideration over the relationship with Japan did not play some role in making the British government cautious about inclining any further towards the Qing.

Closing Remarks of the Chapter

As Okamoto argues, there were numerous events in this period which made the Japanese

¹¹⁹ Memorandum by Inoue Kowashi, 22 Aug 1889, *NGM*, vol. 22, pp. 291-5/*IKDS*, vol. 2, pp. 177-181.

¹²⁰ Kikuchi and Watanabe, “The British Discovery of Japanese Art,” 156-9.

frustrated towards the Qing, and many of them occurred around the borderline between the realms of Chinese and Japanese influence in Korea. As the Qing regime claimed suzerainty over the Chosōn regime, there was a possibility that it might interpret that as the right to intervene in Korean decision-making in general, including the bilateral issues between Korea and countries other than China. Moreover, the Japanese were frustrated by Yuan, who often pressed the Chosōn ministers to refrain from giving commercial concessions to the Japanese, while retaining or expanding the Qing's privileges, thus arousing the suspicion of Japan's diplomats in Korea. The British also did not appreciate these assertions by the Qing officials, and experienced many difficulties in other parts of East Asia.

The historians of modern East Asian history have satisfactorily shed light on the fact that the events between March 1887 and July 1892 created a significant degree of friction between the Western and the Japanese governments and the Qing. These researchers contend that the main source of tension was the friction between the two different principles for conducting international relations – the Westphalian principles and the traditional suzerain-vassal framework – which characterised the international environment that existed in East Asia at that time.¹²¹ Okamoto Takashi argues that this dual structure became more apparent from the mid-1880s onwards because the East Asian crises could only be settled by acknowledging Qing superiority, in other words accepting that the Qing decision-makers placed strong importance on upholding its position as the traditional suzerain.¹²² But the long-term coexistence of these two orders was – according to Okamoto – impossible, as they were theoretically contradictory. Moreover,

¹²¹ Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*; Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast*.

¹²² Okamoto, *Zokkoku to Jishu no Aida*.

the short-term regional stability in East Asia that rested upon recognition of their coexistence had the ironical effect of making decision-makers recognise this incompatibility. Okamoto concludes that Mutsu Munemitsu, the Japanese Foreign Minister at the time of the First Sino-Japanese War, made the decision to go to war against China in June 1894 because it seemed an ideal opportunity to put an end to the dual structure that had continued to frustrate the Japanese and threatened their foothold in Korea.¹²³

However, as Takahashi Hidenao had argued, the long-term factors should not be overemphasised. In the 1980s, Takahashi convincingly argued against the line of argument forwarded by many of the historians focusing on Japan's East Asian policy, who insist that the Japanese government went to war with the Qing in the summer of 1894 to remove what it perceived as the biggest obstacle to fulfil their long-term ambition to colonise Korea¹²⁴ Takahashi argued that while there were many individuals who called for an assertive policy towards Korea, the ones that mattered the most within the Japanese decision-making circle kept their distance for much of the time before 1894.¹²⁵ Accordingly Takahashi has called Mutsu's diplomacy from July 1894 onwards a radical departure from previous policies towards Korea, rather than something induced by international environment or long-term factors. He has argued that this arose because, for the first time in the history of Meiji Japan, the political parties in Japan became so powerful that the government felt it had to distract their attention through an external war

¹²³ Ibid, Conclusion.

¹²⁴ See, among many, Fujimura, *Nisshin Sensō*; Nakatsuka, *Nisshin Sensō no Kenkyū*; Pak, *Nisshin Sensō to Chōsen*; Yamabe, *Nihon no Kankoku Heigō*, 2nd ed.; Iriye, "Japan's Drive to Great Power Status."

¹²⁵ These articles by Takahashi were turned into a book, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*, in 1995.

in order not to have the government brought down by domestic pressure.¹²⁶

The evidence cited here suggests, indeed, that most of the decision-makers of the governments involved in East Asian affairs – not only the Japanese but also the Western governments – were fully aware of the dual structure of the East Asian regional order, and were willing to retain it as a *status quo*. There is no stronger indication that they placed emphasis on the order and stability of the region than the fact that none of them chose to adopt policies that fundamentally departed from the spirit of the post-1887 regional order, despite experiencing difficulties. There is also no evidence that indicates that the key decision-makers in Britain and Japan thought that the post-1887 regional order was so contradictory that it was destined to fall, at least in the period from March 1887 to July 1892.

In the summer of 1892, there were many possibilities for the future of East Asia. As Okamoto has indicated, war was one of the options, but it must also be said that a bilateral Sino-Japanese conflict over Korea was not the only way in which it could have broken out. Despite the fact that the British government was extremely reluctant to fight a war in East Asia, they nonetheless had fought three conflicts with the Qing and Japan in the mid-nineteenth century, and as long as its primary interest within the region was trade, there still was the possibility of another conflagration should a commercial dispute with an East Asian country escalate into something very serious. There also was the possibility that a Sino-Japanese war over Korea might become a much broader conflict, as these two countries were in dispute over other regions, such as Ryukyu, as well. Finally, while there were many factors which prevented the British decision-makers from seeing Qing as their natural ally, they nonetheless were unanimous that it was still the

¹²⁶ Ibid.

most influential country in East Asia. There was thus a very good chance of the British siding with the Qing if a Sino-Japanese war broke out. Indeed, it was because the Japanese decision-makers believed that there might be an Anglo-Chinese *entente cordiale* that the Japanese were very cautious in dealing with their neighbours.

War, though, was not the only possible future for East Asia in the summer of 1892. The decision-makers of the governments involved in East Asian affairs were not holding themselves back from starting a war only because the state of their military was unready, or the international environment did not suit starting a campaign. There always were different opinions on what course they should take in terms of their policies towards Korea. It may be that the influence of the diplomatic hardliners was strengthening particularly within Beijing and Tokyo, but the policy-making processes of the countries involved in Korean affairs, including the Qing and Japan, were still driven by the individuals who thought that peace and stability in Korea suited their interests; even the Qing, which was inclined to strengthen its influence in Korea as much as possible, was cautious not to pursue any policy that would induce a serious reaction from the other countries. In order to understand why it was a bilateral Sino-Japanese war over Korea that broke out in July 1894, one must look carefully into how events developed immediately before the outbreak of the war.

Chapter 6 – The Road to the First Sino-Japanese War, August 1892-July 1894

Despite the fact that the First Sino-Japanese War was a significant event for modern East Asian history, it has received relatively little attention from Western scholars. There is a long article by T. F. Tsiang in English on the origins of the conflict, but, as the author admitted, it was written in the 1930s with very limited access to archival materials.¹ S. C. M. Paine has written a very well researched book, but it focuses more on public opinion towards the war.² There also are some works that deal with the events that occurred during the war, but the books of Hilary Conroy and George Alexander Lensen remain the only two accounts that provide a detailed analysis of the politics and diplomacy which resulted in triggering the conflict.³ Although the focus of this dissertation is on the Anglo-Japanese relationship in the period before the outbreak of war, it is necessary to provide a more detailed overview of the Sino-Japanese crisis over Korea in the summer of 1894 than can be seen in the existing English-language literature, as this helps us to understand the environment in which the British and Japanese formed their policies towards each other and what effect their relationship had on the region.

One must rely on the secondary sources written in Japanese to supplement the shortage of works in English. Among the latter, Shinobu Seizaburō has argued that in the crucial days before the outbreak of war, the government and the military were both conducting

¹ T. F. Tsiang, “Sino-Japanese Diplomatic Relations, 1870-1894,” *The Chinese Social and Political Science Review*, 17:1 (1933): 1-106.

² S. C. M. Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895: Perceptions, Power and Primacy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

³ Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, ch. 5; Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, 108-183. For works on the events during the war, see; Douglas Howland, “The Sinking of the S. S. Kowshing: International Law, Diplomacy, and the Sino-Japanese War,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 42:4 (2008): 673-703. For the Japanese annexation of Taiwan, see Edward I-te Chen, “Japan’s Decision to Annex Taiwan: A Study of Ito-Mutsu Diplomacy, 1894-95,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 37:1 (Nov., 1977), 61-72.

diplomacy on their own, and that it was this that drove the nation towards war against the Qing.⁴ Fujimura Michio had taken this argument further and argued that it was the Japanese military – dominated by individuals who had advocated on assertive policy towards Korea from the early days of Meiji era – that managed to take control of the policy-making process, and in the end directed the government to start a war against the Qing.⁵ These arguments have now been revised by historians from the subsequent generation, as they have presented ample evidence that suggests that the military was willing to accept the leadership of the government.⁶ Both Conroy and Hiyama Yukio have offered an alternative narrative that stresses the contingency in Japanese diplomacy. They state that the Japanese government started sending troops to Korea before it had hammered out a specific policy, and dealt with the crisis in an *ad hoc* manner until it led to the outbreak of war.⁷ However, Takahashi Hidenao has countered this argument by pointing out that the government decision-makers did have a clear vision of their policy.⁸ In doing so, he has followed the argument forwarded by Lensen, Nakatsuka Akira and Pak Chong-gün, which concludes that Mutsu Munemitsu, who served as the Foreign Minister during this crisis, convinced his government to deal with this issue in an assertive

⁴ Seizaburō Shinobu, *Mutsu Gaikō – Nisshin Sensō no Gaikōshiteki Kenkyū*, (Tokyo: Sōbundō, 1935); Seizaburō Shinobu, *Nisshin Sensō – Sono Seijiteki/Gaikōteki Kansatu*, ed. Michio Fujimura (Tokyo: Nansōsha, 1970; originally published in 1934).

⁵ Fujimura, *Nisshin Sensō*. In English, Eugene Kim and Han-kyo Kim argue in a similar direction, although they only mention this in passing, and do not cite any source to back their argument. See Kim and Kim, *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism*, 79.

⁶ Nakatsuka, *Nisshin Sensō no Kenkyū*; Pak, *Nisshin Sensō to Chōsen*; Saitō, *Nisshin Sensō no Gunji Senryaku*; Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*.

⁷ Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 241-260. For articles by Hiyama, see “Itō Naikaku no Chōsen Shuppei Kettei ni Taisuru Seiryakuronterki Kentō – Nisshin Sensō Zenshi toshite (1-2),” *Chūkyō Hōgaku*, 18:1-3 (Feb-Mar 1984); “Chōsen Shuppei Jiken to Kaigai Shuppei Taisei no Keisei,” *Chūkyō Hōgaku*, 18:4 (Mar 1984): 30-91; “Daiichiji Chōsen Shuppei Jiken nitsuite (1-4),” *Chūkyō Hōgaku*, 20:3-4 and 21:1-2 (Mar 1986-Feb 1987).

⁸ Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*.

manner, and that this inevitably strained its relationship with the Qing and Chosōn courts, with the result that in the end the negotiations broke down.⁹

The current debate in Japan focuses on the question of why Mutsu decided to deal with the crisis in such a firm manner, as there is no primary source that adequately explains his thinking. A debate surrounds this issue also because his diplomacy stands out as being considerably adventurous for a foreign minister of the Japanese government, which had hitherto been generally cautious in its policy towards East Asia. As most of the works on the origins of the First Sino-Japanese War have been written by historians who focus on the Japanese imperial or foreign policy-making process, many of them have tended to stress the importance of the domestic factors.¹⁰ In particular, recent works on the origins of the war have been heavily influenced by the book by Takahashi, which argues that in June 1894 it was the situation within Japanese domestic politics which created the environment that led the government to launch a war against the Qing over the question of Korea.¹¹ In particular, Takahashi has pointed to the fact that the anti-governmental political parties managed to pass a vote of no-confidence in the Lower House, and that in the end the government had no other option but to dissolve the House on 31 May 1894. As the relationship between the government and the Diet was already quite tense, Mutsu convinced his colleagues in the cabinet to solve this situation by directing public attention abroad. Within the historiography of Japanese imperialism and diplomacy in the late-nineteenth century, Mutsu is often depicted as a minister who was inclined to start a war from the time the Kabo rebellion escalated in late May, as he deemed it necessary to divert

⁹ Ibid; Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, 124-140; Nakatsuka, *Nisshin Sensō no Kenkyū*; Pak, *Nisshin Sensō to Chōsen*.

¹⁰ See footnotes 4 to 8. In English, Lensen also made such an argument. See his *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, 126.

¹¹ Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*, part 2.

domestic dissatisfaction towards the government abroad. Researchers from this background, including Takahashi, have argued that in order to accomplish this objective, he took measures to remove every obstacle that lay in front of his government to start a war.¹²

There are fewer works that focus on the actual diplomacy between the East Asian countries, and as a result there has not been enough attention paid to the fact that the Qing and the Chosōn decision-makers were far from being static, passive or powerless actors in this story.¹³ However, *Zokkoku to Jishu no Aida* (In Between Autonomy and Protectorate) by Okamoto Takashi, published in 2004, has played an important role in filling this gap, as it offers a detailed narrative of the Qing policy towards Korea before the outbreak of the First Sino-Japanese War.¹⁴ His work presents evidence which suggests that there were also international factors that induced the Japanese to take a firm line of policy against the Qing in the summer of 1894, and that the Chinese were trying to expand their influence in Korea during the Kabo rebellion. This dissertation will also argue that while it is undeniable that Mutsu conducted diplomacy in an unprecedentedly firm manner, it is questionable whether he was did so in the strong conviction that there was no other way for the Japanese government.

In order to understand the outbreak of the First Sino-Japanese War, it is also important to look at why it was only a bilateral conflict – in other words, to examine why the Western countries did not intervene. Again, there is very little literature on this aspect of war origins. Works by Sasaki Yō and Kobayashi Takao are about the only exceptions, but

¹² Nakatsuka, *Nisshin Sensō no Kenkyū*; Pak, *Nisshin Sensō to Chōsen*; Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*.

¹³ For the Japanese-Korean relationship, see Moriyama, *Kindai Nikkan Kankeishi Kenkyū*; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, 2 vols.

¹⁴ Okamoto, *Zokkoku to Jishu no Aida*.

they do not necessarily offer accurate depictions of British policy in the summer of 1894 because their works are based solely on the Foreign Office records.¹⁵ What they both fail to explain is the reason why Lord Rosebery and Lord Kimberley, who served respectively as the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary during the crisis, made a conscious decision to remain neutral, despite the fact that many of the British officials in East Asia were advising them that Britain should act together either with the Chinese or other Western countries in order to press the Japanese to stop acting in a provocative manner. In order to explain the rationale behind the decision of Rosebery and Kimberley in the summer of 1894, it is necessary to utilise the private papers of the individuals who served as Cabinet ministers in the summer of 1894, which were not consulted in the works by Sasaki and Kobayashi.

