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**Pawn on a Chessboard: Anglo-Korean Relation in the Period of the Korean Empire, 1895-1905**

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To my parents



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## Summary

This thesis examines Anglo-Korean relations between 1895 and 1905, when Korea was independent of both Qing China and Japan. This thesis mainly uses official archival documents from both governments to study their high-level diplomacy and policy-making.

In 1895, when Britain and Korea faced the change of the international order of Northeast Asia as a consequence of the First Sino-Japanese War, both nations shared that Korean independence would be desirable for their interests. However, both countries had different approaches to achieve it. Britain preferred the self-strengthening and the modernisation of the Korean administration, whereas Korea focused on diplomacy due to its incapacity to oppose foreign aggression by its own forces. Therefore, Anglo-Korean relations gradually deteriorated through a series of political crises in Korea and eventually reached a point where Britain gave up its hope in Korean independence.

Meanwhile, Korea became a new battlefield for rivalry between Russia and Japan. Having confronted Russian advance together, Britain and Japan found that they shared the same interests in Korea. By 1900, both countries closely worked together to deter any Russian attempts to obtain concessions on the Korean Peninsula, which would potentially damage their interests in the region. Afterwards, British and Japanese representatives in Seoul worked not only for the defence of their shared interests, but also for the other's own interests in the country. Thus, when the Russo-Japanese War broke out, British Legation in Korea helped Japan facilitate the occupation of Korea and eventually agreed with Japan's establishment of a protectorate over Korea.





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# Introduction

In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Northeast Asian states had to cope with an unprecedented threat: Western Powers. For centuries, the international politics of Northeast Asia was based on Sino-centric world order, where a Chinese Empire claimed the Mandate of Heaven and placed itself above every known nation in the world. Those other countries must recognise the Chinese Empire's nominal suzerainty to partake in the China-led international network of trade and diplomacy. Britain was one of many other countries who eagerly hoped to trade with China. In 1793, King George II appointed George Macartney as the first ever envoy to Qing China in hope of establishing a legation in Beijing and gaining access to more Chinese ports than just Guangzhou, the only Chinese city where Western merchants were allowed to visit and trade. Qianlong Emperor, who only saw Britain's Macartney Mission as an envoy of tribute who should recognise Qing China's traditional suzerainty, declined Britain's requests for the relaxation of trade and the concession of a territory for the residence of British merchants.<sup>1</sup> Britain eventually achieved the objectives – the relaxation of trade and the concession of Hong Kong Island – in 1842, after their victory over Qing China in the First Opium War of 1839-1842 obtained further privileges, including the opening of more treaty ports and missionaries' rights to travel freely, after winning in the Second Opium War of 1856-1860.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, Japan also faced a challenge from a Western Power demanding an end to Japan's long-lasting isolation. American Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry, whose mission was the establishment of a diplomatic relationship between Japan and the United States, led his fleet to Edo Bay in 1853 and 1854. After a series of hostile presentations and continuous threats to achieve the objective by violent means, The Kamakura Shogunate signed the Convention of Kanagawa, Japan's first unequal treaty with the Western Power which included several privileges such as most favourable nation clause and extraterritorial jurisdiction. It eventually led to the signing of the

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<sup>1</sup> For an account of Macartney Mission, see James Louis Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham, N.C.; London: Duke University Press, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> For an account of the Opium Wars and the opening of Qing China, see James Louis Hevia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-century China* (Durham, N.C.; London: Hong Kong: Duke University Press; Hong Kong University Press, 2003); John K. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast; the Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1854* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press) 1964; James M. Polachek, *The Inner Opium War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); Timothy Brook and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, *Opium Regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); 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* (New York: Norton, 1976)

United States – Japanese Treaty of Amity and Commerce of 1858, which stipulated the opening of various treaty ports, the exchange of diplomats and the establishment of foreign settlements.<sup>3</sup>

Korea was no exception to gunboat diplomacy as well. Unlike China or Japan, Korea managed to defend its nation from two western invasions; Pyönginyangyo (The French Invasion of 1866) and Shinmiyangyo (The American Invasion of 1871).<sup>4</sup> Neither country succeeded in negotiating a treaty with Korea because both Powers only expected to impose a military threat in hope that Korea would voluntarily give up further resistance and accept the offered deal. However, when Japanese gunboat 'Un'yō' deliberately entered the Korean water near Kanghwa Island and attacked fortresses on the island in 1875, Japan coerced that Korea should come to a negotiation table or Japanese troops would march towards Seoul, the capital of Korea. Therefore, Korea was forced to sign the Treaty of Kanghwa of 1876, Korea's first treaty with any foreign country.

Considering the fact that it was Japan that forcefully opened Korea to the outer world for the first time in 1876 and eventually annexed the country later in 1910, it may seem as Japan's consistent penetration and colonisation of Korea in this period between 1876 and 1910. However, international pressure and domestic unrest, caused by the modernisation and the Westernisation of the country, often initiated political crises that dramatically changed the balance of foreign influence and even dragged them into the domestic politics of Korea. Japan's penetration into Korea was soon challenged by Qing China, who wanted to change Korea from its traditional tributary into a vassal in the new Western world order. Therefore, until 1894, Qing China and Japan confronted each other to exert their own influence over Korea and the fierce rivalry resulted in the Sino-Japanese War of

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<sup>3</sup> For an account of the opening of Japan, see Michael R. Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2004); William G. Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan, 1834-1858* (London: Luzac, 1951); William G. Beasley, *Japan Encounters the Barbarian: Japanese Travellers in America and Europe* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 1995); Marius B. Jansen, *The Emergence of Meiji Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); 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: Global Oriental, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> For an account of the French Invasion of Korea, see Daniel C. Kane, "Bellonet and Roze: Overzealous Servants of Empire and the 1866 French Attack on Korea." *Korean Studies*, 23 (1999), pp. 1-23; Ju Cheon Lee and Kim Jin Hwan, 'Pyönginyangyoüi chaejomyöng [The Reillumination of Byeonginyangyeo Incident - Fighting between the Chosun and the French Army]', *Yöllinjöngshin immunhakyöng'u [Wonkwang Journal of Humanities]*, 8 (2007), pp. 131-146. For an account of the American Invasion of Korea, see Gordon H. Chang, "Whose "Barbarism"? Whose "Treachery"? Race and Civilization in the Unknown United States-Korea War of 1871." *The Journal of American History*, 89.4 (2003), pp.1331-1365; Myeong-Ho Kim, *Ch'ogi hanmi kwan'gyeüi chaejomyönggr syömönho sagönesö shinmiyangyokkaji [Reexamination on the Early Relations between Korea and the U.S.: From the USS Sherman Incident in 1866 to the American Invasion of Ganghwa Island in 1871]* (Seoul: Yeoksa Bipyeongsa, 2005)

1894-1895, where Japan consequently triumphed and forced Qing China to revoke its suzerainty claim over Korea.

Thus, considering that Korea would become a Japanese protectorate in 1905, the next 10 years between 1895 and 1905 became a crucial period for the fate of Korea. On one hand, the Korean Government was finally able to pursue its own foreign policies without any interference from Beijing since Qing China recognised the complete independence of Korea. On the other hand, however, Korea now had to cope with not only the rising of Japan as a dominant regional power but also Russia's southward advance towards Manchuria and Korea, especially since Russia prevented Japan from obtaining the Liaodong Peninsula by the Triple Intervention of 1895. Obviously, it was almost impossible for Korea to deter any foreign aggression, especially from Japan or Russia, by military means. Thus, diplomacy with other Western Powers became a focal point of Korea's foreign policy in this period.

For this reason, Britain became a significant counterpart for Korea at this time. Britain showed its interest in trade with Korea since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> It was not crystallised until 1882, when Britain and Korea signed the Treaty of Amity and Commerce (and revised in favour of Britain's interest in the following year). The opening of commercial trade with Korea could be one of the main objectives of the Anglo-Korea Treaty. However, it should also be considered that, in the 1880s, Britain was confronting Russia at every corner of the world and the most favoured nation clause in the Anglo-Korean Treaty would prevent Russia from obtaining any exclusive privileges and concessions. A threat of Russian advance towards Korea was taken by Britain so seriously that Britain occupied Korean isles called Kōmundo as a countermeasure against the Panjdeh Incident in Afghanistan. Therefore, once Korea lost its traditional ties with Qing China and became a new battlefield of Russo-Japanese rivalry, Britain's Korea policy had to change accordingly.

This doctoral research intends to find an answer to the question, "why did Britain give up on the idea of Korean independence and then agree with Japan's establishment of protectorate over Korea in 1905?", by examining the progress and development of Anglo-Korean relations between 1895, when Korea became completely independent of Korea, and 1905, when Korea lost its diplomatic rights and became a Japanese protectorate. In 1895, when Korea faced the change of the international politics of Northeast Asia, Korea relied on diplomacy as a primary tool to secure its territorial integrity and independence. Britain also expected Korea to become an independent power

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<sup>5</sup> James E. Hoare, 'The Centenary of Korean-British Diplomatic Relations: Aspects of British Interest and Involvement in Korea 1600-1983', *Transactions of the Korea Branch Royal Asiatic Society*, 58 (1983), pp. 1-34. (pp. 2-4)

that would be capable of preventing itself from falling into the hands of any hostile Power against Britain. Therefore, at this time, Korean independence seemed desirable for the interests of both countries. However, in 10 years, Anglo-Korean relations gradually deteriorated to a point where Britain did not oppose to Japan's establishment of a protectorate over Korea, even though Britain was a signatory of the Anglo-Korean Treaty. This doctoral research aims to demonstrate what Britain and Korea expected from each other to secure Korean independence; how Anglo-Korean relations was influenced by a series of political crises happening in Korea; and why Britain and Korea failed to achieve the independence of Korea.

## Literature Review

There are mainly three approaches to the questions of the covering period. Firstly, Because of this sudden end to the 500-year-old dynasty, many researches drew attention to a series of events that eventually lead to the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910. Since Hilary Conroy's *The Japanese Seizure of Korea, 1868-1910*<sup>6</sup> demonstrates that Japan's annexation of Korea was not a result of long-term objectives or strategy but a chain of short-term events that eventually led to the Japanese colonisation of Korea, many scholars analysed the bilateral relationship between Korea and Japan. While Conroy argues that Japan's colonisation was greatly motivated by economic development and their needs for larger market and resources, *The Abacus and The Sword* by Peter Duus<sup>7</sup> argues that such relatively short-changes in Japan's Korea policy could be caused by Japan's domestic politics, just like many other countries in the contemporary times. While these studies focus on the foreign policies of Japan in the period, Alexis Dudden's *Japan's Colonization of Korea: Discourse and Power*<sup>8</sup> analyses the intellectual aspect of the period by examining the influence of languages and how it established a relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. Unlike other researches focusing on Japan's prominent roles, *Korea between Empires, 1895-1919*<sup>9</sup> by Andre Schmid examines how Korea's encounters with modern media as well as the external world shaped and developed their original concept of the Korean nation.

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<sup>6</sup> Hilary Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea, 1868-1910: A Study of Realism and Idealism in International Relations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960)

<sup>7</sup> Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Alexis Dudden, *Japan's Colonization of Korea: Discourse and Power* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Andre Schmid, *Korea between Empires, 1895-1919* (New York : New York , 2002).

Secondly, numerous researches focus on the relationship between Korea and multiple powers. *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism, 1876-1910*<sup>10</sup> by C.I.E. Kim and H.K. Kim provides a comprehensive account of Korea's encounters with imperialist powers. George W. Lensen's *Balance of Intrigue*<sup>11</sup> examines the evolution of the Russo-Japanese rivalry over Manchuria and Korea with analysis on Russian archival sources, which provides a better understanding of Russia's Northeast Asia policy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895: Perceptions, Power and Primacy*<sup>12</sup> by S. C. M. Paine and *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* by Ian Nish investigates the evolution of two regional wars, whose main focus was the Korean Peninsula.

Thirdly, other researches focus on Korea's bilateral relations with other powers. K. W. Larsen's *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade: Qing Imperialism and Chosŏn Korea*<sup>13</sup> examines the transition of two countries' complicated relationship from the traditional Asian tribute system to the Western treaty system. This research reveals that it was not Japan but Qing China who threatened the integrity of Korea before the Sino-Japanese War. *American Diplomacy and Strategy toward Korea and Northeast Asia, 1882-1950 and After*<sup>14</sup> by S. Y. Kim offers an apprehensive account of the United States – Korean relations from the Chosŏn Dynasty to the beginning of the Cold War era. It shows a vivid contrast of the difference in the United States' Korea policy by period. Regarding Russo-Korean relations, *Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, with Special Emphasis on the Causes of the Russo-Japanese War*<sup>15</sup> by Andrew Malozemoff offers a good understanding of Russia's Northeast Asia policy with the analysis of Russian archival sources. Although it does not exclusively cover Russo-Korean relations, Malozemoff's research shows how crucial Korea was to Russia's Northeast Asia policy.

While many researchers studied Korea's relations with other powers in the period between 1895 and 1905, there are few studies focused on the history of Anglo-Korean relations covering this particular period. Some researches other topics of Anglo-Korean relations. D.Y. Ku's *Korea Under Colonialism: The March First Movement and Anglo-Japanese Relations*<sup>16</sup> focuses on the March First

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<sup>10</sup> Chong-lik Eugene Kim, *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism 1876-1910*, ed. by Han-Kyo Kim and Berkeley. Center for Japanese and Korean Studies University of California (Berkeley : London: Berkeley : University of California Press, 1968).

<sup>11</sup> George A. Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue: International Rivalry in Korea and Manchuria, 1884-99* (Gainesville, Fla: University Press of Florida, 1986).

<sup>12</sup> S C M Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 : Perceptions, Power, and Primacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Kirk W Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade : Qing Imperialism and Chosŏn Korea, 1850-1910* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Seung-Young Kim, *American Diplomacy and Strategy toward Kora and Northeast Asia, 1882–1950 and After* (New York: Palgrave, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Malozemoff, *Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, with Special Emphasis on the Causes of the Russo-Japanese War*. (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1958).

<sup>16</sup> Daeyeol Ku, *Korea under Colonialism : The March First Movement and Anglo-Japanese Relations*, ed. by Royal Asiatic Society--Korea Branch (Seoul: Published for the Royal Asiatic Society Korea Branch, 1985).

Independence Movement of 1919 and demonstrates how Britain's view of Japan was influenced by Korean-Christian convertors' confrontation against the brutal repression of Japan during the independence movement. This research also shows how Christian missionaries shaped the Koreans' perception of modernism under Japanese colonialism. C. S. Chong's *The Korean Problem in Anglo-Japanese Relations 1904-1910: Ernest Thomas Bethell and His Newspapers; The Daehan Maeil Sinbo and the Korea Daily News*<sup>17</sup> also focuses on another example of the complicated question of Korea in Anglo-Japanese relations, Ernest Thomas Bethell. He was the editor and publisher of The Daehan Maeil Sinbo and the Korea Daily News. Because of the nationalist and patriotic character of the newspapers, his publishing became a complicated issue between Britain and Japan, who were bound in an alliance at that time. *Relationship with Distance: Korea, East Asia and the Anglo-Japanese Relationship, 1876-1894*<sup>18</sup> by Suzuki Yu also deals with Korea's complicated international status in Northeast Asia and its effects in Anglo-Japanese relations.

Aside from the question of Korea in Anglo-Japanese relations, the British occupation of Port Hamilton, also known as Kōmundo Island, is a popular topic in academia. The latest research on the British occupation of Komundo Island is *Anglo-Korean Relations and the Port Hamilton Affair, 1885-1887, Empires in Perspective*<sup>19</sup> by Stephen A. Royle. While previous researches on the diplomatic aspects of the event with Russia and Qing China, this research also covers their relationship between the British Navy and indigenous Koreans on the island.

James Hoare's *Britain and Korea, 1797-1997*<sup>20</sup> covers the history of Anglo-Korean relations from the very beginning and gives a comprehensive understanding of 200 years of the history of Anglo-Korean relations. In terms of collected papers, two volumes of *Aspects of Anglo-Korean Relations*<sup>21</sup> were published in 1984 to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Anglo-Korean Treaty of 1883. Some of short research papers covers certain topics from the Anglo-Korean relations in the period between 1895 and 1905, such as Daeyeol Ku's 'A Korean Diplomat in London: Yi Haneung and

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<sup>17</sup> Chin-sok Chong, *The Korean Problem in Anglo-Japanese Relations 1904-1910: Ernest Thomas Bethell and His Newspapers; The Daehan Maeil Sinbo and the Korea Daily News*. (Seoul: NANAM Publications, 1987).

<sup>18</sup> Yu Suzuki, 'The London School of Economics and Political Science Relationship with Distance : Korea , East Asia and the Anglo-Japanese Relationship , 1876-1894' (Unpublished doctoral thesis, London School of Economics, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> Stephen A. Royle, *Anglo-Korean Relations and the Port Hamilton Affair, 1885-1887, Empires in Perspective* (London ; New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> James E. Hoare, *Britain and Korea, 1797-1997* (Seoul: Seoul : British Embassy, 1997, 1997).

<sup>21</sup> Roger Bullen, Ian Nish and James E. Hoare, *Aspects of Anglo-Korean Relations* (London: International Centre for Economics and Related Disciplines, London School of Economics, 1984); Daeyeol Ku, *Aspects of Anglo-Korean Relations. Part Two, Papers by Daeyeol Ku, Tony Michell and Shinya Sugiyama.*, ed. by Tony Michell, Shin'ya Sugiyama, and Suntory-Toyota International Centre for Economics and Related Disciplines (London: London : London School of Economics. Suntory Toyota International Centre for Economics and Related Disciplines, 1984, 1984).



Anglo-Korean Relations'<sup>22</sup> about the life of Yi Han-Eung, the last Korean Minister in London before the Japanese Annexation of Korea.

In Korea, some researchers examined the imperialist nature of Britain's Northeast Asia policy. Choi Moon-Hyung's *Han'gukül Tullössan Chegukchuüi Yölgangüi Kakch'uk [Imperialist Powers' Rivalry over Korea]*<sup>23</sup> newly shed lights on the imperialist policies of Great Powers other than Japan. Kim Won-Soo published several researches explaining Britain's Northeast Asia policy as part of Britain's global strategy, including 'Yönggugüi Haeyang P'aegwön'gwa Tongashia Oegyo Chöllyagüi Chönhwan - Üihwadansagön'gwa Küktongwigiwa Yön'gyehayö [Transition of British Sea Power and East Asian Diplomatic Strategy - Connected with the Boxer Rebellion and the Far Eastern Crisis]'.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, new researchers such as Kwang-Ho Hyun and Seung-Hoon Han publish various researches on the topics related to Anglo-Korean relations in recent years.<sup>25</sup> Despite the rise of research interest in Anglo-Korean relations amongst Korean scholars, there are still many topics to be covered and published in English. This research also aims to fill the gap in English literature.

## The Structure of the Thesis

As mentioned, the main objective of This doctoral research is to show the evolution and development of Anglo-Korean relations from 1895, when Britain and Korea shared the same interest

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<sup>22</sup> Daeyeol Ku, 'A Korean Diplomat in London: Yi Haneung and Anglo-Korean Relations', in *Korean-British Relations, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Essays in Celebration of the Centenary of Korean-British Diplomatic Relations*, ed. by Chong-Hwa Chun and James E. Hoare (Seoul: Korean-British Society, 1984), pp. 69–88.

<sup>23</sup> Moon-Hyung Choi, *Han'gukül Tullössan Chegukchuüi Yölgangüi Kakch'uk [Imperialist Powers' Rivalry over Korea]* (Seoul: Chishiksanöpsa, 2001).

<sup>24</sup> Won-soo Kim, 'The Russo-Japanese War and the Crisis Diplomacy of Great Han Empire - Connected with Yongampo Incident', *Söyansahakyön'gu [Journal of Western History]*, 39 (2016), 221–47; Won-soo Kim, 'Yönggugüi Oegyojögch'aek kwa Külleobölchöllyagüi Hyöngsöng, 1900-1904 [British Foreign Policy and the Formation of Global Strategy, 1900-1904]', *Söyansahakyön'gu [Journal of Western History]*, 28 (2013), 179–202; Won-soo Kim, 'Yönggugüi Haeyang P'aegwön'gwa Tongashia Oegyo Chöllyagüi Chönhwan - Üihwadansagön'gwa Küktongwigiwa Yön'gyehayö [Transition of British Sea Power and East Asian Diplomatic Strategy - Connected with the Boxer Rebellion and the Far Eastern Crisis]', *Söyng Yöksawa Munhwa Yön'gu [Journal of Western History and Culture]*, 45 (2017), 65–90.

<sup>25</sup> Kwang-Ho Hyun, 'Taehanjegugüi Ünsan'gümgwang Ch'aegulgwön Höyöwa Kü Oegyojök Üimi [Diplomatic Plan of Eunsan Mining Concession in the Great Han Empire]', *Taegusahak*, 92 (2008), 227–48; Kwang-Ho Hyun, 'Yöngiltongmaeng Ijön Chuhanyönggukkongsaüi Taehanjeguk Chöngseinshik [Understanding of Situation of The British Ministers to the Great Han Empire before the Conclusion of a Treaty of Anglo - Japanese Alliance]', *Yöksahakyön'gu*, 31 (2007), 71–100; Kwang-Ho Hyun, *Taehanjegukki Kojongüi Taeyöng Chöngch'aek [A Policy toward Great Britain of King Kojong in the Great Han Empire]*, *Han'guksayön'gu [The Journal of Korean History]*, 2008; Seunghoon Han, 'Ülsanükyakül Chönhuhan Yönggugüi Taehanjögch'aek [British Policy toward Korean around 1905 Convention]', *Han'guksahakpo [The Journal of the Studies of Korean History]*, 30 (2008), 387–421.

in Korean independence, to 1905, when Britain agreed with Japan's plan to make Korea a protectorate. To effectively demonstrate how Britain and Korea reacted to the question of Korean independence, the main body of the thesis is chronologically divided into five chapters and each chapter discusses Anglo-Korean relations in a certain period.

In the first chapter, which covers the period between October 1895 and February 1896, starts with a brief discussion of Anglo-Korean relations between 1882, when the Anglo-Korean Treaty was first negotiated and signed, and September 1895, when Britain witnessed the change of Northeast Asian regional order and considered Korean independence as a serious option to maintain British interests in the region. Afterwards, it will be discussed how Britain responded to two political crises that happened in October 1895 (Japan's notorious murder of Queen Min) and in February 1896 (Kojong's Asylum at the Russian Legation in Seoul). These two incidents clearly undermined Korean independence and yet Britain cautiously approached to the matters in fear that Russia might exploit any crack in Anglo-Japanese relations. Britain's responses to them shows Britain's intention to not proactively interfere with Korean affairs.

In the next chapter, it will be Britain's opposition against Russia's dominant influence, underpinned by the presence of Kojong at the Russian Legation between 1896 and 1897, will be examined. Interestingly, Britain was convinced that there was no hostile intention on the Russian side when they provided protection for Kojong and even believed that a guidance of Russia to modernise the nation would be desirable for Korea. However, Britain strongly confronted Russian penetration when it reached a point of attempting to replace British advisors within the Korean Government with Russians. It will be discussed why Britain thought their influence in Korea was at stake and how they confronted Russia.

In Chapter Three, two major topics will be discussed; Kojong's assumption of emperor title and the Russo-Japanese dispute over Korean ports on the south coast of the peninsula. Kojong vigorously worked on the assumption of emperor title while believing that it would significantly increase the nation's profile especially in Northeast Asia and send an obvious signal that Korea became a completely independent state. Despite Kojong's effort to raise its profile by the assumption of emperor title, Britain hardly cared about the title assumption. Instead, Britain focused on preventing Russia from obtaining a concession on the south coast of Korea, which might operate as a naval port for the Russian Fleet and damage the interests of Britain and Japan in the region. It clearly demonstrates the differences Britain and Korea had when it came to the question of actually achieving Korean independence.

The following chapter will cover the period between 1900 and 1902, when Anglo-Korean relations started to steeply deteriorate. Since 1898, Kojong was challenged by civil rights movement in the country while he had to deal with the rise of tension between Russia and Japan. Kojong responded by centralising political power to himself and proposing the neutralisation of Korea, both of which were seen by Britain as negative and sceptical. Rather, Britain started to recognise the fact that Japan and Britain shared the same interests in Korea and closely worked together to secure their interests. By this point, Britain not only became an imperialist Power to obtain beneficial concessions in Korea by any means, but also actively deterred Korea's efforts to secure foreign loan to be used for the modernisation of the country.

In final chapter, it will be discussed how actively Britain opposed Russian penetration into Korea in 1903 and how closely Britain worked with Japan before, during and after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. Since 1903, Russia resumed its interest in Korea and vigorously activated and defended its lumber concessions along the Yalu River on the Sino-Korean border, which could be strategically significant for the defence of Russian interests in Manchuria. Britain and Japan strongly condemned Russia's fortification of the Yalu River and pressed Korea not to give any exclusive privileges to Russia. Moreover, after the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, the British Legation in Korea not only tolerated Japanese occupation and their unilateral introduction of political reforms, but also disrupted Korea's domestic and international actions to secure overseas support for the international guarantee of Korean independence.

By demonstrating the analyses of Anglo-Korean relations at key points between 1895 and 1905, it will reach a conclusion that Britain and Korea fell apart due to differences in how to achieve Korean independence. Britain believed that the modernisation of the political and economic systems of the country was urgent for the sake of Korean independence, whereas Korea was convinced that diplomacy would be essential to gain international assurance of Korean independence, especially when Korea had a limited amount of resources to facilitate its modernisation schemes. On top of that, Britain found that Japan, one of the only two nations that had strong intention to put Korea under their sphere of influence, shared similar interests in the region. By signing the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, Britain became an ally to support Japan's ambitions expansion towards Korea and the idea of Korean independence, which had been once shared between Korea and Britain, also came to an end.

# Chapter 1: Britain's Response to the Korean Problems, 1895-6

## Anglo-Korean Relations between 1882 and 1895

It was the Anglo-Korean Treaty of 1883 that established the official diplomatic relations between Britain and Korea for the first time in history. The treaty intended to meet not only the needs of the signatories, but also those of China, who proposed the treaty and mediated both parties. From the British perspective, the Treaty would open a new potential market to British products. Additionally, to a lesser extent, Britain also expected that the presence of British and other Western representatives in the nation would deter a possible advance of Russia. On the other side, Korea believed that treaties with Western powers would strengthen the independence of Korea. Meanwhile, China believed that the treaty would balance off Japanese penetration and confirm Chinese suzerainty over Korea.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, in the period between 1883, when the Anglo-Korean Treaty was concluded, and 1895, when Chinese defeated to Japan in first the Sino-Japanese War, Britain's policy in Korea was; to maximise its commercial interest; to minimise its political interference; and to acknowledge Chinese suzerainty by affiliating the British representative in Korea to the British minister in Beijing, China. The only exception from the non-interference policy was the British occupation of Kōmundo, also known as Port Hamilton, between 1885 and 1887. It was Britain's firm response to the threat of Russian advance from the Vladivostok harbour to the Korean Peninsula and the Pacific Ocean. After two years of the seizure, Britain withdrew from Port Hamilton when Russia gave an assurance that Russian Government would not occupy any part of the Korean territory.<sup>27</sup> The incident shows that the deterrence of Russian advance was one of Britain's strategic interests in Korea.

In the same period, Korea struggled with Chinese predominance within the country. In 1884, when Korean reformists, led by Kim Ok-Kyun, initiated a coup to throw over the Korean Government, China claimed its duty to intervene in the domestic affairs of its vassal and suppressed the uprising by sending troops.<sup>28</sup> Since China successfully repressed the coup and restored the Korean Court, China strengthened its influence upon the Korean Government. China attempted to transform its traditional

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<sup>26</sup> Gordon Daniels, *Sir Harry Parkes: British representative in Japan 1865-83* (Surrey, 1999: Japan Library 1999) pp. 197-201; Ian Nishi, 'The Anglo-Korean treaty of 1883', *International Studies* 1, (1984) pp. 22-24

<sup>27</sup> Peter Farrar, 'British Policy towards Korea during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5', *Proceedings of the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Association for Korean Studies in Europe*, Chantilly, France (10-15 April 1985), 81-96 (p. 84); Spencer J. Palmer, *Korean-American Relations : Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States* (California, 1963), Vol.2, pp. 239-241; Yung-Chung Kim, 'The Komundo Incident, 1885-1887: An Early Phase in British Korea Relations' in Chong-Hwa Chung and J. E. Hoare (eds), *Korean-British Relations*; pp. 9-38; James E. Hoare, 'Komundo – Port Hamilton', *Asian Affairs* (1986) Vol. 17, pp. 298-308

<sup>28</sup> Larsen, *Treaties, Tradition and Trade*, pp. 124–27.

Sino-centric world order into the Westphalian suzerainty-vassal relationship. On the other hand, the Korean Government tried to raise its profile in the international society by establishing legations in Western powers.

In principle Britain was reluctant to challenge the Chinese predominance in the country despite such diplomatic disputes as the Sedan Chair Scandal, where Yuan Shikai, the Chinese Imperial-Resident in Seoul, claimed China's superiority to Korea and persisted in sitting in the highest position in royal audiences.<sup>29</sup> When Korea attempted to establish a legation in the United States, China approved it on three conditions; the Korean minister must be accompanied by the Chinese minister when visiting the foreign ministry of the country of residence; the Chinese minister must stand or sit in a higher position than that of the Korean minister in official occasions; the Korean minister must contact the Chinese Legation in the country of residence and ask for instruction in urgent situations.<sup>30</sup> The Chinese stance in the suzerainty issues could affect the status of British representatives in Korea. However, Britain was reluctant to challenge the Chinese predominance for two main reasons; firstly, Britain believed that Korea was not sufficiently strong to modernise and strengthen itself; secondly, from the British perspective, China was a desirable partner to provide protection for Korea in face of Russian threat.

Therefore, when war between China and Japan over Korea seemed inevitable, Britain concerned that Russia would take advantage of war and exert its influence. Therefore, when China and Japan rejected the withdrawal of both troops, proposed by foreign representatives in Seoul on 25 June 1894, Britain called for international pressure from the Great Powers to prevent the war on 13 July 1894, but it became void since the United States rejected to join the action. However, despite their willingness to stop the war by diplomatic means, Britain was reluctant to take any military intervention.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, Japan continued its attacks on China and eventually won the war.

However, when Japan had to give up Port Arthur and the Liaodong peninsula under the pressure from Russia, Germany and France, Britain did not provide any diplomatic support to back Japan because British interests in the region were not threatened by the Triple Intervention.<sup>32</sup> Due to the fear that Japan would not deter Russia's further advance to Korea, Japan asked to Britain for the international guarantee of Korean independence. On 12 June, Japanese Minister in London Katō Takaaki asked to Lord Kimberly whether or not the British Government would be willing to make the proposal with the Great Powers for the international guarantee of the Korean independence, which had already been planned during the Sino-Japanese War in October 1894. However, Lord Kimberly

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<sup>29</sup> Larsen, *Treaties, Tradition and Trade*, pp. 191–96.

<sup>30</sup> Larsen, *Treaties, Tradition and Trade*, pp. 176–89.

<sup>31</sup> Farrar, 'British Policy towards Korea during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5', pp. 88–89.