In order to explain the aforementioned points, this chapter will be divided into three sections. The first section will follow the events that occurred in the period from August 1892 to April 1894, to provide a general context to what had happened during the crisis which immediately preceded the First Sino-Japanese War. In the second section, this chapter will follow the crisis over Korea from May 1894 until it resulted in triggering the war in late July. Finally, the third section will focus specifically on the Anglo-Japanese relationship in the month between late June and late July, when the Sino-Japanese negotiation over Korea started to break down despite the British mediation. This coincided with when the final negotiation over the treaty revision between the British and Japanese governments had begun; they succeeded in signing the new treaty on 16 July. While the British government dealt with the crisis over Korea and the treaty revision as

¹⁵ Kobayashi, *19 Seiki Igirisu Gaikō to Higashi Ajia*; Sasaki, “The International Environment at the Time of the Sino-Japanese War,” 25-45.

two separate issues, the Japanese side considered that they were linked. As treaty revision was the most important diplomatic issue which the Japanese decision-makers tried to achieve since the 1850s, they took every precaution not to pursue any line of policy that might antagonise the British government at the very last stage of the negotiations. This perception strongly influenced how they dealt with the crisis over Korea. They therefore guaranteed London throughout July that they would limit their military operations in Korea and refrain from taking any measures that could disturb British commerce on the China coast. Such guarantees were enough to convince Rosebery and Kimberley – who were much more reluctant to intervene into the Korean affairs than their diplomats in East Asia – that their country should remain neutral over this issue, and at the same time the Japanese government managed to accomplish treaty revision. And thus the First Sino-Japanese War broke out as a bilateral conflict.

Prologue to the Sino-Japanese War: August 1892-April 1894

Both Britain and Japan experienced a change of administration in August 1892. In Britain, Gladstone formed a government for the fourth and the last time in his political career. In Japan, the first Matsukata administration, which had been fragile from the very beginning, finally collapsed. Many of the individuals within the Japanese decision-making circle turned to Itō Hirobumi to remedy the internal disunity within the government, and he agreed to become the Prime Minister if all of the major Meiji oligarchs would join his administration. Some of the big names such as Yamagata and Kuroda hesitated to come under the premiership of their political rival, but in the end they all agreed as they shared the perception that the government was in crisis, and the second

Itō administration was inaugurated on 8 August.¹⁶ After remedying the disintegration of the government, the administration managed to pass the budget with only minor revisions at the fourth session of the Diet, which commenced from 29 November and closed on 28 February 1893.

Meanwhile, from late 1892 the Japanese-Korean relationship started to become increasingly tense because of the difficulty over the rice embargo incident.¹⁷ While the Chosōn court had agreed in early 1892 that it was responsible for the loss of money that Japanese merchants had suffered over this issue, the two parties disagreed over the amount of the indemnity. The Korean negotiators told Kajiyama Teisuke, the Japanese Minister to Seoul, that they could pay about 48,000 to 60,000 yen while the Japanese government demanded 140,000 yen.¹⁸ In August 1892, Kajiyama argued that not only was the Chosōn court in a dire financial situation, it was also becoming increasingly incapable of sustaining domestic order within the kingdom, and that it was incapable of preventing provincial governors from introducing embargoes in a manner that was not

¹⁶ Unless specified, the information about the Japanese domestic politics in this chapter derive from; Akita, *Foundations of Constitutional Government in Modern Japan*, ch. 8; Banno, *Establishment of the Japanese Constitutional System*, ch. 2 section 3-5; Sasaki, *Hanbatsu Seifu to Rikken Seiji*, ch. 5, ch. 6 section 1-2.

¹⁷ For secondary sources, see articles by Makoto Yoshino; “Bōkokurei Jiken no Gaikō Kōshō – Saigo Tsūchō kara Daketsu made,” *Tōkai Daigaku Kiyō Bungakubu*, 100 (2013): 189-204; “Baishō Seikyū kara Ōishi-Cho Kōshō no Teiton made,” *Tōkai Daigaku Kiyō Bungakubu*, 88 (2007): 153-174; “Kankyōdō Bōkokurei Jiken – Baishō Seikyūan no Kentō,” *Tōkai Daigaku Kiyō Bungakubu*, 66 (1996): 1-18; “Richō Makki ni okeru Beikoku Yushutsu no Tenkai to Bōkokurei,” *Chōsenshi Kenkyūkai Ronbunshū*, 15 (Mar 1979): 101-131. See also Suji Lee, “Bōkoku Baishō Kōshō (1893 nen) ni okeru Nissinkan Kankei,” *Chūgoku Kenkyū Geppō*, 63:6 (June 2009): 1-14; Takeko Karasawa “Bōkokurei Jiken,” *Chōsenshi Kenkyūkai Ronbunshū*, 6 (June 1969): 64-93; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 2, ch. 21. In English, see Kim and Kim, *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism*, 71-3.

¹⁸ Kajiyama to Enomoto (Private), Seoul, 31 Mar 1892, KSKKT MuMKM 72-1; Kajiyama to Enomoto (機密第九十號本六一) Seoul, 4 Aug 1892 (13 Aug), *NGM*, vol. 25, pp. 331-3. Kajiyama to Mutsu (Private), Seoul, 15 Aug 1892, KSKKT MuMKM 72-1; Hara to Mutsu (Private), 28 Oct 1892, *NGM*, vol. 25, pp. 363-6.

permitted in the treaty.¹⁹ He suggested that since the Chosōn government could not muster the full amount, Japan should close the case by accepting the amount of reparations that it could pay.²⁰

Enomoto Takeaki, Mutsu's predecessor, was not as generous. He instructed Kajiyama just before he left office that the Japanese government believed that the Chosōn decision-makers were insincere over this issue. The former had negotiated patiently for three years and yet the latter proposed an indemnity that did not even fulfil half the amount that the Japanese demanded.²¹ After Kajiyama's efforts to convince his government to adopt a more conciliatory attitude had failed, Mutsu concluded that he should send Hara Takashi, the head of the Bureau of Commerce in Gaimushō, to conduct a detailed investigation into this issue before deciding on what to do.²² On 9 November, Hara wrote that the Japanese government should allow the Chosōn ministers to make its own investigation within a fixed period and conduct negotiations based upon its result.²³ However, if the Chosōn presented an amount that was unacceptable, then the Japanese government should consider recalling its Minister in Seoul, and if such measures were still inadequate to break the deadlock, then the Japanese government should consider resorting to gunboat diplomacy.²⁴ Although Hara emphasised that the latter should be regarded as a last resort, the Gaimushō started contemplating military intervention in Korea for the first time since the Kapsin incident.²⁵

¹⁹ Kajiyama to Enomoto (機密第九十號本六一) Seoul, 4 Aug 1892 (13 Aug), *NGM*, vol. 25, pp. 331-3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Enomoto to Kajiyama (機密送第五三二號), 2 Aug 1892, *NGM*, vol. 25, pp. 327-9.

²² Kajiyama to Enomoto (機密第九十號本六一) Seoul, 4 Aug 1892 (13 Aug); Kajiyama to Mutsu (機密第九十五號本六四) Seoul, 19 Aug 1892 (27 Aug); Mutsu to Kajiyama (機密送第六八四號), 24 Sept 1892, all from *NGM*, vol. 25, pp. 331-351.

²³ Memorandum by Hara, submitted to Mutsu, 9 Nov 1892, *NGM*, vol. 367-370.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

In late-December, the government appointed a member of the Jiyūtō named Ōishi Masami as the new Minister to Seoul.²⁶ While this might have been a necessary manoeuvre to gain support from one of the most powerful parties in the Diet, his appointment made the negotiations over the rice embargo even more complicated. He had no previous training or experience as a diplomat, and also was a member of a party which had been urging the government to adopt a more assertive policy towards Korea from the 1880s. He was uncompromising and inflexible about the demands, and had no understanding of diplomatic manners and rituals.²⁷ His attitude at the negotiating table frustrated the Chosōn negotiators as it was perceived as being arrogant and insulting.²⁸ The negotiations deteriorated to the extent that Itō and Mutsu had to ask Li and Yuan to persuade the Korean government to accept the Japanese demands.²⁹ Even after this, the Chosōn decision-makers were reluctant about complying, as the Japanese government demanded about 110,000 yen in total, a much larger sum than the former had argued that they could pay. It was only after the Japanese government sent an ultimatum that the Chosōn court finally complied on 19 May.³⁰

Throughout this process, Ōishi pressed his superiors in Tokyo to be firm over this issue,

²⁶ Hiroaki Ōsawa, “Chōsen Chūsatsu Benri Kōshi Ōishi Masami: Sono Ninmen to Hankyō,” *Kumamoto Hōgaku*, 127 (Mar 2013): 31-53.

²⁷ Ibid. Both diplomats in Korea and Mutsu criticised Ōishi’s attitude retrospectively after the case was settled in May 1893. See Arakawa to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), 7 May 1893 (rec. 7 May), *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 368-370; Mutsu to Arakawa (Unnumbered), 19 May 1893, *NGM*, vol. 26, 382-3; Nakagawa to Hara (Private), Wōnsan, 15 July 1893, *HTKM*, vol. 2, pp. 350-2.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Mutsu to Ōishi (Unnumbered), 6 Apr 1893, *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 316-8/KSKKT IKM 121-1. Mutsu to Ōishi (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), 1 enclosure, 10 Apr 1893, *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 328-330; Mutsu to Ōishi (機密送第三三九號), 1 enclosure, 12 Apr 1893, *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 330-2/KSKKT MuMKM 72-1; Mutsu to Li (Private), 12 Apr 1893, *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 335.

³⁰ See the section on the rice embargo incident in *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 272-413 and KSKKT MuMKM 72-1.

but the Japanese ministers and senior officials of the Gaimushō were very reluctant to take such a course.³¹ They were also cautious about infringing upon the spirit of the Tianjin Convention even if they needed to be somewhat firm over this issue. Thus, their policy kept to the line taken hitherto. However, the incident left the impression that the court in Seoul was much weaker than previously assumed; many Japanese officials thought that the incident occurred because the central government was unable to prevent provincial officials from imposing an unilateral embargo.³² The fact that it could not prevent the outbreak of the first Tonghak rebellion, which broke out in April 1893, did not help to improve that image.³³

In addition, both the Japanese diplomats and decision-makers were becoming increasingly suspicious of the Qing. As indicated in the previous chapter, Yuan was determined than Li to take more assertive measures to strengthen the Qing's position in Korea. Okamoto convincingly argues that Yuan thought that the best way to work within the framework of Li's instruction was to ensure that the Japanese and the Koreans remained on bad terms, as he thought that the Chosōn decision-makers would then have no option but to turn to the Qing. For this purpose he encouraged the Korean ministers to remain firm against the Japanese demands.³⁴ After the difficulty over the rice embargo incident, the Japanese diplomats in Korea became more or less convinced that Yuan was engaged in unfriendly manoeuvres despite acting in a friendly manner on the surface.³⁵ By May 1893, many of the officials in the Gaimushō too were becoming

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid. Such a view was held also by Western diplomats in Korea. See Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, 118-121.

³³ NGM, vol. 26, pp. 413-442.

³⁴ Okamoto, *Zokkoku to Jishu no Aida*, 378-9.

³⁵ Ōishi to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Seoul, 19 May 1893 (rec. 19 May), NGM, vol. 26, pp. 383; Ōishi to Mutsu (機密號外), Seoul, 21 May 1893 (rec. 30 May), NGM, vol. 26, pp. 393-4.

receptive to this argument, and started to worry that Li was turning a blind eye to what Yuan was doing.³⁶

Nonetheless, the situation in Korea became calmer after May. As the Japanese government had stabilised the domestic political situation in the fourth Diet, they accordingly decided to reopen the negotiations for treaty revision and submitted the draft of a new treaty to the British government before any other Western country in July 1893.³⁷ Mutsu appointed Aoki, who by this time was serving as the Minister to Germany, as his negotiator.³⁸ The draft that the Japanese government submitted to the British counterpart was roughly the same as the one that Aoki had drawn up when he had served as Foreign Minister; the unconditional abolition of British consular jurisdiction, in return for a Japanese commitment to permit British residents in Japan to travel, reside and engage in commercial activities freely within its jurisdiction, although with some restrictions.³⁹ As the question of treaty revision had already become an important issue within Japanese domestic politics, it inevitably caught the public eye when the government reopened the negotiations. Influenced by strong distrust towards foreigners, many political activists argued against signing any new treaty that would allow foreigners access to the Japanese interior, and thought that retention of the unequal treaties was a better option.⁴⁰

³⁶ Mutsu to Ōishi (秘電送第一〇七號), 8 May 1893, *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 372/KSKKT MuMKM 72-1; Mutsu to Arakawa (機密送第五一八號), 14 June 1893, *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 400-1.

³⁷ Memorandum on the Cabinet Meeting on Treaty Revision, 8 July 1893, *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 12-3.

³⁸ Ibid; Mutsu to Kawase (送第五六九號), 25 July 1893; Mutsu to Aoki (Telegraphic 送第五六七號), 25 July 1893, both from *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 13-6.

³⁹ Memorandum on the Cabinet Meeting on Treaty Revision, 8 July 1893; Mutsu to Kawase (送第五六九號), 25 July 1893; Mutsu to Aoki (Telegraphic 送第五六七號), 25 July 1893; Mutsu to Aoki (第五六八號), 25 July 1893, all from *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 12-21.

⁴⁰ Sakeda, *Kindai Nihon ni okeru Taigaikō Undō no Kenkyū*, ch. 1, section 2.

Anti-foreign sentiment had already become a problem in Japan by the late-1880s, but a new Anglo-Japanese diplomatic difficulty arose on 30 November 1892 due to a collision between the Japanese warship *Chishima* and the *Ravenna*, a steamer owned by the Peninsular and Oriental Navigation Company (P&O). This provided a fresh source of anti-foreign excitement for the Japanese public. Both the Japanese government and the P&O held each other responsible for the collision, and in the first trial the Yokohama consular court ruled that the latter was the guilty party. However, when the Yokohama consular court rejected the full amount of compensation that the Japanese government demanded, the latter decided to appeal to the British Supreme Court in Shanghai, which then proceeded to overturn the sentence at Yokohama and held the *Chishima* responsible for the incident.⁴¹ As a result, the Japanese government was criticized by anti-governmental parties in the fifth Diet, which convened on 28 November 1893, for failing to hold the British company accountable.⁴² In addition, two weeks prior to the convening of the Diet, Archdeacon Alexander Croft Shaw, the chaplain of the British legation, was attacked by a Japanese mob. This incident made the British diplomats in Tokyo fear that anti-foreign sentiment was growing.⁴³

Whereas the administration had taken a relatively conciliatory attitude in dealing with the Diet in the fourth session, the decision-makers chose to be firm during the next session. They immediately arrested the mob that had attacked Shaw, and ordered the dissolution

⁴¹ Katsumada (Governor of Ehime Prefecture) to Mutsu (Telegraphic, 至急 電受第二四三號), Ehime, 30 Nov 1892 (rec. 30 Nov), *NGM*, vol. 25, pp. 279-280; Katsumada to Mutsu (Telegraphic 至急 電受第二四四號), Ehime, 30 Nov 1892 (rec. 30 Nov), *NGM*, vol. 25, pp. 280; Mutsu to Saigō (送第一六六號), 2 enclosures, 26 Oct 1893, *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 240-257.