<sup>32</sup> Kenneth Bourne, *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830-1902*. (Oxford: Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1970, 1970), pp. 435–36.

politely rejected the proposal by saying that “the situation had been much changed by the war”.<sup>33</sup>

By September 1895, Japanese high-rank officials shared a very negative view on the future of Korea. Inoue Kaoru, Japanese Minister in Seoul, revealed his opinion to British Consul-General William Hillier that his mission to guide the modernisation of the country was “more or less of failure” and that the future of Korea would be “very gloomy” due to the insufficiency and corruption of the current Korean Government.<sup>34</sup> In early October, Inoue told Ernest Satow, British Minister in Tokyo, that Japan only wished to initiate administrative and military reforms for the maintenance of independence of Korea but he complained that it would take much longer than it had been done in Japan because Koreans were indifferent to launching such progressive reforms. Moreover, he justified the Japanese protection of their residents and interests in Korea by emphasising Korea’s failure in dealing with the Tonghak Uprising, which eventually resulted in the Sino-Japanese War. From his perspective, the future of Korea was ‘full of dangers’ and thus Japan must play a role similar to ‘that of Britain in Egypt’ to help the nation modernise itself.<sup>35</sup>

Japanese Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi also shared a similar point of view that was even more sceptical on the independence of Korea than that of Inoue Kaoru. Itō believed that “idea of Korean independence was quite impracticable”. He even argued that “Korea must be either annexed or be placed under the protection of some other Power”.<sup>36</sup> Having said that power would be ‘the strongest’ one in the region, Itō clearly saw Korea as a power vacuum in the region and assumed that either Japan or Russia would eventually place Korea under its sphere of influence. It was apparent that the power Itō mentioned was Japan, but he was well aware that Japan was incapable to resist Russia’s southwards advance at this stage.

However, British diplomats in the region disagreed with their opinions. Hillier pointed out that it was Inoue Kaoru who was responsible for the inefficiency and corruption of the Korean Government. He pointed out that he planned to separate the King and the Queen from the Korean politics and that Japan forced Korea to accept the Japanese loan scheme without any precaution with regard to the spending of the money.<sup>37</sup> British Minister in Japan Ernest Satow also emphasised that, unlike Japan’s policy in Korea, Britain’s policy in Egypt was ‘self-denial’ that ‘Egypt was open as a field of enterprise to all nations and that there were foreigners of all nationalities in the Egyptian service’.<sup>38</sup> He pointed out the key difference between Britain and Japan in terms of protectorate policies: Britain aimed to

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<sup>33</sup> Farrar, 'British Policy towards Korea during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5', pp. 92–93.

<sup>34</sup> The National Archives, London, *Hillier, Seoul, to Salisbury*, 17 September 1895, No. 63, Foreign Office: China and Taiwan Confidential Print (FO 405)/65.

<sup>35</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 4 October 1895, No. 69, FO 405/65.

<sup>36</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 27 September 1895, No. 67, FO 405/65.

<sup>37</sup> Hillier to Salisbury, 17 September 1895, No. 63, FO 405/65.

<sup>38</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 4 October 1895, No. 69, FO 405/65.

respect the local government's autonomy and free-trade principle whereas Japan sought to secure its special interests in the country.

London also preferred the maintenance of Korean independence to the Japanese predominance in the country. In a meeting with Katō Takaaki, Japanese Minister in London, on 25 October 1895, Lord Robert Cecil Sainsbury said that "it would be very desirable that the independence of the country should be maintained and that it should be given time to develop its resources".<sup>39</sup> He thought that the independence of Korea would be assured as long as its three neighbouring countries – China, Japan and Russia – had rival interests in Korea. Despite his additional comment that the stance would be changed if the number of Japanese migrants to Korea increased significantly, as of 1895, Britain was certain that the independence of Korea would have favourable effects for British interests in the country and that Korea should be given a certain amount of time to modernise the nation on its own.

Britain was especially concerned about Japan's attempts to seek for exclusive privileges in the country. In May 1895, the Japanese Government attempted to obtain special rights to monopolise mining and railways in the country. In response, the British consul-general in Seoul appealed to the Foreign Ministry of Korea against the Japanese plot and eventually the Japanese Government abandoned their original attempt in September 1895.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, when Acting Vice-consul William Henry Wilkinson visited Mokpo, which was proposed to be open to foreign trade soon, he found that the treaty port had a great potential. However, he soon discovered that Japanese nationals had already purchased all the available land beforehand. Hillier criticised that these transactions should not be recognised by the Korean Government.<sup>41</sup>

By September 1895, Britain was convinced that the idea of Korean independence would be desirable for British interests if it prevented other foreign powers from seeking for exclusive privileges. British diplomats in the region believed that Japanese high-rank officials were pessimistic of the possibility of Korean independence and that they attempted to secure their special interests by intervening in Korean politics and monopolising the market. It would not only damage British commercial interests in the country, but also provoke Russia to advance towards Korea for establishing protectorate or even annexing it. From British perspective, the independent Korea would keep its market open to the firms of all foreign nationalities, including Britain, and play a role as a buffer state between Russia and Japan. London and British legations in the region were aware that Korea would need a reasonable amount of time to develop and modernise itself and believed that the nation could manage it on its own.

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<sup>39</sup> Salisbury to Satow, 25 October 1895, No. 22, FO 405/65.

<sup>40</sup> Hillier to Salisbury, 17 September 1895, No. 63, FO 405/65.; O'Connor to Salisbury, 8 October 1895, No.89, FO 405/65, pp. 60.

<sup>41</sup> O'Connor to Salisbury, 8 October 1895, No. 89, FO 405/65.

## The Response of the British Representatives in Seoul to the Murder of Queen Min

Despite Britain's wish for Korea to concentrate on the modernisation of the country, Korea fell into another political turmoil only six months after the end of the First Sino-Japanese War, when Queen Min was murdered in the palace on 8 October 1895. She was widely known as the leader of the anti-Japanese party. Since Japan won the Sino-Japanese War in April 1895, Japan attempted to keep Korea under the sphere of Japanese influence. However, before long, Japan had to face the Triple Intervention from Russia, France and Germany and gave up the privileges they had won from China. The Triple Intervention also asserted that the complete independence of Korea should be assured by Japan. Furthermore, when Japan attempted to monopolise mining and railways in the country in May 1895, foreign representatives in Seoul took a joint action to appeal against the Japanese demand.<sup>42</sup> Before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, Queen Min relied on the Chinese presence in the country to balance off the Japanese influence. However, since she witnessed that Japan was unable to challenge the Russian influence, she decided to invite Russia as a new counterpart to Japan.<sup>43</sup>

On the other side, Japan failed to secure the international guarantee of Korean independence due to Britain's indifferent attitude the proposal by June 1895. Furthermore, Park Young-Hyo, the Korean Home Minister and a subordinate of the Japanese authorities, lost his position and left for Japan in July 1895. Therefore, Itō and Inoue were convinced that a radical measure should be taken in order to strengthen Japan's footing in the country, which was the assassination of the Korean Queen. Apparently, the plot was discussed in July 1895, when Inoue stayed in Tokyo for a month. In a cabinet meeting during his visit, Inoue proposed the so-called "Korea Policy" and suggested replacing himself with former army general Miura Gorō as the commander of the plot.<sup>44</sup>

Interestingly, Miura Gorō never had experience in diplomatic service and lacked English language skills. Satow even believed that the appointment of Miura was "a great blunder" for similar reasons.<sup>45</sup> Since his appointment to the Japanese Legation in Seoul in September, Hiller noticed that Miura persisted on acting on his own without any interference by the Japanese Government or Japanese

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<sup>42</sup> Korea University, Seoul, *Kuhan'gugoegyomunsō [The Diplomatic Documents of the Late Chosŏn]*, Hillier to Kim Yun-Shik, 4 May 1895, Vol. 1, *Yŏng'an* [UK Collection].

<sup>43</sup> Min-wŏn Lee, *Myŏngsŏng Hwanghu Sihae Wa Agwan p'ach'ŏn: Han'guk Ŭl Tullŏssan Rŏ, Il Kaltŭng [Murder of Queen Min and Kojong's Flight to the Russian Legation]*, (Seoul: Kukhak Charyowŏn, 2002), pp. 40–44.

<sup>44</sup> Moon-Hyung Choi, 'Russo-Japanese Rivalry and Assassination of Queen Min', *The Yoksa Hakbo (The Korean Historical Review)* 168, (2000), pp. 42-45

<sup>45</sup> Ian C. Ruxton, *The Diaries and Letters of Sir Ernest Mason Satow (1843-1929), a Scholar-Diplomat in East Asia*, (Lewiston, N.Y. : 1998), p. 219.



advisors to the Korean Government.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, he only stayed for less than two months in the position of Japanese minister in Seoul and was replaced with Komura Jutarō immediately after the outbreak of the assassination of the Korean Queen. Therefore, considering his lack of experience and skills in diplomacy, no sign of change of policy and his extraordinarily short term in office, it was apparent that he was assigned a mission to execute the murder of the Queen.

When Hillier was reported about the attack on the royal palace on 8 October 1895, he believed that the Queen had successfully escaped from the palace.<sup>47</sup> However, after listening to European witnesses, including Russian architect Afanasy Ivanovich Seredin-Sabatin and American military instructor William McEntyre Dye, Hillier was convinced that the Queen was murdered during the disturbance. According to Sabatin's testimony, the Queen's house was invaded by 'Japanese in civilian dresses. He also witnessed that three or four women were dragged out and killed by Japanese alone in the presence of Japanese officers.'<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, when Hillier had an audience with King Kojong and the Crown Prince after the incident, he also had an impression that the King was frightened of the Japanese minister and his troops. In the meeting, the King revealed his concern about the Queen, who was still missing at that time. He also worried that the Korean guards, who were occupying the palace, would harm him and asked Hiller to replace them with Japanese troops. Furthermore, the King additionally asked him to 'remain in hail as long as Miura was in the palace'.<sup>49</sup> To ensure the safety of the King and the Crown Prince, foreign representatives agreed to visit the palace on a daily basis. Hiller and American acting minister Horace Allen talked to the King about their plan on 9 October. King Kojong showed his gratitude and then "whispered" what foreign vessels of war were in Chemulpo.<sup>50</sup> Allen answered that two vessels of war, one Russian and the other American, were stationing in Chemulpo and that American soldiers were ready to come to Seoul anytime.

The number of Western troops in Incheon was insufficient to cope with Japanese troops and Japanese-drilled Korean guards. Nevertheless, King Kojong seemed to have believed that the presence of Europeans would help impose pressure to prevent the Japanese side from threatening the King and Crown Prince. In response to the King's request, American officers Dye and Charles Le Gendre decided to stay in the palace all night. Hillier also understood the King's willingness to secure European presence and reported to Beijing that the presence of a British warship would be desirable even though not absolutely necessary.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Hillier to Salisbury, 17 September 1895, No. 63, FO 405/65

<sup>47</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 9 October 1895, Inclosure 2 in No. 86, FO 405/65.

<sup>48</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 10 October 1895, Inclosure 3 in No. 86, FO 405/65.

<sup>49</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 10 October 1895, Inclosure 3 in No. 86, FO 405/65.

<sup>50</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 10 October 1895, Inclosure 3 in No. 86, FO 405/65.

<sup>51</sup> Hiller to O'Connor, 11 October 1895, Inclosure 8 in No.86, FO 405/65.

In the afternoon of 8 October 1895, foreign representatives Karl Ivanovich Waeber (Russia), Horace Allen (United States), Hillier (Britain), Ferdinand Krien (Germany) and Pascal Lefèvre (France) gathered at the Japanese Legation to listen to Miura's explanation. At first, Miura tediously stated that the attack was planned and carried out only by Taiwonkun, the father of King Kojong and the political enemy of Queen Min, and Korean guards. Miura argued that he had been told about the incident by a messenger and headed to the palace with Japanese troops in order to prevent further disturbance. According to him, he arrived too late to prevent Korean soldiers from rushing into the palace and order was already restored there.<sup>52</sup>

However, other foreign representatives, who had been already informed by European witnesses that Japanese took part in the assault and murder, could not simply believe Miura's argument that any Japanese had not been involved in the attack.<sup>53</sup> Miura persistently denied that no Japanese took part in the outrages and argued that the matter should be investigated in conjunction with the Korean Government. However, Waeber reminded him that the accusation was made against the Japanese and emphasised that the Japanese Government incurred serious responsibilities by putting troops in motion. In the end, Miura agreed to make further investigations into two points; the assault committed by Japanese civilians and the escort of Taiwonkun by Japanese troops.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, Waeber asked to Miura whether he would be able to remove Japanese drilled Korean guards from the palace in response to the King's request. Miura did not think it as a proper measure and said he would not control the procedure. However, he stated that he had no objection to 'advising' the removal of Korean guards.<sup>55</sup>

Despite Miura's persistent denial, Hillier was convinced that Japanese nationals had been involved in the outrages for mainly two reasons. Firstly, it was testimonies from Europeans. Sabatin saw armed Japanese civilians ill-treating and killing palace ladies in the courtyard of the Queen's apartment. Sabatin described the Japanese civilian, who took charge in directing the processes, so accurately that even Waeber and Allen could recognise him amongst Japanese civilians in the courtyard, despite their late arrival. Secondly, Cho Hee-Yon, Kim Ka-Jin, Kwon Jae-Hyung and Yoo Kil-Jun, the key members of the pro-Japanese party, had been present in the palace even though they were not in the office and thus had no right to be there. Interestingly they were appointed to prominent positions in the Korean Government only a few hours after the events on the same day. Therefore, judging from Miura's inconsistent statements and the presence of pro-Japanese Korean officials, Hillier drew a conclusion that the plot had been carefully arranged beforehand; and that Taiwonkun attempted to rush into the

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<sup>52</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 11 October 1895, Inclosure 7 in No.86, FO 405/65.

<sup>53</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 11 October 1895, Inclosure 7 in No.86, FO 405/65.

<sup>54</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 11 October 1895, Inclosure 7 in No.86, FO 405/65.

<sup>55</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 11 October 1895, Inclosure 7 in No.86, FO 405/65.

palace with a small number of soldiers because help from the Japanese side was promised.<sup>56</sup>

Meanwhile, Hillier continuously reported on the development of the assault. On 11 October, Hillier reported that the Queen had been doubtlessly assassinated in the courtyard at the time of the attack after collecting numerous stories from four principal witnesses of the murder.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, King Kojong issued a royal decree on 10 October 1895, which proclaimed the degrading of the Queen. In his decree, he condemned that the Queen had rejected the King's order not to intervene with the government's affairs and allegedly provoked the troubles by introducing her followings into the Government and disbanding the troops. The decree also argued that the Queen should be deposed because she kept hiding.<sup>58</sup>

From his point of view, the Decree weirdly accused the Queen of hiding, whereas everyone knew that the Queen had been killed by Japanese assassins.<sup>59</sup> Hillier assumed that there might be mainly two reasons why the decree had been issued; Firstly, it intended to remove the necessity of national mourning when the death of the Queen was admitted; and secondly, the proclamation would prevent the Crown Prince, the son of Queen Min, from succession to the throne. Having based on his previous experiences in the country, Hillier believed that King Kojong would never acknowledge the public denunciation of the Queen.<sup>60</sup>

Hillier and other foreign representatives were furious at the letter from the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs with regard to the public denunciation of Queen Min.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, when they received another letter from the Korean Foreign Ministry that explained the causes of the attack on the palace, they found that it was simply a duplication of Miura's contradictory statements.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, Waeber invited other foreign colleagues except for Miura at the Russian Legation on 12 October in order to discuss what reply should be sent to those two letters from the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>63</sup> After discussions, foreign representatives decided to reject the official explanations of the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which were inconsistent with the testimony of European residents, asked for the truth of the events. Additionally, Hillier stated that it was very difficult for him to believe that the decree degrading Queen Min had been duly approved by King Kojong.<sup>64</sup>

While Hillier sent a reply to Korean Foreign Minister Kim Yun-Sik for the criticism of the languages in

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<sup>56</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 11 October 1895, Inclosure 7 in No.86, FO 405/65.

<sup>57</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 11 October 1895, Inclosure 1 in No. 111, FO 405/65.

<sup>58</sup> Royal Proclamation, 10 October 1895, Inclosure 1 in No. 111, FO 405/65.

<sup>59</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 11 October 1895, Inclosure 1 in No. 111, FO 405/65.

<sup>60</sup> Kim Yun-Shik to Hillier, 10 October 1895, Vol. 1 *Yŏng'an*.

<sup>61</sup> Kim Yun-Sik to Hillier, 13 October 1895, Inclosure 7 in No. 111, FO 405/65.

<sup>62</sup> Kim Yun-Sik to Hillier, 8 October 1895, Inclosure 1 in No. 111, FO 405/65.

<sup>63</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 18 October 1895, Inclosure 1 in No. 112, FO 405/65.

<sup>64</sup> Hillier to Kim Yun-Shik, Inclosure 7 in No. 111, FO 405/65.

those two letters from him,<sup>65</sup> Russian Charge d'affaires Waeber asked for an interview with Kim Yun-Sik. First, Waeber pointed out that some Korean officials and palace ladies had been certainly murdered in the palace even though the Korean Government persistently denied the death of the Queen. Waeber then stated that it was unreasonable for the Korean Government to appoint new ministers immediately after the murder. Furthermore, those soldiers who had tolerated the murders were present at the palace.

Waeber condemned that the Korean Government was powerless to act, or they were worried that investigations would eventually head for themselves. Then Waeber informed Kim that he would not recognise any act of the present Government until the murderers were punished; the present guard was withdrawn from the palace, and new ministers recently appointed in the Government were punished or at least removed.<sup>66</sup> When Waeber told Hillier about the interview with the Korean Foreign Minister, Hillier believed that his strong language had been approved by the Russian Government. Furthermore, Allen also appeared to have telegraphed to the United States Government that he would not recognise any act of the present Korean Government.<sup>67</sup> Hiller agreed that the current Korean Government acted without the sanction of the King, but he did not align himself with his Russian and American colleagues.<sup>68</sup>

Apparently, Waeber and Allen were even asked by the King for saving him from the palace by military means. In the mid-October, they informed Hillier that they had received a confidential message from the King, who urgently asked them to send guards to the palace to protect him and asked whether he would join them in requesting permission from home.<sup>69</sup> At this time, the British consulate in Seoul had fifteen additional marines from HMS Edgar, which had arrived at Chemulpo on 17 October. On the following day of the arrival, William H. Henderson, the captain of HMS Edgar, and Hillier visited the palace to see King Kojong. He told them that he was very satisfied with the presence of a British vessel in the country and asked to send a guard of marines to Seoul. Therefore, they decided to send 15 out of 25 marines, who had landed at Chemulpo, to Seoul. In the same meeting, King Kojong also asked Waeber and Allen, who had already come to the palace to see him, to increase the number of guards at their legations.<sup>70</sup> Considering the timing, it appears that King Kojong had already thought of the plan by that time. However, Hillier thought that such a step should be taken only if it was agreed upon by

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<sup>65</sup> Hillier to Kim Yun-Shik, 14 October 1895, Vol. 1, *Yŏng'an*; 22 August 1895 (Lunar Calendar), Vol. 33, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>66</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 22 October 1895, No. 128, FO 405/65.

<sup>67</sup> Spencer J Palmer, *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States. Vol.2, The Period of Growing Influence, 1887-1895* (Berkeley: Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963, 1963), p. 267.

<sup>68</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 22 October 1895, Inclosure 1 in No. 128, FO 405/65.

<sup>69</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 22 October 1895, Inclosure 3 in No. 128, FO 405/65.

<sup>70</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 19 October 1895, Inclosure 2 in No. 112, FO 405/65.

all foreign representatives, including the Japanese Minister, while Waeber and Allen believed that the Japanese Minister would attempt to prevent the process of a plan once he knew about it. After discussions, they decided that it would be more desirable to wait for the return of John Mahelm Berry Sill, the United States Minister. They also agreed to invite Japanese Minister Komura Jutarō, who was newly appointed to replace Miura and to investigate into the incident to the meeting of foreign representatives to discuss the matter.<sup>71</sup>

Despite his hesitation to join Waeber and Allen in sending guards to the palace for the protection of King Kojong, he was convinced that a threat against King Kojong's safety was increasing. In the night of 21 October, Hillier and other foreign relatives received another letter from King Kojong, stating that Cho Hee-Yon and Kim Ka-Jin, warned the King that they would murder him before they got killed if a foreign guard entered the palace. Moreover, he also informed them that the Japanese Minister had demanded from the King and Taiwonkun a statement to confirm that the recent attack on the palace was committed only by Koreans.<sup>72</sup> Hillier disagreed with Waeber and Allen, who believed that any measure should be immediately taken to secure the safety of King Kojong. Hillier doubted whether they would take such an extreme measure as the murder of the King, which would not be backed by their Japanese supporters. However, he was certain that further incidents were likely to happen at any time as long as the current mutineers stayed in power and the Japanese-drilled Korean guards were present at the palace. Therefore, he stated that the disbandment of the Japanese-drilled guards was vital to restore order and peace in the Korean Court.<sup>73</sup>

On 25 October, all foreign representatives, including American Minister Sill and Japanese Minister Komura, had a meeting to discuss the current situations and what measure should be taken in order to secure the King's safety. Sill stated that King Kojong had been certainly threatened by mutineers, especially War Minister Cho Hee-Yon and that the representatives of the treaty powers were responsible to rescue the King from danger. He believed that Komura would be the most suitable person to take charge of the matter, thanks to the strong influence of the Japanese Legation in the country. Russian Charge d'affaires Waeber asserted that the removal of mutineers was the only way to end this difficulty and pointed out that Japanese Minister Komura was the only person to apply. Hillier also asked if Miura had asked to the Japanese Government for permission to withdraw Japanese-drilled guards from the palace, which Miura had promised in the previous meeting on 8 October. Komura replied that he had not been aware of it until then and asked if others had agreed that the removal of the guards could be done without a risk of confrontation. Waeber answered that the presence of a foreign guard at the gate of the palace would be sufficient to coerce the Japanese-drilled

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<sup>71</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 22 October 1895, Inclosure 3 in No. 128, FO 405/65.

<sup>72</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 22 October 1895, Inclosure 3 in No. 128, FO 405/65.

<sup>73</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 22 October 1895, Inclosure 3 in No. 128, FO 405/65.

troops, which other representatives except the German consul agreed with. After discussions, Komura stated that such measures as the dismissal of War Minister Cho Hee-Yon, the disarmament of Japanese-drilled guards and the restoration of the King's authority would be desirable and that he would take some time to consider the best means to exercise these measures.<sup>74</sup>

#### The Disparities between London, Tokyo and Seoul with regard to the Murder of Queen Min

The Japanese Government was unhappy with the decision that all foreign representatives in Seoul agreed that the Japanese Legations would play a leading role in the removal of the participants in the assault on palace. While Japanese ministers Miura and Komura in Seoul attempted to buy time by avoiding discussions with other foreign colleagues or hesitating to act immediately,<sup>75</sup> Japan vigorously appealed to the powers having treaties with Korea that the Japanese Government was not responsible for the attack against the palace in Seoul. On 10 October, Saionji Kimmochi, the Japanese acting Foreign Minister, told Satow that the Japanese Government was greatly unpleasant that Japanese nationals had participated in "a treasonable conspiracy against the sovereign of a friendly state" and additionally informed him that Komura Jutarō was dispatched to Seoul in order to replace Miura Gorō and to investigate into all the matters.<sup>76</sup>

The Japanese Government admitted the engagement of Japanese nationals in the events so early probably because of the testimony of Europeans since the Japanese Legation failed to disguise the murder as a crime committed only by Koreans. On 16 October, Saionji informed Satow that the Queen was believed to have been murdered by Japanese and that at least sixteen or seventeen Japanese nationals took part in the attack.<sup>77</sup> Saionji also assured that the Japanese Government had determined to solve this case and bring the Japanese offenders to justice.<sup>78</sup> Thanks to the efforts made by the Japanese Government, Satow was convinced that 'the Japanese Government were entirely innocent of the matter'.<sup>79</sup>

It is one of the reasons why Satow tended to take an attitude to support the Japanese side rather than the British consul-general in Seoul. He was aware that there was some confrontation between

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<sup>74</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 25 October 1895, Inclosure 1 in No. 129, FO 405/65.

<sup>75</sup> Hillier several times mentioned that neither Miura nor Komura had shown any indication to discuss matters with other foreign representatives. Hillier to O'Connor, 16 October 1895, Inclosure 12 in No. 111, FO 405/65; Hillier to O'Connor, 22 October 1895, Inclosure 3 in No. 128, FO 405/65; Hillier to O'Connor, 25 October 1895, Inclosure 1 in No. 129, FO 405/65.

<sup>76</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 10 October 1895, No. 72, FO 405/65.

<sup>77</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 16 October 1895, No. 79, FO 405/65.

<sup>78</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 18 October 1895, No. 17, FO 405/65; Satow to Salisbury, 17 October 1895, No. 14, FO 405/65.

<sup>79</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 18 October 1895, No. 17, FO 405/65.

the Japanese Legation and other foreign representatives in Seoul. When Saionji showed him a telegram with regard to the meeting of foreign representatives without the Japanese minister on 14 October, Satow understood that other foreign representatives were reluctant to act in co-operation with Miura because of the suspicion and accusation against him.<sup>80</sup>

However, later when Satow talked with Japanese Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi on 23 October 1895, he was leaning towards the opinion of the Japanese Government in the matter. Itō told Satow that foreign representatives in Seoul, or at least Russian and American Charges d'affaires had asked their Governments for instructions with regard to whether or not they should recognise the current Korean Cabinet, which included the main participants of the attack on palace. In response, Itō instructed Komura to discuss with his foreign colleagues if it would be possible to make a compromise by forcing Taiwonkun to leave the Korean Court. Satow agreed that it would be a good idea to solve the problem,<sup>81</sup> while Hillier was convinced that the removal of the War Minister and other participants would be desirable to restore order. Furthermore, when Satow was informed by Itō about the requests of foreign representatives, Satow strongly condemned that the proposal of the disbandment was 'unsafe' and the denial of recognition to the Korean Government was 'unwise'.<sup>82</sup>

It is worth noting that Satow described the foreign representatives were 'influenced by the Russian Charge d'affaires' to request the disarmament of the Japanese-drilled troops.<sup>83</sup> It is probably the other reason why Satow preferred the opinion of the Japanese Government. From the beginning, Satow realised that the Japanese Government worried that the murder of the Korean Queen, obviously encouraged and even committed by Japanese nationals, would provoke the Russian side. On 10 October, When Saionji asked Satow as to Britain's policy, Satow answered that the British Government had no intention to interfere with Korea and that they would be satisfied if any international arrangement reduced the current tension. Saionji believed that Japan should have a predominant position in Seoul because of the proximity to Korea and the exceeding number of Japanese residents. However, Saionji said that Russia would prefer to talk alone with Japan and if so, then Japan would not be able to forward any proposals but only leave it to Russia and let them write their wishes.<sup>84</sup>

The Japanese Government were very concerned about a threat of Russian penetration into Korea because Russia had greater interests in Korea than any other powers. In a conversation with Satow on 23 October 1895, Japanese Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi pointed out that Russia was the only Western power that had called upon the Japanese Government immediately after the end of the first Sino-

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<sup>80</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 16 October 1895, No. 79, FO 405/65.

<sup>81</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 23 October 1895, No. 96, FO 405/65.

<sup>82</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 28 October 1895, No. 30, FO 405/65.

<sup>83</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 28 October 1895, No. 30, FO 405/65.

<sup>84</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 10 October 1895, No. 72 FO 405/65.

Japanese War to respect Japan's declaration with regard to the independence of Korea. Furthermore, Itō also informed that Prince Alexey Borisovich Lobanov-Rostovsky had told the German Emperor that "Russia would not tolerate the Japanese establishing themselves in Korea".<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the Japanese Government noticed that Russia was interested in providing military protection to Korea.<sup>86</sup>

Satow assured that the British Government would not accept that Russia had more critical interests in Korean than Britain. Additionally, he warned that "Russia would become the sole arbiter of Korea's future if Russia were treated as if that power was alone to be dealt with".<sup>87</sup> Satow warned that Japan should abandon its policy that aimed to secure exclusive privileges in the country to avoid further collision.<sup>88</sup> However, judging from Satow's statements, Britain seemed ready to align itself with Japan by recognising Japan's predominant voice in Seoul to some extent if it would prevent Russia from stepping into Korea.

Satow even gave him a strategic advice on how to respond if Russia firmly demanded the withdrawal of the Japanese garrisons from Korea. Satow told Itō that the Japanese Government should attempt to avoid such a demand from the Russian side because it would be very dangerous for Japan to reject it in the current conditions of the Japanese Navy. To avoid a demand from Russia, Satow suggested the withdrawal of the Japanese garrison stationing in Seoul and replacing them by a detachment from those already in other parts of Korea. He believed that it could be seen as the beginning of the withdrawal and even expected to remain the latter in the country in justification of protecting the telegraph cables with the Liaodong Peninsula.<sup>89</sup>

It is an example that Japan and Britain shared similar strategic interests in Korea. In August 1895, Satow assured Itō that "Britain had a similar interest to the Japanese in preventing Russian annexation of Korea" even though its commercial interest is insignificant.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, Satow had a very negative view of the future of Korea. On 9 October 1895, immediately after the outbreak of the murder of Queen Min, Satow wrote to F. V. Dickins about his view on Korea:

*"...Korea I anticipate will be another Morocco, a rotten fruit which no one may touch, and which will be carefully propped up lest it should fall into someone's hands of whom the others would be jealous to the point of fighting".<sup>91</sup>*

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<sup>85</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 23 October 1895, No. 96, FO 405/65.

<sup>86</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 23 October 1895, No. 96, FO 405/65.; Satow to Salisbury, 16 October 1895, No. 79, FO 405/65.

<sup>87</sup> Salisbury to Satow, 5 December 1895, No. 110, FO 405/65.

<sup>88</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 4 October 1895, No. 70, FO 405/65; Satow to Salisbury, 10 October 1895, No. 73, FO 405/65.

<sup>89</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 10 October 1895, No. 73, FO 405/65.

<sup>90</sup> Ruxton, *The Diaries and Letters of Sir Ernest Mason Satow (1843-1929)*, pp. 201–202.

<sup>91</sup> Ruxton, *The Diaries and Letters of Sir Ernest Mason Satow*, p. 218.



Considering Britain's strategic interest in Korea and his negative view on the future of the country, Satow probably drew a conclusion that the presence of Japanese military capacities would help Korea maintain order and peace and concentrate on the modernisation of the nation. Furthermore, on 26 October, Satow was told by Itō that Miura had assassinated Queen Min to destroy her scheme to accept a Russian protectorate and Satow thought "it was very likely the explanation".<sup>92</sup> This may explain why Satow strongly criticised the foreign representatives in Seoul when Itō told him that they had been influenced by the Russian Charge d'affaires.<sup>93</sup> Satow believed Hillier had been indulged into a Russian plot to strengthen its influence within the country. London was surprised by Satow's alarming report and immediately telegraphed the British Legation in Beijing and asked them to instruct British Consul-general Hillier to report as to the related situations in Korea.<sup>94</sup>

As demanded, British Minister in Beijing Nicholas Roderick O'Connor gave Hillier instructions to report on the recent decisions made by foreign representatives as to the disarmament of Japanese-drilled guards and the denial to recognise the current Korean Cabinet. However, O'Connor also advised that it was still desirable for Hillier to work in close co-operation with the Russian Charge d'affaires and that any representations made to the Korean Government would be better to be those of the general diplomatic body rather than that of the Russian Charge d'affaires alone.<sup>95</sup> Although he was unsure if the proposal by foreign representatives in Seoul was suitable to the present situations, he believed that Hillier would have more power to moderate the demands of the Russian Charge d'affaires when working in co-operation with him. He thought that the separation of Hillier from Waeber would draw a distinctive line between Britain's policy and those of Russia and the United States and it would probably cause very serious tension between them.<sup>96</sup>

In his report to London, Hillier pointed out that Satow's statements had been based on inaccurate information. He indicated that the removal of the Japanese-drilled Korean guards had been requested by King Kojong and suggested by him and his colleagues to the Japanese Minister. He emphasised that it was not a demand but a suggestion and that Komura had accepted the suggestion, but he believed delay would be desirable to seek for the best means. Additionally, he indicated that he did not join the Russian Charge d'affaires's action to refuse the recognition of the current Korean Government. He also stated that the disbandment of the Japanese-drilled troops would be safe if it was carried out judiciously.<sup>97</sup>

Hillier and his foreign colleagues held a meeting on the morning of 5 November. It is worth noting

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<sup>92</sup> Ruxton, *The Diaries and Letters of Sir Ernest Mason Satow*, pp. 221–222.

<sup>93</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 28 October 1895, No. 30, FO 405/65.

<sup>94</sup> Salisbury to Satow, 29 October 1895, No. 34, FO 405/65.

<sup>95</sup> O'Connor to Hillier, 29 October 1895, Inclosure in No. 137, FO 405/65.

<sup>96</sup> O'Connor to Salisbury, 31 October 1895, No. 139, FO 405/65.

<sup>97</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 2 November 1895, Inclosure in No. 135, FO 405/65.

that the Japanese Minister and Special Envoy Inoue Kaoru were present at the meeting. The mission of Inoue was to express the Japanese Emperor's condolences to King Kojong.<sup>98</sup> Inoue arrived at Chemulpo on 30 October and came to Seoul on the next day.<sup>99</sup> After discussions, all participants, including Komura and Inoue, unanimously agreed that it was imminent to disarm the Japanese-drilled Korean guards at the palace for the King's personal safety. Since Japanese Minister Komura also believed that resistance from the palace guard would be ignorable, it was decided that the measure would be taken by Japanese troops within a few days from the meeting.<sup>100</sup>

Again, the foreign representatives' decision upset the Japanese Government. On 12 November, Saionji told Satow that foreign representatives' request to replace the Japanese-drilled Korean guards with the Japanese garrison was inconsistent with Japan's recent announcement of non-intervention policy in Korea.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, he emphasised that the Japanese Government were unwilling to take any responsibility for the disarmament by Japanese troops of the Korean guards, which seemed likely to lead to bloodshed. Moreover, from his perspective, the current situations in Korea seemed satisfactory. Thus, he was unsure if it would be advisable to disband the Japanese-drilled Korean guards by military means.<sup>102</sup> Additionally, Saionji asked whether or not Satow was able to talk to Hillier in Seoul and make him change his attitude. Satow answered that British Consul-general in Seoul was affiliated to the British Legation in Beijing and all he could do was "to transmit his communication to London or Beijing by telegraph".<sup>103</sup>

However, on 14 November, Satow received a report that the replacement of Japanese-drilled Korean guards by Japanese troops had been actually suggested by Inoue Kaoru who was present at the meeting. Saionji also confirmed that he had been informed by Mikhail Hitrovo, Russian Minister in Tokyo, that Waeber had reported the same context to the Russian Government. However, Saionji still persisted that the Japanese Government would never carry out the proposed measure due to inconsistency with Japan's previous announcement of non-intervention policy in Korea.

Satow replied that it was very important for the Japanese Government to endeavour in the line they had previously announced to foreign powers.<sup>104</sup> Inoue believed that it would be desirable for the Japanese Government to accept the request from foreign representatives and take responsibility for the safety of the King. He also concerned that another power would take over the role of the King's protector unless Japan stepped into this matter. However, in the end, Itō disagreed with Inoue's

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<sup>98</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 26 October 1895, No. 99, FO 405/65.

<sup>99</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 4 November 1895, Inclosure 1 in No. 136, FO 405/65.

<sup>100</sup> Hillier to Salisbury, 5 November 1895, No. 44, FO 405/65.

<sup>101</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 29 October 1895, No. 33, FO 405/65.

<sup>102</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 12 November 1895, No. 76, FO 405/65.

<sup>103</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 12 November 1895, No. 139, FO 405/65.

<sup>104</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 15 November 1895, No. 7, FO 405/70.

opinion and refused to approve what Inoue had suggested.<sup>105</sup>

Therefore, Satow sent to London an additional telegraph to correct that it was Inoue who had suggested the removal of the Korean guards. However, unfortunately to Hillier, London only received the telegraph that had been sent on 12 November in time.<sup>106</sup> London only received a letter that contained the summary of a conversation between Satow and Saionji and Satow's separate opinion that "the Japanese Government appeared anxious that British Consul-General in Seoul should have instructions to that effect given him". Due to limited information, London told William Nelthorpe Beauclerk, the new British Charge d'affaires in Beijing, that he should instruct Hillier to "telegraph for instructions in the event of Hillier's foreign colleagues wishing him to join in exercising pressure upon the representative of Japan".<sup>107</sup> London emphasised that Hillier should not urge upon the Japanese minister in Korea while they were in the military seizure of the country because such action might relieve Japan of their full responsibility to maintain order.<sup>108</sup>

Of course, Hillier was very unhappy with London's instructions. In his reply, Hillier emphasised that his efforts made throughout discussions with regard to the current events of Korea were consistent with the instructions that London had given. He also pointed out that he and his foreign colleagues had consistently argued that Japan should assume full responsibility for the restoration of order within the country since they were in the military occupation of Korea. He again clarified that his suggestion about the removal of Korean guards from the palace had been duly approved by Japanese Special Envoy Inoue Kaoru and Japanese Minister Komura Jutarō.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, Satow was satisfied that London's instructions to respect Japan's military occupation of the country would prevent Hillier from exercising pressure upon the Japanese Minister in Seoul.

This disagreement amongst the Foreign Office in London and British representatives in the region was remarkable. From the perspective of London and the British Legation in Tokyo, Japan was still an important strategic partner against Russian advance. Therefore, when they were reported by Hillier that the Russian minister was playing a leading role in confrontation against the Japanese minister, they were alarmed that the Russian minister might be taking advantage of the Japanese engagement in the events and warned the British consul-general in Seoul not to take joint action with him. However, Hillier, who well understood the situations of the country, saw the murder a significant challenge to the independence of the country. Therefore, he strongly appealed to the Japanese side to maintain order in the country while he contained himself from joining the American and Russian ministers, who

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<sup>105</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 21 December 1895, No. 26, FO 405/70.

<sup>106</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 12 November 1895, No. 76, FO 405/65.

<sup>107</sup> Salisbury to Beauclerk, 18 November 1895, No. 80, FO 405/65.

<sup>108</sup> Salisbury to Beauclerk, 18 November 1895, No. 80, FO 405/65

<sup>109</sup> Hillier to Salisbury, 23 November 1895, No. 13, FO 405/70.

vigorously challenged the Japanese presence in the country. Hillier's stance was consistent with Britain's policy in Korea at a national level. However, London put weight on the British interests at a regional level and accepted the suggestions from the British Legation in Japan. Moreover, the rank of the representative in Seoul was consul-general, which was affiliated to the British Legation in Beijing. Therefore, without the support of the British minister in Beijing, Hillier's opinion could not be as influential as Satow's.

On 19 November, Satow informed Saionji that Hillier had been instructed not to interfere with the Japanese authorities in Seoul, who was responsible for the maintenance of order in the country. However, Saionji denied that the presence of Japanese forces in Seoul did not mean the assumption of full responsibilities to restore order in the country. Satow again reminded that Japan would be seen as responsible for not having stopped it with all the means at the Japanese authorities in Seoul.<sup>110</sup>

Apparently, Japanese acting Foreign Minister Saionji, "who seldom ventures to speak on his own responsibility",<sup>111</sup> did not directly answer him with regard to the proposals. However, it seems that Satow's advice for the Japanese Government influenced their Korea policy. On 26 November, King Kojong issued a new decree, announcing the restoration of Queen Min to her former status, the revocation of all decrees that had been issued on 8 October, the dismissal of the Minister of War and the Chief of Police, who were the key participants of the attack on palace and the immediate arrest of other offenders of the attack on 8 October.<sup>112</sup> Interestingly, foreign representatives showed slightly different reactions to the Decree. American Minister Sill and Russian Charge d'affaires revealed great satisfaction with the King's announcement also stated that they had never recognised the previous decrees of 8 October as approved by the King. On the other hand, Japanese Minister Komura showed his satisfaction with the measure, but he also stated that his Government did not refuse to recognise the previous decrees from 8 October. British Consul-general Hillier did not mention about the recognition issues, but he simply told King Kojong that he was happy to see the King taking such measures to recapture his lost authority. Hillier believed that these measures were the most satisfactory by far and hoped the King would be able to maintain the power.<sup>113</sup>

It is worth noting that most of the proposals that had been suggested by foreign representatives were given effect, except for the dismissal by the Japanese garrison of Japanese-drilled Korean palace guards. Hillier certainly believed that the authority of the Japanese Legation was sufficient to repress any resistance against the measures they favoured.<sup>114</sup> Judging from the previous discussions amongst

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<sup>110</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 19 November 1895, No. 9, FO 405/70.

<sup>111</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 19 November 1895, No. 9, FO 405/70.

<sup>112</sup> Kyujanggak, Seoul, *Kojong Silok* [Annals of Kojong Era], 10 October 1895 (Lunar Calendar), Vol. 33.

<sup>113</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 27 November 1895, Inclosure 1 in No. 15, FO 405/70.

<sup>114</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 27 November 1895, Inclosure 1 in No. 15, FO 405/70.

foreign representatives, Komura agreed with the proposals of his colleagues on the ground that such measures would be advisable in order to relieve the King's concern about his safety within the palace. Furthermore, he believed that such measures would help Japan keep the Korean government under its influence.<sup>115</sup>

However, the Japanese Government eventually decided to approve some of the proposals that had been made by foreign representatives in Seoul once Saionji was warned by Satow with regard to Japan's responsibility to maintain order and peace while being in military occupation of Korea. The Japanese authorities firmly refused to disband the Japanese-drilled Korean guards by Japanese troops. However, the Japanese Legation approved of the removal of Minister of War Cho Hee-Yon and Chief of Police Kwon Hyong-Jin, who allegedly threatened King Kojong after they had found out that the King's appeal to foreign representatives in Seoul for protection.<sup>116</sup>

There may be several reasons why the Japanese Government changed its mind. First, the Japanese Legation might be conceived that the dismissal of War Minister Cho Hee-Yon would be sufficient to secure the King's safety. The Japanese-drilled Korean troops were obviously the participants of the incident, but they still remained under the command of Japanese officers throughout the attack. Thus, the Japanese authorities possibly believed that the change of the War Minister would be sufficient to keep the guards under control. Furthermore, the Japanese Government might be seriously worried about the consequences of the forceful disbandment of the Korean guards despite the foreign preventatives' confidence in a peaceful outcome. Therefore, it was apparently the best measure the Japanese Government could take.

Before long, it was proven to be the right decision for the Japanese side to maintain the presence of Korean troops at the palace. In the early morning of 28 November 1895, King Kojong's supporters attacked the palace and attempted to rescue the King from the palace under the occupation of the pro-Japanese Koreans. However, the plot had been leaked to the Korean and Japanese authorities beforehand and the well-prepared palace guards successfully repulsed the attack.<sup>117</sup> Some of the participants were American missionaries and the key figures of Korean participants had been seeking refuge at the American and Russian Legations since the outbreak of the murder of Queen Min. However, American Minister Sill and Russian Minister Waeber persisted that they had not been aware of the plot beforehand.<sup>118</sup> Itō and Saionji were satisfied that it was right to reject the proposal to disband the Korean guards because they successfully defeated the attack against them.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword* (California, 1995), pp. 114

<sup>116</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 22 October 1895, FO 405/65.

<sup>117</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 29 November 1895, Inclosure 3 in No. 15, FO 405/70.

<sup>118</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 4 December 1895, Inclosure 3 in No. 31, FO 405/70.

<sup>119</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 21 December 1895, No. 26, FO 405/70.

*"Hansŏngshinbo"*, a Seoul-based Japanese newspaper, even attempted to take advantage of the failed attempt and heavily criticised foreign participants in order to cover up the Japanese murder of Queen Min.<sup>120</sup> Hillier believed that it was unwise that Sill and Waeber had allowed Korean refugees to stay within their legations.<sup>121</sup>

Therefore, as Hillier said, King Kojong's Decree proclaiming the removal of two most notorious ministers from the Korean Cabinet was the most satisfactory for the British side.<sup>122</sup> In terms of the Korean internal affairs, it was a favourable measure for the British consulate because those two Koreans had threatened the safety of the King by the Japanese-drilled Korean troops under his command. Meanwhile, it was also acceptable to the Japanese Government, who had preferred not to disarm the Japanese-drilled Korean troops by the Japanese garrison. Furthermore, unlike his American and Russian colleagues, Hillier was reluctant to interfere with Korea's domestic affairs as actively as they did. Britain's Korea policy was shaped up by Britain's point of view on the independence of Korea, which would be favourable to British interests within the country, and the worldwide strategic rivalry between Britain and Russia. Thus, when the situation of the country became favourable to British interests, Britain did not raise further question but left Korean affairs "to quiet down".<sup>123</sup>

Britain's understanding of the situations of Korea in the early 1896

At the beginning of Year 1896, Seoul seemed settled and quiet under the influence of the Japanese authorities: Japan was still a predominant power in military terms and pro-Japanese high-ranking officials remained in power. However, unlike in Seoul, anti-Japanese sentiment rapidly arose outside the fortress of the capital. The tension was sparked by King Kojong's proposed order for palace guards to cut off the hair-knot. In the Korean society, where Confucianism was predominant, it was traditionally believed that men should not cut their hair because hair was also seen as part of one's body that had been given by his parents. Therefore, cutting the hair-knot was viewed as a disobedient action to their parents. Furthermore, since it was widely believed that the hair-knot cutting had been forced by the Japanese authorities, the violent uprisings particularly targeted Japanese authorities or their Korean supporters.

British diplomats and military officers were also aware of the changes of the political conditions in the country. By January 1896, British Consul-General Hillier was convinced that the situations of the Korean affairs became satisfactorily settled and that no further disturbance was likely to happen in the

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<sup>120</sup> F. A. McKenzie, *The Tragedy of Korea* (Seoul, 1969), p. 117.

<sup>121</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 4 December 1895, Inclosure 3 in No. 31, FO 405/70.

<sup>122</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 27 November 1895, Inclosure 1 in No. 15, FO 405/70.

<sup>123</sup> Ruxton, *The Diaries and Letters of Sir Ernest Mason Satow*, pp. 224–225..

near future. Therefore, after discussing about the necessity of the presence of marine guards at the consulate with the American Minister and the Russian Charge d'affaires, he reached a conclusion to withdraw them from the current British consulate.<sup>124</sup> At this point, American Minister John M. B. Sill was already arranging the withdrawal of his guards. Although Russian Charge d'affaires Karl Ivanovich Waeber was still reluctant to take the same measure as the American Minister did, he also agreed with his colleagues that there was no immediate threat to the Korean Court or Government. However, because they all believed that the current Korean Government lacked any sufficient stability to prevent further disturbances in the future; it seemed favourable to maintain the presence of foreign warships at Chemulpo despite the withdrawal of marine troops from the capital.<sup>125</sup>

Vice-Admiral Alex Buller at Hong Kong also shared a similar view. He understood that top-knot was as important to a Korean as 'a pigtail was to a Chinaman' and believed that the enforcement of the cutting of top-knot would possibly lead to a nationwide disturbance.<sup>126</sup> He also reported to the Admiralty that King Kojong was still in fear of his life despite the relatively settled situations and still wished Europeans to visit him daily and their guards to remain at their premises. Therefore, he concluded that 'Korea was still in an unstable condition and it would be desirable to maintain a vessel of war at a Korean port to report proceedings.'<sup>127</sup> Therefore, Hillier decided that it would be desirable to reduce the number of marine guards of the consulate down to fifteen but to keep a vessel of war at Chemulpo in preparation for any unexpected disturbances.<sup>128</sup>

His decision clearly shows that he did not foresee any disturbance at least inside the capital in the near future. Only before less than a month, the political state of the country completely changed overnight. In the early morning of 11 February, King Kojong and the Crown Prince successfully deceived the palace guards and left for the Russian Legation. King Kojong's asylum to the Russian Legation, also known as '*Agwanp'ach'ön*' in Korean, shifted power from the pro-Japanese party to the pro-Russian party.

Considering the fact that Russian troops were deployed to Seoul just one day before the execution of King Kojong's flight to the Russian Legation, the Admiralty assumed that King Kojong and Russian representatives had previously arranged the incident.<sup>129</sup> According to Russian sources, it was King Kojong who secretly approached to the Russian side for the plot. Immediately after the arrival of Russian Charge d'affaires Alexei de Speyer, who was appointed to replace Waeber, King Kojong sent him a note via Yi Pom-Jin, Acting Agriculture Minister who was already taking refuge at the Russian

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<sup>124</sup> Hillier to Forsyth, 13 January 1896, Inclosure 11 in No. 102, FO 405/70.

<sup>125</sup> Hillier to Forsyth, 13 January 1896, Inclosure 11 in No. 102, FO 405/70.

<sup>126</sup> Buller to Admiralty, 15 January 1896, No. 62, FO 405/70.

<sup>127</sup> Buller to Admiralty, 15 January 1896, No. 62, FO 405/70.

<sup>128</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 22 January 1896, Inclosure 10 in No. 102, FO 405/70.

<sup>129</sup> Commander-in-chief on China Station to Admiralty, 17 February 1896, FO 405/70.

Legation since the outbreak of the murder of Queen Min. In his note, the Korean King revealed his unhappiness with the current situations of the Korean Court as well as his hope for help from the Russian side to see “brighter days with her collaboration”.<sup>130</sup> Afterwards, on 12 January 1896, he had his first audience with King Kojong. The audience seemed nothing different from those that Western representatives would have after their appointments to the country.<sup>131</sup> However, when Alexey Speyer, newly appointed Russian Minister to Korea, was about to leave, King Kojong secretly slipped him a note, explaining his continuous efforts to search for the Queen and his reluctance to reveal her whereabouts “until the overthrow of the present government by the Russians”.<sup>132</sup> Later on 2 February 1896, King Kojong again sent Yi Pom-Jin to Speyer in order to discuss about the protection of King Kojong and his Crown Prince at the Russian Legation. King Kojong argued that he and his son were surrounded by the traitors, who would be willing to ‘destroy them’ whenever any disturbance occurred in the capital.<sup>133</sup> At first, Speyer thought that the plot was too dangerous to accept. However, Yi Pom-Jin insisted that the King was prepared to take the risk if the Russian Legation agreed with the proposal. Yi also told him that it would be much more dangerous for the King to stay in the palace than to risk his life by running to the Russian Legation. Speyer was also convinced that the presence of the King at their legation would be a great advantage for his country. Therefore, he agreed to provide protection to King Kojong after his escape from the palace.<sup>134</sup>

It seems obvious that King Kojong made such an unexpected decision because of immense threat in the Court. However, it is also important to understand on what basis the Russian Legation in Seoul agreed with the Korean King’s ambitious plan. Before his arrival to Seoul, newly appointed Russian Charge d’affaires Speyer stopped over in Tokyo and had conversations with Western diplomats and Japanese high-rank officials with regard to the state of Korea. On 17 December 1895, he was told by Japanese acting Foreign Minister Saionji that the Japanese Government had friendly sentiment towards the Russian Government and that they realised that it was inevitable to reach an agreement with Russia for the suitable solution of the Korean question. Saionji also suggested that it would be desirable for Speyer and Japanese Minister Komura to discuss the settlement of current issues with regard to the Korean affair. In his conversation with German Minister Felix Freiherr von Gutschmid, Speyer told the German Minister that he was prepared to work in co-operation with the Japanese Government and to keep in touch with Japanese representatives in Korea.<sup>135</sup> Speyer believed that the

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<sup>130</sup> Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, p. 580.

<sup>131</sup> According to the official record of the Korean Court, Speyer and his predecessor Waeber were received an audience with King Kojong in Gyeongbokgung Palace and gave Speyer’s credential, issued by the Russian Government, to the King. *Kojong Silok*, 12 January 1896, Vol. 33.

<sup>132</sup> Larsen, *Balance of Intrigue*, p. 580.

<sup>133</sup> Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, p. 582.

<sup>134</sup> Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, p. 582.

<sup>135</sup> Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, p. 570.



Japanese Government endeavoured to do their duty in maintaining the independence of Korea in accordance with the Japanese Government's previous announcement that had been issued after the murder of Queen Min.

However, upon his arrival in Seoul, Speyer realised that the situation of the nation was quite different from what he had expected. After witnessing that King Kojong's power was so limited that he even had to secretly slip a note to Speyer in order to avoid the attention of pro-Japanese Korean statesmen, on 14 January 1896, he reported to St. Petersburg that the situation of the country was very different from what the Japanese Government had asserted.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, since it became clear that direct Russian intervention was what King Kojong wanted, Speyer asked to St. Petersburg for instruction with regard to the overthrow of the current regime in Korea.

When he was asked to clarify the main purpose of the plan on the following day, he argued that Japan would take over Korea if Russia refused to act.<sup>137</sup> Additionally, he asserted that Russian troops should be deployed to Seoul in order to balance off the Japanese troops stationing in the capital. In response, St. Petersburg showed no objection in principle to Speyer's idea of supporting King Kojong and the anti-Japanese party in Korea. However, St. Petersburg clearly refused the idea of sending Russian troops equal in number to Japanese troops stationing in Korea because Russia did not want to face new complications in the region at that time.<sup>138</sup>

London and British representatives in the Far East also noticed Speyer's anti-Japanese sentiment. On 23 January, in Tokyo, Japanese acting Foreign Minister Saionji mentioned to British Minister Satow about Speyer's telegraph to the Russian Government, which stated that King Kojong was "still kept a prisoner in his Palace" and that "the Japanese Government intended to carry off the Crown Prince to Japan".<sup>139</sup> Saionji argued that the relationship between King Kojong and his ministers had improved even though the King was still in confinement and that neither the Japanese Government nor their minister resident in Seoul had any plan to bring the Crown Prince to Tokyo.<sup>140</sup> Saionji insisted that the new Russian minister tried to give a false impression to St. Petersburg with regard to Japan's policy in Korea.

Furthermore, Saionji also pointed out that Waeber did not move to Mexico even though he had been appointed a new Russian Minister to the country on 11 September 1895. In December 1895, he was ordered by the Russian Government not to leave the country upon the arrival of his successor.<sup>141</sup> Therefore, although Speyer reached Seoul on 8 January 1896, Waeber and Speyer co-worked as the

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<sup>136</sup> Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, p. 578.

<sup>137</sup> Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, pp. 580–581.

<sup>138</sup> Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, pp. 580–581.

<sup>139</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 23 January 1896, FO 405/70, pp. 93.

<sup>140</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 23 January 1896, FO 405/70, pp. 93.

<sup>141</sup> Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, p. 577.

representatives of Russia under the approval of their government. While French Minister Pascal Lefèvre simply believed that it intended to help Speyer fully understand the current situations of the country, American Minister Sill was alarmed that 'Russia might assume a very active role in the Korean affairs in the spring, when the Vladivostok harbour would become ice-free.'<sup>142</sup> Therefore, from the Japanese point of view, Russia's decision to keep Waeber and Speyer in Seoul must have looked hostile to Japanese interests in Korea because the Japanese Government was already aware that Waeber had severely criticised Japan's policy in Korea since the murder of Queen Min in October 1895. Furthermore, Speyer's alleged report to St. Petersburg proved that he shared the same view as Waeber's.

His view on the question of Korean independence was clearly displayed in conversation with Hillier, where he talked about his previous dialogue with Japanese Minister Komura at the American Legation in Seoul after his arrival in early February. When he was asked by Japanese Minister Komura to talk freely on the question, he expressed his impression on the Korean question.

*"Previous to my arrival in this country, I heard much of the independence of Corea which the Japanese Government claimed to have established, and I was prepared to find when I got here that this boasted independence of Corea was more or less existent. [...] I convinced myself that the theory of Korean independence was a farce and I feel inclined to regret that the Russian Emperor has been made a party to this farce by burnishing me with Letters of Credence to a sovereign who was virtually a prisoner in the hands of his Ministry. [...] I soon realised that the King was mere automation, afraid to open his mouth. [...] The Cabinet were subordinate to the will of the Japanese Minister, who had the power to control their actions as he pleased and was the only foreign Representative whose voice had any weight with the King or whose advice would not compromise His Majesty in the eyes of his Ministers. Korean independence is non-existent, and it was useless for the Japanese to pretend that it did exist. [...] it was more or less an insult to the ordinary intelligence to expect anyone to accept the Japanese declaration of non-intervention in the affairs of this country."*<sup>143</sup>

Speyer argued that the Russian Government should pay more attention to Korea and take more an active role in the Korean affairs because of its significant 'geopolitical propinquity' to Russia. He pointed out that Russia and Japan were the powers most interested in Korea and stated that it would be desirable if they could reach a mutual understanding with regard to the Korean affairs. However,

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<sup>142</sup> Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, p. 577.

<sup>143</sup> Hillier to Salisbury, 12 February 1896, FO 405/71.

he strongly asserted that “it was time for Russia to intervene” and thought that “Russian intervention would not be objected to any other Power”.<sup>144</sup>

It is noteworthy that this conversation was made on 8 February, only 3 days before the Korean King’s flight to the Russian Legation. As is previously mentioned, King Kojong already slipped a note to Speyer and asked for asylum and protection at the Russian Legation on 2 February. Unlike the previous decision, St. Petersburg approved the King’s asylum at the Russian Legation on a basis that the presence of the Korean sovereign at their legation would be very beneficial to Russian interests in the country and that the Korean King’s voluntary action would be more desirable than Speyer’s previous plot to balance off Japanese influence by dispatching Russian troops to Seoul.<sup>145</sup> The Russian Government also decided to send the Russian cruiser *Admiral Kornilov* to Chemulpo to provide military support for the plot.

On 3 February, King Kojong thanks Speyer for approving his asylum at the Russian Legation and informed the Russian Legation of their preparation on a daily basis.<sup>146</sup> On 6 February, since the Russian cruiser *Admiral Kornilov* arrived at Chemulpo, the Russian Legation prepared for the Korean King’s escape from the palace, which would happen on the following day. However, King Kojong thought that the presence of Russian marine guards at the Legation was insufficient to assure his safety even though the Russian Legation had already increased the number of the guards up to 40.<sup>147</sup> Therefore, Speyer asked the cruiser Admiral Kornilov to send more troops to the capital and in response the Russian cruiser dispatched approximately 4 officers, 100 sailors and a 0.45 inch Maxim gun to the Russian Legation in the morning of 10 February 1896, just one day before the outbreak of the King’s flight to the Russian Legation.<sup>148</sup> The Russian detachment used 42 donkeys to carry military supplies for next 3 weeks.<sup>149</sup>

## The Korean King’s refuge at the Russian Legation

When it was reported to the British consulate that more than 100 of Russian troops landed on Chemulpo and headed to Seoul on the same day, Hillier asked to Waeber why the Russian detachment was on its way to Seoul even though the Russian Legation had already increased the number of troops up to 40 a few days ago. Waeber and Speyer answered that the decision had been made because of a

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<sup>144</sup> Hillier to Salisbury, 12 February 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>145</sup> Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, pp. 582–583.

<sup>146</sup> Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, pp. 582–83.

<sup>147</sup> Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, pp. 582–83.

<sup>148</sup> Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, pp. 582–83.; Commander-in-Chief on China Station to the Admiralty, 14 February 1896, FO405/70.

<sup>149</sup> Pelly to Buller, 10 February 1896, FO 405/71, pp. 9

growing concern over the rise of Korean insurgents.<sup>150</sup>

When King Kojong was forced by the pro-Japanese Cabinet to introduce the removal of the top-knot at the beginning of the year, it provoked many local Koreans who saw the top-knot as a symbol of the country's traditional customs and initiated the nationwide anti-Japanese military uprising. By the time of the early February 1896, the Korean rebels had successfully defeated the national troops and reached only 20 miles away from the fortress of the capital.<sup>151</sup> Waeber and Speyer pointed out that the number of insurgents was rapidly increasing and that they were coming closer to Seoul day by day. They emphasised that the Japanese Legation would only focus on protecting their nationals in Korea if the insurgents seized the capital because the Japanese Government had already announced its intention not to interfere with the Korean affairs.

Waeber and Speyer even advised Hillier and American Minister Sill to increase the number of guards at their legations.<sup>152</sup> Hillier understood the rebels were rapidly approaching to Seoul and that they even killed Japanese telegraph officers and cut off the telegraph lines between Seoul and Busan. Nevertheless, Hillier agreed with Komura's view that the Korean rebels were very unlikely to attempt to conquer the capital.<sup>153</sup> He and Sill believed that the Russian ministers were taking "a rather exaggerated estimate of the situation" but they asked their vessels of war at Chemulpo to prepare to send troops if required.<sup>154</sup> They even repeated the advice that it would be desirable to strengthen a guard at their legations while they were dining with Hillier, Sill and Komura.<sup>155</sup> The Russian ministers hinted that they should be prepared for the Korean King's flight to the Russian Legation, which would happen in the morning of the following day but Hillier did not immediately understand why they were consistently suggesting the strengthening of the guard.

Therefore, Hillier was completely unaware of the plot until 9 am, 11 February 1896, when he was reported that King Kojong and the Crown Prince were currently in the Russian Legation. At 10 am, Waeber visited Hillier and told him that Foreign Minister Kim Yun-Sik was replaced with Yi Wan-Yong, who was taking asylum at the American Legation since the murder of Queen Min and capable of speaking in English.<sup>156</sup> Waeber refused to answer Hillier's question on how King Kojong managed to have escaped from the palace but by far Hillier was aware that the King and the Crown Prince were in two Korean ladies' sedan chairs when they arrived in the Russian Legation at 7.30 am on the day.<sup>157</sup> In response to King Kojong's letter of invitation, which was circulated by Foreign Minister Yi Wan-Yong,

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<sup>150</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 12 February 1896, FO 405/70.

<sup>151</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 9 February 1896, FO 405/70.

<sup>152</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 12 February 1896, FO 405/70.

<sup>153</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 9 February 1896, FO 405/70.

<sup>154</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 12 February 1896, FO 405/70.

<sup>155</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 12 February 1896, FO 405/70.

<sup>156</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 12 February 1896, FO 405/70; Yi to Hillier, 11 February 1896, *Yeong'an*, Vol. 1.

<sup>157</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 12 February 1896, FO 405/70.

Hillier came to the Russian Legation at noon. Before his audience with the King, Speyer welcomed Hillier and other foreign representatives and explained why King Kojong had fled for the Russian Legation. He stated that “the state of affairs in the palace had become so intolerable that the King had thrown himself on Russian protection”.<sup>158</sup> Waeber argued that the King’s request could not be withheld and also revealed his hope that the King would return to his palace before long.<sup>159</sup>

Afterwards, Hillier and his other Western colleagues went to see the King in a different room. King Kojong also explained the reason why he left for the Russian Legation was because “his position in the palace became so dangerous and intolerable”.<sup>160</sup> He also asked them to support the Russian Minister in difficult situations. Interestingly, while Hillier and other Western colleagues expressed their satisfaction that the Korean King and the Crown Prince were in safety, American Minister Sill not only showed his satisfaction with King Kojong being in good health, but also guaranteed his sympathy and devotion in helping Waeber.<sup>161</sup> It may hint the different views on Western intervention in the Korean affairs shared amongst foreign ministers, especially between American and Russian ministers and other foreign representatives. Since Queen Min had been murdered by Japanese assassins, American and Russian ministers consistently showed their dissatisfaction with the predominant Japanese influence and took a very active part in appealing to the Japanese authorities for taking responsibility of the maintenance of peace and order in the country. Therefore, although Sill worried about possible popular violence within the city or insurgents’ attack to the capital as a consequence of the incident,<sup>162</sup> he might be convinced that the presence of the Korean King at the Russian Legation would balance off the Japanese influence in the near future.