⁴² De Bunsen to his mother (Private), 24 Nov 1893, MBP Bodleian, De Bunsen 5u (MB/I/u); De Bunsen to Rosebery (No. 128), Tokio, 30 Nov 1893 (rec. 1 Jan 1893), FO 46/429.

⁴³ Ibid.

of the Lower House on 31 December when it submitted a bill that criticised treaty revision.⁴⁴ Both Itō and Mutsu were aware that the British diplomats in Japan had been reporting about the anti-foreign movement, which was arousing deep concern among the senior officials of Foreign Office. These reports had created uncertainty among the senior officials of the Foreign Office about whether they should agree to abolish extraterritoriality. They also feared that the Itō administration might not be strong enough to stave off the pressure from the Diet.⁴⁵ Aoki reported to the Gaimushō that if the Japanese government wanted to succeed in the negotiations then it had to gain the confidence of the British by making it clear that the current administration had no interest in yielding to the opinions of the anti-foreign political activists.⁴⁶

The Japanese government's determination was duly reported by Maurice de Bunsen, who at this time was serving as the Chargé d'Affaires to Japan. On 12 January 1894, he reported to the Foreign Office that, "IF (*sic*) treaty revision is not to be indefinitely postponed, I consider advantage great of negotiating with the present gov[ernmen]t, which is strong and friendly."⁴⁷ While there was no likelihood that the agitation from the supporters of anti-foreign policies would end in the near future, the current

⁴⁴ De Bunsen to Rosebery (No. 125), Tokyo, 30 Nov 1893, (rec. 1 Jan 1894), FO 46/429; De Bunsen to Rosebery (No. 139), Tokyo, 23 Dec 1893 (rec. 29 Jan 1894), FO 46/429; De Bunsen to Rosebery (No. 17 Telegraphic), Tokyo, 31 Dec 1893 (rec. 31 Dec), FO 46/430. See also Aoki to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Berlin, 23 Dec 1893, *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 111; Mutsu to Aoki, (Telegraphic No. 297), 24 Dec 1894, *NGM*, vol. 26, 111-2; Mutsu to Aoki (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), 2 enclosures, 31 Dec 1893, *NGM*, vol. 26, 112-132; De Bunsen to Rosebery (No. 17 Telegraphic), Tokyo, 31 Dec 1893 (rec. 31 Dec), FO 46/430; Mutsu to Itō (Private), 9 Jan 1894, *IHKM*, vol. 9, pp. 159-160.

⁴⁵ De Bunsen to Rosebery (No. 38), Tokyo, 25 Mar 1893 (rec. 3 May), FO 46/428; De Bunsen to Rosebery (No. 139), Tokyo, 23 Dec 1893 (rec. 29 Jan 1894), FO 46/429.

⁴⁶ Aoki to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), London, 22 Sept 1893, *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 40; Mutsu to Kawase (送第八五〇號), 20 Oct 1893, *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 76; Aoki to Mutsu (別信第三號), Berlin, 11 Nov 1893 (rec. 19 Dec), *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 95-8; Aoki to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Berlin, 23 Dec 1893, *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 111.

⁴⁷ De Bunsen to Rosebery (No. 1 Telegraphic), Tokyo, 12 Jan 1894, rec. 13 Jan, FO 46/440.

government had been much firmer against such agitation than its predecessors. As the current administration was much more stable than its forebears, he recommended that the British government should negotiate, although they should wait until discovering the outcome of the upcoming election in March. After receiving this telegram, Francis Bertie, the Assistant Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, complied.

If we refuse to negotiate or leave unanswered the Japanese proposals, a strong anti-English movement encouraged by the Japanese Government may ensue. [T]he exigencies of party warfare may drive whatever Government in power into a denunciation [of the existing Anglo-Japanese treaty], leaving us with no trade advantages.... In such case, we are not locally in a position to enforce our existing Treaty rights. The Japanese have a navy nearly as strong as that of China. Their coast defences are nearly finished, and will be formidable, and their army consists of 70,000 well-armed and well-drilled troops. The great object which Japan and China have in common, and which is also an English interest, is to keep Russia out of Corea (*sic*)....⁴⁸

Under such conditions, Bertie argued, the wisest thing for the Foreign Office to do was to proceed with the negotiations while there was a stable administration that was also willing to take a firm stance against the anti-foreign agitators. Sir Thomas Sanderson and the Earl of Rosebery, the Permanent Undersecretary of the Foreign Affairs and the Foreign Secretary, concurred.⁴⁹

Another fact that was somewhat more encouraging for them was that the political parties opposed to treaty revision failed to win a majority within the Lower House in the general election held on 1 March 1894. The party that won the largest number of seats was the Jiyūtō, which secured 120 out of 300. The Jiyūtō and Kaishintō were the two

⁴⁸ Memorandum by Bertie with Minutes, FO, 13 Jan 1894, FO 46/445.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

parties in the Lower House that had played a leading role in the anti-governmental campaign since the 1880s, but the Jiyūtō was starting to soften its attitude against the government from late 1892 onwards as the administration had begun to make some political compromises with its leaders. However, the political environment was still far from being safe for the administration. Despite holding more seats than any other party, the Jiyūtō was still 30 seats short of a majority. In addition, although the Jiyūtō chose to support the government over treaty revision, the relationship between the party and the government was far from being easy, as the former was still of the opinion that it must make serious efforts to reduce taxation. As the domestic political situation remained unpredictable, the ideal outcome was that the new Anglo-Japanese treaty should be signed before the opening of the sixth session of the Diet, but the negotiations over the details of the new treaty took much longer.

It was under these conditions that another Korea-related incident broke out.⁵⁰ In early 1894, the Japanese diplomats in Asia sent several reports warning that the Chosōn ministers might have sent agents to Japan to assassinate Kim Ok-kyun and Pak Yōng-hyo, who were living as political exiles in Japan.⁵¹ The Japanese government reiterated the stance that it had taken over this issue from 1885, that it had to fulfil its obligations under international law to protect any political exiles within its jurisdiction.⁵² The agents with

⁵⁰ For secondary sources on the assassination of Kim Ok-kyun, see; Tsutomu Arai, “Kin Gyokukin Ansatsu Kyōsahan no Hanzaichi ni tsuite,” *Nihon Hōgaku*, 71:4 (Mar 2006): 1251-1288; Mizuno Kobayashi, “Nisshin Sensō Kaisen Zenya no Shisō Jōkyō – Kin Gyokukin Ansatsu Jiken o Meguru Ichikōsatsu,” *Aoyama Gakuin Joshi Tanki Daigaku Kiyō*, 64 (Dec 2010): 45-64; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 2, ch. 22.

⁵¹ Nakagawa to Mutsu (親展), Hong Kong, 31 Jan 1894 (rec. 10 Feb), *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 482-3; Nakagawa to Hara (Private), Hong Kong, 12 Feb 1894, *HTKM*, vol. 2, pp. 362-3.

⁵² Yoo to Mutsu (第十五號), Korean Legation in Tokyo, 2 Mar 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 525-8; Memorandum on the Punishment of Korean Assassins, written by H. W. Denison at Gaimushō, 30 Mar 1894, KSKKT MuMKM 73-12; Mutsu to Yoo (親展送第二六號), 2 Apr 1894, KSKKT MuMKM 75-4. A copy of the royal rescript that the assassin was

the credentials to assassinate the exiles were arrested in Japan in early March.⁵³ However, on 24 March, Kim boarded a ship bound for Shanghai, and was assassinated four days later in that city by a Chosōn agent named Hong Chong-u.⁵⁴ After the incident was investigated by the treaty-port police, the Chosōn authority pressed the local authority to hand over Kim's body.⁵⁵ The Japanese government feared that the Chosōn government might display the corpse in public in order to humiliate the traitor, and made strenuous protests against any such move not to do so, but once the handover took place the body of Kim was amputated into four pieces which were displayed in public on 15 April.⁵⁶

Several historians have argued that Kim's assassination was the incident that made Japanese sentiment – both inside and outside of the government – become decisively hostile towards the Chosōn and the Qing.⁵⁷ Indeed, the incident did lead to a massive public outcry. The press were critical that the Chosōn officials had blatantly humiliated Japan by hunting down a political exile and by doing so had disrespected the sovereignty of their country.⁵⁸ Moreover the manner in which the dead body of Kim was exposed in

carrying is kept within the KSKKT MuMKM 73-11.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Mutsu to Ōkoshi (Telegraphic, 電報第五五號), 24 Mar 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 483-4; Onoda to Inoue (Private), 24 Mar 1894, IKM KSKKT 147-2; Ōkoshi to Mutsu (Telegraphic, 電送第七八號), Shanghai, 28 Mar 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 484-5.

⁵⁵ Mutsu to Ōtori, 31 Mar 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 495; Mutsu to Komura (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), 13 Apr 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 505-6.

⁵⁶ Ōtori to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Seoul, 15 Apr 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 506.

⁵⁷ Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 221-9; Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, ch. 5; Mayuko Mori, "The Outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War and the Issue of Suzerain-Vassal as Viewed from the Standpoint of Chosōn," *International Journal of Korean History*, 17:1 (Feb 2012): 32; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 2, ch. 22.

⁵⁸ Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 2, 202-8; Saitō, *Nisshin Sensō no Gunji Senryaku*, 51-2.

public was perceived as being utterly barbaric.⁵⁹ Additionally, as Kim had been lured to and killed in Shanghai, the Japanese press looked suspiciously towards the Qing officials, thinking that they had cooperated with the Chosōn authorities.⁶⁰ This sense was shared by individuals within the government, and in late-April, Nakagawa Tsunejirō, the Consul in Hong Kong, argued that the Gaimushō should stop assuming that Li was inclined to take a conciliatory attitude towards Japan.⁶¹ This incident took the public attention away from the treaty revision talks and made the position of the Japanese government even more difficult.

Of course, as Conroy has argued, it was the Japanese perception towards the Qing and Chosōn that shifted as a result of the assassination of Kim, not the policy, and the senior officials of Gaimushō dealt with this issue with restraint.⁶² However, it is important to note that this series of incidents occurred in rapid succession, and consequently resulted in some Japanese decision-makers seeing their East Asian neighbours with much stronger suspicion than before. From the domestic political perspectives, the second Itō administration was relatively successful in strengthening its foothold vis-à-vis the Diet, but it was clear that more hardships awaited them in the future, and no minister could be certain about the fate of the administration.

The British government observed the affairs in Korea before May 1894 relatively passively. Its diplomats in East Asia reported about the Japanese-Korean difficulty over the rice embargo and about the first Tonghak uprising, but there are no indications that

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Onoda to Inoue (Private), 24 Mar 1894, IKM KSKKT 147-2; Ōkoshi to Mutsu (電送第七八號), Shanghai, 28 Mar 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 484-5; Nakagawa to Hara (Private), Hong Kong, 20 Apr 1894, *HTKM*, vol. 2, pp. 365-6.

⁶² Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 229; *NGM*, vol. 27-1, 483-525.

the Foreign Office felt the need to respond.⁶³ The Foreign Office under Rosebery's ministership continued to pursue East Asian policy along the lines that the British government had taken from 1887. It operated under the perception that the Qing was the most influential country in the region, and thus made efforts to avoid upsetting its decision-makers. For this purpose, the British officials in London and the diplomats in East Asia continued to bite their tongue over the Qing claim of suzerainty over their neighbouring kingdoms.

At the same time, East Asian policy after August 1892 was also a continuation of the one by the previous administration in the sense that the British decision-makers did not necessarily see the Qing under a positive light. In September 1892, Nicholas O'Conor replaced Walsham as the Minister in Beijing. Compared to his passive predecessor, O'Conor was known for his forthright negotiating style, and was actually successful in gaining some concessions from the Qing not only over trade but also over border disputes on the Burmese and Central Asian frontiers.⁶⁴ When the British government faced new diplomatic difficulties with Russia in the Pamir region in Central Asia and with France over Siam, Rosebery did not contemplate the idea of forming an alliance with the Qing as the British government once had in 1885.⁶⁵ Also, while the British relationship with

⁶³ De Bunsen to Rosebery (No. 5 Confidential), 1 enclosure, Tokyo, 16 Jan 1893 (rec. 16 Feb), FO 46/428; O'Conor to Rosebery (No. 105), Beijing, 24 Apr 1893, rec. 13 June, FO 17/1156; De Bunsen to Rosebery (No. 59), Tokyo, 18 May 1893 (rec. 22 June), FO 46/428; De Bunsen to Rosebery (No. 62), Tokyo, 24 May 1893 (rec. 5 July), FO 46/428. Also see De Bunsen to His Mother (Private), Tokyo, 17 Apr 1893, MBP Bodleian De Bunsen 5-u (MB/I/u).

⁶⁴ O'Conor to Rosebery (No. 156) and enclosures, Beijing, 5 July 1893, rec. 21 Aug, FO 17/1157; O'Conor to Rosebery (No. 228) and enclosures, Beijing, 12 Oct 1894, rec. 1 Dec, FO 17/1158; O'Conor to Rosebery (No. 281), Beijing, 9 Dec 1893, rec. 5 Feb 1894, FO 17/1158. Also see Otte, *The China Question*, 25.

⁶⁵ See the relevant folios in RP NLS and KP Bodleian. For secondary sources, see Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier*, ch. 5, sections 3 and 4; Gordon Martel, *Imperial Diplomacy: Rosebery and Failure of Foreign Policy*, (London: Mansell Publishing, 1986), ch. 4.

Japan was not always easy, the relationship was definitely not hostile, and the British decision-makers were cautious about taking measures that might make their Japanese counterparts feel marginalised. As the British thought that the Japanese were not in a good relationship with the Qing, they were reluctant to pursue the goodwill of Qing decision-makers beyond a certain point.