After the audience with King Kojong, Hillier and Sill decided to call for guards to their legations, which Waeber and Speyer had continuously insisted since the day before King Kojong’s flight to the Russian Legation.<sup>163</sup> At first, he hesitated to take their advice because he believed that the general public had friendly feelings towards Westerners and it seemed very unlikely that Koreans would commit any violence against them. However, he was aware that Koreans were currently so excited with the incident that it would easily cause any panic in the city, which might lead to violent disturbances.<sup>164</sup> Therefore, at 1 pm, Hillier sent a telegram to Commander Francis N. Pelly, the captain of the British vessel of war “Porpoise” at Chemulpo, and informed him that King Kojong took refuge at the Russian Legation and

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<sup>158</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 12 February 1896, FO 405/70.

<sup>159</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 12 February 1896, FO 405/70..

<sup>160</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 12 February 1896, FO 405/70.

<sup>161</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 12 February 1896, FO 405/70.

<sup>162</sup> Sill to Olney, 11 February 1896, *Korean-American Relations: Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States* (KARD), Vol. 3, pp. 17-18

<sup>163</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 12 February 1896, FO 405/70.

<sup>164</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 13 February 1896, FO 405/71.

it was a “critical state of affairs”.<sup>165</sup> Hillier also asked him to dispatch 15 guards to the British consulate in the morning of the following day. In his letter to Pelly, he explained that “the situation of the country became serious since Korean insurgents had defeated the national troops and has approached within 20 miles from the city”.<sup>166</sup>

Apart from possible uprisings and attacks that could be caused by Koreans, he also suspected Russia’s intention in providing asylum to the Korean sovereign at the Russian Legation. Hiller mentioned that 140 men of the Russian guard would take an important role in protecting the capital from such disturbances. However, Hillier thought that the number of the Russian guard was “unnecessarily large” and that “the demonstration has probably more behind it”.<sup>167</sup> British naval officers and the Admiralty also believed that the Korean King’s refuge at the Russian Legation had been previously arranged on a basis that the Russian guard landed on Chemulpo on the day before the King’s flight.<sup>168</sup> Therefore, at 6 pm on the same day, Pelly landed one officer and 15 marines on Chemulpo and they arrived in Seoul in the morning of the following day.<sup>169</sup> A house of Finance Advisor and Chief Commissioner of Korean Customs John McLeavy Brown, which was located next to the gate of the British consulate, was lent to be used for their temporary accommodation.<sup>170</sup>

While the British Consulate-General took precautions against possible disturbances that could happen as a consequence of the King’s refuge at the Russian Legation, King Kojong took radical measures to bring back power into his hands. First of all, King Kojong pardoned Yi Jae-Sun, Yi Min-Kung, Yi Chung-Gu, Chon Woo-Ki, Noh Hung-Kyu, Ahn Kyung-Soo, Kim Jae-Pung and Nam Man-Ri, most of who mainly took part in the Ch'unsangmun Incident, a failed attempt to rescue King Kojong from the palace in November 1895.<sup>171</sup> Meanwhile, King Kojong dissolved the current Cabinet and replaced most of the ministers with his loyal followers as below:

- Park Chung-Yang: Prime Minister, Acting Minister of Home Affairs, Acting Minister of Household
- Yi Wan-Yong: Minister of Foreign Affairs, Acting Minister of Education, Acting Minister of Works
- Cho Byung-Jik: Minister of Justice
- Yi Yun-Yong: Minister of War

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<sup>165</sup> Pelly to Buller, 13 February 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>166</sup> Pelly to Buller, 13 February 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>167</sup> Pelly to Buller, 13 February 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>168</sup> Commander-in-Chief on China Station to Admiralty, 17 February 1896, TNA, FO 405/70.

<sup>169</sup> Pelly to Buller, 13 February 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>170</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 13 February 1896, TNA, FO 405/71.

<sup>171</sup> 11 February 1896, Vol. 34, *Kojong Silok*.

- Yoon Yong-Koo: Minister of Finance
- Ahn Kyung-Soo: Commissioner-General of the Police<sup>172</sup>

The overthrow of the Korean Cabinet clearly intended to remove Japanese influence within the Korean Court. Most of the ministers who were discharged by King Kojong were those who had actively taken part in or supported the Japanese murder of Queen Min. For example, former War Minister Cho Hee-Yon was one of the major participants in the plot. Furthermore, some of the newly appointed officials were those who had been discharged from office immediately after the Queen had been killed. Ahn Kyung-Soo, the newly appointed Commissioner-General of the Police, was in the same position when the Queen had been killed on 8 October 1895. Therefore, King Kojong obviously wanted to remove the pro-Japanese ministers or subordinates of the Japanese Legation from the Government.

However, although the new Cabinet were clearly anti-Japanese, it is still difficult to define that the new Government, which was made as a result of King Kojong's flight to the Russian Legation, were pro-Russian. For example, Yi Pom-Jin, who had taken refuge at the Russian Legation since the murder of Queen Min and played a very important role as a messenger between King Kojong and the Russian Legation, was not immediately appointed to any position in the Korean Government on 11 February. On 22 February, 11 days after King Kojong's refuge at the Russian Legation, Yi Pom-Jin was eventually appointed as the Minister of Justice.<sup>173</sup> However, only after a month, Yi Pom-Jin was newly appointed a secretary to the Korean Legation in the United States and thus he had to leave the Korean Cabinet.<sup>174</sup>

There are mainly two reasons why Kojong's new Cabinet was anti-Japanese and pro-American to a lesser extent but not pro-Russian. Firstly, the Russian Legation was unwilling to give an impression that Russia was trying to exert the exclusive and predominant influence in Korea. Although Speyer and Weaber had a clear intention to balance off the Japanese influence in the country by granting asylum to the Korean King at the Russian Legation and the Russian Government approved the plot in hope that the presence of the sovereign at their legation would be enormously beneficial to their interests in the country, it was obvious that other foreign representatives would be provoked if Russia would vigorously take advantage of the favourable situation.<sup>175</sup> In a conversation between Hillier and Speyer on 13 February, Speyer argued that the only reason why the Russian Legation offered asylum to King Kojong was to rescue the King from fear and threat that had been imposed by his Cabinet with the backing of the Japanese Legation.<sup>176</sup> Speyer insisted that Russia only took responsibility for granting

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<sup>172</sup> 11 February 1896, Vol. 34, *Kojong Silok*,

<sup>173</sup> 22 February 1896, Vol. 34, *Kojong Silok*.

<sup>174</sup> 22 March 1896, Vol. 35, *Kojong Silok*.

<sup>175</sup> Min-Won Lee, *Myŏngsŏng Hwanghu Sihae wa Agwan P'ach'ŏn* (Seoul, 1987) pp. 124-126.

<sup>176</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 15 February 1896, FO 405/71.

asylum to the King and that “neither Speyer or Waeber had interfered, nor would interfere, in the slightest degree in the arrangements which the King had made, or might see fit to make, for securing his independence and ruling the country with Ministers of his own selection”.<sup>177</sup>

Secondly, not many pro-Russian Koreans were included in the new Cabinet because it was not Speyer but Dr. Horace Allen, secretary of the American Legation, whom King Kojong consulted with regard to the new formation of the new Cabinet immediately after his arrival in the Russian Legation. Speyer, who took a very active part in King Kojong’s refuge at the Russian Legation from the beginning, was very reluctant to give any guidance on the Korean Government at this point because he refused to engage with Korea’s domestic affairs. Therefore, the new Cabinet included several key members of the pro-American party. For example, Park Chung-Yang and Yi Wan-Yong were the Korean Minister to the United States and his secretary in the Korean Legation in Washington D.C., where they served between 1887 and 1888. New War Minister Yi Yun-Yong was a brother of Yi Wan-Yong.<sup>178</sup> Therefore, thanks to the cautious approach of the Russian Legation and the advice from Dr. Allen, King Kojong was able to form the anti-Japanese Government that could be supported by Russian and other foreign representatives in principle.

After his audience with King Kojong at the Russian Legation, Hillier found that the King’s decrees had been posted in the street, which announce that King Kojong had appealed to foreign representatives for protection and sought for asylum at the Russian Legation. In the decrees, he proclaimed that his previous decree with regard to the degrading of the status of Queen Min was abolished immediately because they had been forced against King Kojong’s will.<sup>179</sup> Additionally, King Kojong promised that the national troops who had been deployed to suppress insurgents would be called back and granted amnesty to all prisoners except those who had played a key role in the murder of Queen Min, such as Cho Hee-Yon, Yoo Kil-Jun, Chang Bak, Kwon Hyung-Jin, Yi Du-Hwang, Wu Bom-Son, Yo Bom-Rae and Lee Jin-Ho.<sup>180</sup> In a separate order issued to the War Ministry, King Kojong mentioned as “traitorous leaders” and called upon the Ministry of War, officers and soldiers to “cut off instantly their heads, present them, waiting upon the King at the Russian Legation”.<sup>181</sup>

However, before long, Hillier became seriously concerned about the possible consequences of the decrees. Hillier learned that former Prime Minister Kim Hong-Jip and former Minister of Works Chung Byung-Ha were arrested by the police in the palace before noon on 11 February and soon sentenced to beheading.<sup>182</sup> After cutting off their heads, the police threw their bodies into the street and then

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<sup>177</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 15 February 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>178</sup> Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, p. 588.

<sup>179</sup> 11 February 1896, Vol. 34, *Kojong Silok*.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*; Hillier to Beauclerk, 12 February 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>181</sup> Ordinance, February 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>182</sup> Ordinance, February 1896, FO 405/71.



people dragged them into the city centre, where they “kicked, stabbed and stroke the corpses as they went”.<sup>183</sup> He thought they were executed “doubtlessly with the approval of the King”.<sup>184</sup> However, afterwards he was told by a friend of Foreign Minister Yi Wan-Yong that they were killed by the police without the King’s order. It was true that the Police arrested Ministers Cho and Chung and brought them to the head-quarter of the Police. However, when another group of the policemen were taking former Home Minister Yoo Kil-Jun to the head-quarter, Japanese troops rescued him from the police forces and brought him to the Japanese garrison near the palace. In fear of Japanese troops’ attack to the Police head-quarter, the police killed them without the King’s approval and threw their bodies into the street.<sup>185</sup>

Hillier believed the captives should be given a fair and open trial even though they were condemned as traitors. Furthermore, after witnessing that the excited mob had mutilated the bodies of the beheaded ministers in the middle of the street and killed Japanese nationals, he was convinced that such brutal and bloody measures would only make the situations even worse. Thus, when Waeber visited Hillier on 12 February 1896, Hillier told him his concern about the King’s decree and warned that it could be exploited in order to disgrace the Russian Legation. Waeber explained that he had been unaware of the royal decree but assured that he would look into the matter.<sup>186</sup>

Four days later, on 16 February 1896, Hillier received a printed copy of the translation of the revised decree from Foreign Minister Yi Wan-Yong. In his letter, the Foreign Minister explained that the degrees had been made in a hurry and thus mistakes were inevitable when wording them. He also argued that the degrees might have been posted by unauthorised persons and that it could have misguided the public.<sup>187</sup> In the revised decree, King Kojong also repeated the same excuses as the Foreign Minister did. About the death of former Ministers, he persisted that at first it was intended to give them a fair trial in accordance with the laws. However, he emphasised that it was not the police but the mob that killed the two ministers. Hillier seemed unimpressed with King Kojong’s argument, but he hoped that the King’s alleged disapproval of the murder would prevent the further happening of “such barbarities”.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Ordinance, February 1896, FO 405/71. Hillier’s report explains why there is a difference in record between the Annals of Joseon Dynasty, which states “they were killed by people”, and the Journal of Royal Secretariat, which says “they were sentenced to death penalty and then executed”. 11 February 1896, Vol. 34, *Kojong Silok*; Kyujanggak, Seoul, *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* [Journal of Royal Secretariat], 28 December 1895 (Lunar Calendar), Vol. 139.

<sup>184</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 12 February 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>185</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 14 February 1896, FO 405/71; Hillier’s report explains why there is a difference in record between *Kojong Silok*, which states “they were killed by people”, and *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, which says “they were sentenced to death penalty and then executed”. 11 February 1896, Vol. 34, *Kojong Silok*; 28 December 1895 (Lunar Calendar), Vol. 139, *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*.

<sup>186</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 14 February 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>187</sup> Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs to Hillier, 16 February 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>188</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 18 February 1896, FO 405/71; Yi to Hillier, 16 February 1896, *Yeong’an*, Vol. 1.

Despite his viewpoint that the Russian Legation would only offer asylum to the Korean King and refrain from interfering with Korea's domestic affairs, this case clearly shows that Waeber was sufficiently powerful to influence the Korean Government. However, Hillier seemed convinced that it was favourable that Waeber was advising the Korean King and his ministers because "it was hopeless to expect that the King, or any ministers be selected, could govern the country without foreign advice, enforced, if necessary, by insistence".<sup>189</sup> He believed that the situation of the country would become much more desperate if the Russian Legation withdrew their protection and left the King alone.<sup>190</sup>

One of the examples that made Hillier pleased with the Russian presence was the empowerment of John McLeavy Brown, who was a British national, the Chief Commissioner of Korean Customs and the financial advisor. On 1 March, thanks to Waeber's suggestion, McLeavy Brown was given absolute power to keep the Ministry of Finance and the Treasury under his full control. Hillier thought that the promotion of McLeavy Brown was the assurance of Russian Minister Waeber that "he had no intention of using the influence he now possessed for the pursuit of an exclusive policy".<sup>191</sup>

He also believed that it was a "step in the right direction" for the Korean Government to give him absolute power to control the Treasury because the financial situation of the country was miserable. Due to corruption and waste, the Government was seriously "close on bankruptcy" and McLeavy Brown estimated that it would only take less than 6 months to exhaust the Treasury if the Government continued to spend money at the current rate. Before his appointment to the position, the annual budget used to be allocated to each Department in advance and it usually ran out immediately after it reached the department. McLeavy Brown stopped the inefficient system of distributing money in advance and refused to grant any unreasonable request for extra money.<sup>192</sup> Despite the financial difficulties, McLeavy Brown's tight control over the expenditures and revenues of the Treasury expanded with the support of King Kojong and Waeber.

Furthermore, since King Kojong came under the Russian protection, the situation of Seoul became settled down before long. Because the telegraph line between Seoul and Busan was cut off by the insurgents outside the capital, the Japanese Legation only took a passive approach and 500 men of Japanese troops stationing in the capital remained calm despite the sudden political change.<sup>193</sup> Furthermore, despite the continuous rumour that insurgents approached within a few miles from the fortress of Seoul, the British Consulate-General in Seoul and British vessels of war at Chemulpo were convinced that the insurgents were very unlikely to attack the capital. There were mainly two reasons.

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<sup>189</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 2 March 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>190</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 15 February 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>191</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 2 March 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>192</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 24 March 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>193</sup> Hillier to Salisbury, 22 February 1896, FO 405/71.

Firstly, the insurgents were in principle anti-Japanese. Since the insurgents were very unhappy with the Japanese murder of Queen Min and the hair-cutting order, they hardly approached to Seoul or treaty ports, where foreign troops and vessels of war stationed.<sup>194</sup> Although the local insurgents controlled the large areas outside the capital, they selectively attacked Japanese nationals residing or travelling in the countryside.<sup>195</sup>

Secondly, King Kojong's decrees appealed to the insurgents. Hillier doubted whether the King's proclamation to retreat national forces would settle down the uprisings. However, in March, it was reported that the news of the King's refuge at the Russian Legation, followed by the decrees, eased locals and probably served to stop an uprising, especially Wonsan and the north of it.<sup>196</sup> Therefore, in mid-March, when Captain James Forsyth visited Seoul, he "found everything quiet, both in town and neighbourhood".<sup>197</sup> In April, Forsyth was convinced that the situation became good enough to withdraw 7 soldiers from the consulate guard and Hillier agreed with his idea on a condition that at least one vessel of war should remain at Chemulpo.<sup>198</sup>

Despite the positive effects of the Russian protection given to King Kojong, Hillier was continuously concerned about the King's possible departure from the Russian Legation. When King Kojong and the Crown Prince left for the Russian Legation, the Queen Dowager and Crown Princess lodged at Kyöngun'gung Palace, which was located next to the British Consulate-General. Therefore, when it was rumoured that King Kojong would move to Kyöngun'gung in a few days' time, Hillier worried that the British Consulate-General and the premises of the English Mission would be desirable places for them to seek for asylum if a sudden disturbance occurred.<sup>199</sup> By the end of March, it was believed that King Kojong would be more likely to stay at Kyöngun'gung if he left the Russian Legation because the King was reluctant to return to the main palace, where he had suffered the loss of Queen Min and faced continuous threats from the Japanese authorities and their Korean subordinates.<sup>200</sup> Therefore, Hillier and Forsyth worried about the possible situation that they could be asked by the Korean King for the British protection in the event of a sudden excitement after his move to Kyöngun'gung.<sup>201</sup> Hillier's concern with regard to the King's possible move to Kyöngun'gung was consistent with Britain's policy on Korea. Britain was aware that their interest in the country was marginal in comparison with those of Russia or Japan. Therefore, they wanted to maintain their engagement with Korea's domestic affairs at a limited level.

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<sup>194</sup> Hillier to Salisbury, 22 February 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>195</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 3 March 1896, FO 405/71; Hillier to Beauclerk, 25 March 1896, 405/71.

<sup>196</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 12 March 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>197</sup> Forsyth to Buller, 23 March 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>198</sup> Forsyth to Hillier, 11 April 1896, FO 405/71; Hillier to Forsyth, 11 Apr 1896, TNA FO 405/71.

<sup>199</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 13 February 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>200</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 25 March 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>201</sup> Forsyth to Buller, 23 March 1896, FO 405/71.

## London's Response to the Korean King's Flight to the Russian Legation

The news of King Kojong's flight to the Russian Legation not only shocked foreign representatives in Seoul, but also alarmed Westminster. On 18 February 1896, in the House of Commons, Member of Parliament (hereafter MP) Griffith-Boscawen asked George Curzon, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether the Foreign Office had the detailed information on the landing of Russian troops on Chemulpo and the Korean King's refuge at the Russian Legation. He then asked whether British, American and French troops also landed on Seoul; and also asked why he took refuge at the Russian Legation.

Curzon confirmed that Russian troops landed on Chemulpo on 10 February and King Kojong took refuge at the Russian Legation on the following day. He also reported that a British guard was subsequently dispatched to the British Legation and that the Foreign Office had no information on whether other Western troops had landed. He also explained the reason why the King took refuge at the Russian Legation was due to the political situation in Seoul and the danger to himself and his family.<sup>202</sup> On 20 February, MP Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett asked whether Russia's agreement not to occupy any port in Korea when Britain withdrew from Korea in 1886 was still valid and Curzon confirmed that the Russian Government's agreement "not to occupy Korean territory under any circumstances whatsoever" was still binding.<sup>203</sup> On 27 February, when MP Albert Rollit questioned whether Russian troops had occupied Seoul or any part of Korea, Curzon answered that no Russian occupation of Seoul or any part of Korea had taken. He confirmed that approximately 150 Russian sailors were protecting the Russian Legation and 500 Japanese soldiers were stationing in Seoul.<sup>204</sup>

These questions and answers show what the British Government's primary concern was: possible Russian occupation of Korean territory. In April 1885, Britain occupied a small island that was located in the mouth of the Korean Strait. The isles were called "Kömundo" or "Port Hamilton". The seizure intended to check a possible Russian southward advance from the Vladivostok harbour to the Korean Peninsula and the Pacific Ocean. After two years of the British occupation, Britain and Russia reached an agreement that Russia would never occupy any part of Korea under any circumstances and then Britain withdrew from Port Hamilton in February 1887.<sup>205</sup> Therefore, Westminster wanted to check whether the landing of Russian troops and the Korean King's flight to the Russian Legation were the

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<sup>202</sup> Question asked in the House of Commons, 18 February 1896, FO 405/70.

<sup>203</sup> Question asked in the House of Commons, 20 February 1896, FO 405/70.

<sup>204</sup> Question asked in the House of Commons, 27 February 1896, FO 405/70.

<sup>205</sup> Yung-Chung Kim, 'The Komundo Incident, 1885-1887: An Early Phase in British Korea Relations' in *Korean-British Relations: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Essays in Celebration of the Centenary of Korean-British Diplomatic Relations* (Seoul, 1984) ed. by Chong-Hwa Chung and J. E. Hoare, pp. 34-37

violation of the agreement between Britain and Russia. Judging from the questions and answers, the Foreign Office and Westminster obviously believed the Korean King's refuge at the Russian Legation would not lead to the Russian occupation of Seoul or any part of Korea.

It indicates that Britain would actively interfere with the Korean question only when the territorial integrity of the country was threatened by Russia. On 19 February, Japanese Minister Katō Takaaki visited Salisbury and had a conversation as to the recent Korean King's flight to the Russian Legation. Katō argued that the King's refuge had been clearly pre-arranged with the Russian Minister and asked what opinion the British Government had with regard to this event. Salisbury answered that the incident might not be very significant because only few men have been landed. Furthermore, when Katō revealed his personal view that Russia might want an ice-free port in the Far East, Salisbury answered that "Britain could offer no objection as long as Russia merely sought a commercial outlet".<sup>206</sup> However, Salisbury assured that the British Government would change the attitude if Russia intended to fortify a port or to seize any foreign territory.<sup>207</sup>

Japanese Minister in Berlin Aoki Shūzō showed a more detailed view on the Korean question. On 20 February, Aoki pointed out that the Russian Far Eastern fleet already became so strong that Japan could not stand alone against them. He continued to argue that the proposed Trans-Siberian Railways would eventually place the Liaodong Peninsula, Beijing and Korea under the sphere of Russian influence. Thus, he insisted that Britain, Japan and China should reach an agreement to deal with the Russian advance. He believed that British officers and engineers would be able to modernise the Chinese navy and communication technology while Japanese officers could re-organise the Chinese army. He thought that the co-operation amongst three countries would enable China to check a Russian advance into Manchuria in a short time.<sup>208</sup> Aoki believed that the intervention should be taken immediately because the Russian plans for the domination of the region was already close to the execution.<sup>209</sup>

Although it was not the official view of the Japanese Government, Aoki's suggestion showed how Japanese statesmen understood the current situations of the region: Japan was not strong enough to stand alone in face of a possible Russian advance into Manchuria and Korea and Britain was crucial to separate China from Russian influence and to form a three-party alliance against Russia. However, as Salisbury mentioned, Britain was not interested in any confrontation against Russia unless Russia intended to occupy any foreign territory or to fortify a harbour. On 3 February 1896, British Prime Minister Balfour already stated that "from regarding with fear and jealousy a commercial outlet for

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<sup>206</sup> Salisbury to Satow, 19 February 1896, FO 405/70.

<sup>207</sup> Salisbury to Satow, 19 February 1896, FO 405/70.

<sup>208</sup> Lascelles to Salisbury, 20 February 1896, FO 405/70.

<sup>209</sup> Lascelles to Salisbury, 29 February 1896, FO 405/70.

Russia in the Pacific Ocean which should not be ice-bound half the year, I should welcome such a result as a distinct advance in this far distant region".<sup>210</sup> Due to the British Government's indifference as to the Russian advance to Korea, the Japanese Government realised that a mutual agreement between Russia and Japan would be more desirable since Britain was uninterested in supporting Japan.<sup>211</sup>

Therefore, considering the British Government's principle with regard to the Korean affair, Salisbury's suggestion for the international recognition of Korean neutrality in late April was completely unexpected. On 28 April, Salisbury sent the following telegraph to Satow in Tokyo:

*By harbouring the King of Korea, Russia practically exercises a Protectorate, but she would find inconvenience in declaring such an arrangement at present. A suggestion has been made that Russia, in order to prevent Japan from questioning her present proceedings, may lead the King of Korea again to declare himself China's vassal. Having regard to this possibility, do you think that the Japanese Government would be disposed to agree to a declaration of Korean neutrality, if such a proposal were advanced?*<sup>212</sup>

In response, Japanese Foreign Minister Mutsu Munemitsu asked Britain to answer four questions: whether Britain would take the initiatives entirely; what powers have been approached; whether other countries had given Britain any encouragement; and what is Britain's opinion on Russia's possible attitude to the proposal. When the suggestion was made, the Japanese Legation in Seoul was very close to reaching a *modus vivendi* with the Russian Legation in Seoul and thus Satow believed that Japan would not take part in such a proposal unless a successful result was guaranteed.<sup>213</sup>

On 4 May, Mutsu again said that the proposal for Korean neutrality was "somewhat as a surprise", considering Britain's indifferent attitude to a possible Russian advance towards ice-free ports or Japan's suggestion for international agreement against Russia. Mutsu admitted that Korea had friendly feelings towards China but argued that it was very unlikely that Korea would return to a vassal of China because it should have already happened if Russia actually wanted it.

Furthermore, he asserted that Japan would be exposed to the risk of a Russian protectorate over Korea if Japan came into the negotiations but failed to receive sufficient international support. Therefore, he asked Salisbury to answer his four questions before discussing the suggestion with the Japanese Cabinet.<sup>214</sup> Satow also stated that Japan had an impression that Britain was not interested in

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<sup>210</sup> Ian Nishi, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance* (London, 1966), pp. 43; Ruxton, *The Diaries and Letters of Sir Ernest Mason Satow*, pp. 227

<sup>211</sup> Salisbury to Satow, 19 February 1896, FO 405/70.

<sup>212</sup> Salisbury to Satow, 28 April 1896, No. 28, FO 405/71.

<sup>213</sup> Salisbury to Satow, 3 May 1896, No. 34, FO 405/71.

<sup>214</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 4 May 1896, No. 62, FO 405/71.

the affairs of Korea. Britain had ignored Japan's to receive Britain's support in the matter. For example, after the Japanese Government had announced their non-interference policy in Korea after the murder of Queen Min, Japan also asked to the British Government for their view with regard to Japan's announcement, but Japan received any reply. Moreover, Balfour's speech on Russia's ice-free ports and Salisbury's answer to Katō with regard to King Kojong's refuge at the Russian Legation encouraged such an impression.<sup>215</sup>

On 7 May, Satow telegraphed to Salisbury that Mutsu had been looking forward to an answer to his questions from Salisbury.<sup>216</sup> However, on 9 May, Salisbury simply replied that "it is not at present in my power to give such an engagement as is suggested".<sup>217</sup> To clarify the attitude of Salisbury, Japanese Minister in London Katō visited Salisbury and asked about his opinion with regard to the Korean question. Salisbury told him that "interested powers should concert with the object of finding a remedy".<sup>218</sup> However, he asserted that Britain should participate to a lesser extent even though Britain was one of the interested powers. He argued that China, Japan or Russia should take the initiatives in negotiation with other neighbours and also revealed his personal opinion that Russia did not seem to have an immediate design of swallowing Korea.<sup>219</sup> Mutsu, who was disappointed with Salisbury's answer, immediately telegraphed Komura in Seoul and instructed him to sign the *modus vivendi*.<sup>220</sup>

Salisbury's ill-prepared proposal for the international recognition of Korean neutrality clearly shows Britain's willingness to avoid too much engagement in the Korean affairs. The Japanese Government was ready to scrap their *modus vivendi* with the Russian side and to take the British offer if it was favourable. However, until last minute, Salisbury refused to take too much responsibility for the negotiation and Mutsu had nothing but negotiating a mutual agreement exclusively with the Russian Government. Salisbury's efforts to bring out an international agreement with regard to the Korean neutrality mean that Britain was still unhappy with a Russo-Japanese agreement or a possible Russian protectorate over Korea. On the other hand, Mutsu's anxiety to assure Britain's firm support for the scheme also reveals that the Japanese Government was willing to obtain Britain's assistance in the matter of Korean questions.<sup>221</sup> However, British interest in Korea was not sufficiently large enough to vigorously convince the Japanese Government in this issue and Britain was still satisfied with the maintenance of the status quo.

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<sup>215</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 4 May 1896, No. 62, FO 405/71.

<sup>216</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 7 May 1896, No. 38, FO 405/71.

<sup>217</sup> Salisbury to Satow, 9 May 1896, No. 41, FO 405/71.

<sup>218</sup> Salisbury to Satow, 13 May 1896, No. 47, FO 405/71.

<sup>219</sup> Salisbury to Satow, 13 May 1896, No. 47, FO 405/71.

<sup>220</sup> Ian Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894–1907* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976), pp. 43–44.

<sup>221</sup> Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894–1907*, pp. 43–44.





## Chapter 2: Anglo-Korean Relations after Kojong's Refuge at the Russian Legation, 1896-7

### Min's Special Mission to the Coronation Ceremony of the Russian Tsar

King Kojong's flight to the Russian Legation in February 1896 completely changed the *status quo* in Korea. Since their victory over China and the subsequent murder of Queen Min in 1895, Japan almost placed Korea under their complete control. However, before long, the Korean King fled from the Japanese-occupied palace for the Russian Legation and Russia was enabled to influence the Korean Court thanks to the royal presence at their premise. While facing Russian advance to strengthen their foothold in Korea by taking advantage of the Korean King's presence, Japan sought for Britain's help to balance off the Russian penetration and to defend their special interests in the country. However, Britain was reluctant to put pressure upon the Russian side on behalf of Japan. Therefore, without Britain's help, Japan had no option but negotiating with Russia to defend their interest in the country.

While Japan was being forced by Russia to reach an agreement to secure their mutual interest in the country, Kojong was willing to challenge Japan's dominant position in the Korean politics with the help of Russia. Although Japan held a dominant position in the country in economic and military terms, Kojong learned from the Triple Intervention of 1895 that Japan would not want to risk any conflict against Russia. Therefore, once he was under the protection of the Russian side, Kojong swiftly announced the reshuffle of the Cabinet and the new appointment of pro-Russian *chargé d'affaires* immediately after his flight to the Russian Legation. It was also crucial to obtain Russia's military and economic aid because it would not only strengthen their influence enough to balance off Japanese penetration into the country but also to fasten the westernisation of Korea's administration and military forces, which would eventually enable the country to maintain its independence against other hostile powers.

One of the most symbolic measures, taken by Kojong to achieve so, was his decision to send a special envoy to the coronation of Nicholas II. On 11 March, Min Yong-Hwan was appointed to the post of Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary for the coronation ceremony and he departed from Seoul on 1 April.<sup>222</sup> One of the main purposes for the special mission to the coronation

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<sup>222</sup> 11 March 1896, vol. 34, *Kojong Silok*.

was to proclaim Korea's independence to the world because it was believed that "every country from all the five continents will send special representatives to offer their congratulations".<sup>223</sup>

The appointment of Min Yong-Hwan as the special mission was made approximately only two months prior to the coronation to be held on 26 May in St. Petersburg. The assassination of former tsar Alexander II and the accession of Tsar Nicholas II were already informed by Russian chargé d'affaires Waeber in November and December 1894 but the Korean Court did not mention any attempt to send a special representative to the coronation ceremony until March 1896.<sup>224</sup> However, some pro-Russian figures, such as Yi Pom-Chin and Ou Yoon-Joong, had already prepared for such kind of mission to enhance Korea's relations with Russia, which had been the main objective of Korea's foreign policy since the end of the Sino-Japanese War of 1895.<sup>225</sup> For instance, on 9 January 1896, two months before the official appointment of Min Yong-Hwan as a special envoy, Yun Chi-Ho was asked by Yi Pom-Chin if he would like to join in a special mission to St. Petersburg and later on 26 January, Yun Chi-Ho told Ou Yoon-Joong that he wanted to go to St. Petersburg and Ou asked him not to mention it to anyone.<sup>226</sup> Considering Japan's dominant influence in the Korean Court since the murder of Queen Min, it was almost impossible to send such kind of special mission to St. Petersburg. Therefore, after Kojong had escaped from the Japanese-occupied palace and his safety was secured by the Russian Legation, the Korean Government could eventually plan to send a special representative to the Russian capital.<sup>227</sup>

British Consul-general Hillier also believed that the appointment of a Korean envoy for the coronation ceremony was made with either "suggestion" or "approval" of Waeber. Hillier was also convinced that the special mission was intended to stress 'the independence and autonomy of Korea', which had been consistently emphasised by Waeber since Kojong's flight. Apart from its diplomatic meaning, Hillier also argued that the special mission was a public acknowledgement to the Russian Government for their protection and assistance upon the Korean Government, which had been provided by the Russian chargé d'affaires in Seoul.<sup>228</sup> Hillier did not give further comments on Min Yong-Hwan's mission to St. Petersburg after his departure from Chemulpo on 1 April. In the same

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<sup>223</sup> Michael Finch, *Min Yong-Hwan: The Selected Writings of a Late Choson Diplomat* (Berkeley, California, 2008), p. 66.