Just before East Asia headed into crisis, Gladstone resigned the premiership, and was succeeded by Rosebery on 2 March 1894. While the vacant seat of the Foreign Secretary was handed over to Kimberley, Rosebery continued to cast a significant degree of influence over the foreign policy-making process even after he became Prime Minister.⁶⁶ However, Kimberley did matter in the decision-making process. After all, he had served as the Secretary of State for India in the past, and had been in office when the Anglo-Chinese convention over Burma was signed. The difficult negotiations over this issue had left Kimberley with a bad impression of the Qing, and he continued to see their activities in Central Asian and Burmese frontier with strong suspicion after he had returned to office in August 1892.⁶⁷ Such an individual was the minister responsible for the Foreign Office during the Sino-Japanese crisis.

The Road to the Sino-Japanese War, May-July 1894

The direct cause of the Sino-Japanese crisis of June and July 1894 was the Kabo peasant rebellion.⁶⁸ The rebellion began in February as a revolt against the provincial governor

⁶⁶ Martel, *Imperial Diplomacy*, ch. 4; Otte, *The China Question*, 9-10.

⁶⁷ Kimberley to Rosebery (Private), 30 Dec 1892, MS.10247; Kimberley to Rosebery (Private), IO, 11 July 1893, MS.10068. Both RP NLS.

⁶⁸ Secondary sources on the Sino-Japanese crisis in summer 1894 include: Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, 234-260; Kim and Kim, *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism*, 77-80; Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, 124-181; Saitō, *Nisshin Sensō*

in Chōlla province, but by April had spread across the southern part of the Korean peninsula.⁶⁹ After the local provincial forces were defeated in early May, the court in Seoul decided to dispatch its troops, but the rebels fought with determination in late May, and gained some success in a battle at Chōnju. Following this, the court in Seoul came to the conclusion that they should request the Qing to send troops. The Qing informed the Japanese that they would send troops to Korea, as obliged by the Tianjin Convention, and dispatched them on 8 June.⁷⁰ Upon receiving this correspondence, the Japanese government immediately replied that it too would send troops.⁷¹ The Sino-Japanese relationship became inevitably tense as the troops of both countries landed in Korea.

As already mentioned, much of the existing literature on the origins of the First Sino-Japanese War, particularly that coming from the historians who focus on the Japanese diplomatic and imperial policy-making process, argues that Mutsu took this sudden crisis as an opportunity to spark a war in order to satisfy public opinion and solve the Korean problem. However, considering how the Japanese had perceived events in Korea over the past two years, it is not surprising that they felt the need for action as they feared that otherwise the Qing might use this incident to expand its influence. Indeed, preparations for military action were quickly made in case the situation escalated. As early as 22 May, when the Gaimushō and the army general staff started to receive alarming reports about the rebellion, Itō authorised the IJA to mobilise a brigade. Japan was thus well

⁶⁹ *no Gunji Senryaku*, 53-69; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 2, chs. 24-31; Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*, part 2, ch. 1, sections 1-2 and ch. 2. Just as in the case for the Kapsin incident, most of the archival materials relevant to the Sino-Japanese crisis of 1894 in GS 1-1-2-9 vol. 1 (JACAR B03030204300) are included in *NGM* vols 27-1 and 27-2. Unless specified, this chapter will refer only to the *NGM* when citing official diplomatic correspondence.

⁷⁰ For the outbreak of the Kabo peasant rebellion, see Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 2, ch. 23, section 67.

⁷¹ Wang to Mutsu, 7 June 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 167-9.

⁷¹ Komura to Mutsu (機密第二十信號), 8 June 1894 (21 June), *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 174.

placed to dispatch troops by the time the Qing decided to do so a week later.⁷² On 9 June, about 4,000 soldiers were sent to Korea, which was quite a large number for the protection of treaty ports; the Qing expeditionary force had only 1,500 troops despite the fact that they were being sent to suppress a rebellion.⁷³ Moreover, the Japanese general staff decided a week before to start general mobilisation of the entire service in case more troops had to be dispatched in the near future. On 5 June they declared the establishment of a general headquarters, as it was impossible to mobilise that amount of troops without putting the entire service on a war footing.⁷⁴

The situation in Korea made the Japanese decision-makers feel the necessity to make determined efforts to retain their interest in that country. However, at this stage they were only reacting to the crisis developing in Korea rather than initiating anything. Despite the fact that the media was already reporting about the rebellion in late April, it was not until the last week of May that they started mobilising their troops.⁷⁵ In addition, the Gaimushō instructed Ōtori Keisuke, the Minister to the Chosōn who had left Tokyo on 5 June, to return to the legation after a short leave of absence with 300 marines and 20 policemen but to be very cautious after he returned to his post in Seoul.⁷⁶ As he left for Korea before the Qing informed Japan that it would dispatch troops, Mutsu had instructed Ōtori that the Japanese government would send troops if the situation in Korea deteriorated in the future, but that “the objective of the Japanese government would be to

⁷² Sugimura to Mutsu (機密第六十三號本四二), Seoul, 22 May 1894 (rec. 28 May), *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 152-3. Saitō, *Nisshin Sensō no Gunji Senryaku*, 52; Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*, 323-4.

⁷³ Army General Staff to Nozu (Telegraphic 暗号第二号), 5 June 1894, BKS, 大本營-日清戰役電報綴-M27-1-113 (JACAR C06060666100).

⁷⁴ Ibid; Saitō, *Nisshin Sensō no Gunji Senryaku*, 54-5.

⁷⁵ Saitō, *Nisshin Sensō no Gunji Senryaku*, 52.

⁷⁶ Mutsu to Ōtori (機密送第十九號), 4 June 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 160-2.

protect the Japanese legation and residents in Korea.”⁷⁷ Mutsu authorised Ōtori to use his own discretion in dealing with the situation, but also told him to “be very careful not to cause any unnecessary troubles with the Qing army in Korea.”⁷⁸ Until the second week of June, the Japanese decision-makers were not intending to be assertive for other purposes.

It was only after the Japanese government had dispatched the brigade that the instructions from Tokyo to Seoul started to become more assertive. The Ninth Brigade of the IJA, under the command of the Fifth Division, arrived in Korea on 11 June, but by that time the army of the Chosōn court had managed to recoup its strategic foothold and driven the rebels out from Chōnju.⁷⁹ Faced with these new conditions in Korea, the Japanese diplomats in East Asia asked for fresh instructions on what to do from this point on.⁸⁰ Mutsu now replied that as there were a large number of Japanese troops in Korea, they should not fail to seize this opportunity to demand that the Chosōn authorities engage in domestic reform, as Sugimura Fukashi, a veteran diplomat who by this time had served in Korea for quite a long time and was acting as Chargé d’Affaires until Ōtori returned, had argued in late-May.⁸¹ Mutsu contended that the root cause of the rebellion was the degree of poverty that the ordinary Korean people had to endure as a result of its

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ For the arrival of the Japanese brigade, see Ōtori to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Seoul, 12 June 1894 (rec. 13 June), *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 186-7. Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 2, pp. 261-4.

⁸⁰ Komura to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Beijing, 10 June 1894 (rec. 10 June); Ōtori to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Seoul, 11 June 1894 (rec. 11 June); Ōtori to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Seoul, 11 June (rec. 12 June), all from *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 179-185.

⁸¹ Mutsu to Komura (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), 11 June 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 183; Mutsu to Ōtori (内訓), 11 June 1894, KSKKT MuMKM 75-11. For Sugimura’s argument, see Sugimura to Mutsu (機密第六十三號本四二), Seoul, 22 May 1894 (rec. 28 May), *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 152-3.

exploitation by, and the corruption of, the officials and ministers. Even if the Chosōn court managed to suppress the rebellion, it would not be able to bring about long-term stability unless it engaged in thorough reform. He also felt that it might be worth demanding concessions in regard to railroads and telegraphs and the opening of other treaty ports, but at any rate the Japanese government should not withdraw its troops until the regime had given satisfactory replies to the request for reform. Mutsu proposed at the cabinet meeting on 15 June that;

While the outcome of the recent disturbance in Korea remains somewhat uncertain, it seems as if the Korean government is about to suppress the rebels. Yet, ...it is unlikely that the Korean government can provide long term domestic stability in that country. And if another rebellion would break out, then it would be inevitable for both the Qing and the Japanese governments to dispatch troops, which could lead to further destabilisation of the international environment in East Asia. In order to maintain peace in East Asia, I propose to the cabinet that the following two actions are necessary. First, we should cooperate with the Qing to suppress the rebellion in a thorough manner. Second, after the suppression, Qing and Japan should establish a joint committee that would be responsible for reforming the Korean finance, governance and military. ...Until the negotiation with the Qing government over this issue would come to a satisfactory end, [the Japanese government] should not withdraw its troops. If the Qing government rejects our proposal, then the Imperial Japanese government must carry the proposal out on its own.⁸²

This proposal was approved on the spot, and communicated immediately to the court in Beijing. Also the Japanese government took the opportunity to dispatch another 3,600 troops to Korea.⁸³

⁸² Memorandum on the Cabinet Decision on the Korean Question, 15 June, *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 206-7/ KSKKT MuMKM 74-4.

⁸³ For the communication of the proposal, see Mutsu and Wang, 16 June 1894, KSKKT MuMKM 74-5. For dispatch of troops, see Yamane to the General Headquarters (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Ujina, 15 June 1894 (rec. 15 June), BKS, 大本營-日清戰役電報綴-M27-3-115. The first 600 troops arrived at Inch'ón on 19 June, and the

Historians have debated the reason behind Mutsu's zeal in pushing his agenda, and also over why the others within the Japanese decision-making circle were agreeable to taking this course, which clearly intended to alter the post-1887 order quite drastically. As already noted, a number of scholars of Japanese imperialism and diplomacy have tended to emphasise the importance of domestic politics at this point. They correctly point out that around the time when the Chosōn central army was experiencing a temporary setback against the rebels in the last week of May, the anti-governmental parties of the Lower House had managed to bring the non-party members of the chamber on to their side. With their support, they passed a bill of no-confidence towards the government.⁸⁴ The government therefore had no other option but to dissolve the Diet on 31 May.⁸⁵

This development happened at a most untimely moment; it was on the same day that the Gaimushō informed its ministers in Washington, Paris, Berlin and St. Petersburg that they should initiate negotiations over treaty revision with their host countries as the talks with Britain had made decisive progress.⁸⁶ It would not be surprising if a nightmare scenario – the negotiations having to be adjourned indefinitely again as a result of domestic pressure right at the time when they were starting to make progress – crossed the minds of the decision-makers. There was therefore a very good reason for the

remaining 3,000 landed on Pusan and Wōnsan the next day. See Ōtori to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), 19 June 1894 (rec. 21 June), *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 219; Ōtori to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Seoul, 20 June 1894 (rec. 21 June), *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 224; Ōtori and Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Seoul, 20 June 1894 (rec. 21 June), *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 224-5.

⁸⁴ Sasaki, *Hanbatsu Seifu to Rikken Seiji*, 380.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Mutsu to Tateno (送第一九號), 22 May 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 160-1; Mutsu to Aoki (送第一二號), 31 May 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 129-130; Mutsu to Nishi (送第十二號), 31 May 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 221-2; Mutsu to Sone (送第十四號), 31 May 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 331-2. Mutsu to Yamagata (Private), 17 May 1894, *YAKM*, vol. 3, pp. 268-9. In this document, Mutsu wrote that Aoki telegraphed two days ago that there has been major progress in the negotiations with Britain.

Japanese government to become much more sensitive towards public opinion in the first two weeks of June than it had been in late-May, and there were, of course, many individuals within the anti-governmental parties and the press who supported an assertive policy towards Korea.⁸⁷

On the other hand, scholars of modern East Asian history stress the significance of the international environment that surrounded Japan. For example, Okamoto cites many documents which indicate that when Yuan received the official request for military support from the court in Seoul, he perceived this as an opportunity to further strengthen the suzerain-vassal relationship by making Chosōn agree that it would entrust its suzerain with responsibility for the security of the kingdom.⁸⁸ When Yuan contacted Sugimura, he received the impression that the Japanese were more passive than he had expected, and that they were not in a position to quickly organise an expedition because of the tumultuous domestic situation.⁸⁹ Li trusted his report, and in the end approved Yuan taking the steps he thought were necessary.⁹⁰ Okamoto argues therefore that the Japanese decision-makers were reacting against the policy that the Qing decision-makers were pursuing in Korea. The problem with this argument is that there are very few documents that shed light on how the Japanese diplomats perceived the Qing actions in Korea during the first two weeks of June, how their opinions were communicated to Gaimushō, and how they influenced the latter.⁹¹ However, there are sources which

⁸⁷ Itō to Mutsu (Private), 2 June 1894, *YAKM*, vol. 1, pp. 120; Itō Miyōji to Itō (Private), 7 June 1894, *IHKM*, vol. 2, pp. 289-290.

⁸⁸ Okamoto, *Zokkoku to Jishu no Aida*, 380-2.

⁸⁹ Okamoto, *Ri Kōshō*, 174.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ There is a memoir by Sugimura, but the problem with this source is that it was written post-facto and thus from the benefit of the hindsight. See Fukashi Sugimura, *Meiji Nijū Shichihachinen Zaikan Kushinroku (Records of Hardships in Korea, 1894-5)*, (Tokyo: Private Publication of Sugimura Fukashi's Son, Yōtarō, 1932). Sugimura Fukashi died in 1906. Sugimura's diary does exist, and has many entries about the

indicate that the Japanese diplomats in East Asia were keeping a close eye on the actions of the Qing decision-makers, which is not surprising considering the suspicion that the Japanese diplomats had towards Yuan.⁹²

In a semi-official document that Mutsu sent to Ōtori on 11 June he raised several reasons why he thought the Japanese government needed to take a robust stance against the Qing and Chosōn.

[If the Japanese troops would withdraw its troops] without firing a single shot in Korea, then only the Qing would be credited for contributing to the suppression of the Tonghaks. ...If that would be the case, then the domestic opposition would not be satisfied, and it would encourage them to make up groundless accusations to attack the government.... [In addition], is it not a good idea to initiate diplomatic negotiations [with the Qing and the Chosōn] over the Korean question? In order to be successful in negotiations over Korea, [the Japanese government must] be firm.... Now that we have mobilised a large number of troops, it does not make sense to withdraw them without making use of them. According to the telegraph received yesterday, the Qing government was rather shocked to see us dispatch troops as quickly as we did... and is proposing that both the Qing and Japan should withdraw their troops as quickly as possible. However, [if the Qing officials in Korea contacted Ōtori over this issue, then] you should inform them that you cannot authorise withdrawal of troops without the permission of the government.⁹³

assassination of Queen Min in December 1895 – a conspiracy with which he was involved – but none on May to July 1894. See Sugimurakun Nikki (Diary of Mr. Sugimura), which is part of the Sunaga Collection, kept at the Sanoshi Kyōdo Hakubutsukan (Sano Local Museum), Sano city, Tochigi prefecture. It has been published as Shingo Fukushima, “Jingo Kōshin Minhi Jiken Kanren no ‘Sugimurakun Nikki’ – Kenkyū to Kōsatsu (Entries of the ‘Diary of Mr. Sugimura’ Related to Imo, Gapsin and Queen Min Incidents: Research and Observations),” *Senshū Shigaku*, 22 (April 1990): 45-68; Shingo Fukushima, “Jingo Kōshin Minhi Jiken Kanren no ‘Sugimurakun Nikki’ – Kenkyū to Kōsatsu – Zoku (Entries of the ‘Diary of Mr. Sugimura’ Related to Imo, Gapsin and Queen Min Incidents: Research and Observations, Continued),” *Senshū Shigaku*, 22 (Apr 1990): 35-83. Also refer to Mori, “The Outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War,” 54.

⁹² Ōkoshi to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Shanghai, 8 June 1894 (rec. 8 June); Ōkoshi to Mutsu (機密第三十二號), Shanghai, 8 June 1894 (rec. 14 June), both from *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 171-6.

⁹³ Mutsu to Ōtori (内訓), 11 June 1894, KSKKT MuMKM 75-11.

In this document, Mutsu clearly expressed his concern about the domestic political situation, but he also indicated that he believed in the need for a counter-maneuvre against the Qing in Korea. Both the domestic and international factors thus contributed to making the Japanese adopt a firm policy.

Takahashi, who has conducted the most extensive research of the available primary sources relating to Japanese decision-making, has argued that after 15 June Mutsu conducted diplomacy with the intention of breaking up the negotiations and starting a war.⁹⁴ Indeed, as the proposal that he submitted to the cabinet that day demanded that the Chinese regard Japan as their partner in dealing with the current disorder in Korea, it is not surprising to see that the Qing decision-makers were reluctant to accept it.⁹⁵ In addition, when Japanese government learned from its diplomats that the Qing was starting to mobilise its troops and send reinforcements to Korea, it responded by dispatching another 2,000 troops.⁹⁶ The Japanese government was determined to strengthen its foothold while it enjoyed the strategic upper hand in Korea, and also made military preparations so that it could send reinforcements to retain that advantage even if the Qing sent in more troops.

⁹⁴ Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*, 358. His argument follows the line that Nakatsuka and Pak had forwarded before him. See Nakatsuka, *Nisshin Sensō no Kenkyū*; Pak, *Nisshin Sensō to Chōsen*.

⁹⁵ Arakawa to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Tianjin 18 June 1894 (rec. 19 June), *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 218.

⁹⁶ Nose to Hara (Private), 20 June 1894, *HTKM*, vol. 2, pp. 570-1; Kamio to Army General Staff (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Tianjin, 20 June 1894 (rec. 21 June), BKS, 大本營-日清戰役電報綴-M27-1-113 (JACAR C06060743900); Mutsu to Katō (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), 23 June 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 558-9; Mutsu to Ōtori (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), 23 June 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 559; The Head of the Army General Staff to Captain Shiba Katsusaburō (officer in Pusan), General Headquarter, 23 June 1894, BKS, 大本營-日清戰役電報綴-M27-1-113 (JACAR C06060678700).

At the same time, it should also be emphasised that the Qing decision-makers were as unyielding as their Japanese counterparts over their interests in Korea. What the proposal of 15 June called for was only a joint Sino-Japanese intervention and the supervision of reform. While the Japanese authorities told their Qing counterparts on several occasions that they had never officially approved of the Qing claim of suzerainty over the Chosōn dynasty, they carefully avoided mentioning about that issue on this occasion.⁹⁷ Of course, acceptance of such terms would still be a setback for the Qing, but it should also be remembered that as the Japanese had responded quite effectively against the initial Qing opportunism towards Korea in early June, the latter was in an inferior strategic position. If the Chinese wanted to get out of this situation peacefully, then it was therefore necessary for the Chinese to make some concessions, just as the Japanese had had to do when their adventurism had failed in 1885. Considering this fact, the Japanese proposal was so harsh as to make it inevitable that the Qing decision-makers would reject it.

Okamoto, Tabohashi and Kirk Larsen all present evidence that Li was not willing to risk war against Japan over this issue, as he was very aware of the weakness of his military.⁹⁸ However, by this time the influence of the hardliners within the Qing decision-making circle was becoming too strong for Li to ignore.⁹⁹ On 22 June, Wang Fengzao, the Qing Minister in Tokyo, communicated that his government did not feel the

⁹⁷ For the Japanese denial of Chinese suzerainty over Korea, see Mutsu to Wang (送第九號), 7 June 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 169; Mutsu to Komura (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), 11 June 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 183; Mutsu to Aoki (and rest of the Ministers in the Western countries) (機密), 11 June 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 267-8; Komura to Mutsu (機密信第二十三號), 2 enclosures, Beijing, 13 June 1894 (27 June), *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 193-5.

⁹⁸ Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade*, 232-4; Okamoto, *Ri Kōshō*, 178; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 2, ch. 30, section 84-5.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

need to take the course that the Japanese had suggested.¹⁰⁰ He argued that what they should focus on at this stage was making an arrangement that would allow the Qing and Japan to withdraw their troops as soon as possible; as the Korean rebels were now defeated, there was no source of instability in Korea aside from the foreign troops. While the Qing court agreed that there was a need for reform in Korea, it argued that any such venture should be initiated spontaneously by the Chosōn decision-makers themselves rather than being induced by a foreign military presence.

It was only after receiving this correspondence that Mutsu started to take a firmer attitude towards Korea. Mutsu immediately replied that his government regretted the fact that the Qing did not agree with the line of policy he had suggested. In his official response, he stated that since the Japanese government placed strong importance on the stability of Korea, it could not withdraw its troops before being confident that the rebels had been completely wiped out and that the Chosōn decision-makers would embark on reform, and that if the Qing officials were not willing to work with the Japanese then there was no other option but for the latter to do this on its own.¹⁰¹ The Japanese government submitted a proposal for unilateral Korean reforms, which called for the thorough modernisation of the court's political, financial and military institutions, the tackling of corruption, and a formal declaration of independence from Qing suzerainty, and this draft was submitted to the Korean government on 3 July.¹⁰²

It is worth noting that the Gaimushō started drawing up this draft only after the Qing officially rejected the Japanese proposal of 15 June.¹⁰³ The fact that there is no evidence

¹⁰⁰ Wang to Mutsu, Chinese Legation in Japan, 22 June 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 234-5.

¹⁰¹ Mutsu to Wang (親展送第四二號), 22 June 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 235-7.

¹⁰² Ōtori to Mutsu (Telegraphic No. 17), Seoul, 3 July 1894 (rec. 4 July), *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 584-5.

¹⁰³ Ōtori to Mutsu (機密第一〇七號), Seoul, 26 June 1894 (rec. 4 July); Mutsu to Ōtori

which suggests that Mutsu was taking any specific manoeuvres to prevent foreign intervention until late June reinforces the view that the Foreign Minister was much more reactive than many historians have argued.¹⁰⁴ Also related to this, one can say that, considering how the Japanese had perceived the Russians and the British throughout the years before the summer of 1894, it is likely that Mutsu would have been concerned that the former might be tempted to expand its influence towards Korea, and that the latter might form an anti-Japanese alliance with the Qing if a war broke out. Consequently, one would have expected Mutsu to have taken determined steps to prevent Britain and Russia from intervening if he was the Machiavellian genius that Takahashi portrays. Yet, the only communication that he made to the Foreign Office to defend his government's stance over this issue was made on 16 June.¹⁰⁵ This came not on his own initiative but as a response to Aoki who was warning already by the second week of June that the British government was concerned about the situation in Korea.¹⁰⁶ In this communication, Mutsu argued that his government considered it necessary to keep its troops in Korea until the rebels were completely wiped out and that it wanted to see thorough reforms in Korea to eradicate the source of long-term instability in that country. The lack of evidence which suggests that the Foreign Minister contemplated taking any measures beyond this would seem to indicate that he was not as proactive as many of the historians of Japanese diplomacy and imperialism argue.

Indeed, the communication that Mutsu made to the Foreign Office was inadequate to

(機密送第二六號), 28 June 1894; Ōtori to Mutsu (機密第百十號本六五), Seoul, 28 June 1894 (rec. 5 July), all from *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 567-580.

¹⁰⁴ See the section 10 of *NGM*, vol. 27-2, which is on the negotiations between Japan and Western countries over Sino-Japanese crisis.

¹⁰⁵ Mutsu to Aoki (電送第二〇八號), 16 June 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 270.

¹⁰⁶ Aoki to Mutsu (Telegraphic 電受二二七號), London, 10 June 1894 (rec. 12 June); Aoki to Mutsu (電受第二四八號), London, 14 June 1894 (rec. 16 June), both from *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 268-270.

prevent foreign intervention. After the breakdown of the Sino-Japanese negotiations on 22 June, both the British and Russian governments started to show stronger concern over this issue.¹⁰⁷ Faced with this pressure, Mutsu agreed on 3 July that the Japanese government would reopen negotiations over the withdrawal of troops if the Qing decision-makers would agree to establish a joint Sino-Japanese committee for Korean reform, and guarantee that these two countries would enjoy equal political and economic opportunities in Korea.¹⁰⁸ In addition, the proposal stated that if the Qing government agreed to these conditions, then the Japanese would not raise the issue of the suzerain-vassal relationship between the Qing and Chosōn at the negotiating table.¹⁰⁹ The Japanese were clearly asking for more concessions from the Qing in early July than they had on 15 June. However, even if Mutsu's real intention was to start a war, he was still driving towards that direction carefully. The Japanese proposal indicated that they were still prepared to be considerate towards the Qing claim of suzerainty at the negotiating table, and thus there still was room for an agreement that would allow the Qing decision-makers to save face. The Japanese government also did not send more troops while it awaited the response from its Qing counterpart.¹¹⁰

It should also be noted that the Foreign Office regarded the Japanese conditions as being "a reasonable proposal, which China should accept," perhaps because the British diplomats and decision-makers thought that it was inevitable for the Japanese to make additional demands as they were being asked to return to the negotiating table after the

¹⁰⁷ Western intervention into the Sino-Japanese crisis, mentioned in this paragraph, will be examined in more detail in the next section of this chapter. For the secondary sources, see Lensen *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. 1, chs. 7-8; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, vol. 2, ch. 29; Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*, 398-409.

¹⁰⁸ Mutsu to Aoki (Telegraphic 電送第二六八號), 3 July 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 289-290.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Mutsu to Ōtori (Telegraphic No. 17), 28 June 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 577-8.

Qing rejection of the initial Japanese proposal.¹¹¹ Therefore, when the Qing court – still heavily influenced by the hardliners – rejected the second Japanese proposal on 9 July, Western observers started to think that the Chinese were as determined to resort to war as the Japanese.¹¹² The Western countries made their decisions not to get overly involved in the crisis by the third week of July.

By this time, even Itō, who continued to hold some hope for a peaceful resolution to the crisis, was aware that it was becoming difficult to avoid war.¹¹³ On 10 July Mutsu started demanding that the Chosōn court accept the proposal for domestic reform.¹¹⁴ By this time, Li had dispatched reinforcements to Korea.¹¹⁵ As Li had not given up on the prospect of peaceful resolution, he was reluctant to send a large number of troops to Korea, fearing that such an action might increase Sino-Japanese tensions to the point of no return, and argued to the hardliners that he could not take such an action because he lacked sufficient funds.¹¹⁶ However, the hardliners responded by handing him 3 million taels and also managed to convince the emperor to authorise Li to prepare for war.¹¹⁷ In this environment, Li had no other option but to send reinforcements on 18 July.¹¹⁸ But the IJA, which had already ordered the general mobilisation, responded by sending an even larger number of troops.¹¹⁹ On the very next day, the military ordered the Ninth Brigade

¹¹¹ Kimberley to O'Conor (No. 48 Telegraphic), FO, 6 July 1894, FO 17/1202.

¹¹² O'Conor to Kimberley (No. 38 Telegraphic), Beijing, 9 July 1894 (rec. 9 July), FO 17/1204; O'Conor to his wife (Private), Beijing, 10 July 1894, NOP CAC OCON/3/3/3.

¹¹³ Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*, 434-5.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 424-5; *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 592-9.

¹¹⁵ Okamoto, *Ri Kōshō*, 178.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ General Headquarters to Ōshima (Telegraphic), 18 July 1894, BKS, 大本營-日清戰役電報綴-M27-2-114 (JACAR C06060705700); Shiba to Terauchi (Telegraphic), Pusan, 18 July 1894 (rec. 18 July), BKS, 大本營-日清戰役電報綴-M27-5-117 (JACAR C06060792800); Kamio to the Army Headquarter, (Telegraphic), Tianjin, 18 July 1894 (rec. 18 July), BKS, 大本營-日清戰役電報綴-M27-5-117 (JACAR C06060793500).

¹¹⁹ See BKS 大本營-日清戰役電報綴-M27-1-113 (JACAR C06060665600) to M27-4-116

and the navy on the alert.¹²⁰

On 18 July, the Chosōn ministers rejected the Japanese proposal for domestic reform.¹²¹ Ralph Paget, the British Chargé d’Affaires in Japan, contacted the Gaimushō to communicate that the Qing government was now prepared to accept most of the terms of the proposal of 3 July if that would lead to a peaceful resolution.¹²² Mutsu immediately replied that, since the Japanese government had already made efforts to initiate reform in Korea after the Qing’s initial rejection, it could not agree to a proposal that would put the situation in Korea back to how it was in early-July.¹²³ If the Qing decision-makers wished the Japanese to return to the negotiating table, then the former must show goodwill by promising that it would not only abide by the spirit of the proposal of 3 July but also accept the fruits of the reforms which the Japanese had already initiated.¹²⁴ By also demanding the Qing court reply within five days, the Japanese government managed to turn the British attempt of mediation into an ultimatum.¹²⁵ On 20 July, the Japanese government also submitted an ultimatum to the Chosōn court, demanding that the latter reconsider its decision to reject the former’s proposals for reform, to reject the entrance of Qing army into Korea, and to reply within three days.¹²⁶

Three days later, the Chosōn ministers asked for an extension of the deadline, and in reply Ōtori authorised his troops to storm the palace, leading to the establishment of a

(JACAR C06060745200).