<sup>224</sup> Michael Finch, *Min Yong-Hwan: A Political Bibliography* (Hawaii, 2002), p. 74.

<sup>225</sup> Min-Won Lee, *Myöngsöng Hwanghu Sihae wa Agwan P'ach'ön* (Seoul, 1987), p. 150.

<sup>226</sup> Chi-Ho Yun, *Yun Chi-Ho Ilgi*, 6 vols (Seoul: National History Compilation Committee, 1975), 4, pp. 74-75. 201), 124, 131-132.

<sup>227</sup> Finch, *Min Yong-Hwan* (Hawaii, 2002), pp. 74-75.

<sup>228</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, 13 March 1896, FO 405/71.

report, he briefly mentioned that he would visit St. Petersburg, Berlin, Paris, London, Washington and San Francisco.<sup>229</sup>

While Min Yong-Hwan was on his journey to St. Petersburg in April 1896, Hillier reported some activities from the Russian side. On 15 April, Hillier reported about three parties of Russian officers travelling in Korea but the report was focused on the decrease of the number native insurgents, who had risen against the introduction of the so-called top-knot Edict of January 1896.<sup>230</sup> He also reported that the Russian Government had approved the Korean Government's proposal to purchase 3,000 rifles and 600,000 rounds for ammunition, which would be delivered by a Korean steamer from Vladivostok. In the same report, he also mentioned that the number of Korean troops had been increased by 2,000 men and the forces were under the supervision of Russian officers. However, despite the clear fact that Russian officers were taking over the charge of Korean troops, Hillier believed that the expansion of the Russian authority was "imperative" because the Korean army under the current circumstances were "a useless and undisciplined rabble", led by officers who lacked "the most elementary knowledge of military science".<sup>231</sup> While Japanese officers troops were withdrawing, Hillier was convinced that Russia played its role to provide the protection and guidance required for the maintenance of the Korean administration.

Despite Hillier's opinion that Min's special mission was merely a diplomatic gesture, the Korean Court and the Russian Government were expecting something more than just a moral support. Korea was not the only Asian nation who sent a special mission to St. Petersburg. From the Russian perspective, the coronation ceremony was a very good excuse to invite three Asian nations to discuss the Far Eastern concerns without causing any suspicion from other Western powers. The Chinese Government sent Li Hongzhang as a plenipotentiary to discuss Manchurian questions regarding the establishment of railways and the lease of Port Arthur. The Japanese Government also appointed Yamagata Aritomo as an ambassador plenipotentiary to reach an agreement about the Korean questions with St. Petersburg.<sup>232</sup>

On the other hand, Kojong instructed him to negotiate an agreement with the Russian Government to attain military and economic aid. After attending the coronation ceremony on 24 May as an ambassador extraordinary, Min had a meeting with Lobanov to discuss about Min's request to present

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<sup>229</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, Seoul, 2 April 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>230</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, Seoul, 15 April 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>231</sup> Hillier to Beauclerk, Seoul, 20 April 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>232</sup> Finch, *Min Yong-Hwan* (Hawaii, 2002), 75.

his credentials to the tsar on 5 June. During the interview, Min told Lobanov that he had been authorised to discuss the following five proposals;

1. *Guard for the protection of the King until the Korean army be drilled into a reliable force.*
2. *Military instructors*
3. *Advisors: One for the Royal Household to be near the King; one for the Ministry; one for mines, railroads, etc.*
4. *Telegraphic connections between Russia and Korea on terms beneficial to both; an expert in telegraphic matters*
5. *A loan of 3 million Won to cancel the Japanese debt*<sup>233</sup>

Afterwards, Min gave a memo to Lobanov, which said;

*"... Koreans, feeling the wrong [the Japanese murder of Queen Min] deeply, look to Russia for help - hence the five requests. Russia is the only country which Korea expects to take up the responsibility single-handed. Russia's help would place the government of Korea on a firmer basis."*<sup>234</sup>

The message was obvious: the Korean Government wished to attain Russian support to balance off Japanese influence by 'fighting barbarians with other barbarians'. On the following day, when Min could have an audience with the tsar, he once again emphasised the importance of Russia's help to the country;

*"It is now in the power of Russia to enable Korea to have a stable government. A joint influence of Russia and Japan would breed factional intrigues among Korean officials and produce irritating*

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<sup>233</sup> Yun, *Yun Chi-Ho Ilgi* 4, (Seoul, 1975) p. 201.

<sup>234</sup> Yun, *Yun Chi-Ho Ilgi* 4, (Seoul, 1975) p. 202.

*complications between Russia and Japan. Under such an agreement, either war or in probable peace, Korea would be the sufferer. May your Majesty never consent to such an arrangement.*"<sup>235</sup>

Despite Min's sincere wish to obtain Russian support, the Russian Government seemed rather uninterested in the Korean Government's proposals. After two days from their arrival in Moscow, Stein translated the five requests into Russian language and handed the memorandum to Dmitrii Kapnist, the director of the Asiatic Department and asked him to show it to Lobanov so that the Russian Foreign Minister would be able to discuss their requests during the meeting with the Korean delegation. However, Lobanov was unaware of Min's proposals until the beginning of the meeting. Furthermore, even the tsar was reluctant to immediately promise that the Russian Government would provide the help that had been requested by the Korean side. Instead, the tsar notified the Korean party to discuss the matter with Lobanov and Sergei I. Witte, the Russian Minister of Finance.<sup>236</sup> On 7 June, Min met Witte in hope that he would agree to the proposals. Witte assured him that "Russia is fully resolved to keep Korea in order and peace, not allowing Japan or any other country to take or trouble Korea".<sup>237</sup> However, he also emphasised that it was not the right time for Russia to take an aggressive approach to the Korean questions because the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, which would significantly enhance the country's influence in the Far East, was not complete yet.<sup>238</sup>

On 13 June, Min met Lobanov again to discuss the proposals. After revealing the tsar's willingness to protect the independence of Korea from Japanese threats, Lobanov rejected Min's idea of hiring many Russian military instructors by saying that "they might come into conflict with the Japanese soldiers at Seoul", he gave the following answers to Min;

1. *Our government intends to send an officer to examine into the military affairs of Korea and the advisability of sending out Russian instructors.*
2. *As for the loan, the Minister of Finance is going to send an expert in financial matters for the purpose of examining carefully the condition of the Korean finance and of the state of*

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<sup>235</sup> Yun, *Yun Chi-Ho Ilgi 4* (Seoul, 1975), p. 204.

<sup>236</sup> Yun, *Yun Chi-Ho Ilgi 4* (Seoul, 1975), p. 204.

<sup>237</sup> Yun, *Yun Chi-Ho Ilgi 4* (Seoul, 1975), p. 205.

<sup>238</sup> Yun, *Yun Chi-Ho Ilgi 4* (Seoul, 1975), p. 205.

*commerce and agriculture of the country. Upon his report shall depend the willingness or unwillingness of our government to advance a loan to Korea.*

3. *In regard to the telegraphic connections between Russia and Korea, we are willing to connect a Seoul line with the Vladivostok line.*<sup>239</sup>

Being unhappy with Russia's disagreement with the hiring of military advisor, Min met Kapanist at the Foreign Office on 16 June. In this meeting, Min insisted that the guard would be the most important of the five requests and questioned why the Korean Government was not allowed to hire as many military instructors as they wanted. Kapanist answered that the deployment of the Russian guard at the palace would cause political problems, which would turn out to be dangerous rather than helpful to the safety of Kojong.<sup>240</sup> Instead, Kapanist offered two options; that the Korean King might stay in the Russian Legation as long as he would want; or that Kojong would return to his palace without a guard but with the full moral assurance of Russia that nobody should harm him.<sup>241</sup> Kapanist further refused to assure any possibility that Russian troops would enter the palace for the protection of the king or send a large number of instructors. Therefore, Min bitterly asked to the Russian Government for a written statement of answers to his requests. On 30 June, he received the written letter from Lobanov, which stated the following;

1. *The King may stay in the Russian Legation as long as he wants. In case he should return to his palace, the Russian Government would answer for his safety. A guard will remain in the Legation at the disposal of the Russian chargé d'affaires at Seoul.*

2. *For military instructors, the Russian government will send an experienced officer of high standing to Seoul to negotiate with the Korean Government on the subject. His first object in view shall be the organisation of a Korean guard for the King. Another experienced man will be sent to examine into the economic conditions of Korea and to find out necessary financial measures.*

3. *These two confidential officers may act as advisers, under the guide of the Russian chargé d'affaires at Seoul.*

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<sup>239</sup> Yun, *Yun Chi-Ho Ilgi 4* (Seoul, 1975), p. 214.

<sup>240</sup> Yun, *Yun Chi-Ho Ilgi 4* (Seoul, 1975), pp. 219-220.

<sup>241</sup> Yun, *Yun Chi-Ho Ilgi 4* (Seoul, 1975), p. 220.

4. *The question of the loan will be taken into consideration when the financial condition of Korea and its needs be fully known.*

5. *Russia consents to connect the landlines of Korea with those of Russia and will give all possible assistance to the realisation of the project.*<sup>242</sup>

Comparing with the original proposals made by Min, it is obvious that the Russian Government partially agreed to the requests. The request for a Russian guard to the palace, which had been emphasised as the most significant matter amongst them, was rejected by the Russian Government. The loan proposal was also agreed only if the financial condition of the country would be fully examined. The number of Russian advisors was also reduced to two. The only proposal that was accepted without any objection was the connection of telegraphic lines between Russia and Korea. The agreement was so disappointing that even Min believed that his diplomatic mission to St. Petersburg was a complete failure.<sup>243</sup>

There are two main reasons why Min failed to achieve its original aims. The first was the shift of Russian interest from Korea to Manchuria since 1895. After Russia's diplomatic victory over Japan in the Triple Intervention, the Chinese Government was convinced that they would need a military alliance with other power in case of future collisions with Japan. Before the first Sino-Japanese War, Britain and China saw each other as an important strategic partner. However, after Britain had not shown any support for the Chinese side during the war and the Triple Intervention against Japanese concession, China sought a new military partner and Russia was the most suitable one because unlike France, whom China fought over Vietnam in the 1880s, or Germany, who shared no border with China, Russia was able to deploy its troops to the Chinese territory in case of war.<sup>244</sup>

On the other side, Russia now became interested in the lease of Port Arthur, an ice-free port at the end of the Liaodong Peninsula. Witte especially wanted to place the region under the sphere of Russian influence by constructing the Trans-Siberian Railways through Manchuria and connecting it to Port Arthur and Vladivostok. Therefore, even though Russia was interested in gaining an ice-free port in Korea since the 1880s, Russia's focus of the Far Eastern policy moved from Korea to China and St. Petersburg also took a possibility of an alliance with China into consideration.<sup>245</sup> Therefore, when Li Hongzhang visited St. Petersburg for the coronation ceremony, both parties signed a secret alliance,

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<sup>242</sup> Yun, *Yun Chi-Ho Ilgi 4* (Seoul, 1975), p. 233.

<sup>243</sup> Yun, *Yun Chi-Ho Ilgi 4* (Seoul, 1975), p. 221.

<sup>244</sup> Lensen, *The Balance of Intrigue*, p. 489.

<sup>245</sup> Seung-Kwon Synn, *The Russo-Japanese Rivalry over Korea, 1876-1904* (Seoul: Yukphubsa, 1981), pp. 46–47.

which stipulated their mutual military cooperation if Japan invaded Russia, China or Japan. The Russo-Chinese alliance also allowed the Russian Government to construct the Trans-Siberian Railways through Heilongjiang and Jilin, which would be connected to Vladivostok.<sup>246</sup>

The second was the Moscow Protocol, signed between the Russian and the Japanese Governments. Since Manchuria became Russia's primary strategic concern in the Far East, it was necessary for Russia to compromise with the Japanese Government to maintain their current interest in Korea. Japan also believed that they could not afford any full-scale war against Russia over the dominance of Korea at that time, especially since the Russian influence was significantly increased after Kojong's flight to the Russian Legation in Seoul in February 1896. Therefore, after negotiations between the Russian and Japanese ministers in Seoul, which resulted in the Waeber-Komura memorandum was signed on 14 May, the arrangement was further discussed between Lobanov and Japanese ambassador plenipotentiary Yamagata Aritomo. On 9 June, both parties signed the Moscow Protocol, which stated the following clauses;

#### *Public articles*

1. *The Russian and Japanese governments, with a view to removing financial difficulties of Korea, will advise the Korean government to curtail superfluous expenditures and to establish a balance between expenditures and revenues. If, as the result of the urgency of some reforms, it will be necessary to resort to foreign loans, the two governments will assist it by common efforts.*

2. *The Russian and Japanese governments will try to leave it entirely up to Korea, insofar as the financial and economic condition of the country permits, to form and maintain indigenous armed forces and police in a number sufficient for the maintenance of general order without foreign assistance.*

3. *In order to facilitate communication with Korea, the Japanese government will retain the management of the telegraph lines now in its hands; the establishment of telegraphic communication between Seoul and her own border is granted to Russia; these lines can be redeemed by the Korean government when it will have the necessary funds for it.*

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<sup>246</sup> For a detailed background and negotiation process of the Russo-Chinese alliance of 1896, see Lensen, *The Balance of Intrigue*, pp. 477–513.



4. *Should the above require more exact and detailed definition or if other questions arise requiring negotiations, the respective representatives of the governments will be instructed to come to an amicable agreement regarding such matters.*

*Secret articles*

1. *Should the tranquillity and order in Korea be disturbed or seriously endangered as the result of some internal or external cause and should the Russian and Japanese governments, by common accord, judge it necessary to come to the aid of the local authorities by means of sending troops in addition to the number necessary for the security of their nationals and the protection of their telegraph lines, the two imperial governments, desirous of preventing any collision between their armed forces, will determine the sphere of action reserved for each in such a way as to leave a space free of occupation between the troops of the two governments.*

2. *Until the formation in Korea of the necessary forces, mentioned in article 2 of the public clauses of the present protocol, the provisional arrangement signed by State Counsellor Waeber and Mr Komura regarding the rights of Russia and Japan to maintain an equal number of troops in the kingdom remains in force. As for the personal security of the king, the procedure established for this purpose will likewise be preserved until the formation of an indigenous detachment especially intended for this service.<sup>247</sup>*

When Min met Lobanov and discussed his five proposals for the first time on 5 June, Lobanov was already very close to reaching an agreement with the Japanese side. Lobanov and Yamagata discussed a variety of issues to deal with Korean questions and to recognise each other's influence in the country.<sup>248</sup> The signing of the Moscow Protocol was very important for the Russian government because it enabled Russia to check Japan's influence that had been dominant since the murder of Queen Min of 1895. Furthermore, the Russian government could ensure the territorial integrity and independence of Korea. The Moscow Protocol also stipulated that both governments should take joint action in the country and Russia's exclusive rights to protect the Korean King at the Russian Legation.

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<sup>247</sup> Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, pp. 633-634.

<sup>248</sup> During the negotiations, Yamagata even suggested the partition of the Korean Peninsula, which Lobanov declined to accept. Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, p. 632.

Therefore, comparing to the significance of the Moscow Protocol, Min's proposal was a neglectable concern.<sup>249</sup>

Furthermore, once Lobanov signed the Moscow Protocol, which prohibited unilateral military action in the country, the acceptance of Min's proposals for military and economic aid would violate the Russo-Japanese agreement and eventually lead to a fresh confrontation against Japan. Lobanov or Kapanist refused to give a clear answer to Min's request for a Russian guard at the Korean palace but insisted that such an intervention would lead into a political turmoil or international conflict.<sup>250</sup> The Russian Government also refused send a large number of military advisors for the organisation of the Korean army. Min's request for a Russian loan of three million Won was also difficult to approve not only because it would violate the Moscow Protocol, but also because the Russian government was financially struggling with the construction of the Trans-Siberian railways and their treasury was already relying on a French loan.<sup>251</sup>

The British Government vaguely assumed that Min might have signed a political agreement with the Russian Government when British ambassador at St. Petersburg Nicholas Roderick O'Conor called on Min Yong-Hwan and met him in St. Petersburg. According to his report, Min confessed that "he was confused by all he saw" and "feared that he was too old to understand the western system of administration and life".<sup>252</sup> Min also felt sorry that the country was in a dangerous situation and he was useless to do anything to help the Korean King.<sup>253</sup> Considering the date of the report, O'Conor might have had this conversation in the mid-June, when Min failed to persuade the Russian Government to accept their proposals with regard to a guard and military advisors. By then, Min realised that the Russian Government would not want to be a protector of the nation any more. His conversation with O'Conor indicate his bitter disappointment with the Russian side.

Although the British Government did not realise that Min and Lobanov reached a secret agreement regarding the sending of advisors and telegraphic lines, they were aware that the Russian and Japanese ministers in Seoul started a negotiation to settle the current confrontation in the country.<sup>254</sup> The articles of the Waeber-Komura memorandum were kept in secret even after the signing on 14

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<sup>249</sup> Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, p. 635.

<sup>250</sup> Yun, *Yun Chi-Ho Ilgi 4* (Seoul, 1975), pp. 219-221.

<sup>251</sup> Lee, *Myöngsöng Hwanghu Sihae wa Agwan P'ach'ön*, [*Murder of Queen Min and Kjong's Flight to the Russian Legation*], (Seoul, 1987), pp. 164-165.

<sup>252</sup> O'Conor to Salisbury, 15 June 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>253</sup> O'Conor to Salisbury, 15 June 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>254</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 6 May 1896, FO 405/71.

May. However, British minister at Tokyo Ernest Satow managed to gain some information about the agreement and drew a conclusion that it was only of a provisional character and it was only meant to avoid any collision between the armed forces of the two governments stationing in Korea. He also assured London that the paper would contain nothing that could probably affect British interests in the country.<sup>255</sup> It seems likely that Satow believed the Waeber-Komura memorandum was only required to solve the current local issues.

However, when it was reported that Lobanov and Yamagata had concluded a definite arrangement regarding Korea, London was anxious to find out the details of the agreement.<sup>256</sup> Immediately afterwards, British diplomats in Japan and Europe contacted Japanese statesmen, including Japanese Foreign Minister Aoki Shūzō and Vice-Foreign Minister Hara Takashi, and asked them what terms had been agreed with the Russian Government in justification that the British government was just naturally curious of what arrangements had been made regarding Korea, on account for Britain's commercial interests in the country.<sup>257</sup>

Obviously, when Satow was informed of the Lobanov-Yamagata protocol, it was almost two weeks after the agreement had been concluded. However, Japanese diplomats insisted that nothing definite had been settled yet. For instance, when Aoki was asked by British ambassador in Berlin Martin Gosselin about a possible agreement between the two governments, he admitted that the arrangement had been briefly mentioned during meetings but denied that anything had been settled.<sup>258</sup> Hara also gave Satow a similar statement that nothing had been settled.<sup>259</sup>

There might be various reasons why the Japanese government was reluctant to share the details of their agreement with the Russian Government. Tokyo might have been still disappointed with the lack of British support when Japan was struggling with the increase of Russian influence in Korea. For instance, in April 1896, London suddenly suggested the international recognition of Korean neutrality to the Japanese government, but they refused to take a leading role when the Japanese government seriously asked to do so. However, it seemed more likely that the Japanese government simply did not want to reveal the terms of the arrangement. Especially, the first clause allowed Russia and Japan

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<sup>255</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 18 June 1896, FO 405/72.

<sup>256</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 22 June 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>257</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 27 June 1896, FO 405/72.

<sup>258</sup> Gosselin to Salisbury, 26 June 1896, FO 405/71.

<sup>259</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 27 June 1896, FO 405/72.

to interfere with the financial administration of Korea, which was already under British influence via Financial Advisor and Chief-Commissioner of Korean Customs John McLeavy Brown.

Thanks to the signing of the Russo-Japanese protocol and Russo-Chinese alliance that were signed during the visit of Asian representatives, Russia successfully strengthened its foothold in the Far East without making too much commitment to the negotiations with the Korean Government. Because Russia wanted to increase their influence in Manchuria by avoiding any further collision with Japan over the region, the Russian government rejected any military-related proposals from Min, which would probably cause another conflict over the Korean peninsula. From the Korean point of view, the secret agreement between Min and Lobanov was a bitter failure since they could not obtain Russia's military protection to the King. However, on the other hand, the Min-Lobanov agreement justified Russia's intervention by granting them the rights to send military and economic advisors.

## The Increase of Russia's Influence in Korea

Since the Korean administration and army were under the Russian influence, Russian firms started to exploit their dominant position in the country and attempted to obtain concessions. On 22 April 1896, the Korean Government granted the mining concession of opening gold mines in Hamgyŏng Province to Russian nationals.<sup>260</sup> According to the terms of the agreement, the Russian company should pay 25% of the gold or gold dust that were obtained from the mine.<sup>261</sup> From other foreign businessmen's perspectives, the 25 per cent royalty was so high that it would leave no profit for the concessionaires or too little profit to attract other investors into the venture. Therefore, it was generally believed that Russian companies had gained the mining concessions mainly for their political advantages and the monopoly of mining rights.<sup>262</sup>

Of course, Russia was not the only power that was seeking for concessions from the Korean Government. A French firm showed its interest in making bid for the right to construct a railway from Seoul to Ŭiju, a city near the Chinese border while Japanese capitalists were willing to obtain a railway concession that would connect Seoul and Busan. An American firm was asking for the right to establish a railway line between Seoul and Chemulpo. A German party openly revealed its interest in railway

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<sup>260</sup> Memorandum of Agreement, 22 April 1896, FO 405/72.

<sup>261</sup> Memorandum of Agreement, 22 April 1896, FO 405/72.

<sup>262</sup> Hillier to MacDonald, 6 July 1896, FO 405/72.

and mining concessions as well. Despite the objection from local communities, whose interests would be seriously affected if those concessions were granted to foreign firms, foreign representatives were quite confident that those firms would eventually obtain the rights for railway construction and mining.<sup>263</sup> Britain was no exception to the scramble for Korea. When Alfred Burt Stripling, a British national and a foreign advisor to the Korean Police Department who had resided in Korea since 1883, applied for the grant of mining concession, Hillier asked to British minister in Beijing Claude Maxwell MacDonald for instruction as to what extent he should support the application from a man with limited resources.<sup>264</sup>

Amongst many applications from foreign firms, one application from a French company, backed by French Consul Victor Collin de Plancy, was particularly outstanding due to the scale of its demands. In addition to the construction rights of a railway line between Seoul and Ŭiju, the French firm also requested its mining rights within 20 miles wide on either side of the railway line.<sup>265</sup> Waeber criticised that the French proposal was far too excessive. However, despite his heavy criticism of the French offer, Waeber did not reject it even though he had enough power and influence in the Korean Court to do so.<sup>266</sup> Furthermore, Waeber even revealed his wish that the gauge of the railway to be constructed by the French firm should be the same as that in use on the Russian railways but such kind of regulation was never imposed upon the American firm.<sup>267</sup> Therefore, McLeavy Brown, who was generally in charge of the finance and customs of the country, believed that Collin de Plancy and Waeber might be working together in this scheme and that "Russian schemes are being promulgated under a French disguise".<sup>268</sup>

The signing of the Min-Lobanov secret agreement on 30 June was the turning point of Russia's Korea policy. During the arrangement negotiations in Russia, Min failed to attain Russia's military protection or a loan of three million Won to clear off the Japanese debt. However, what the Russian Government agreed with the sending of one military advisor and one economic expert who would examine the current military and financial situations of the country.

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<sup>263</sup> Hillier to MacDonald, 8 May 1896, FO 405/72.

<sup>264</sup> Hillier to MacDonald, 8 May 1896, FO 405/72.

<sup>265</sup> Hillier to MacDonald, 6 July 1896, FO 405/72.

<sup>266</sup> Hillier to MacDonald, 4 June 1896, FO 405/72.

<sup>267</sup> Hillier to MacDonald, 6 July 1896, FO 405/72.

<sup>268</sup> Hillier to MacDonald, 4 June 1896, FO 405/72.

The first was the arrival of D. D. Pokotilow, the director of the Russo-Chinese Bank in Shanghai. Since Pokotilow came to Seoul in order to investigate into the financial status of the Korean administration before offering a loan of three million Won, the British Consulate-general in Seoul correctly assumed that the loan offer had been requested by Min Yong-Hwan during his visit to Russia.<sup>269</sup> As was discussed previously, the main purpose of the proposed Russian loan was to pay off the remaining due of the Japanese loan of 1895, which had been forced by the Japanese Government in order to keep the Korean government under the control by financial means. Japan and Korea agreed that the loan should be repaid half-yearly at Tokyo and the Korean Government was expected to repay all the loan by no later than December 1898 or December 1899.

Therefore, when British Vice-Consul at Chemulpo William Henry Wilkinson heard of the Russian loan offer, he was convinced that it would easily free the country from its financial duty to Japan. However, meanwhile, he doubted “whether she would be wise in doing so at the cost of strengthening the hold of Russia”.<sup>270</sup> The terms of Russia’s proposed loan were very similar to those of the current loan agreement with Japan, which included the same amount of money and the same half-yearly instalment to repay the debt. However, the only difference was the period for redemption. In the case of the proposed Russian loan, the period should not be shorter than twenty-five years.<sup>271</sup> The Russian loan clearly intended to reduce Japanese influence upon the Korean Government by repaying the Japanese debt so as to release the Korean Government from financial obligation to the Japanese Government

However, despite Russia’s ambition behind the loan offer, McLeavy Brown was convinced that Russia would be a better creditor of the Korean Government than Japan.<sup>272</sup> He did not mention the reason why he preferred Russia to Japan as a creditor, but he might have believed in Russia’s announcement to respect the independence of Korea and their efforts to persuade other foreign powers. Moreover, thanks to the Franco-Russian alliance of 1894, Russia had access to Europe’s banks and markets and therefore the Russian Government had better financial options to support the Korean Government than Japan did.

Nevertheless, before long, McLeavy Brown started to doubt if the Russian offer had any intention rather than the repayment of the Japanese debt. That doubt was triggered by the appointment of Min

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<sup>269</sup> Memorandum respecting the proposed Russian Loan, 22 August 1896, FO 405/72.

<sup>270</sup> Memorandum respecting the proposed Russian Loan, 22 August 1896, FO 405/72.

<sup>271</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 16 November 1896, FO 405/73.

<sup>272</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 16 November 1896, FO 405/73.

Yong-Hwan as Minister Plenipotentiary to Great Britain, Germany, Russia, Italy, France and Austria in January 1897.<sup>273</sup> Although Min was meant to cover diplomatic duties with various European powers, John Jordan, then acting British consul general in Seoul, assumed that his main diplomatic missions would be exercised in St. Petersburg because of Min's previous experience to visit St. Petersburg as Minister Plenipotentiary and his current War Minister title that required close partnership with the Russian Legation and their military officers.<sup>274</sup> Jordan believed that Kojong's diplomatic plan was to revive the country's failed attempts to raise its profile in the international society by diplomatic activities in the 1880s, when Korea was struggling with China's claim for suzerainty over the country. He also pointed out that the reason why Kojong's diplomatic manoeuvres failed was because of the lack of financial resources and predicted that they would have the same problem again since the financial situation had not been significantly improved since then.<sup>275</sup>

McLeavy Brown, who oversaw the country's financial administration, also thought that this mission was an "act of folly" and tried to persuade the King that the mission should be aborted. Despite such criticism, Waeber did not give any objection to the mission when Kojong asked him for any suggestion or advice. McLeavy Brown thus blamed that Waeber had been encouraging the King to spend an excessive amount of money for such an expensive but decorative diplomatic mission. McLeavy Brown suspected that Waeber might deliberately attempt to create deficit in the Korean finance, which would make the Korean Government eventually accept the Russian loan offer.<sup>276</sup> Furthermore, by February 1897, Jordan was also convinced that "there is absolutely no necessity for a loan at the present time" if the Korean Government continued to manage its financial affairs in the present conditions. Apparently, there was a balance of 1,800,000 Won in the treasury and it was sufficient to pay off the instalment of Japanese loan for December 1898.<sup>277</sup> British diplomats in Seoul believed that the proposed loan intended to place the country under the Russian influence regardless of Korea's financial situations.

Japanese minister in Seoul Katō Masuo was more anxious about the proposal of the Russian loan. Because the terms of the Russian loan offer were very similar to the existing agreement with Japan, the customs revenue of Korea would be held as security if the Russian loan was eventually accepted by the Korean Government. However, Katō stressed that the customs revenue could not be pledged

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<sup>273</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 14 January 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>274</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 14 January 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>275</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 14 January 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>276</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 14 January 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>277</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 10 February 1897, FO 405/73.

for any other purpose until the Japanese loan was paid off under the current agreement regarding the Japanese loan.<sup>278</sup> As was instructed by the Japanese Government, he demanded an explanation from Waeber of the Russian Government's intention behind the loan offer. In response, Waeber emphasised that neither he nor the Russian Government had any link with the loan offer and argued that it was only a commercial scheme that had been initiated by the Russo-Chinese Bank.<sup>279</sup> Katō already knew that the Russian Legation imposed a high level of pressure upon the Korean Government to accept the loan. However, Katō did not put further questions to Waeber regarding the offer of a Russian loan after the Korean Finance Minister assured that there was a balance of more than 2,000,000 Won in the treasury and that the Korean Government would request a Russian loan only if their financial situations required such measure.<sup>280</sup> Thus, the offer of a Russian offer was indefinitely postponed.

While the offer of a Russian loan was meant to increase its financial influence in the country, the sending of military officers aimed to take over the control of the nation's military forces. In the late October 1896, when Envoy Extraordinary Min Yong-Hwan returned from St. Petersburg through Siberia and Vladivostok, a detachment of Russian officers and non-commissioned officers, led by Colonel Dmitrii Vasil'evich Putiata, accompanied Min in all his journey and arrived at Chemulpo. The nominal objective of the military mission was to drill and organise the Korean army, which would be a fundamental condition for Kojong's return to the palace. However, Jordan had no doubt that their real intention was to "strengthen and perpetuate the semi-protectorate with Russia has established over this country".<sup>281</sup> He also believed that what this Russian mission wanted was a Russian-drilled force, who would protect the Korean King after his departure from the Russian Legation. By doing so, Jordan thought that the Russian-drilled guard would serve as an "equally effective and a less overt machinery for controlling the Korean administration".<sup>282</sup>

Although the number of the Russian military officers was not as high as Min Yong-Hwan had expected during his negotiations with Lobanov, Kojong seemed satisfied with the arrival of these Russian officers. On 14 November 1896, when Jordan had an opportunity to look at a rough plan of Kyōngun'gung Palace, Kojong's new residence, he found that a block of several buildings was assigned

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<sup>278</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 10 February 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>279</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 19 March 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>280</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 19 March 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>281</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 27 October 1896, FO 405/72.