¹²⁰ Saitō, *Nisshin Sensō no Gunji Senryaku*, 68-9.

¹²¹ Ōtori to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), Seoul, 18 July 1894 (rec. 19 July), *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 604-5.

¹²² Paget to Mutsu, 19 July 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 260-1.

¹²³ Mutsu to Paget (Unnumbered), 19 July 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 261-2; Mutsu to Komura (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), 19 July 1894, KSKKT MuMKM 75-13.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Ōtori to Mutsu (Telegraphic, No. 34), Seoul, 20 July 1894 (rec. 21 July), *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 615-6.

new government under the premiership of the Taewon'gün at gunpoint.¹²⁷ The court in Beijing did not reply to the Japanese ultimatum, and on 25 July the IJN torpedoed a Chinese-chartered ship, the *Kowshing*, transporting Qing troops to Korea, which was owned by the British and operated by Western crews.¹²⁸ On land, the Ninth Brigade engaged with the Qing troops in Asan on 28 July. The latter was defeated within a day as it was badly isolated due to the fact that the IJN denied it any reinforcements.¹²⁹ By the time the Qing and Japan formally declared war on each other on 1 August, a Sino-Japanese conflict was well under way on the ground, and the Qing troops were quickly forced to withdraw from the southern part of Korea.¹³⁰

The Sino-Japanese Crisis, Treaty Revision and the Anglo-Japanese Relationship after late June 1894

Until late June, the British government remained relatively idle over the Sino-Japanese crisis, as much of the attention of the British officials in East Asia, especially the officers in the China Squadron, was directed towards the contemporary Franco-Siamese confrontation.¹³¹ However, after the breakdown of the Sino-Japanese negotiations, both the decision-makers in London and diplomats in East Asia started to show stronger concern over this issue.¹³² Their primary fear was that the Russian government might

¹²⁷ Ōtori to Mutsu (Telegraphic, No. 37), Seoul, 23 July 1894 (rec. 23 July); Ōtori to Mutsu (Telegraphic, No. 38), Seoul, 23 July 1894 (rec. 27 July), both from *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 617-9.

¹²⁸ Howland, "The Sinking of the S. S. *Kowshing*"; Sasaki, *Meijjin no Rikiryō*, 137-8.

¹²⁹ Sasaki, *Meijjin no Rikiryō*, 137.

¹³⁰ Wang to Mutsu (機密受第一一二九號), Chinese Legation in Japan, 1 Aug 1894; Imperial Declaration of War against China, 1 Aug, both from *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 264-6.

¹³¹ See the relevant folios in RP NLS, and also ADM 1/7199. For secondary sources, see Martel, *Imperial Diplomacy*, 125-133.

¹³² See documents after 22 June 1894 in FO 17/1204 and FO 46/434. Also *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 272-283.

see the recent disturbances in Korea as an opportunity to expand its influence, and this sentiment was duly recognised by the Japanese.¹³³

The Japanese decision-makers acted most cautiously towards British mediation, and it is difficult not to assume that this was because the negotiations over treaty revision were about to finish. Aoki and the senior officials of the Foreign Office managed to draw up a final draft of the revised treaty on 31 June; they still had some disagreements over the new tariff convention, but they agreed to negotiate this separately after they had signed the treaty.¹³⁴ Aoki warned that in this situation it was important not to act in a manner that would change the friendly attitude that the British government had shown thus far.¹³⁵ Being fully aware of the suspicions that the British held towards Russia, the Japanese government politely rejected the Russian overture when the latter expressed their will to mediate this issue, and continued to keep a distance from them throughout the crisis.¹³⁶ And on 3 July, Mutsu informed the Foreign Office that the Japanese government was prepared to return to the negotiating table if the Qing would agree to the conditions that it demanded.

When O'Conor and the Foreign Office learned with resentment that the Qing decision-makers had rejected the Japanese offer, the prospect of a peaceful resolution of the crisis

¹³³ Kimberley to O'Conor (No. 42 Telegraphic), FO, 26 June 1894, FO 17/1202; O'Conor to Bristow (Private), Beijing, 28 June 1894, NOP CAC OCON4/1/9; O'Conor to Kimberley (No. 153 Confidential), Beijing, 29 June 1894, rec. 20 Aug, FO 17/1194.

¹³⁴ Aoki to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), London, 31 June 1894 (rec. 6 July); Aoki to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), 4 July 1894 (rec. 6 July), both from *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 81-4.

¹³⁵ Aoki to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), London, 24 June 1894 (rec. 25 June), *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 272-3; Aoki to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), London, 30 June 1894 (rec. 1 July), *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 283-4. Hayashi Gonsuke, the secretary of the Japanese legation in London, had argued in the same direction. See Hayashi to Mutsu (Private), 30 June 1894, *HTKM*, vol. 3, pp. 571-2.

¹³⁶ Nishi to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), St. Petersburg, 29 June 1894 (rec. 1 July); Arakawa to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), 30 June 1894 (rec. 30 June), both from *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 282-3.

became bleaker, and they started to fear that the Russian government might use this occasion to take action to expand its influence in Korea.¹³⁷ Due to this fear, the Foreign Office contemplated the idea of making an overture to the governments of the other Western nations about a joint intervention in order to prevent the Russians acting unilaterally.¹³⁸ Yet, as the Foreign Office concluded that the Russian government was uninterested in intervening in the crisis, they chose not take a decisive step in this direction.¹³⁹ Sasaki Yō argues that the British policy in July was based upon their calculation of which country would prevail in any Sino-Japanese struggle, as the outbreak of a war became more realistic. He argues that throughout the month the British decision-makers were busy evaluating the military strength of the Qing and Japan, and decided to change their East Asian policy which hitherto was had been based upon a pro-Qing inclination, as they concluded that the Japanese now had the strategic upper hand.¹⁴⁰ They therefore chose not to support the Qing by declaring neutrality, and sought to gain Japanese goodwill as they thought that Japan would be a more competent partner to check any Russian advance in East Asia. Certainly, there is a report by the Intelligence Divisions of the Admiralty and War Office which clearly argues that the quality of the IJN was superior to that of the Beiyang fleet.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ O'Conor to Kimberley (No. 38 Telegraphic), Beijing, 9 July 1894 (rec. 9 July), FO 17/1204; Memorandum by Sanderson, FO, 10 July 1894, FO 881/6594.

¹³⁸ Kimberley to Paget (No. 21 Telegraphic), FO, 7 July 1894, FO 46/439; Bertie to Kimberley (Private), London, 8 July 1894, KP Bodleian MSS.Eng.c.4380; Kimberley to O'Conor (No. 54 Telegraphic), FO, 11 July 1894, FO 17/1202.

¹³⁹ Paget to Kimberley (No. 27 Telegraphic), Tokyo, 9 July 1894, rec. 9 July, FO 46/440; O'Conor to Kimberley (No. 41 Telegraphic), Beijing, 11 July 1894, rec. 12 July, FO 17/1204; Paget to Kimberley (No. 28 Telegraphic), Tokyo, 14 July 1894, rec. 14 July, FO 46/440.

¹⁴⁰ Sasaki, "The International Environment at the Time of the Sino-Japanese War," 38-9.

¹⁴¹ The Secretary to the Admiralty to Sanderson, Intelligence Division of the Admiralty, 16 July 1894 (rec. 16 July); Memorandum on the Relative Values of the Armies of China and Japan. Inclosure to Intelligence Division to Foreign Office (Confidential),

However, it is important to note that Vice-Admiral Sir Edmund Fremantle, the Commander-in-Chief of the squadron at that time, was reporting to the contrary. He had been much impressed when he visited the naval establishment of the Beiyang Fleet in May – just before the Kabo uprising escalated – and had concluded that the quality of the Qing officers and seamen was not as poor as was conventionally believed.¹⁴² Accordingly, he predicted that the Qing would prevail if war broke out, as the Japanese did not possess an ironclad.¹⁴³ He also thought it was unlikely that the Japanese could easily break through the Qing land forces, which enjoyed a clear advantage in terms of the quantity of resources and troops. This perception was shared by many Western observers in East Asia.

Meanwhile, Fraser, who had served as the Minister to Tokyo from 1888, had passed away suddenly on 4 June.¹⁴⁴ De Bunsen and Spring-Rice, who had served in the legation for much of the first half of the 1890s, had also left Japan just before the death of the Minister, and thus the legation was headed by an inexperienced young diplomat named Paget.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, O'Conor was by far the most influential diplomat in East Asia in the summer of 1894. Despite being somewhat notorious for his assertive attitude when negotiating with the Qing officials, he nonetheless held considerable regard for the

16 July 1894, rec. 16 July. Both FO 881/6594.

¹⁴² Fremantle to the Secretary to the Admiralty (No. 247), Alacrity (Shanghai), 25 May 1894, rec. 2 Jul, ADM 1/7199; Fremantle to Spencer (Private), Alacrity (Shanghai), 26 May 1894, SP BL Add MS 77392.

¹⁴³ Fremantle to Paget (Private), 2 July 1894, PP BL Add MS. 51252; Spencer to Kimberley (Private), Admiralty, 3 July 1894, SP BL Add MS 77378; Fremantle to Spencer (Private), Centurion (Hakodate), 30 July 1894, SP BL Add MS 77393. Even after the success of the IJN during the initial stage of the First Sino-Japanese War, Fremantle continued to believe that the Beiyang Fleet would prevail in the end. See Fremantle to the Secretary to the Admiralty (No. 336), Centurion (Zhifu), 16 Aug 1894. EFP CLNMM FRE/140/A/2; Fremantle to Spencer (Private), Centurion (Zhifu), 21 Aug 1894. SP BL Add MS 77393.

¹⁴⁴ Paget to Kimberley (No. 12 Telegraphic), Tokyo, 4 June 1894, rec. 5 July, FO 46/440.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

potential of the Qing Empire and thus actively advocated in favour of an Anglo-Chinese alliance. In June and July of 1894, the individuals who saw the Qing in more favourable light, such as Fremantle and O'Conor, therefore cast a stronger degree influence towards the home government than before. In this environment, it is unlikely that the ministers and officials in London could be convinced that the Japanese had the strategic upper hand, as Sasaki argues.

Taking account of the above point, Kobayashi Takao has offered a counterargument to Sasaki by pointing out that the British government sought to prevent the outbreak of war by seeking a cooperative relationship with the Qing in order to put pressure on the Japanese, so that the latter would not provoke any disorder in East Asia that the Russians might find it convenient to exploit.¹⁴⁶ He concludes that the British decision-makers chose to remain neutral over this issue only reluctantly, because of the fact that the Japanese managed to parry the British manoeuvres and also because the Qing court was less than willing itself to take a conciliatory attitude over this issue.¹⁴⁷ Without question, O'Conor continued to make efforts to hammer out an agenda to prevent the outbreak of war even after mid-July.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, the Japanese decision-makers and diplomats in East Asia certainly received the impression that the British government was acting in a manner that was supportive to the Qing and unfriendly to Japan after observing the attitude of the British diplomats. Christopher Gardner, the British Chargé d'Affaires in Korea, reported on several cases during the crisis that the Japanese military personnel

¹⁴⁶ Kobayashi, *19 Seiki Igirisu Gaikō to Higashi Ajia*, 271-9.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ O'Conor to Kimberley (No. 48 Telegraphic), Beijing, 18 July 1894, rec. 18 July, FO 17/1204. In this document, O'Conor wrote that the Qing government accepted his proposal for a peaceful resolution of war, reported to the Foreign Office through No. 59 Telegraphic on 16 July, with some modification. But No. 59 telegraphic is missing from FO 17/1204.

were intimidating or inflicting physical harm on the treaty-port population and diplomats.¹⁴⁹ One case that particularly shocked the Japanese decision-makers happened on 14 July, when Aoki visited the Foreign Office to sign the final draft of the new Anglo-Japanese treaty that both governments had finally agreed upon. The senior officials of the Foreign Office informed Aoki that unfortunately they had received a report from Gardner that Ōtori had requested the Korean government to dismiss Lieutenant Callwell, the British naval advisor to that country, and that they could not sign the new treaty if the Japanese had acted in a manner so unfriendly to the British.¹⁵⁰ This overture made Aoki fear that his government's policy over the course of the Sino-Japanese crisis was alienating the British decision-makers, who sympathised with the Qing to the extent that they might withhold the signing of the new treaty at the last minute, in the hope that the Japanese government would readjust its policy.¹⁵¹

However, Kobayashi's argument fails to take account of the fact that the key individuals in the British decision-making circle were much less willing to intervene in the crisis than the diplomats in East Asia. Mutsu immediately replied to Aoki that Ōtori confidently denied that he had requested the dismissal of Callwell, and upon receiving this reply the British government agreed to sign the treaty.¹⁵² Aoki also took this opportunity to complain that the Japanese government could not help but feel that recent

¹⁴⁹ O'Conor to Mr. Gardner (Private), Beijing, 21 June 1894, NOP CAC OCON4/1/9; O'Conor to his wife (Private), Beijing, 15 July 1894, NOP CAC OCON/3/3/3; O'Conor to Kimberley (No. 47 Telegraphic), Beijing, 17 July 1894, rec. 18 July, FO 17/1204; O'Conor to Kimberley (No. 49 Telegraphic), Beijing, 18 July 1894, rec. 19 July, FO 17/1204.

¹⁵⁰ Aoki to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), London, 14 July 1894 (rec. 15 July), *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 87.

¹⁵¹ Aoki to Mutsu (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), London, 15 July 1894 (rec. 16 July), *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 88-9.

¹⁵² Mutsu to Aoki (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), 14 July 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 88; Mutsu to Aoki (Unnumbered, Telegraphic), 15 July 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 303-4.

actions taken by Gardner had been unfriendly, and after receiving this complaint the Foreign Office instructed O'Conor and Gardner to refrain from doing anything that could be interpreted as taking sides in the current Sino-Japanese crisis.¹⁵³ In the memorandum that Rosebery wrote on 30 July, he stated that;

In the first place I would observe that we should not be joined apparently by any other Power & that while collective action is one thing joint action is a very different affair. What O'Conor wishes us to do is to make an armed demonstration in conjunction with Russia so as to prevent war between the two Powers. I distrust all demonstrations unless you are prepared to go all lengths. It is of course necessary to have recourse to them sometimes, but there is always a fear of their either leading you further than you wish, or of their becoming ridiculous. If we thus interfere, we must be prepared to engage in naval action, and to justify that proceeding to Parliament. I think it very doubtful if we could so justify it. ...Again I am quite sure that Japan is determined on war. If then we take action, it must be in reality against Japan. Would this be politic on our part? In my opinion it would not. We should weaken and alienate a Power of great magnitude in those seas, and which is a bulwark against Russia. It is quite true that China and Japan may weaken themselves by war, but that will not, I suspect, be a very violent process. ...It seems to me then... that we have used our best exertions to maintain peace, we should not do more than we have done.¹⁵⁴

While this note was written at a time when the military engagement between Qing and Japan had already begun, the opinions voiced in these documents resonate well with the line of policy that the British government had pursued hitherto. It was uncertain whether the other Western nations would respond favourably to a British call for a joint

¹⁵³ Ibid; Kimberley to O'Conor (No. 57 Telegraphic), FO, 15 July 1894, FO 17/1202; Memorandum by Kimberley, FO, 16 July 1894, KP Bodleian MSS.Eng.c.4396; O'Conor to Gardner (Private), Beijing, 15 July 1894, NOP CAC OCON4/1/11.

¹⁵⁴ Memorandum by Rosebery, written at 10 Downing, 30 July 1894, MS.10134. Kimberley concurred to Rosebery's opinion on the same day. See Kimberley to Rosebery (Private), London, 30 July 1894, MS.10068. Both RP NLS.

intervention into the crisis.¹⁵⁵ Besides, by mid-July both the Qing and the Japanese decision-makers seemed inclined to go to war, and in order to prevent these two countries from taking such a course, only a firm military demonstration would suffice. The British ministers and senior officials of the Foreign Office had made their decisions throughout the Victorian era in the clear awareness that military expeditions were expensive, unpredictable and associated with the risk of Parliamentary outcry. Such risks might be justifiable in order to protect interests in vital regions, but were clearly less so in East Asia where the British stake was seen as being much smaller. It was natural for the British decision-makers to be even more reluctant from taking such course, when they were becoming reasonably confident that the Russians were not interested in taking this opportunity to expand, at least for the time being. In such an environment, if the Japanese were willing to provoke a war and the Qing were determined to respond in an equally firm manner, then there was nothing that the British government could do.

This stance was consistent with the line of policy that the British government had taken up to this point. At the same time, considering the fact that the opinion of British officials in East Asia was dominated by those who held sympathy for the Qing cause over the Sino-Japanese crisis, it should not be assumed that the personality of the ministers in London did not have any influence on the decision-making process. As argued in previous parts of this dissertation, Rosebery and Kimberley – the latter in particular – were quite frustrated towards the Qing decision-makers because of their experiences over the Burmese and Pamir questions. The ministers of the previous Conservative administration did not show the same degree of frustration towards the Chinese as the

¹⁵⁵ British decision-makers were feeling so already by early-July. See Memorandum by Rosebery, 7 July 1894, RP NLS MS.10243; Kimberley to O'Conor (No. 54 Telegraphic), FO, 11 July 1894, FO 17/1202.

Liberals did. Salisbury and Viscount Cross, the Secretary of State for India from 1887 to 1892, were much less actively involved in the delineation of Sino-Burmese border than Kimberley had been, and while they did show concern over the Pamir question, their attention was directed more towards the Russian actions in Central Asia than the Qing's.¹⁵⁶ Also there are several documents which suggest that Kimberley held a higher opinion of Japan than most of his subordinates in the Foreign Office. For example, on 28 June the Foreign Office was preparing a telegram which initially intended to instruct Paget to inform the Japanese that "Japan could not expect our sympathy" if a war would break out as a result of the line of policy that the Japanese had pursued over the past month, but the draft was rewritten by Kimberley into a softer tone, mentioning that "it cannot be for the interest of Japan" to be involved in a war against the Qing.¹⁵⁷

In addition, the Japanese decision-makers avoided taking any action that might make the British seriously upset. When the government ministers and the military officers in the General Headquarters started drawing up a war plan from 21 June, Kawakami Sōroku, the Deputy Head of the Army General Staff, argued that they must attempt to land their troops on the coast of the Capital District, and march them up all the way to Beijing in order to deliver a quick and decisive blow to the Qing.¹⁵⁸ However, Mutsu, as well as the other government ministers, vetoed this suggestion. The main reason behind this was that they did not think it was possible to land the troops in an area where so many Qing troops and warships were concentrated, but it is difficult not to think that Mutsu considered the possibility that the Western countries might intervene if Japan conducted a military operation directly against China. Such an action could fundamentally

¹⁵⁶ SP HHA A74; CP and LP, both from BL.

¹⁵⁷ Kimberley to Paget (No. 15 Telegraphic), FO, 28 June 1894, FO 46/439.

¹⁵⁸ Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*, 482-9.

destabilise the domestic order and disturb trade, or in the worst case could provoke the Russians to make an advance towards northern China; the British decision-makers wanted to see neither of these happening. In the last week of July, the British government made it clear that it did not want the Japanese to make any military manoeuvre that would disturb the trade on the Chinese coast, and in particular in Shanghai, and the Japanese complied with this request.¹⁵⁹ The archival materials relating to British firms in East Asia indicate that their merchants did not show a particularly strong interest or concern over the situation in Korea.¹⁶⁰ There was no strong reason for the British merchants to be too upset about the situation in Korea, as long as their business in the Chinese treaty ports would not be disturbed.

Throughout the Sino-Japanese crisis, the Japanese government was influenced by the political environment – both domestic and international – to negotiate with its Qing and the Chosōn counterparts in a very firm manner. The Japanese government continued to dispatch a large number of troops to Korea from early-June 1894, and were determined to enforce its demands to the extent that it was prepared to go to war if it could not get what it wanted. It was confronted by the Qing, whose decision-making circle was becoming increasingly dominated by hardliners, and who were therefore equally unwilling to back down over their interests in Korea.

¹⁵⁹ Paget to Mutsu, British Legation in Japan, 23 July 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-3, pp. 400-1; Mutsu to Paget, 23 July 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 401-2; Paget to Kimberley (No. 41 Telegraphic), Tokyo, 23 July 1894, rec. 23 July, FO 46/440; Kimberley to O'Conor (No. 70 Telegraphic), FO, 23 July 1894, FO 17/1202; Hannan to Mr. Paget (Private), Shanghai, 7 July 1894, PP BL Add MS. 51252.

¹⁶⁰ Minutes of the General Committee, London, 13 Mar 1894, JSP JSS 1/1/8. Also see CAP CHAS/02/01 and CHAS/03/01. Both at SOAS. There also is no particular document in JMP CUL that indicates that Jardine Matheson held any particular concern about the situation over Korea in the summer of 1894.

During the crisis, the British and the Japanese governments conducted diplomacy under the conviction that it was in their best interests to avoid taking any measure that could be interpreted as being unfriendly by their counterparts. For the Japanese decision-makers to be successful in the struggle against Qing over Korea, they were aware that they had to avoid any Western governments siding with the Chinese. The Japanese were particularly sensitive about the British, as they perceived that the latter had started to adopt a pro-Qing line of policy after 1887, and also because they were in the midst of important negotiations over treaty revision until mid-July. In reality, the Japanese decision-makers were overestimating the degree of sympathy that the British counterparts had towards the Qing. British ministers did not feel any particular need to support the Qing case over this issue. However, this perception did make the Japanese cautious, and therefore they refrained from taking any measures that might be interpreted as being seriously injurious to British interests. By the last week of July, British press started to report about the situation in Korea, but it was too late for the press to urge the British government to take strong measures to intervene in the Sino-Japanese crisis.¹⁶¹ In addition, as the first report on the *Kowshing* incident reached London on 28 July, this issue seriously affected the Anglo-Japanese relationship from August – as the Japanese sunk a vessel that was flying the British flag – but it could not particularly in the period before.¹⁶² Considering these points, it is not very surprising to see that the British decision-makers in London chose not to be involved in this incident. And thus, the First

¹⁶¹ Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895*, 129-130.

¹⁶² For some of the preliminary report on the *Kowshing* incident, see O'Conor to Kimberley (No. 61 Telegraphic), Beijing, 28 July 1894, rec. 29 July, FO 17/1204; Hayashi to Inoue (Private), 29 July 1894, KSKKT IKM 547-6; Kimberley to Rosebery (Private), 30 July 1894, RS NLS MS.10068; O'Conor to his wife (Private), Beijing, 30 July 1894. NOP CAC OCON3/3/3; Paget to Kimberley (No. 46 Telegraphic), Tokyo, 31 July 1894, rec. 31 July, FO 46/440. Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895*, 129-130.

Sino-Japanese War broke out as a bilateral war between the two local powers in East Asia.

Conclusion

The objective of this dissertation has been to address several conventional misunderstandings about East Asian history and Korean affairs before the First Sino-Japanese War in the years from 1876 to 1894. These years are often perceived as a period of moratorium before the Qing dynasty of China, which had been in a state of continuous decline after its defeat in the Opium War, finally fell prey to Western and Japanese imperialism at the turn of the century. Kim Key-hiuk has depicted the Korean affairs within this framework. He has described the Qing as the benevolent suzerain of the Chosōn dynasty which tried in vain to protect Korea from an expansionist Japan.¹

This argument has been repudiated by a number of historians, such as Banno Masataka, Okamoto Takashi and Kirk Larsen, who offer more a nuanced analysis of Chinese policy towards Korea.² Their works convincingly suggest that the Chinese were not as powerless as Kim has argued. From the late-1870s onwards, the Qing authorities started to make a conscious effort to strengthen their empire's influence in East Asia by utilising the suzerain-vassal relationship that had existed between the Chinese empire and the neighbouring kingdoms for centuries. To accomplish this objective, they relied on military mobilisation and the making of unequal treaties with their traditional vassals – the exact same means that the Western nations and Japan utilised to strengthen their foothold in East Asia. It goes without saying that such actions were not always appreciated by those at the receiving end, such as the Chosōn.³ Far from being a

¹ Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*.

² Banno, *Kindai Chūgoku Seiji Gaikōshi*; Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade*; Takashi Okamoto, *Zokkoku to Jishu no Aida*.

³ Deuchler, *The Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoy*; Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade*; Lee, *West Goes East*; Swartout, *Mandarins, Gunboats, and Power Politics*.

benevolent suzerain of East Asian kingdoms, the Qing was no less imperialist than the other nations in Korea.

Looking at the British and Japanese policies towards Korea in the twenty years before the outbreak of the First Sino-Japanese War, greatly reinforces the argument put forward by these revisionist historians. This dissertation has revealed that both of these governments recognised that the Qing had re-emerged as a very influential actor in East Asian affairs in these years. The Chinese influence continued to grow throughout the 1880s, and clearly became the most influential regional power in the region after the East Asian crises in the middle of the decade. After 1887, these two governments started to formulate their East Asian policies in the clear recognition that it would be very difficult to uphold their interests if they lost the goodwill of the Chinese. As they also understood that the Qing decision-makers were starting to place a significant degree of importance on upholding their prestige as the traditional suzerain of East Asia, the British and the Japanese acknowledged the need to bite their tongues as much as possible, especially after the East Asian crises. As a consequence, there emerged a unique international environment in East Asia, in which Westphalian principles and the traditional East Asian order coexisted. The governments involved in the East Asian affairs conducted diplomacy within this structure until the First Sino-Japanese War.

The argument posed by Kim Key-hiuk is also based upon the assumption that Japan was a powerful regional power which attempted to push forward its interest in East Asia in a Machiavellian manner from the very early stages of Meiji era. This argument is in accord with those Japanese historians who produced their works on Japanese imperialism before 1980.⁴ Even the historians who have criticised Kim for understating the

⁴ Eguchi, *Nihon no Rekishi* 32; Fujimura, *Nisshin Sensō*; Nakatsuka, *Nisshin Sensō no*

imperialist tendency of the Qing policy towards Korea in the 1880s have not seriously questioned the conventional wisdom that the Japanese were inclined to conquer Korea at the first appropriate opportunity.⁵ There are only a handful of historians, such as Hillary Conroy, Peter Duus, Tabohashi Kiyoshi and Takahashi Hidenao, who have pointed out that the Japanese government did not possess either the power or will to push such an aggressive foreign policy.⁶ However, after conducting a research on the Japanese primary sources, this dissertation has concluded that the line of argument forwarded by these few researchers is more convincing.

Of course, the Japanese government did not hesitate to advance its interests in Korea through gunboat diplomacy and unequal treaties when they could, and such behaviour provoked strong suspicion from the Qing and the Chosōn. The rowdy conduct of the Japanese merchants in Korean treaty ports was also resented by the local population. It is therefore understandable that these two countries formulated their policies upon the belief that Japan was a potential threat to their interest and security. But still, the Chinese and the Koreans in the late-nineteenth century overestimated the aggressiveness of the Japanese government, and historians must detach themselves from such perceptions if they wish to accurately understand the motives behind the actions taken by the Japanese government. In the years before 1894, the Japanese decision-makers were clearly aware that they possessed only a limited amount of power that could be projected abroad. The

Kenkyū; Iriye, “Japan’s Drive to Great Power Status”; Pak, *Nisshin Sensō to Chōsen*; Peng, “Kōshin Jihen o Meguru Inoue Gaimukyō to Furansu Kōshi tono Kōshō”; Peng, *Meiji Shoki Nikkanshin Kankei no Kenkyū*; Shibahara, *Nihon Kindaika no Sekaishiteki Ichū*; Shibahara, “Taigaikan to Nashonarizumu”; Tōyama, *Tōyama Shigeki Chosakushū, Dai 1 shū: Meiji Ishin*; Tsuda, “1880 nendai ni okeru Nihon Seifu no Higashi Ajia Seisaku Tenkai to Rekkyō”; Yamabe, *Nihon no Kankoku Heigō*, 2nd ed.

⁵ Deuchler, *The Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoy*; Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade*; Lee, *West Goes East*; Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, vol. I.

⁶ Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*; Duus, *The Abacus and Sword*; Tabohashi, *Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyū*, 2 vols.; Takahashi, *Nisshin Sensō eno Michi*.

Japanese also harboured strong concerns about the great powers, as a result of their having been at the receiving end of gunboat diplomacy in the 1850s and 1860s, and thought that their country might still fall prey to Western imperialism unless they remained cautious. There were therefore many reasons for the most important decision-makers in Japan, such as Itō Hirobumi, to be reluctant about pursuing the diplomatic policy towards Korea that the hardliners advocated.