<sup>282</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 27 October 1896, FO 405/72.



to two Russian lieutenants and ten Russian non-commissioned officers.<sup>283</sup> Kojong clearly wanted to have them within the palace and probably even expected to provide the protection for the safety of the King in case of emergency. In November 1896, the Korean army had 7,500 men, 4,000 of whom were stationed in Seoul. However, due to consistent uprisings outside Seoul, half of them were sent to suppress the insurgents. Russian officers kept approximately 800 men under their command and they would be replaced by a fresh unit returning to Seoul. The Russian mission and the Korean Ministry of War were looking forward to drilling the whole army through this rotation system.<sup>284</sup>

Despite his suspicion of the real intention of the Russian military mission, it is worth noting that the British consulate-general in Seoul did not show any objection or joint appeal to the Russian Legation. Jordan believed that Korean troops were very undisciplined and poorly equipped. Therefore, although Jordan was aware that the Russian-drilled Korean forces could be their tool to take the Korean King as hostage and control the Korean Government in case of emergency, Jordan had to admit that the reorganisation of the current army would be much more important to provide the sufficient protection for the King at his palace, which would be a significant step to stress the independence of the country.

Furthermore, later in June 1897, according to the report by Captain Mercer on the Korean army, he pointed out that the quality of the troops was significantly improved since the arrival of Colonel Putiata and his officers.<sup>285</sup> Putiata inspected the current troops and selected the best officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers and organised them into a regiment with about 900 men of all ranks. Afterwards, their old-fashioned rifles were all replaced by new Berdan rifles purchased from Vladivostok. Then the reorganised Korean troops went through a series of personal training, squad-company-battalion level drills and shooting range.<sup>286</sup> Mercer believed that the outcomes were very impressive. Since the Korean army had a good supply of recruits, the Russian officers selected only the strongest and best volunteers. Therefore, he believed that the reorganised Korean troops were physically good and capable of performing their duties.

Despite such achievements, Mercer also reported some limitations of the mission. Firstly, by June 1897, the Russian officers managed to drill the only one regiment that had been reorganised by

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<sup>283</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 14 November 1896, FO 405/72.

<sup>284</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 14 November 1896, FO 405/72.

<sup>285</sup> Mercer to Jordan, 11 June 1896, p.103, FO 405/73.

<sup>286</sup> Kojong issued a decree to purchase 3,000 Berdan rifles and 200 ammunitions per each rifle. Chong-Hyo Park, *Rosia Kungnip Munso Pogwanso Sojang Han'guk Kwallyon Munso Yoyakchip [The Summary of Korea-Related Documents at the Russian National Archives]*, (Seoul, 2002), pp. 239-240.

themselves even though the Korean Government had an ambitious plan to train the whole army gradually. Secondly, he also believed that the troops had discipline issues because the Korean soldiers did not seem to feel “the necessity for vigilance and smartness when on their posts”.<sup>287</sup> Thirdly, the Korean army did not have any artillery or any knowledge of how to use artillery. The lack of artillery regiments would severely limit the operational capacities of the Korean army in case of war.<sup>288</sup> Lastly, he pointed out that the greatest problem of the Korean army was “the corruptness and cowardness of the native officers” and he showed his opinion that the Korean officers could not be improved significantly “however much they are trained in peacetime”.<sup>289</sup> However, in general, Mercer believed that the Russian military officers did a great job to train the Koreans, “by nature a timid race”, so that the army were now able to be excellent guerrilla forces with the knowledge of the country.<sup>290</sup>

Seeing what happened after the arrival of Russian financial and military advisors, it is obvious that their activities in Korea intended to increase the influence of the Russian Government in the country. The offer of a Russian loan not only aimed to release Korea from their financial obligation for the Japanese Government but also wanted to financially force the Korean Government to rely on the Russian side for next 25 years. The Russian military mission brought about 900 strongest native troops in Seoul and organised into a regiment armed with new rifles and then formed a good relationship with the troops while training them in Russian. British diplomats in Seoul worried that these measures would significantly strengthen the Russian presence in the Korean Government, which had been already enhanced by hosting Kojong at their legation since February 1896.

These actions were against the main principle of Britain’s Korea policy at that time: to maintain the independence and autonomy of Korea by reforming its administration and finance. Thanks to McLeavy Brown’s management of the Korean customs and treasury, the financial situations of Korea had been greatly improved since 1896 and thus the proposed Russian loan, together with Waeber’s toleration of Kojong’s extravagant expenditures, was only seen by British diplomats as a plot to exploit the improved finance of the country and to make the Korean Government reliant on the Russian support.

However, despite the ambitious actions from the Russian Government, the British consulate-general in Seoul did not overtly appeal or object to such schemes until the Japanese Government’s

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<sup>287</sup> Mercer to Jordan, 11 June 1896, FO 405/73.

<sup>288</sup> Mercer to Jordan, 11 June 1896, FO 405/73.

<sup>289</sup> Mercer to Jordan, 11 June 1896, FO 405/73.

<sup>290</sup> Mercer to Jordan, 11 June 1896, FO 405/73.

opposition stopped the Russian Legation from pushing the matter further. British representatives in Korea were reluctant to take any pre-emptive measure to stop such activities as the loan offer or military mission until they were duly executed. In case of the military mission, British diplomats and military officers were convinced that the Russian-drilled would be an “equally effective and a less overt machinery for controlling the Korean administration”.<sup>291</sup> However, when they believed that the modernisation of the Korean army was more urgent than the concern of the Korean troops falling under the control of a Western power, they did not oppose to it. Britain’s such responses were in line with their ‘non-interference policy’, which was the other fundamental principle of their Korea policy.

### Kojong’s Return to the Palace and the Change of Korea’s Foreign Policy

The Russian Government significantly increased its influence in the country and challenged Japan’s dominant position by taking advantage of the presence of Kojong at the Russian Legation. Before fleeing to the Russian Legation, Kojong felt that his life and safety were threatened by the Japanese garrisons next to the palace and pro-Japanese ministers within the Korean Court, some of whom had been involved in the murder of Queen Min in October 1895. Therefore, Kojong had no willingness to leave the Russian Legation unless he was guaranteed any military guard from Russia, who was currently offering the protection of Kojong’s safety.

As is discussed earlier, when Min Yong-Hwan was sent as Minister Plenipotentiary to the Russian capital and negotiated with Lobanov to obtain a Russian guard to protect the palace for the King; military advisors to reorganise the Korean army; a Russian loan to pay off the Japanese debt; and the connection of telegraphic lines between Korea and Russia. Lobanov, who was in talks with Yamagata over Korean questions, had no intention to offer any military protection outside the Russian Legation in fear that it would eventually violate his agreement with Japan. Min Yong-Hwan consistently argued that the Russian guard was the most important one amongst his five proposals and that the guarantee of Russian military protection was crucial for the safety of the Korean King. Despite Min’s persistence, Lobanov only assured that the Korean King would be allowed to stay at the Russian Legation as long as he wanted and promised that the Russian Government would send the military mission to re-organise and drill the native troops until they could protect the Korean King at the palace.

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<sup>291</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 27 October 1896, FO 405/72.

It is not a coincidence that in mid-August 1896, Kojong requested McLeavy Brown to supervise and plan the repair work of Kyöngun'gung Palace. Kojong announced that the main purpose of the repair of Kyöngun'gung Palace was "to provide a temporary resting place for the Queen's remains and wherein her son the Crown Prince may with safety attend to the prescribed rituals".<sup>292</sup> However, since Kojong must have been reported that Russia was unwilling to provide a palace guard for the protection of Kyöngbokkung Palace by then, the real intention of the repair work was to have a residence in the foreign district of the Korean capital, surrounded by foreign legations including the British consulate-general.<sup>293</sup> To Jordan, the next question would be whether Kojong would ask for a Russian guard "by personal fears or external pressure". He believed that Korea's reliance upon Russia would be continuously strong if the Russian government agreed with the request. Otherwise, Russia would lose the advantage of hosting the Korean King as well as its influence upon the Korean Court. Meanwhile, he also worried that the Korean King would take refuge again at nearby legations including the American or British buildings if any threatening incident occurred at his residence after his departure from the Russian Legation.<sup>294</sup>

Jordan was unaware of the Min-Lobanov agreement that had been already concluded on 30 June. Russia already refused to provide a Russian guard at Kyöngbokkung Palace, where he had resided before his refuge at the Russian Legation, in fear that it would cause another conflict with the Japanese Government. Therefore, when Kojong issued his intention to repair Kyöngun'gung Palace, Kojong was already aware that he would not have a Russian guard next to his Kyöngbokkung Palace. That is why Kojong particularly wanted this palace to be repaired because it was in Chöngdong District, a foreign quarter where Kojong would take refuge at a foreign legation much easier.

After the completion of the expansion work of Kyöngun'gung Palace at the end of 1896, Kojong had his first New Year reception for foreign representatives outside the Russian Legation for the first time since his flight but it was reported that Kojong would not move into this palace until the spring of the year. Jordan hinted that the King's return to the new palace was delayed because there was a still large party that wanted Kojong to stay at the Russian Legation.<sup>295</sup> However, later in the early February 1897, Kojong firmly decided to move into the new palace and even stayed overnight at the Kyöngun'gung Palace on 1 February, which was the first time for Kojong to stay outside the Russian

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<sup>292</sup> Memorandum respecting the Extension of the Myengil Palace, yoFO 405/72.

<sup>293</sup> Yoon-Sang Lee, 'Hwangjeüi kunggwöl kyöngun'gung' [the Palace of Emperor, Kyöngun'gung], *The Journal of Seoul Studies*, 40 (2010), pp. 1-25 (p. 5).

<sup>294</sup> Memorandum respecting the Extension of the Myengil Palace, FO 405/72.

<sup>295</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 2 January 1897, FO 405/73.

Legation since his refuge in the previous year. Jordan also assured Korean high-rank officials that the new palace and its neighbourhood would be of no danger to the King when he was asked about the safety of the area.<sup>296</sup>

Waeber was unhappy with Kojong's decision to return to the new palace. When Kojong's decree with regard to the return to the royal palace was handed to Waeber for his approval, Waeber opposed to the plan on the basis that it was too early for the King to move out of the Russian Legation and expose himself to possible danger.<sup>297</sup> However, Putiata's military mission had successfully drilled the Korean palace guard and thus by mid-December 1896 they were able to assume the protection of the palace under the charge of Russian non-commissioned officers.<sup>298</sup> The improvement of a Russian-drilled guard ironically justified Kojong's will to return to the palace. However, it was still satisfactory for Russia because they could maintain their dominant influence upon the Korean Government thanks to the Korean troops under the charge of their military mission.<sup>299</sup>

On the other hand, Kojong was under the pressure of Korean officials and public, who had consistently demanded that the King should immediately leave the Russian Legation "for the sake of the royal ancestors and the subjects who were seriously worried about the fate of the country".<sup>300</sup> Since the Russian government refused to offer any military protection of Kyŏngbokkung Palace during Min's negotiations with Lobanov, his only other option was Kyŏngun'gung Palace. By taking up his residence at this palace, he could show to foreign representatives and his people that the King stepped out of the Russian Legation to strengthen the independence of the country. Also, since the new palace was surrounded by foreign residences and legations, any hostile party against the King would have to risk possible foreign interventions if they planned any attack similar to the murder of Queen Min. Furthermore, if such incidents happened, then the King would be able to take refuge at the British or American legations next to the palace.

Furthermore, he was willing to move into Kyŏngun'gung Palace soon because the construction of the palace was almost complete. After his overnight stay at the palace, he was so pleased with the new palace that he announced a decree encouraging the construction work, "which had been postponed due to the cold weather during winter season" and also stating he would take up his

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<sup>296</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 4 February 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>297</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 4 February 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>298</sup> Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, pp. 653-654.

<sup>299</sup> Lee, *Myŏngsŏng Hwanghu Sihae wa Agwan P'ach'ŏn [Murder of Queen Min and Kojong's Flight to the Russian Legation]*, pp. 189-190.

<sup>300</sup> 1 February 1897, Vol. 35, *Kojong Silok*.

residence at Kyŏngun'gung Palace "when it gets warmer and flowers start to blossom".<sup>301</sup> Moreover, when Cho Byung-Shik asked him for his return to Kyŏngun'gung Palace on 11 February, Kojong refused Cho's request on the ground that "the construction has not been finished yet".<sup>302</sup> Having based on these factors, British representatives were also convinced that the King would move into Kyŏngun'gung Palace "sometime in March or early in April at the earliest".<sup>303</sup> However, despite their expectations, on 18 February Kojong suddenly announced his intention to return to Kyŏngun'gung Palace and on 20 February he moved into the new palace and issued a decree to appeal to the nation. In his decree, Kojong announced that he had moved to the new palace "satisfy the hearts of the people", who had become "anxious over their staying in a foreign legation".<sup>304</sup>

By then, Kojong maintained a close relationship with Waeber. For instance, when Kojong appointed Min Yong-Hwan as Minister Plenipotentiary to Great Britain, Germany, Russia, Italy, France and Austria in January 1897,<sup>305</sup> McLeavy Brown told him that this mission was an "act of folly" because it would impose too much financial burden.<sup>306</sup> Despite such criticisms, Kojong insisted on sending a mission to Europe because of the rumour that the Russian Government had wanted to replace Waeber by Speyer. Min Yong-Hwan was to be instructed by Kojong to persuade the Russian czar that Waeber should remain in Seoul.<sup>307</sup>

However, Kojong's reliance upon Waeber was questioned when on 26 February Japanese Foreign Minister Okuma Shigenobu released the Waeber-Komura memorandum and Lobanov-Yamagata protocol that had been signed in 1896. On 18 February, Okuma informed Satow that the Japanese Government had decided to release the Lobanov-Yamagata protocol because "it was not a very important document and [the Japanese Foreign Minister] saw no reason why it should not be given to the world".<sup>308</sup> Even though Okuma argued that the Russo-Japanese agreements were insignificant, they were sufficiently powerful to make Kojong feel betrayed by whom Kojong had always seen as "a friend of Korea".<sup>309</sup> Kojong was a refugee at the Russian Legation when Waeber and Komura signed a memorandum in Seoul and Min Yong-Hwan was negotiating over a Russian support for the

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<sup>301</sup> 2 February 1897, Vol. 35, *Kojong Silok*.

<sup>302</sup> 11 February 1897, Vol. 35, *Kojong Silok*.

<sup>303</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 18 February 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>304</sup> Extract from "*The Independent*" of February 25, 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>305</sup> 11 January 1897, Vol. 35, *Kojong Silok*.

<sup>306</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 14 January 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>307</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 18 January 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>308</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 18 February 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>309</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 10 March 1897, FO 405/73.

independence of the country while Lobanov and Yamagata was discussing about the fate of Korea. Therefore, Japan's release of the Russo-Japanese agreements clearly gave an impression that Russia was not a protector of the nation but another hostile power to exploit the country.<sup>310</sup>

The Korean Government was so shocked by the existence of secret agreements between Russia and Japan and approached the representatives of both countries for an exploration of the reasons why both Governments had decided to start negotiations on issues that would eventually affect the integrity of Korea without consulting its government. In response, on 2 March, Japanese minister Katō replied that the main objective of the agreements was not to affect the independence of Korea but to "strengthen and consolidate" the integrity of the country and a week later, the Korean foreign minister replied that the terms and clauses of the agreements should not be considered as in any way restraining the freedom of action which the Korean Government possessed as an independent state.<sup>311</sup>

Despite the Korean Government's official announcement consenting to the agreements between Russia and Japan and acknowledging their good will to maintain the independence of the state, the existence of the secret agreements enraged Kojong and Korean ministers. Waeber argued in defence of his action that the agreement had successfully reduced the number of Japanese troops in Korea from 3,500 to 1,000 and stipulated that at least 200 of 1,000 should be military policemen instead of soldiers.<sup>312</sup> However, it was also undeniably true that the agreement stipulated the despatch of Russian troops into the country, which could pose additional threat upon the Korean Government in favour of the Russian Government.

Since then, Russia, once a friend of Korea, became a potential threat to the country and the foreign policy of the Korean Government was also adjusted accordingly. The Korean Government started to look for a new foreign Power who would check the penetration of Japan and Russia since both countries had now become "two evils".<sup>313</sup> In March 1897, immediately after Kojong's return to the palace, it was Great Britain whose support the Korean Government wanted to have. Kojong believed

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<sup>310</sup> Joon-Hwa Hong, *Agwan Pachŏn'gi Daero Chagwan Yochŏng gwa Rosia ui Taedo'* [Request for Russian Loan during Kojong's Asylum at the Russian Legation and Russia's Response], *Sachong* 60 (2005), 149-169 (160-161).

<sup>311</sup> Katō to the Corean Minister for Foreign Affairs, Seoul, 2 March 1897, FO 405/73.; The Corean minister for Foreign Affairs to Katō, Seoul, 9 March 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>312</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, Seoul, 10 March 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>313</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, Seoul, 10 March 1897, FO 405/73.

that Great Britain was “amongst the first to open up intercourse with his kingdom and whose political and commercial interests in the peninsula gave her a claim to a voice in Korean affairs”.<sup>314</sup>

Therefore, on 28 March, when British Minister in Beijing Claude MacDonald visited Seoul and had an audience with Kojong, he revealed his hope for MacDonald to report to London his willingness to obtain Britain’s sympathy and support for the continuing independence of the country. Kojong also asked if the British Government would be interested in making an appeal to other Great Powers for an international guarantee that would secure the position of Korea as an independent state.<sup>315</sup> Kojong’s suggestion seemed similar to Britain’s proposal for an international guarantee to neutralise the Korean Peninsula, which had been already suggested by Salisbury to the Japanese Government in April 1896, a month before the signing of Waeber-Komura memorandum that had stipulated mutual agreements between Russia and Japan regarding Korea. Even though London had once considered the international guarantee of the country independence, the neutralisation of Korea was not actively pushed forward by the British Government due to lack of preparation and Britain’s reluctance to interfere with Korean affairs, which might eventually result in an international conflict against other parties concerned. Jordan still believed that the Korean Government was expecting to secure an international guarantee for the independence of Korea, to which he believed that it would be “premature, and perhaps unwise, to attach much importance”. Amongst many difficulties, Jordan especially mentioned “the incapacity of the Koreans themselves for self-government”, which he thought to be the foundation of the country’s independence.<sup>316</sup>

MacDonald, who shared the same point of view as Jordan’s, assured that the British Government had the greatest interest in the maintenance of the integrity of Korea, but he carefully declined that London would take such an action as securing an international guarantee. MacDonald emphasised that no foreign power would strive to threaten the independence of Korea if Kojong kept reforming and improving the administration of the country and show the world that “his kingdom was being governed on progressive lines”.<sup>317</sup> MacDonald ensured that Kojong might depend on Britain’s friendly sympathy and goodwill if he continued to benefit his people by running a “stable and progressive government”. MacDonald’s opinion on Kojong’s suggestion for the international guarantee of Korean independence indicates that from the British perspective Korea had not reached a level to self-govern, which was the crucial foundation of Britain’s Korea policy, and believed that any form of international

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<sup>314</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury, 30 March 1897FO 405/73.

<sup>315</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury, 30 March 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>316</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 10 March 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>317</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury, 30 March 1897, FO 405/73.



guarantee would be pointless if the state was too weak to resist other foreign powers' offers and threats.

A conversation between MacDonald and Japanese Minister in Seoul Katō Masuo on the next day also provides additional understanding of Britain's Korea policy. During his conversation, MacDonald admitted that commercial rivalry existed between British and Japanese merchants in the Korean market since both countries shared the foreign trade of Korea. Despite the existing commercial rivalry, MacDonald and Katō agreed that two governments were equally interested in the maintenance of the independence of Korea for the foreign trade. They also consented that both governments were expecting Korea to establish and maintain a stable administration that would "enable the country to gradually work out its own development".<sup>318</sup> MacDonald particularly underlined that "British influence", which indicates the role of McLeavy Brown, had successfully improved the financial administration of the country and empowered it to strengthen its independence in reality.<sup>319</sup> Katō disagreed with MacDonald's opinion that British stance towards Japan had been very friendly. It is possibly because of Britain's hesitation and reluctance to support Japan's position in previous international events, including the Triple Intervention of 1895 and Russo-Japanese agreements regarding Korea in 1896. However, apart from them, Katō acknowledged that both governments shared the same interests and that British influence played a positive role in the maintenance of the independence of Korea.

MacDonald's conversations with Kojong and Katō clearly demonstrated the key elements of Britain's Korea policy: the maintenance of Korean independence was desirable for Britain's interests in the country and it would be achieved by establishing a stable, progressive and self-governing administration. They were the main principles of their Korea policy since the end of the Sino-Japanese War of 1895. However, as of March 1897, there are two points worth noting. Firstly, British national McLeavy Brown was employed by the Korean Government as a financial advisor and assumed full control over the Korean treasury. Thanks to his successful management, the financial condition of the country was significantly improved, which was very advantageous to run a stable government and to enhance the independence of the country that would be also helpful for British interests in Korea.

Secondly, British and Japanese representatives recognised that both governments shared the same interests in the country. Since the end of the Sino-Japanese War, Britain and Japan shared a similar strategic interest in Korea, which was to balance off Russian influence from the Korean

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<sup>318</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury, 30 March 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>319</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury, 30 March 1897, FO 405/73.

peninsula. However, when Korean Queen Min was murdered by Japanese assassins, British representatives accused the Japanese Government of seriously undermining the integrity of Korea. Moreover, when Japan was overwhelmed by a steep increase of Russian influence, which had been encouraged by Kojong's flight to the Russian Legation in February 1896, Japan was forced to have bilateral negotiations with Russia regarding Korean questions because of Britain's reluctance to interfere with it. However, by this point, Japan's stance on Korea policy became closer to that of Britain: the maintenance of Korean independence by reforming the Korean Government in a progressive way.

#### 4. Russia's Attempt to Reduce British Influence in the Korean Government: The Case of McLeavy Brown

John McLeavy Brown, the chief of the Korean Customs and a financial advisor for the Korean Government, was a significant figure for the maintenance of British interests in the country. Since he was authorised by Kojong to assume full control over the financial administration of the Government in the early 1896, McLeavy Brown effectively controlled the expenditures of the government and introduced new taxes on luxury goods. Thus, in his first year, McLeavy Brown successfully managed to achieve a surplus revenue income and placed the financial administration in a more stable position.<sup>320</sup>

Sound financial condition was crucial for the establishment of a stable government, which Britain believed was key principle for the maintenance of Korean independence. Moreover, McLeavy Brown took advantage of his position as the controller of the Korean finance and provided important advices for British interests. For instance, when foreign firms were attempting to acquire railway concessions connecting Seoul to various important cities in the country, McLeavy Brown urged British Consul-General Hillier to join in the scramble for railway concessions and suggested to demand a railway concession from Seoul to Mokpo, a port town at the southwest end of the peninsula closely located to the country's most fertile area, on the basis that the treaty port would be open to foreign trade shortly and Britain would certainly obtain the railway concession.<sup>321</sup>

However, despite his remarkable achievements, McLeavy Brown's position in the Korean Government soon faced a serious challenge from the Russian side, which had stemmed from the

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<sup>320</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 10 April 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>321</sup> Hillier to MacDonald, 1 July 1896, FO 405/72.

question of Russia's military scheme. In the early 1897, Colonel Putiata proposed a re-organisation of 6,000 Korean troops under the charge of 160 Russian military officers, which was approved by Waeber and Russian War Minister Petr Semenovich Vannovskii. The scheme aimed to eventually drill 40,000 Korean soldiers over next three years.<sup>322</sup> This re-organisation scheme was in a very large scale and very different to the Russian Government's reluctant attitude towards the Korean Government's request for military officers and guard for the protection of the Korean King during Min's special mission to the coronation ceremony in 1896, The complete change of Russia's military mission policy emanated from the change of situations in Manchuria. Russia's request to the Chinese Government for the construction of railways in Southern Manchuria was continuously rejected by Li Hong-Zhang, who believed that it would be an immense threat to the integrity of China if Russia was granted the railway concessions that would connect Port Arthur to their Trans-Siberian Railways.<sup>323</sup> Therefore, Russia turned their eyes back to Korea and took more assertive policies to strengthen their position in the country.

On 25 April, Japanese minister Katō noticed that Russian chargé d'affaires Waeber had made a proposal to the Korean Government, for the employment of 160 Russian military officials in relation to the reorganisation of the Korean army and visited the British Consulate-General to discuss with Jordan about the matter. Katō revealed his concern about the serious consequences of the re-organisation of the Korean army on such a large scale and asked to Jordan if he would be interested in joining in his appeal against the Korean Government for stopping the introduction of the scheme. Jordan, who personally believed that such a huge scheme of military re-organisation was "unnecessary and not warranted by the present financial condition of the country", declined to take a joint action with the Japanese minister because the matter should be discussed between Russia and Japan in accordance with the Lobanov-Yamagata protocol.<sup>324</sup>

Having been rejected by the British consulate-general, Katō had an audience with Kojong on 26 April and urged the King to refuse the Russian re-organisation offer even by giving him an example of a Japanese-drilled Korean force, which was established with small help from foreign officers and seriously threatened the safety of the Korean King. Kojong said that he was incapable of rejecting the great pressure posed by the Russian chargé d'affaires upon him. Despite Katō's assurance that his government would take full responsibility if Kojong refused the Russian scheme, Kojong still denied

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<sup>322</sup> Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue*, p. 656.

<sup>323</sup> Lee, *Myōngsōng Hwanghu Sihae wa Agwan P'ach'ōn*, [Murder of Queen Min and Kojong's Flight to the Russian Legation], pp. 204-208.

<sup>324</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, Seoul, 27 April 1897, FO 405/73.

taking an action to reject the Russian offer and instead told him that he would leave it to the decision of the Korean Cabinet.<sup>325</sup>

The Korean Cabinet failed to consent to the acceptance of the Russian military re-organisation offer because majority of the Cabinet opposed against the Russian proposal. Despite the Cabinet's general opinion, Shim Sang-Hoon, the Finance Minister and acting War Minister with his well-known pro-Russian inclinations, did not reject the Russian offer with the employment of 160 officers but suggested a compromise with the engagement of three officers, ten non-commissioned officers, one doctor, one saddler and three musicians. However, Katō declined the compromised offer from Acting War Minister Shim and argued that the matter should be duly discussed between the Russian and Japanese Governments, whereas Waeber warned the Korean Government that the Russian Legation would stop providing military protection for the stability of the Korean politics if the proposal was rejected.<sup>326</sup>

In the end, Kojong approved the Russian re-organisation in a modified form and thus Acting War Minister Shim wrote to Waeber that the Korean Government would be interested in the engagement of 21 Russian officers and civilians about the re-organisation of the Korean army.<sup>327</sup> Waeber replied to Shim that he would hand over the application to the Russian Government.<sup>328</sup> In response to Katō's continuous objections that the introduction of the Russian re-organisation scheme would violate the Lobanov-Yamagata protocol, the Russian Government assured Tokyo that any action regarding Russian instructors would not be taken until the arrival of Roman Romanovich Rosen, the newly appointed Russian chargé d'affaires to Japan, in Tokyo.<sup>329</sup>

It is worth noting that Shim's letter had not been delivered via the hands of Korean Foreign Minister Yi Wan-Yong, who was the leader of the Cabinet members against the Russian military scheme. Yi was very unhappy with Kojong's approval of the engagement of Russian instructors and upset with the way Acting War Minister Shim had delivered his letter without consulting him.<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 27 April 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>326</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 7 May 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>327</sup> The Korean Government requested three officers; ten non-commissioned officers; one youth instructor; one saddler, one military band conductor; three musicians; and two medics. Park, *Rōshia kungnim munsō pogwanso sojang han'gung kwallyŏn munsō yoyakchip [The Summary of Korea-Related Documents at the Russian National Archives]* (Seoul, 2002), pp. 93-94.

<sup>328</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, Seoul, 12 May 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>329</sup> Lowther to Salisbury, Tokyo, 13 May 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>330</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, Seoul, 12 May 1897, FO 405/73.

Foreign Minister Yi even revealed his willingness to resign from his current position, which Kojong declined to accept it.<sup>331</sup>

Kojong's approval of the Russian military scheme seems inconsistent with the sudden change of his attitude towards Russians immediately after the release of the Russo-Japanese agreements regarding Korean affairs. However, it should be noted that Kojong was very reluctant to accept the original plan including 160 Russian officers and he only accepted the offer when the number of Russians was reduced to 21. Meanwhile, he also refused to reduce the voice of the anti-Russian cabinet members. Since Kojong relied upon a Russian-drilled palace guard, they were probably Kojong's limited manoeuvres to check the increase of Russian influence as much as possible.

Despite the Russian Government's assurance that the matter would be only discussed after the arrival of the new Russian chargé d'affaires to Japan in Tokyo. However, everything changed when a dozen of Russian officers and non-commissioned officers landed at Chemulpo on 27 July 1897, before the arrival of the Russian chargé d'affaires to Japan. The thirteen Russian instructors were believed to drill 3,000 Korean soldiers. Adding 1,000 men of the palace guard, who had been already re-organised by Russian instructors, 4,000 Korean troops in total would be placed under the charge of Russian officers and non-commissioned officers. Katō reminded Waeber of the promise made by the Russian Government that the deployment of the instructors would not be undertaken until the arrival of the new Russian chargé d'affaires but Waeber argued that the Russian instructors were invited by the Korean Government as an independent state, who "had a perfect right to make a selection for the purpose from any nationality it pleased".<sup>332</sup>

Russia's unilateral decision to send a group of Russian officers to the Korean Government also seemed to have been linked to Colonel Putiata's tour of inspection along the Korean coast with an intention to choose some available places to build the forts. Although the Korean Government refused to offer a lease of a governmental steamer for his tour and the Russian military mission subsequently suspended the proceeding of the tour for now, the British representative in Seoul started to fear that the actual objective of Russia's Korea policy was to construct the fortification of the Korean coast for the use of Russians. Jordan was particularly worried because the Korean authorities were heavily reliant on the suggestion of Russian military mission.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> 11 May 1897, *Sŭngjŏngwŏnilgi*, vol. 139.

<sup>332</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 2 August 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>333</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 10 August 1897, FO 405/73.

Furthermore, Russia attempted to remove McLeavy Brown from the position of financial advisor and appoint a new Russian advisor to the job. On 12 June 1897, Mikhail Nikolaevich Muraviev, the Russian Foreign Minister, already instructed the Russian legation in Seoul to ensure Kir Alekseevich Alekseev to be appointed as a financial advisor in the Korean Government.<sup>334</sup> On 9 August, McLeavy Brown received a message from Kojong and noticed that Alekseev, a relative of the wife of Russian chargé d'affaires Waeber, would assume the control over the Korean Treasury. Jordan also worried that Finance Minister Shim Sang-Hoon, who was the official chief of McLeavy Brown, was the main figure who propelled the acceptance of the Russian military re-organisation and believed that Shim would try to replace McLeavy Brown for the interest of the Russian side in the near future.<sup>335</sup> Kojong told Jordan that he personally had no intention to discharge McLeavy Brown because of his outstanding achievements but Jordan warned Kojong that the British Government would resent if McLeavy Brown's position was interfered by any chance.<sup>336</sup>

Therefore, when Alekseev arrived in Seoul and was introduced as financial advisor by Alexey Speyer, the new Russian chargé d'affaires to Korea, to Kojong on 6 October 1897, Jordan reported to British Minister to China Claude MacDonald that McLeavy Brown's position was being seriously threatened and that "such removal would very seriously affect British interests".<sup>337</sup> London immediately authorised MacDonald to instruct Jordan to "warn the King that Her Majesty's Government would be seriously displeased if Mr. Brown were to be so removed".<sup>338</sup> Speyer argued that the new Russian financial advisor was appointed in response to the request of the Korean Government, which had been made during Min Yong-Hwan's visit to the coronation of the Russian tsar in 1896, as an independent state.<sup>339</sup>

Jordan believed that "no success will attend any opposition to the scheme"<sup>340</sup> but he requested for an audience with Kojong to warn about the discharge of McLeavy Brown, which was consistently rejected by Korean Foreign Minister Cho Byung-Shik. In his conversation with Jordan, Foreign Minister Cho admitted that the Korean Government was in a very difficult situation between having McLeavy

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<sup>334</sup> Park, *Rosia Kungnip Munso Pogwanso Sojang Han'guk Kwallyon Munso Yoyakchip [The Summary of Korea-Related Documents at the Russian National Archives]*, (Seoul, 2002), p. 148.