The Anglo-Japanese relationship in the years from 1876 to 1894 was inevitably affected by this international environment, in which both the British and Japanese governments had to prioritise their relationship with the Chinese. Neither the British nor Japanese governments considered themselves to be powerful enough to challenge the dominant Chinese influence in the region. As Britain's primary interest in East Asia was trade, the objective of its policy towards this region was to provide stability, so that the trading networks that they established through unequal treaties and treaty ports would not be disturbed. The British were therefore quite happy to accept Chinese superiority in Korea if their influence as the traditional suzerain could stabilise the regional order. In addition, if they could maintain good relations with the Chinese, then there was potential for a military alliance to form with this emerging regional power in East Asia, which could be useful to protect their interests from other great powers, such as Russia. The most important Japanese decision-makers could also acquiesce to the Qing, as they similarly considered that it was in their best interests if the regional order in East Asia remained stable. And the Japanese also held high hopes that they might be able to form an alliance with the Qing and the Chosōn to resist Western imperialism into East Asia if they could improve their relationship with their neighbours. By the mid-1880s, the British government in particular became convinced that the Qing had become much

stronger than in the past, to the extent that it would be very difficult to maintain its stake in East Asia without upholding the goodwill of the court in Beijing. The decision-makers therefore chose to acquiesce to the Chinese efforts to reassert their influence in the region through the claim of traditional suzerainty over their neighbouring kingdoms, including Korea and Upper Burma. In this environment, whenever they felt the need to form an alliance with East Asian powers to prevent Russian expansion, they naturally turned to the Qing instead of Japan.

Before 1894, there was an environment in which both Britain and Japan had to prioritise upholding good relations with the Qing, and this inevitably meant that their relations with each other were often sacrificed. There also were numerous bilateral issues that caused frictions between Britain and Japan in the period from 1876 to 1894. For example, the issues arising between Japanese migrant workers in the white settlers' societies around the Pacific and the host populations continued to frustrate the Japanese, and these incidents negatively influenced their perception towards Britain, as many of these labourers worked within the British Commonwealth.⁷ Legal issues which involved the British in Japan, such as the *Normanton* and *Chishima-Ravenna* incidents also indicated that the Anglo-Japanese relationship could improve only to a certain extent as long as the treaty of 1858 remained intact. Yet, the progress of the negotiations for

⁷ For the incidents related to this issue after August 1892, see the section on the government-initiated immigration to Hawaii, *NGM*, vol. 25-27. See also Ban to Hara (Private), 12 Oct 1892, *HTKM*, vol. 3, pp. 99-101; Kitō to Hayashi (第五號), Vancouver, 4 Jan 1893 (rec. 23 Jan), *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 688-690; Kitō to Hayashi (機密受第五二九號機密信), Vancouver, 20 Apr 1893 (rec. 8 May), *NGM*, vol. 26, pp. 694-6; Satō to Hara (Private), 6 May 1893, *HTKM*, vol. 2, 36-7; Oda to Hara (Private), 20 Aug 1893, *HTKM*, vol. 1, pp. 320-3; Mutsu and Inoue to Itō (機密親展送第一六號), 12 Feb 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 618-621; Hayashi to Governors of Tokyo, Kanagawa, Hyogo and Nagasaki (親展送第三六號), Gaimushō, 7 May 1894, *NGM*, vol. 27-2, pp. 645; Tateno to Mutsu (機密第十六號), Washington, 10 May 1894 (rec. 5 June), *NGM*, vol. 27-1, pp. 367-372.

treaty revision remained frustratingly slow, and the Japanese identified the British as being the most reluctant amongst all the great powers to comply with their demands, which inevitably influenced the former to be very suspicious.

As pointed out in the introduction, many of the works on the Anglo-Japanese relations in the late-nineteenth century tend to focus on the cooperative aspects of the relationship, which often makes historians assume that the relationship between these two countries at this time was relatively cordial.⁸ This thesis has argued against such conventional wisdom by pointing out that the Anglo-Japanese relations before the First Sino-Japanese War were not based upon any innate mutual sympathy, admiration or sense of affiliation. Instead, the governments of Britain and Japan conducted diplomacy towards each other based upon calculations on what would be best for promoting their national interests. This is not to say that the Anglo-Japanese relations before the First Sino-Japanese War were hostile, and the British and Japanese could cooperate on issues where they shared common concerns. For example, during the Sino-French War, the British government requested that the other foreign powers in the Chinese treaty ports, including Japan, join together in naval operations to protect the merchant ships of neutral countries, and the Japanese government accepted this request. The British decision-makers also contemplated the idea of forming an alliance not only with the Qing but also Japan during the Penjeh crisis, as they thought both of the East Asian empires saw Russia as a major threat.

The bottom line was that British decision-makers and diplomats were aware that as a result of Japan's determined efforts, the Japanese military in 1880 was stronger than it

⁸ Checkland, *Britain's Encounter with Meiji Japan*; Fox, *Britain and Japan*; Hirama, *Nichiei Dōmei*; Kurobane, *Teikoku Gaikō no Kotsuzui*, vol. 1; Murashima, "The Opening of the Twentieth Century and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1895-1923."

had been in 1863 and 1864 when Britain had successfully waged a military campaign against Satsuma and Choshū. The British officials concluded that it would no longer be easy to promote their interests in Japan in a high-handed manner. They also thought that there could be grave consequences if they marginalised the Japanese too much, fearing that the latter might choose to come on to better terms with Russia. It was under this calculation that the British concluded in the 1880s that they should comply with the Japanese request to negotiate treaty revision, an issue on which the Japanese decision-makers placed significant importance. The Japanese, in return, were well aware of the risks in case the relationship became hostile, as they, just as most of their contemporaries throughout the world, knew that Britain possessed the strongest navy. As a result, despite being frustrated by their counterparts on numerous occasions, the British and the Japanese never contemplated the idea of permanently suspending the negotiations on treaty revision and finally managed to sign a new treaty in July 1894.

But still, there were plenty of factors that kept Britain and Japan at a distance. Ōsawa Hiroaki has argued that the Japanese policy towards East Asia after 1887 can be characterised as a period when its decision-makers identified Russia as the primary threat to Japan's security and interests in Korea.⁹ He contends that they tried to address this concern by developing a cooperative relationship with the Qing and Britain, and that this attempt failed because of the conflicting interests over Korea between the Qing and Japan. However, it must be said that his argument is based upon an assumption that the Anglo-Japanese relationship was relatively cordial. In reality, the confidence between the British and the Japanese was not strong enough to enable such an arrangement to develop. The Japanese decision-makers realised that in the 1880s the global competition between

⁹ See his articles, the latest being "Chōsen Eisei Chūritsuka Kōsō to Nihon Gaikō."

the European nations was becoming more intense, and this recognition concretised after the East Asian crises from 1884 to 1887. The most obvious example of this disturbing tendency was the British occupation of Kōmundo in April 1885, and the brief confrontation between British and Russian warships which occurred in the harbour of Yokohama few weeks later. Within this environment, there was no reason why the Japanese should assume that Britain was less of a threat to their security than the other great powers.

Moreover, Ōsawa has also overemphasised the Japanese suspicion towards Russia. While it is true that the Japanese saw Russia as an expansionist empire, the Russo-Japanese relationship before 1894 was relatively stable. The treaty of 1875, which delineated the maritime frontier in the northern waters of Japan, provided quite an efficient framework for interactions across this border. The Japanese decision-makers also perceived that the Russians were quite sympathetic towards their position over the question of treaty revision. What was most important was that Russia was far from being as an aggressive and expansionist power as the British expected, and conducted diplomacy in East Asia in a very cautious manner. This stance was duly accepted by most of the individuals within the Japanese government, and thus they were reluctant to pursue a line of policy which could induce a serious negative reaction from Russia, such as coming onto closer terms with Britain.

What was also important was that the Anglo-Japanese relationship in this period was that it was asymmetrical. For the Japanese decision-makers, Britain was a great power whose influence could not be ignored, whereas for the British their interests in Japan were not seen as something very important. For the British decision-makers, Japan was a region which lay in the fringe of East Asia, a region which already was relatively

unimportant. As long as the Japanese government allowed British merchants to access its market, then the British government did not have much more to demand from the Japanese. Issues over trade with Japan were not discussed in Parliament as frequently as commercial matters in other regions that were deemed more important – such as the Middle East, Egypt or India.¹⁰ Even for the British firms in East Asia, Japan was deemed as being much less important than the other markets in the region.¹¹ Thus, the British decision-makers attached no urgency to the issue of treaty revision. But the Japanese perceived the Anglo-Japanese treaty of 1858 as something more serious than a mere commercial treaty, as it imposed restrictions on the administrative and judicial abilities of their government. This issue also started to catch the attention of the public and the press in Japan from the late-1880s. As it often sparked public outcry, Japanese government ministers started to consider it ever more important to conclude the negotiations as quickly as possible. However, senior officials of the Foreign Office preferred to take much more time than the Japanese. Although the British did not intend to be unfriendly, this attitude frustrated the latter, especially because three Foreign Ministers – Inoue Kaoru, Ōkuma Shigenobu and Aoki Shūzō – had to resign in the face of the violent public criticism before they could conclude the negotiations over treaty revision. Yet, it was too risky for the Japanese to contemplate the idea of unilaterally denouncing the treaty of 1858, considering the naval strength of Britain.

Similarly, there was a gap in the degree of importance that the British and the Japanese attached to Korea. For the British, it was a kingdom that mattered even less than Japan.

¹⁰ Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid-Marsot, “The British Occupation of Egypt from 1882,” 651-664 and Robin J. Moore, “Imperial India, 1858-1914,” 422-446, both in *The Oxford History of British Empire*, vol. 3. See also Ram Lakhan Shukla, *Britain, India and the Turkish Empire, 1853-1882*, (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1973).

¹¹ See JMP CUL and JSP SOAS.

The commercial prospects of Korea seemed extremely bleak, and the ministers and officials of the Chosōn regime drew very little sympathy. There was nothing for the British to lose even if they engaged in *de facto* recognition of the superiority of Qing in Korea, as long as the Chinese wielded enough influence to check Russian expansion and uphold stability in Northeast Asia. However, Korea was considered as being much more important by the Japanese, due to its geographical proximity to their country, and therefore they could not afford to completely lose their foothold in Korea. It was also because most of the Japanese considered Korea as being important that some individuals argued that their government should take firm measures to strengthen their foothold in that country. Although the government officials and ministers were unwilling to follow such a policy, it was impossible for them to entirely ignore the hardliners. But the British frowned upon these hardliners who seemed inclined to urge their government to engage in military expeditions against the Chosōn and the Qing, as such actions would cause ‘unnecessary’ disturbances in East Asia that could possibly create an opportunity for Russia to expand. These gaps in perception often led the British and the Japanese to misunderstand each other’s actions.

The international environment that surrounded the Anglo-Japanese relationship went through a significant transformation from the summer of 1894. Despite the fact that the British and Japanese governments chose to bite their tongue as much as possible towards the Qing claim of suzerainty over Korea, this did not mean that they were not frustrated by the Chinese actions. As the Japanese government considered Korea was important for the national interest, it could not help but feel concerned when the Qing continued to expand its influence in that country. The former feared that the latter was inclined to

turn Korea into its exclusive sphere of influence, and therefore thought they must take necessary countermeasures to uphold their position. Even the British, who did not place as strong importance on East Asia as the Japanese, eventually became frustrated when the Chinese continued their attempts to strengthen their influence in East Asia from the late-1880s onwards. The British decision-makers were suspicious that the Chinese might be plotting for a secret agreement with the Russians and the French, which could be potentially dangerous to the British interest not only in China but also in India. They also thought the Qing negotiators were procrastinating in the negotiations on the delineation of the Sino-Burmese border, and this perception inevitably had negative effects on Anglo-Chinese relations. The coexistence of Westphalian principle and traditional East Asian international order – two theoretically contradictory concepts – was not easy.

This did not mean that the dual structure that characterised regional order in East Asia before 1894 was completely unsustainable. Despite experiencing numerous diplomatic difficulties with the Qing, the governments involved in East Asian affairs still thought it was useful for stabilising the regional order, and therefore showed strong determination to uphold this structure by conducting diplomacy within this framework. The problem, however, was that the Chosōn regime could not provide long-term domestic political stability for Korea. When the Kabo rebellion broke out in the spring of 1894, it was difficult for both the Qing and Japanese governments to deal with the crisis in the same restrained manner as they had in 1882 and 1884. After experiencing numerous difficulties with the Qing over Korea throughout the 1880s, the Japanese government was suspicious that the Chinese might take the disturbance in Korea as an opportunity to expand their influence in the peninsula and carve back the Japanese foothold even further.

Indeed, that was exactly what the Qing government, which could no longer suppress the hardliners within the decision-making circle, tried to do in early June of 1894. But such manoeuvre induced a sharp reaction from Japan; it must also be remembered that at this time the Japanese government was also facing strong pressure from the domestic political opposition, which also were calling for hardline policy. As neither the Qing nor Japan were willing to compromise their interest in Korea, these two powers headed towards war from late July.

The outcome of the war changed the entire dynamics of East Asian regional affairs. Japan emerged as the victor, and replaced the Qing as the strongest regional power in East Asia. As the Qing was defeated more quickly and thoroughly than any Western observers had expected, decision-makers in the Western countries no longer saw it as the most influential regional power in East Asia, and felt no need to respect the Qing claim of suzerainty over its traditional vassals after the conflict. The dual structure which characterised East Asian regional order collapsed after 1894-5. The Western nations started to intervene into East Asian affairs in a much more direct manner than they had before the war, most notably in April 1895 Russia, Germany and France gave ‘friendly advice’ to the Japanese to return some of the fruits of war that they had claimed in the Treaty of Shimonoseki to the Qing. The environment that induced the Western nations to scramble for China at around the turn of the century started to be formulated around this time.

It is also worth noting that two weeks prior to the outbreak of the conflict, the new Anglo-Japanese commercial treaty was signed, and the biggest thorn in Anglo-Japanese relations – the question over treaty revision – was removed. In addition, after the Triple Intervention the Japanese decision-makers started to become more aware of the danger

of diplomatic isolation. This incident was also important in the sense that the government in Tokyo now started to see Russia, which initiated the intervention, with much stronger suspicion than before. In contrast, the Japanese impression towards Britain improved, as the British government chose not to participate in the Russian call for intervention. The increased Russian commitment into East Asia after the Triple Intervention was a concern for the British government as well, and the collapse of the Qing prestige meant that Japan stood as the only local power that the British could rely upon as a potential partner to check the Russian advance. As Ian Nish and T. G. Otte argue, this still did not mean that an Anglo-Japanese alliance and Russo-Japanese war was inevitable, but these developments certainly became more possible than in the years before 1894.¹² At the very least, it became inevitable for the British and Japanese governments to make adjustments to their policies towards each other, as the environment that surrounded the Anglo-Japanese relationship had now profoundly changed.

¹² Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, ch. 1; Otte, *The China Question*, ch. 1.

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