<sup>335</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 10 August 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>336</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 10 August 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>337</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury, 5 October 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>338</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury, 5 October 1897 FO 405/73.; Salisbury to MacDonald, 6 October 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>339</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury, 7 October 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>340</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury, 7 October 1897, FO 405/73.

Brown, “whom they could not well dispense”, and having Alekseev, “whom they could not refuse to accept”.<sup>341</sup> Jordan asserted that the Korean Government was free to appoint Alekseev in any appropriate position if it would not interfere with the position of McLeavy Brown. However, it was clearly unacceptable to the Russian side, who were willing to affiliate the Korean financial administration to that of the Russian Government.<sup>342</sup>

The appointment of Alekseev was not made by the Korean Government until the beginning of November 1897 and Jordan believed that the delay was caused by a confrontation between the Korean Foreign Office, who were backed by Kojong and the Russian Legation, and the Finance Department, who had been successfully managed by McLeavy Brown.<sup>343</sup> Kojong’s support for the Foreign Office, who were pushing forward the replacement of McLeavy Brown, seemed inconsistent with his previous conversation with Jordan, where he revealed his intention not to dispense McLeavy Brown from the current position. However, when Jordan had an audience with Kojong on 26 October 1897, Kojong admitted that he had been in an unprotected situation when he had agreed to several requests from the Russian Government.<sup>344</sup> For instance, on 25 October, only a day before Jordan’s audience with Kojong, Speyer visit the Korean palace and warned Kojong that he would mobilise the palace guard and lock down the palace gates unless Kojong complied with the replacement of McLeavy Brown.<sup>345</sup>

Kojong even secretly advised Jordan to avoid the termination of McLeavy Brown’s contract by refusing to accept any letter stipulating it to the writer. Jordan followed Kojong’s advice and returned the letter to the Korean Foreign Minister when he found it on his way back to the British Consulate-General after his audience with Kojong.<sup>346</sup> Meanwhile, London also instructed British Ambassador to Russia Sir Edward Goschen in St. Petersburg to ask to the Russian Government a question regarding the pressure imposed upon the Korean Government by the Russian chargé d’affaires to dispense McLeavy Brown on 27 October.<sup>347</sup> In his conversation with Alexander Konstantovitch Basily, the head of the Asiatic Department of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Goschen was told that the Russian financial expert had been sent at the invitation of the Korean Government but Basily denied that his

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<sup>341</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 10 October 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>342</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 10 October 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>343</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 24 October 1897, FO 405/73,

<sup>344</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 27 October 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>345</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 26 October 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>346</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 27 October 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>347</sup> Salisbury to Goschen, 27 October 1897, FO 405/73.

department had never instructed to obtain the dismissal of McLeavy Brown.<sup>348</sup> Thus, Goschen told him that Russian representative in Seoul had clearly misinterpreted Basily's instruction if what he said were true and then asked if Basily would instruct Speyer by telegraph to suspend further action to dismiss McLeavy Brown. Goschen did not believe that Basily would take such a measure but he hoped that the record of Basily's language regarding the matter might be useful for Jordan to make an appeal to Speyer as well as to the Korean Government.<sup>349</sup>

It is uncertain if the Russian government did not instruct Russian chargé d'affaires Speyer to repel McLeavy Brown from the Finance Department. However, Basily's statement was consistent with Waeber's suggestion to the Russian Foreign Ministry that it would be advisable to appoint Alekseev as a foreign advisor of the Household Office, not of the Treasury.<sup>350</sup> Furthermore, Alekseev also privately admitted that he had not come to Korea to succeed McLeavy Brown.<sup>351</sup> However, since Speyer, who had successfully helped Kojong leave for the Russian legation in 1896, was appointed as the Russian chargé d'affaires to Korea only a month before the arrival of Alekseev and vigorously pushed forward the conclusion of his contract, it seems likely that the Russian government was at least prepared to tolerate Speyer's active attempts to take over the control of the finance of the Korean Government.<sup>352</sup>

However, despite Jordan's efforts to defend the position of McLeavy Brown, Korean Foreign Minister Cho Byung-Sik and Russian chargé d'affaires Speyer signed a contract for the engagement of Alekseev on 6 November 1897. According to the terms of the contract, Alekseev was authorised to assume the absolute control of the Korean Maritime Customs and the financial administration of the Korean Government.<sup>353</sup> This contract was eventually approved by Kojong and announced via the Gazette on 16 November.<sup>354</sup> Although Alekseev's contract had been officially approved and he had been empowered to take the charge of the country's finance, McLeavy Brown was still not officially dismissed from his position, which seemed to be the least action Kojong could take for now. However,

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<sup>348</sup> Goschen to Salisbury, 30 October 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>349</sup> Goschen to Salisbury, 30 October 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>350</sup> Park, *Rōshia kungnim munsō pogwanso sojang han'gung kwallyōn munsō yoyakchip [The Summary of Korea-Related Documents at the Russian National Archives]* (Seoul, 2002), pp. 370-371.

<sup>351</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury, 14 November 1897, FO 405/73

<sup>352</sup> Lee, *Myōngsōng Hwanghu Sihae wa Agwan P'ach'ōn [Murder of Queen Min and Kojong's Flight to the Russian Legation]*, (Seoul, 1987), 222-223.

<sup>353</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 6 November 1897, FO 405/73; Jordan to Salisbury, 6 November 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>354</sup> 13 November 1897, Vol. 35, *Kojong Silok*.



even if McLeavy Brown still attended his office daily, the Korean staff members were not allowed to make any conversation with him.<sup>355</sup>

British Minister to China and Korea Claude MacDoland was very concerned that the withdrawal of current staff members at the Korean customs would cause a serious damage to British trade.<sup>356</sup> However, on 3 December, MacDonald assumed that the British Government could not make any further effort to support McLeavy Brown's in maintaining his position and asked to London for instructions regarding McLeavy Brown.<sup>357</sup> In response, London replied that further representation to the Russian Government would not be necessary but he urged McLeavy Brown to refuse his resignation and instructed MacDonald to claim a proper compensation for the unilateral termination of his contract.<sup>358</sup> Following this instruction, McLeavy Brown determined to refuse his resignation even though Alekseev frequently suggested that the Korean Government was willing to compensate for his dismissal.<sup>359</sup> Furthermore, McLeavy Brown deliberately delayed to return a large sum of money on the account of Korean custom revenues, which had been deposited in various banks in his name, to buy more time for negotiations between McLeavy Brown and Alekseev for a compromise.<sup>360</sup> As a result, on 21 December, both parties reached an agreement in a modified form, which stipulated that the control of the Korean Customs would be retained by McLeavy Brown but he should act under the supervision and approval of Alekseev in important matters.<sup>361</sup> It also ended the affiliation of the Korean customs to the Chinese customs since Alekseev assumed the right to manage and supervise the Maritime Customs.<sup>362</sup>

It might be Russia's triumph over British presence in the country because British advisor McLeavy Brown lost his right to exclusively control the Korean treasury as well as the Korean maritime customs and he had to allow a Russian chief to supervise his management of the country's finance. However, considering Russia's dominant influence in the country, including a Russian-drilled palace guard and the presence of pro-Russian figures in the Korean Government, which had been in place since Kojong's

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<sup>355</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 17 November 1897, FO 405/80.

<sup>356</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury, 14 November 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>357</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury, 3 December 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>358</sup> Salisbury to MacDonald, 6 December 1897, FO 405/80.

<sup>359</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 9 December 1897, FO 405/80.

<sup>360</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 20 December 1897, FO 405/80.

<sup>361</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury, 22 December 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>362</sup> Park, *Rosia Kungnip Munso Pogwanso Sojang Han'guk Kwallyon Munso Yoyakchip* (Seoul, 2002), p. 149.

refuge at the Russian Legation in 1896, London's response to Russia's attempts to remove McLeavy Brown from his financial advisor position must be praised as a successful manoeuvre to defend British influence and their interest in the country.

It was especially crucial for Britain to maintain the control of the Korean customs management because of their interest in the trade of Korea. According to Jordan, the export of British cotton products to Korea was remarkably larger than the export of the same goods to Tunis. Therefore, Jordan believed that Britain's commercial interest would be significantly challenged if the control of the Korean customs was assumed by other foreign powers. Particularly, since McLeavy Brown had taken charge of the Korean customs, the import of British cotton goods steeply increased. In 1897, out of a total £516,829 of Korea's import, approximately £300,000 were of British cotton products made in Manchester.<sup>363</sup> He even suspected that the French Legation was secretly supporting the Russian Legation in hope of assuming or co-managing the Korean customs in case if McLeavy Brown was dismissed. He believed that the French Legation would attempt to boost their trade with Korea at the expense of British goods.<sup>364</sup> British missionaries were also very worried about the possible dismissal of McLeavy Brown. They believed that they had enjoyed privileges to establish settlements outside the treaty ports thanks to the tolerance of the Korean authorities, which they believed to have stemmed from McLeavy Brown's successful service in the Korean Government.<sup>365</sup>

It is also important to pay attention to the presence of British warships in the Korean waters between December 1897 and January 1898. It was reported to the Admiralty that nine Russian warships landed at Chemulpo on 2 December.<sup>366</sup> London immediately advised the Admiralty to send an equal number of British warships to Chemulpo and forwarded Lord Salisbury's opinion that the fleet should stay at the port at least for a week or ten days.<sup>367</sup> After several correspondences between the Foreign Office and the Admiralty to count; the exact number of Russian warships at Chemulpo, the Admiralty confirmed that there were six Russian warships as of 17 December and sent seven British warships to confront them.<sup>368</sup> The landing of Russian warships at Chemulpo might be related

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<sup>363</sup> Hyun-Sook Kim, *The Politics of Foreign Advisors in Korea with Special Reference to J. McLeavy Brown*, *The Journal of Korean History* 66 (1989), pp. 103-156 (p. 148).

<sup>364</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, Seoul, 9 December 1897, FO 405/80.

<sup>365</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, Seoul, 23 November 1897, FO 405/80.

<sup>366</sup> Evan MacGregor, Admiralty, to Foreign Office, 6 December 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>367</sup> Foreign Office to Francis Bertie, Admiralty, 8 December 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>368</sup> Foreign Office to Bertie, Admiralty, 14 December 1897, FO 405/73; Evan MacGregor, Admiralty to Foreign Office, 17 December 1897, FO 405/73; Evan MacGregor, Admiralty to Foreign Office, 30 December 1897, FO 405/73.

to the German occupation of Jiaozhou on 14 November 1897 and Russia's counteraction in accordance with the Russo-Chinese alliance of 1896.<sup>369</sup>

However, the Foreign Office obviously saw the presence of Russian warships as an immense threat and sent British warships "with the object of preventing the Korean Government and people from assuming that Russia has any special rights in the waters of that country".<sup>370</sup> When Kojong was so surprised by the presence of such a large number of British warships that he asked if the British naval force had occupied Port Hamilton, Jordan told him that the presence of the British fleet was "intended to manifest and accentuate the interest which the British Government continued to take in the affairs of Korea".<sup>371</sup> Jordan even wished to use the presence of the British fleet to put pressure upon the Russian Legation for the better terms of Alekseev's proposal regarding the position of McLeavy Brown if the information on the approach of the British warships had reached him at least a few hours earlier before signing the modified contract on 17 December.<sup>372</sup> It indicates that at this time Britain was prepared to afford military support if any hostile power was willing to threaten the integrity and independence of the country despite the non-interference principle of their Korea policy.

It is also worth noting that Japan stood on the British side and helped to deal with Russia's attempt to replace McLeavy Brown. Earlier in March 1897, when British minister to China Claude MacDonald visited Seoul, he and Japanese minister Katō Masuo agreed that both governments shared the same interests in the maintenance of Korean independence.<sup>373</sup> When the dismissal of McLeavy Brown was rumoured, Katō told Jordan that the removal of McLeavy Brown from the Korean Government would be "most injurious to the best interests of Korea and to produce the financial collapse and consequent political complications".<sup>374</sup> He also ensured Jordan that the Japanese Government had instructed him to "use every endeavour against the appointment of Alekseev in place of McLeavy Brown".<sup>375</sup> Considering the fact that Britain was reluctant to take a joint action when Japan was appealing against

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<sup>369</sup> Moon-Hyung Choi, *Rōsia ui Namha wa Ilbon ui Hanguk Chimnyak* [Russia's Southward Advance and Japan's Invasion of Korea] (Seoul, 2007), 291-293; Andrew Malozenoff, *Russian Far Eastern policy, 1881-1904, with Special Emphasis on the Causes of the Russo-Japanese War* (Berkeley, 1958), pp. 105-106.

<sup>370</sup> Foreign Office to Admiralty, 8 December 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>371</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 6 January 1898, FO 405/80.

<sup>372</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 6 January 1898, FO 405/80.

<sup>373</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury, 30 March 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>374</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 5 October 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>375</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury, 9 October 1897, FO 405/73.

Russia's military re-organisation scheme, Anglo-Japanese co-operation reached a new level by jointly dealing with Russia's attempt to remove McLeavy Brown.

## Chapter 3: The Russo-Japanese Rivalry in the Empire of Korea, 1898-1900

### The Assumption of Emperor Title by Kojong

On 20 February 1897, after almost a year of asylum at the Russian Legation, Kojong eventually returned to Kyŏngun'gung. Kojong's decision to leave the Russian Legation was made by mainly two reasons. As is discussed in previous chapter, Kojong returned to the royal palace because of his dissatisfaction with Russia's Korea policy. Despite Kojong's request for a wide range of military and economic support for the modernisation of the Korean Government, Russia was reluctant to offer such aids in fear that their obvious actions to interfere with Korean affairs would eventually provoke Japan. Yet, Russia was willing to maximise their influence by the appointment of Russian advisors. Thus, having challenged Japanese influence by his asylum at the Russian Legation, Kojong had to reduce Russian influence upon the Korean Court by removing himself from the Russian Legation. In addition, the Korean public and high-rank officers also demanded the return because Kojong's stay at a foreign establishment was widely seen as a national humiliation and the infringement of Korean independence.

#### Previous Attempts to Proclaim the Status of Emperor

Kojong's return to the royal palace encouraged Koreans to call for a further step towards the independence of Korea by assuming the title of an emperor. Traditionally, the kings of Chosŏn Dynasty respected their tributary status in a relationship with China and recognised it by only using the term 'emperor' for Chinese rulers. However, since Korea signed treaties with foreign powers from 1876, all of which stipulated that 'Korea was an independent state', the assumption of an emperor title started to be discussed. It was mentioned for the first time on 4 December 1884, when Kim Ok-Kyun initiated the Kapshinchŏngbyŏn (Kapsin coup) to overthrow a conservative regime and to subsequently establish a progressive government. Two days after the coup, his party, Kaehwadang (Enlightenment Party), announced fourteen political principles, one of which stipulated

the end of a tributary relationship with Qing China.<sup>376</sup> Kim Ok-Kyun apparently considered the acceptance of emperor title would be an explicit way to achieve it.<sup>377</sup> The question of emperor title also arose as to how the sovereign of Korea should be addressed during the ratification of the Austro-Korean Treaty of 1892.<sup>378</sup>

Apparently, it is 1894 that Kojong and the Korean Court started to seriously consider the adaptation of emperor title. On 29 July, just before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, Japanese Minister Ōtori Keisuke suggested the formal introduction of emperor title.<sup>379</sup> Although Kojong and the Korean court declined the suggestion, later in January 1895, Kojong modified a royal regulation regarding the styles of address and changed the previous form 'Chusang Chŏnha (His/Her Royal Majesty) into 'Taegunju P'yeha (His/Her Imperial Majesty), which should be only used for an emperor.<sup>380</sup> It implicates that both Korea and Japan were interested in establishing an imperial status in Korea at that time even though their objectives might vary.<sup>381</sup>

The change of the title was again discussed on 15 October 1895, right after the Japanese Assassination of Queen Min and the following reshuffle of the Korean Cabinet. Yun Chi-Ho, then Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, described the discussion of the matter in his diary.

*At 4 p.m., a meeting of all the Ministers and Vice Ministers was called in the Cabinet to discuss the advisability of changing the title of 'King' to that of 'Emperor'. Messrs Cho [Hee-Yon], Kwon [Hyung-Jin], Chung [Byung-Ha] advocated the step very strongly. Kwon said that this was absolutely necessary to make the people to realize their independence of China. I told them that while neither Japan nor China would honor Corea an iota more for putting on the imperial title, we would evoke the ridicule of the sensible. The Minister of F.O. [Kim Yun-Sik] and the Prime Minister [Kim Hong-Jip] agreed with me but they dared not oppose the majority – supported the Army Officers [Wu Pom-Son, Yi Tu-Hwang]. Mr. So Kuang Pom made himself a*

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<sup>376</sup> For an account of the Kapsin Coup of 1884, see Harold F. Cook, *Korea's 1884 Incident: Its Background and Kim Ok-Kyun's Elusive Dream* (Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society Korea Branch, 1972) and Eun-Sook Park, *Kapsin chŏngbyŏn Yŏn'gu* (A Study of Kapsin Coup) (Seoul: Yŏksabip'yŏngsa, 2005).

<sup>377</sup> Kwach'ŏn, Korea, *Chuhan Ilbon'gongsagwan Kirok* (The Records of the Japanese Legation Korea, hereafter 'CIK', Katō to Ōkuba, 25 October 1897, No. 71 (Confidential), Vol. 12; Hyŏn Hwang, *Wanyŏk Maech'ŏn yarok* [Historical Records by Hwang Hyŏn] (Seoul: Kyomunsa, 1994), pp. 156-157.

<sup>378</sup> CIK, Katō to Ōkuba, 25 October 1897, No. 71 (Confidential), Vol. 12,.

<sup>379</sup> Hyun Hwang, *Wanyŏk Maech'ŏn yarok* (Seoul: 1994), p.296.

<sup>380</sup> 17 December 1894 (Lunar Calendar), Vol.32, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>381</sup> Min-Won Lee, 'Taehanjegugŭi Sŏngnipkwajŏnggwa Yŏlganggwaŭi Kwan'gye [On the Response of the Foreign Powers to the Establishment of the Taehan Empire]', *Han'guksa Yŏn'gu* [The Journal of Korean History], 64 (1989), pp. 117-145 (pp. 123-124).

*goose by saying that none should assume the title of an Emperor who has no dependencies. The Proposition was carried to receive the sanction of His Majesty at about 6 p.m.*<sup>382</sup>

Yun's diary clearly demonstrates that the change of the royal title was supported and promoted by Korean young officers and pro-Japanese ministers, who had actively involved themselves in the assassination of the queen for the Japanese side. Furthermore, because the Korean Court and Cabinet were under occupation by Japanese troops since the incident, it is obvious that these Korean ministers and officers pushed forward the policy on behalf of Japan.

A correspondence by British Consul-General Hillier hints that the change of the title had been originally planned by the Japanese. Just like the pro-Japanese Korean officers and minister, former Japanese Minister Miura Gorō and the local Japanese newspapers also argued that it would be necessary of "demonstrating to the Korean nation and the world at large the complete independence of Korea and her equality with her two great neighbours".<sup>383</sup> Russian Minister Waeber also confirmed that he had been told by Kojong that some Cabinet ministers in favour of Japan had forced him to approve the proposal.

Waeber strongly opposed to the promotion of the king's status to that of emperor and refused to recognise it as well as any other policies pursued by the current Korean Government, who were clearly under the strong influence of Japan. Although Hillier did not as strongly protest as Waeber did, he shared the same view as Waeber's that the status as King would be sufficient to underline the Korean independence because all European sovereigns whose governments concluded treaties with Korea were designated as 'King' or 'Queen' in the same manner. Hillier pointed out that the abolishment of the title 'King' would be accepted by other European Powers when Qing China and Korea negotiated a new treaty recognising the complete independence of Korea by removing the current title 'Wang', which could be interpreted as a 'Tributary Prince' in Korea's traditional relationship with China.<sup>384</sup>

What particularly concerned Hillier was not the change of the status but a potential threat to Kojong or the Crown Prince, which might be caused during the ceremony of the title announcement. He was aware that the Japanese-drilled Korean guards, under the command of Cho Hee-Yon,

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<sup>382</sup> Chi-Ho Yun, *Yun Chi-Ho Ilgi* 4, pp. 74-75.

<sup>383</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 25 October 1895 (Inclosure 8 in No. 128), FO 405/65.

<sup>384</sup> On the other hand, McLeavy Brown asserted that the emperor title should be not be employed until all other Treaty Powers agreed with the implication. Hillier to O'Connor, 25 October 1895 (Inclosure 8 in No. 128), FO 405/65.

encircled the Council Chamber and stopped ministers from leaving until they agreed with the proclamation of emperor title, which Kojong obviously did not intend to obtain under such circumstances.<sup>385</sup> Furthermore, when it was announced that the ceremony for the announcement would be held without the presence of the Crown Prince, who had been never apart from Kojong in fear of personal safety since the Japanese assassination of Queen Min, Hillier shared the same view with Waeber and American Minister Sill that the ceremony might be exploited by conspirators not only to harm Kojong and the Crown Prince, but also to lead a large gathering to tragic results.<sup>386</sup>

Therefore, they decided to tell Japanese Minister Komura Jutarō to exert his authority, “which he undoubtedly possesses”, upon those pro-Japanese Korean officers in charge of the security of the palace.<sup>387</sup> Komura answered that he had been instructed by the Japanese Government not to recognise the proclamation of the emperor title and assured that he would do everything he could do to prevent the ceremony. As he promised, he had a meeting with Cho Hee-Yon and forced him to abandon the ceremony in excuse of foreign representatives’ disagreement.<sup>388</sup>

Despite what he said, Komura had to discourage the proclamation of emperor title because they could not risk further confrontation against foreign representatives by proceeding with the announcement. It is worth noting that the assumption of emperor title was proposed right after the murder of Queen Min, who had vigorously intervened in political affairs by inviting foreign Powers to balance off Japanese influence. If Japan successfully forced Kojong to accept the emperor title and to subsequently announce Korea’s complete independence from any foreign Power, then the killing of Queen Min could have been justified as an elimination of a threat to the integrity of the nation. However, foreign representatives knew Japan’s engagement in the matter from the very beginning of the incident and thus Japan were unable to disguise the murder as an accident by Japanese-drilled Korean guards.

#### A Road to the Assumption of the Emperor Title, February – September 1897

Discussions over the acceptance of emperor title were resumed in the early 1897, when Kojong left the Russian Legation and returned to Kyōngun’gung palace, and the political circumstances were much favourable for the Korean Court to pursue the proclamation of the emperor title than before.

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<sup>385</sup> Hillier to O’Conor, 25 October 1895 (Inclosure 8 in No. 128), FO 405/65.

<sup>386</sup> Hillier to O’Conor, 27 October 1895 (Inclosure 5 in No. 129), FO 405/65.

<sup>387</sup> Hillier to O’Conor, 27 October 1895 (Inclosure 5 in No. 129), FO 405/65.

<sup>388</sup> Hillier to O’Conor, 27 October 1895 (Inclosure 5 in No. 129), FO 405/65.



One of the most prominent differences was the lack of strong foreign presence surrounding Kojong. Unlike October 1895, when the royal palace was practically seized by pro-Japanese troops and officers and the physical safety of Kojong was insecure, Kojong was relatively free from foreign aggression as of February 1897. His asylum at the Russian Legation not only damaged Japanese influence within the Korean Government, it also led both Russia and Japan to reaching an agreement to solve the current bilateral confrontation over Korea. The Romanov-Yamagata agreement of 1896 stipulated that both Governments should recognise the status quo within the country and that Russia should offer protection to the safety of Kojong if he were to return to the palace in the future. Such conditions enabled Kojong to pursue more independent foreign policies.

It should be also reminded that Kojong had gradually taken several steps towards the complete assumption of the emperor title since 1894. Traditionally in Northeast Asia, the sovereigns of the tributaries of Chinese Empires not only had to address themselves as ‘Wang’ (Kings or Prince), but also they had to use Chinese era names for official records to recognise the suzerainty of a Chinese empire.<sup>389</sup> Therefore, if a tributary attempted to deny Chinese suzerainty and proclaim independence, both Ch’ingje (the self-proclamation of emperor) and Kŏnwŏn (the introduction of an era name) must be conducted. As is already discussed, Kojong changed the form of address of king and changed it into that of emperor, ‘Taegunju P’yeha’ on 12 January 1895 even though he was reluctant to officially take a full title of emperor.<sup>390</sup> Meanwhile, Kojong aimed to abolish the use of Chinese era names after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. On 30 July 1894, Kojong announced the abolition of Chinese era names for official use and introduced a new era name ‘Kaeguk’, where years were numbered from the beginning of Chosŏn Dynasty in 1392.<sup>391</sup> Subsequently, on 30 December 1895, when Kojong abolished the Lunar Calendar as part of his reforms, he introduced a new era name called ‘Kŏnyang (the introduction of the Western Calendar)’ and completed the replacement of Chinese era name with a new Korean era name.

Kojong’s reforms regarding the form of address and the abandonment of Chinese era names clearly show his clear intention to become an emperor as well as his cautious approach to achieve it. Thus, once Kojong left the Russian Legation for Kyŏngun’gung Palace and became less dependent on foreign influence, he eventually planned to raise the status of sovereign by assuming the title of emperor (Ch’ingje) and establishing a new era name for the emperor (Kŏnwŏn). Interestingly, since May 1897, approximately three months after Kojong’s return to the palace, high-ranking officials in

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<sup>389</sup> For an account of the Sinocentric world order, see Key-Hiuk Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order : Korea, Japan and the Chinese Empire, 1860-1882* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1980).

<sup>390</sup> 17 December 1894 (Lunar Calendar), Vol.32, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>391</sup> 28 June 1894 (Lunar Calendar), Vol.31, *Kojong Sillok*.

the Korean Government sent up memorials to the Throne, which called for the official assumption of emperor title. Whenever Kojong received such memorials regarding the title assumption, he officially condemned that such suggestions were “very wrong”.<sup>392</sup>

Kojong’s responses to the memorials seem inconsistent with his subtle yet determined approach towards the assumption of emperor title, which he had shown by modifying the form of address and changing the era name. However, according to Maech’önyarok, it was Kojong that manipulated high-ranking officials to submit those memorials to claim that there was a strong demand from the Korean Government for the assumption of the title of emperor.

*...Since the Year of Ŭlmi (1895), the [Korean] Government understood Kojong’s willingness to become an emperor and thus suggested the assumption of the title to the King. However, other foreign ministers, including those from Russia, France and the United States, said it should not happen and even Japanese Minister Miura Gorō advised the King to wait further for a right moment.*

*Afterwards, since Miura Gorō committed crime [the assassination of Queen Min] and hence left the country, the [Korean] Government again raised an issue and started to prepare a ceremony [for the assumption of the emperor title]. However, other foreign representatives strongly opposed to our plan and the Russian Minister even warned that “Russia would terminate its diplomatic relationship if Korea announced to be an empire”. At that time, Kojong felt threatened but also determined that he would lose face if the title assumption was disturbed at a very close stage to completion. Thus, he secretly advised some loyal officials to continuously send up memorials calling for the title assumption. In that way, he wanted it to look as if he surrendered to other officials’ endless demands against his will.<sup>393</sup>*

The statement is consistent with what had happened since 1894, such as the change of the form of address into that of emperor. Moreover, it is also true that many foreign representatives in Seoul opposed to the Korean Government’s plan to assume the emperor title, especially when the Korean Government was clearly forced by Japan to announce the assumption of the emperor title. Even without Japanese interference, most foreign representatives believed that the assumption would be

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<sup>392</sup> 1 May 1897, Vol.35, *Kojong Sillok*; 9 May 1897, Vol.35, *Kojong Sillok*; 16 May 1897, Vol.35, *Kojong Sillok*; 26 May 1897, Vol.35, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>393</sup> Hyun Hwang, *Wanyŏk Maech’önyarok*, pp. 409-410.

an unnecessary step since their treaties with Korea recognised Kojong as the head of the nation. Thus, as Hwang Hyun argued in his record, Kojong's manipulation of his officials and the following rejections of the memorials aimed to give an impression to foreign ministers that the assumption of emperor title was inevitable due to popular demand.

Although those memorials to the throne were sent up at Kojong's covert requests, they are very useful to understand how Kojong and his officials justified the assumption of emperor title why he was so eager to obtain the title. The most important reason was its significance as a symbol of complete independence. Most of those memorials clearly mentioned the relationship between the independence of the nation and the title of emperor. For instance, Yi Choe-Yong argued in his memorial on 1 May that;

*We are currently living the era of independence thanks to your majesty's great mercy and magnificent achievements. We thus already run an imperial system by royal letters and edicts, but your majesty remains in the status of king. Although King and Emperor are widely used in the same manner these days, in my humble opinion, all servants and subjects believe that there is no other proper title than emperor.*<sup>394</sup>

On 9 May, Kwon Tal-Sop also wrote a memorial to the throne, stating the importance of emperor title to represent the nation's independent status.

*Generally, 'Cha' of 'Chaju (self-reliance)' and 'Tok' of 'Tongnip (independence)' mean that everything is entirely done by one's will without asking to or relying on others. Thus, the sovereign of our independent nation must be addressed an emperor but why is your majesty not stepping up to the grand and precious status of emperor? I am not able to read your majesty's mind but is your majesty hesitating because of what would happen to the nation's dignity?*<sup>395</sup>

On top of that, Kang Mu-Hyong submitted a memorial to the king, which pointed out how different the emperor title was in Northeast Asia that that in the Western hemisphere.

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<sup>394</sup> 1 May 1897, Vol. 35, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>395</sup> 9 May 1897, Vol. 35, *Kojong Sillok*.

Currently, Western Powers use such terms as 'emperor', 'king' or 'president'. Although it is said there is no level of difference amongst those titles, in East Asia, there has always been a hierarchy between emperors and kings.<sup>396</sup>

Previously, Kojong already faced opposition from foreign representatives when the Korean government attempted to introduce an emperor title in October 1895. Western diplomats were sceptical of the title assumption because they thought it would not change the much of Korea's international status.<sup>397</sup> Pro-Western Korean intellectuals, such as Yun Chi-Ho, also believed that becoming an empire would not make Korea more respectable.<sup>398</sup> Kang's memorial clearly aimed to argue against them and justified that the acceptance of emperor title would be still critical in the international politics of East Asia. These memorials show that, unlike Western diplomats and progressive Koreans, Kojong and high-ranking officials were convinced that the independence of Korea could not be achieved without stepping up to the same level as Qing China or Japan in the international politics of East Asia by the emperor title.

While openly rejecting all requests made by high-ranking officials, Kojong started to prepare his government for the assumption of emperor title. On 14 June 1897, Kojong established 'Saryeso', a new office dedicated to study the history of the past in order to introduce a new system suitable for an empire.<sup>399</sup> At the beginning, the office was affiliated to the Home Office and only had three other staff members. However, since 1 July, the office was shifted to the Central Council for the efficiency of the work and added fifteen more staff members, most of whom were moderate Confucian reformers loyal to the Korean King.<sup>400</sup> For instance, Chang Chi-Yon, one of the newly appointed officials who wrote 'Taehanyejön' and 'Hwangnye', introducing new royal regulations and protocols for the emperor and the empire while in office, called for the uprising of the Righteous Army when Queen Min was assassinated in 1895. When Kojong stayed at the Russian Legation in 1896, he took part in writing a memorial to the throne, calling for his immediate return to the royal palace.<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> 26 May 1897, Vol. 35, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>397</sup> Hillier to O'Connor, 25 October 1895 (Inclosure 8 in No. 128), FO 405/65.

<sup>398</sup> Chi-Ho Yun, *Yun Chi-Ho Ilgi* 4, p. 74.

<sup>399</sup> 14 June 1897, Vol. 35, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>400</sup> 27 June 1897, Vol. 35, *Kojong Sillok*; 1 July 1897, Vol. 35, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>401</sup> Young-Woo Han, 'Taehanjegugüi Söngnipkwajönggwa Taeryeüigwe [The Foundation of the Korean Empire and the Royal Protocol of State Ceremony]', *Han'guksaron [The Study of Korean History]*, 45(2001), pp. 193-277 (p. 206).

The assumption of emperor title was accelerated by the appointment of Sim Soon-Taek as the Prime Minister of the State Council on 1 August 1897.<sup>402</sup> Sim Soon-Taek was a well-known moderate Confucian reformer, who once resigned from the State Council when Japan forced Korea to reshuffle the cabinet in favour of the pro-Japanese in 1894. He won Kojong's ultimate confidence and was praised by Kojong as 'the only person who can push ahead with the changes of the royal title and era name'.<sup>403</sup> Once Sim came into office at Kojong's request in the early August of 1897, he took charge of a series of events that would eventually lead to the assumption of the emperor title on 12 October 1897.

Firstly, he was ordered by Kojong to suggest a new era name after having abolished all decrees issued on 15 November 1895, which had stipulated the introduction of era name 'Könyang' and the cut-off of topknot.<sup>404</sup> Sim Soon-Taek brought up two candidates for the new era name, 'Kwangmu (Announcing the strength)' and 'Kyöngdök (Celebrating the King's virtue)', and then Kojong chose the former and officially announced the first year of Kwangmu on 16 August 1897.<sup>405</sup> When the new era name 'Kwangmu' was introduced, Kojong reaffirmed that it was necessary to strengthen the independent status of the nation.

*I will eventually restore the traditional system, uphold the ancestral law and hope to restructure them with my rule. I will establish diplomatic relations with other neighbours for friendship and co-prosperity and establish a foundation for independence. Hence, I modify the laws and regulations by taking current situations into account while referring to the existing ones.*<sup>406</sup>

The introduction of the new era name encouraged discussions about the assumption of emperor title, especially since Kojong held ritual ceremonies for the celebration of the new era name at Won'gudan (the altar for the rite of heaven) on 16 August 1897, the same day as the announcement of 'Kwangmu'. Won'gudan was a building exclusively dedicated to the rite of heaven. It could be only conducted by a 'son of heaven', who was the Chinese emperor in the Sinocentric and Confucian world. Interestingly, by the time the era name 'Kwangmu' was introduced, Won'gudan had not been

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<sup>402</sup> 1 August 1897, Vol. 35, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>403</sup> Hyun Hwang, *Wanyök Maech'önyarok*, p. 406.

<sup>404</sup> 12 August 1897, Vol. 35, *Kojong Sillok*; 13 August 1897, Vol. 35, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>405</sup> 15 August 1897, Vol. 35, *Kojong Sillok*; 16 August 1897, Vol. 35, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>406</sup> 16 August 1897, Vol. 36, *Kojong Sillok*.

officially built yet. The building of Won'gudan was officially approved after the introduction of Kwangmu, when Kim Ju-Hyong first suggested on 21 September 1897 that the current royal facilities were not suitable to host the rite of heaven despite the importance of the ceremony.<sup>407</sup> However, in the past, there were several records that rituals had been occasionally performed by the kings of Chosŏn Dynasty at Won'gudan. For instance, in 1467, King Sejo (1417-1468) prayed at Won'gudan when the Crown Prince was ill for a long time. According to Sejo Sillok, two altars for the rite of heaven existed; one in approximately 40 kilometres south of Hanyang and the other in 40 kilometres north of Hanyang.<sup>408</sup> Therefore, although the Chosŏn royal court did not officially conduct the rite of heaven at Won'gudan every year, it was likely that they had some specific areas or buildings dedicated to serve the heaven and one of these places were the Won'gudan used for the ritual ceremony of the introduction of the era name 'Kwangmu'.<sup>409</sup>

It is also worth noting that it was 12 July 1895 that Kojong had ordered the construction of Won'gudan for the first time, two years before the introduction of 'Kwangmu'<sup>410</sup>. Moreover, in 1896, when Kojong ordered the Royal Household to set up new regulations and protocols for state ceremonies, he mentioned rituals at Won'gudan as well.<sup>411</sup> It is still unclear if the construction of Won'gudan actually started immediately after Kojong had issued the order in 1895 because the original site has not been discovered until now. However, it is very clear that Kojong wanted to establish a new altar for a ritual that could be only allowed to an emperor in the Sinocentric world at that time. It also coincides with the fact that Kojong changed the forms of address within the Korean Court into imperial ones since 1894. More decisively, on 10 August 1897, three days before announcing his intention to introduce a new era name, Kojong awarded the high-ranking staff members of the Royal Household, who supervised the making of vessels and musical instruments for rituals at Won'gudan.<sup>412</sup> These factors indicate that Kojong firmly intended and prepared for the assumption of emperor title before the official declaration of it on 12 October 1897.

#### Kojong's Official Declaration of the Assumption of Emperor Title on 12 October 1897

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<sup>407</sup> 21 September 1897, Vol. 36, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>408</sup> 1 September 1457 (Lunar Calendar), Vol. 9, *Sejo Sillok*.

<sup>409</sup> Y. W. Han, , 'Taehanjegugŭi Sŏngnipkwajŏnggwa Taeryeŭigwe [The Foundation of the Korean Empire and the Royal Protocol of State Ceremony]', pp.209-210.

<sup>410</sup> 20 intercalary May 1895 (Lunar Calendar), Vol. 33, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>411</sup> 24 July 1896, Vol. 34, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>412</sup> 10 August 1897, Vol. 35, *Kojong Sillok*

Once Kojong openly demonstrated his craving for the emperor title by holding a ceremony at Won'gudan, high-ranking officials again submitted memorials to the throne since 25 September 1897. These memorials were continuously brought up to Kojong until 3 October, when he finally approved their proposals and announced he would become an emperor soon. These memorials stated various justifications about the emperor title, but they can be mainly divided into three; international law, Chosŏn's legitimacy as 'the successor of Ming China' and the independent status of the nation.

Firstly, it was the Minister of Agriculture, Commerce and Industry Kwon Chae-Hyong that argued Kojong's assumption of emperor title would not be contradictory to the principles of the international law. In his memorial, Kwon quoted 'Kongbŏp'oet'ong', which was a Chinese translation of '*Das Moderne Völkerrecht der Civilisirten Staaten als Rechtsuch Dargestellt* [The Modern International Law of the Civilised States]' written by Johann Caspar Bluntschli, published in 1868 and translated by William Alexander Parsons Martin. He critically discussed the specific chapters regarding the definition of emperor and argued why the title of emperor would be still desirable for Kojong. He stated that a decision to change a royal title from king to emperor was entirely up to a nation with an example of Russia, whose assumption of emperor title had been unwelcomed but eventually accepted by the international society. Furthermore, Kwon also pointed out that the emperor title should not necessarily require a vast territory or different nations within its boundary if Turkey or Japan, whose territories were relatively limited in comparison with Britain or France, were still able to claim their imperial status to the international society. Also, he argued that, even though 'Kongbŏp'oet'ong' made it clear that an emperor title was not a requirement to be equally treated with other empires, it would be crucial to become an emperor because Korea had been a vessel to the Chinese empire for centuries and such an outdated conception must be challenged.<sup>413</sup>

While Kwon Chae-Hyong's arguments were based on the elements of the international law, the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Yu Ki-Hwan emphasised the origin of the term 'emperor' in Northeast Asia. Yu first pointed out that both king and emperor had been used to address the sovereign of a nation in Chinese history. Then, he argued that Kojong should become an emperor in the same manner as the sovereign of Ming Dynasty had been called because 'Chosŏn's system and civilisations were modelled upon those of Ming China'.<sup>414</sup> He made an interesting comparison

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<sup>413</sup> 25 September 1897, Vol. 36, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>414</sup> 26 September 1897, Vol. 36, *Kojong Sillok*. For an account of Chosŏn's self-identification as 'Sojungjwa (little China)', please see Da-Ham Chong, 'Sadaewa Kyorin'gwa Sojunghwaranŭn T'ŭrŭi Ch'oshiganjŏgin Kŭrigo Ch'ogongganjŏgin Maengnang [The Trans-temporal and Trans-spatial Contexts of "Sadae", "Kyorin", and "Sojunghwa" as the Historical Frameworks of Modern Korean Historiography]', *Han'guksahakpo [The Journal for the Studies of Korean History]*, 42 (2011), pp. 287-323.

between the Korean case and Western cases. He stated that the sovereigns of Germany and Austria became emperors because they claimed to have inherited the legitimacy of the Roman Empire. Then, he concluded that the same principle could be applied to Korea because Qing China and Chosŏn had inherited the legacy of Ming China in Northeast Asia.<sup>415</sup>

The movement of the assumption of emperor title reached at its peak when 716 Confucian scholars and officials, led by the highly respected Kim Jae-Hyon, brought up a memorial to Kojong on 29 September 1897. Due to a large number of signatories, the memorial included a variety of opinions in favour of Kojong's assumption of emperor title, including international law and Chosŏn's alleged legitimacy. On top of that, the memorial emphasised the necessity of an imperial title to underpin the independence of Korea. It stated that various Korean nations in the past, not only such major countries as Shilla, Kokuryo and Paekje, but also even minor nations and neighbours like Songyang, Kaya, Yemaek, Yŏjin and T'amna claimed their sovereigns as kings. The memorial argued the Korean dynasty deserved to become an empire since all those nations had been united into one nation, but it stated that it was Chinese empires that prevented Korea from using an imperial title.<sup>416</sup>

Once Confucian scholars showed their firm support for the assumption of emperor title, Prime Minister Sim Soon-Taek and other ministers of the Korean Government officially called Kojong for becoming an emperor since 30 September 1897.<sup>417</sup> Despite continuous rejections by Kojong, Sim and other ministers vigorously visited Kojong three times on 1 October 1897 and five times on the following day to argue why Kojong should become an emperor.<sup>418</sup> At the same time, on 2 October 1897, even an ordinary citizen named 'Chong Chae-Sung' submitted a memorial calling for becoming an emperor. Since Kojong and Sim Soon-Taek had been preparing for the assumption of emperor title for a very long time, such requests made by the high-ranking officials as well as ordinary citizens aimed to demonstrate that Kojong's assumption of emperor title had gained so huge support from all different classes of the nation that Kojong could not help but accept the demand.

On 3 October 1897, when Sim Soon-Taek again had an audience with Kojong to persuade him into becoming an emperor, Kojong finally agreed with it by saying that "I unwillingly accept it because I cannot eventually refuse the request made by the whole nation".<sup>419</sup> Having once approved it, Kojong issued various orders regarding the assumption of emperor title in a relatively short time. On the same day, Kojong selected 12 October 1897 for his announcement to become an emperor,

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<sup>415</sup> 26 September 1897, Vol. 36, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>416</sup> 29 September 1897, Vol. 36, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>417</sup> 30 September 1897, Vol. 36, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>418</sup> 1 October 1897, Vol. 36, *Kojong Sillok*; 2 October 1897, Vol. 36, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>419</sup> 3 October 1897, Vol. 36, *Kojong Sillok*.



which was only nine days after his approval. On 7 October 1897, Kojong proclaimed the change of the main hall of Kyöngun'gung from Chükchodang to T'aegükchön.<sup>420</sup> On 9 October 1897, Sajikdan, the altar for the rite of soil and grains, was changed into 'Taesa' and 'Taejik' to match the new imperial status. Also, Kojong held a ritual to inform his imperial coronation to heaven and installed the deceased queen as the empress on the same day.<sup>421</sup> On 11 October 1897, Kojong announced that the country would be renamed as 'Teahan' for the following reason.

*“Our country inherited the lands of ‘Samhan (three ancient Korean nations including Chinhan, Mahan and Pyönhan)’ and they were unified into one nation by the mandate of heaven at the beginning of the dynasty. Thus, there is nothing wrong with the name of the country changing into ‘Taehan (Great Han)’. Moreover, other nations often called us ‘Han’ rather than ‘Chosön’. All these signs were meant for today and thus it would not even need an announcement to let the world know the title ‘Taehan’.*<sup>422</sup>

On 12 October 1897, Kojong officially became an emperor and changed the name of the country into the Taehan Empire. Kojong's proclamation included all the justifications of emperor title, which had been continuously mentioned and discussed in previous memorials by various figures. It clearly stated that the country deserved to become an empire because it united all Korean nations into one. He also emphasised that he assumed the emperor title only because “various officials, people, soldiers and merchants called for it with one voice”.<sup>423</sup>

Considering the fact that Kojong cautiously and continuously took measures for the proclamation of emperor since 1894, when the international order of Northeast Asia was challenged by the First Sino-Japanese War, it is noteworthy how thoroughly Kojong planned to become an emperor and raise his nation's profile within the international society. Not only did Kojong wait for the right timing to avoid huge foreign influence, but he also carefully manipulated government officials and Confucian scholars to justify his emperor title. Continuous memorials, brought up by many figures from different backgrounds, provided theoretical backgrounds for the title assumption and demonstrated people's general support for it.

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<sup>420</sup> 7 October 1897, Vol. 36, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>421</sup> 8 October 1897, Vol. 36, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>422</sup> 11 October 1897, Vol. 36, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>423</sup> 13 October 1897, Vol. 36, *Kojong Sillok*.

## British Recognition of Kojong's Proclamation of Becoming an Emperor

The British Consulate-General in Seoul was uninterested in the debates over the emperor title until the early October of 1897, when Kojong finally approved the assumption of emperor title after rejecting a series of memorials. In his correspondence sent on 5 October 1897, Jordan mentioned that the movement had been recently propelled by gaining a larger number of supports in last few days before Kojong's approval. Jordan mentioned two main points regarding the assumption of the title of emperor. Firstly, Jordan saw the question of the emperor title as a domestic issue rather than a diplomatic concern. He argued that the assumption of the title of emperor would not change the independent status of Korea because 'Taegunju', which was the current term of address for the sovereign of Korea, was already recognised by other Powers as the equal counterpart to European sovereigns in treaties. Jordan explained that the assumption of the title of emperor would be a necessary step for Kojong's own people to "emphasise their newly acquired independence".<sup>424</sup>

Secondly, he argued that Kojong's assumption of the title of emperor would only upset Qing China, who had traditionally claimed its suzerainty over Korean dynasties. Jordan clearly mentioned that, although it had been initially planned by the Japanese side in 1895 right after the assassination of Queen Min, Japan was unconcerned about the change of the title because Japan already used the term 'emperor' to describe all other sovereigns while only the Korean sovereign was called 'Taegunju' as was stipulated in their treaty with Korea.<sup>425</sup> British Minister to Japan Gerard Lowther also confirmed that Japan did not take Kojong's action seriously even though Japan had instructed the Japanese Minister in Korea to discourage Kojong from officially becoming an emperor.<sup>426</sup> However, unlike Japan, Jordan believed that the Chinese Emperor would be never willing to see their former vessel proclaiming "a title which he considers so exclusively his own". In fact, since May 1897, when Korean officials started to bring up memorials calling for the assumption of emperor title, Tang Shaoyi, the Qing Chinese Consul-General in Seoul, even reported the movement in detail to Beijing and urged the Qing Government to take any action that could prevent foreign Powers

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<sup>424</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 5 October 1897 (Inclosure 1 in No. 142), FO 405/73.

<sup>425</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 5 October 1897 (Inclosure 1 in No. 142), FO 405/73; CIK, *Katō to Ōkuba*, 25 October 1897, No. 71 (Confidential), Vol. 12.

<sup>426</sup> Lowther to Salisbury, 7 October 1897, FO 405/73.

from recognising Kojong's emperor title.<sup>427</sup> Yet, Jordan stated that Qing China's stubborn attitude was one of the main reasons why Korea decided to take such actions.

Therefore, since the impact of the recognition of Kojong's title assumption would be very limited, the British Government clarified that they would not prevent Jordan from acknowledging the emperor title assumed by Kojong if other foreign representatives in Seoul did the same.<sup>428</sup> On 10 November 1897, within a month from Kojong's assumption of the title of emperor, the Japanese Government officially informed that they would use the term 'emperor', regardless of whether other foreign Powers would recognise or not, because they had used the title to address any overseas sovereign.<sup>429</sup> Afterwards, Jordan obtained the information that, on 18 December 1897, the Russian Czar had sent a congratulatory telegram to Kojong for his assumption of the title of emperor.<sup>430</sup> The Russian recognition was later officially published in the official Gazette and taken as a "special token of friendly feeling on the part of Russia".<sup>431</sup>

Following Japan and Russia, the United States also recognised the assumption of emperor title by using the term in correspondences between the President of the United States and the sovereign of Korea. Therefore, Jordan respected the instruction given by the British Foreign Office to take the action followed by the majority of foreign representatives in Seoul and told Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs Cho Byung-Sik that he would use the new title in his future correspondences with the Korean Government. Jordan only informed him verbally because he was unwilling to implicate any special significance to it.<sup>432</sup> Despite the verbal recognition, Kojong expressed his gratitude to Jordan for recognising the assumption of emperor title. Kojong interpreted it as "the interest which Her Majesty's Government took in Korea" and "a token of their good-will towards himself personally".<sup>433</sup> Since the main objective of Kojong's new title was to mainly assure Korea's new position as a complete independent country in Northeast Asia, Kojong also welcomed Britain's recognition of his new title with pleasure.

Coincidentally, immediately after Britain had recognised Kojong's assumption of the title of emperor, the rank of the British representative in Seoul was promoted from consul-general to minister. On 8 March 1898, John Newell Jordan was officially appointed the British Charge d'affaires

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<sup>427</sup> Koo-Yong Lee, 'Taehanjegugŭi Sŏngnipkwa Yŏlgangŭi Panŭng - Ch'ingjegŏnwŏn Nonŭirŭl Chungshimŭro [The Great Powers' Attitude with reference to the Founding of Taehan Empire], *Kangweong Sahak*, 1 (1985), pp. 75-97. (pp. 88-90)

<sup>428</sup> Foreign Office to Jordan, 30 December 1897, FO 405/73.

<sup>429</sup> CIK, Nish to Katō, 10 November 1897, No. 57, Vol. 12.

<sup>430</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 26 December 1897 (Inclosure in No.10), FO 405/80.

<sup>431</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 4 January 1898 (Inclosure in No. 47), FO 405/80.

<sup>432</sup> Jordan to Foreign Office, 25 February 1898, No. 79, FO 405/80.

<sup>433</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 9 March 1898, No. 83, FO 405/80.

in Korea and he notified the Korean Government on the following day.<sup>434</sup> Due to the timing, the promotion of the rank of the British representative in Korea is sometimes interpreted as one of the measures taken by Britain to acknowledge Kojong's new imperial title. However, the change of the rank was originally considered for a practical reason.

The question of Jordan's diplomatic rank was raised when he found it very difficult to have an audience with Kojong in October 1897. On 6 October 1897, Jordan requested a royal audience to Minister of Foreign Affairs Min Chong-Muk for an "urgent matter".<sup>435</sup> It is the same day that British Minister in Qing China MacDonald was authorised by the Foreign Office to instruct Jordan to warn Kojong that the British Government would be furious if McLeay Brown, the current chief of the Korean Customs and a financial advisor to the Korean Government, were to be sacked.<sup>436</sup> Hence, Jordan's "urgent matter" was very likely to deliver Britain's official objection to the replacement of McLeay Brown with a Russian advisor. Minister Min accepted Jordan's request and informed him that he would see Kojong at five o'clock in the afternoon on 7 October 1897.<sup>437</sup> However, on 7 October, Min Chong-Muk suddenly notified Jordan that Kojong would be unavailable to have an audience with Jordan because he was not feeling well.<sup>438</sup> On 8 October, Jordan once again requested an audience with the Korean King to Min Chong-Muk but on the following day, Min informed him that Kojong would meet him once the King were to be fully recovered.<sup>439</sup> On 12 October 1897, the day when Kojong officially announced the assumption of his new title, Jordan reminded Min of all his requests that had been rejected in last few days and requested a meeting.<sup>440</sup> Jordan wanted to have a private meeting with Kojong after a joint audience with other foreign representatives in Korea, who were to congratulate on Kojong becoming an empire.<sup>441</sup> However, his request was once again denied by Min because Kojong's audience with the Japanese Minister had been unexpectedly prolonged.<sup>442</sup>

Despite all the excuses given by Min Chong-Muk, Jordan was already aware that Kojong was perfectly healthy to meet the United States Minister Horace Allen and the captain of the United

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<sup>434</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 10 March 1898, No. 85, FO 405/80.

<sup>435</sup> Asiatic Research Institute, *Kuhan'gugoegyomunsö [The Diplomatic Documents of the Late Chosŏn]* (Seoul: Korea University, 1965-1973), Jordan to Min Chongmuk, 6 October 1897, *Yŏng'an* [UK Collection] vol. 1.

<sup>436</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury, 5 October 1897, No. 111, FO 405/73; Salisbury to MacDonald, 6 October 1897, No. 112, FO 405/73.

<sup>437</sup> Min Chongmuk to Jordan, 6 October 1897, *Yŏng'an* vol. 1.

<sup>438</sup> Min Chongmuk to Jordan, 7 October 1897, *Yŏng'an* vol. 1.

<sup>439</sup> Jordan to Min Chongmuk, 8 October 1897, *Yŏng'an* vol. 1; Min Chongmuk to Jordan, 9 October 1897, *Yŏng'an* vol. 1.

<sup>440</sup> Jordan to Min Chongmuk, 12 October 1897, *Yŏng'an* vol. 1.

<sup>441</sup> Jordan to Min Chongmuk, 13 October 1897, *Yŏng'an* vol. 1.

<sup>442</sup> Min Chongmuk to Jordan, 13 October 1897, *Yŏng'an* vol. 1.

States' Ship 'Boston' as of 6 October 1897. Additionally, on 7 October 1897, having Jordan's request rejected, Min Chong-Muk reminded that Jordan would only claim an audience with Kojong as a favour due to his rank as a consul general and thus refused to give any definite date for next possible audience with the King.<sup>443</sup> After his attempts to transmit his messages via interpreters also failed due to Russian interferences, he realised that as a consul general, it would be impossible to deliver Britain's opposition to the replacement of McLeavy Brown, which would be disapproved by the Russian side. Although he appealed to Min Chong-Muk that his activities as the British representative in Korea had never been disturbed in last couple of years, London confirmed that audience with the sovereign could not be claimed by a British consul general in accordance with international protocols, unless other foreign consuls were given the same privilege.<sup>444</sup>

It is the moment Britain realised that they would be unable to properly represent British interests in Korea if they kept a consul-general as the highest-ranking diplomat in the country. Previously, the British consul-general in Seoul was generally treated by Kojong as equal as other foreign representatives whose diplomatic ranks were either Chargé D'affaires or Minister Resident. Kojong usually had audiences at the requests of the British Consul-General and even consulted urgent and important issues with them in several occasions, including the Japanese murder of Queen Min or Kojong's asylum to the Russian Legation. His initial decisions regarding British interests in Korea were also respected by the British Minister to Qing China and Korea and the Foreign Office in London, even though they required the former's approval due to diplomatic formality. However, when the Korean Government notified that McLeavy Brown would be removed from his current position as a financial advisor and the Anglo-Russian rivalry became fierce in the early October 1897, Kojong took advantage of the low rank of the British representative to Korea and attempt to avoid a direct confrontation against Britain.

Hence, British Minister in Qing China MacDonald strongly argued that the British representative in Seoul should have the right to request audience of Kojong especially in order to solve the question of the position of McLeavy Brown, which would significantly undermine the British presence in and out of the Korean Government.<sup>445</sup> Salisbury and MacDonald discussed what diplomatic rank should be given to Jordan. Salisbury suggested if the rank of minister resident, the same rank as other foreign representatives from Japan, the United States, Russia and France, should be given to Jordan.<sup>446</sup> MacDonald replied that chargé d'affaires, a lower rank than minister resident, would be

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<sup>443</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 8 October 1897 (Inclosure in No. 83), FO 405/73.

<sup>444</sup> Salisbury to MacDonald, 22 December 1897, No. 170, FO 405/73.

<sup>445</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury, 15 February 1898, No. 32, FO 405/80.

<sup>446</sup> Salisbury to MacDonald, 18 February 1898, No. 33, FO 405/80.

reasonable for the British representative in Korea and recommended that Jordan was qualified to become a chargé d'affaires to Korea.<sup>447</sup> Considering that Britain carefully designed their diplomatic network in Northeast Asia by affiliating their representative in Korea to the minister resident in Qing China, it reflects Britain's cautious and yet practical policy towards Korea because the rank of chargé d'affaires would sufficiently authorise the representative to claim an audience with the sovereign and yet it left a space for a further improvement, depending on the future of Anglo-Korean relations. On 9 March 1898, Jordan duly notified to the Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs that he had been appointed the Chargé d'affaires in Korea. In response, Minister of Foreign Affairs Min Chong-Muk and even Kojong expressed their pleasure and satisfaction to him on the same day.<sup>448</sup>

Because of the coincidental timing, it is sometimes argued that the promotion of the British representative to chargé d'affaires was related to Britain's recognition of the official assumption of Kojong's new title as emperor.<sup>449</sup> It is true that the Korean Government raised the question of the rank of the British representative in October 1897, when they were preparing for the assumption of Kojong's new title and the announcement of the Taehan Empire. If Kojong believed it would be crucial to have a British chargé d'affaires or a minister resident as a gesture to recognise the complete independence of Korea, in the same way as they had expected from the Anglo-Korean Treaty of 1883, then he seems to have successfully taken it as an opportunity to force Britain to replace the rank of the British representative in Korea. Furthermore, since Kojong revealed his "satisfaction" when Jordan informed his appointment as chargé d'affaires, it is possible that to some extent Kojong saw it as Britain's significant step to acknowledge the independence of Korea.

However, at the same time, it should be reminded that the main reason why London decided to change the rank of the British representative in Korea was very practical. Britain did not change an affiliation between British Legation in Qing China and British Consulate in Korea when the First Sino-Japanese War ended with Qing China's humiliating defeat and the Chinese recognition of Korean independence. When the Korean Government under Japanese influence discussed the assumption of Kojong's new title as emperor immediately after the murder of Queen Min in 1895, Britain was still sceptical of the proposed new title because Kojong's current title as 'king' would be sufficient to be recognised by other countries as an equal sovereign. Britain did not appoint a chargé d'affaires

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<sup>447</sup> MacDonald to Salisbury, 19 February 1898, No. 34, FO 405/80; MacDonald to Salisbury, 21 February 1898, No. 36, FO 405/80.

<sup>448</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 10 March 1898, No. 85, FO 405/80.

<sup>449</sup> Min-Won Lee, "Taehanjegugŭi Sŏngnipkwajŏnggwa Yŏlganggwaŭi Kwan'gye [On the Response of the Foreign Powers to the Establishment of the Taehan Empire]", p. 142.

until when British interests in Korea were seriously challenged by external powers and a consul-general was unable to defend those interests.

This gap between Korea and Britain over the questions of the new imperial title and the rank of the British representative shows how much their expectations from each other differed at that time. Kojong's assumption of the new title mainly aimed to redefine Korea's centuries-long tributary relationship with the Chinese Empire and to reclaim their position as a complete independent country in Northeast Asia. To avoid any objection from foreign Powers, Kojong took a very cautious and patient approach for months by building up justifications on why Kojong's new imperial title should be accepted by the international society. Kojong certainly believed that it was a crucial step to obtain the recognition by Great Powers of the independence of Korea through diplomacy. On the other hand, Britain took a remarkably practical approach towards the issues. Although Britain emphasised the importance of the independence of Korea, Britain believed that it would be more urgent to stabilise the financial situations of the Korean Government and eventually modernise them as a small but stable country, which should not be easily fallen into the hands of any hostile Power against Britain. Thus, Britain was even sceptical of Kojong's efforts to ensure diplomatic successes by sending special envoys or maintaining legations overseas. This case sets an example of the fundamental natures of British and Korean policies to each other.

## Russo-Japanese Confrontation over the Lease of Korean Ports, 1897-1900

### Russian Attempt to Lease Chōryōngdo, 1897-1898

Since Russia obtained the Maritime Province in accordance with the Beijing Treaty of 1860, one of Russia's strategic interests in Northeast Asia was an ice-free port in Northeast Asia because Vladivostok, which had been fortified since the mid-1870s, was unavailable to operate a Russian fleet in winter. Therefore, since Korea opened its nation to the external world in 1876, Russia was very much interested in gaining a foothold for its fleet on the Korean Peninsula. Britain, who were fighting against Russian advances towards Central Asia and Northeast Asia, concerned about Russia's territorial design on the Korean Peninsula. Hence, when it was rumoured that Russia and Korea would sign a secret agreement to gain Russia's military support in exchange for the lease of a Korean port and the Anglo-Russian rivalry became fierce in Central Asia after the Panjdeh incident in 1885, Britain seized Kōmundo, located in the south of the Tsushima Strait, to keep a Russian fleet from

Vladivostok in check. Britain withdrew from Kōmundo in 1887, when Russia assured that they would not have any territorial design on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>450</sup>

Despite the agreement, Russia attempted to build a coal depot on Chōryōngdo Island (now Yōngdo) near Pusan in 1897. The strategic importance of Chōryōngdo Island was highly evaluated by foreign Powers as well as the Korean Government. Korea once announced that any purchase by foreigners of land or buildings on Chōryōngdo Island would be prohibited for military purpose in July 1895. However, before long, the Korean Government had to scrap the policy due to opposition from other foreign representatives in Seoul, who argued that the island should not be exclusively occupied and used by the Korean Government.<sup>451</sup>

On 10 April, J. H. Hunt, the first commissioner of the customs in Pusan, reported the arrival of the Russian cruiser 'Mandjour'. The main purpose of their visit was to choose a space near the port, which they intended to use as a drill ground and a place for coal and naval supply depot.<sup>452</sup> On 20 April 1897, Jordan reported it to the British Legation in Beijing.<sup>453</sup> After nearly 4 months, on 16 August 1897, Waeber officially requested the Korean Government to designate a place for a Russian coal depot on Chōryōngdo Island on the grounds that "many men-of-war belonging to the Russian Pacific Squadron are constantly visiting the ports of Korea" and that "it is highly desirable that they should have some place at their disposal in which sufficient coal can be stored for their use".<sup>454</sup> Having once obtained the intelligence of the Russian scheme, Japanese Minister Katō Masuo immediately appealed to the Korean Government and told Jordan his concern regarding the lease of ground on Chōryōngdo Island to Russia.

*... the Japanese Government views with considerable uneasiness the prospect of Russia gaining a foothold on Deer Island (Chōryōngdo Island). Its proximity to Tsushima and its strategic*

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<sup>450</sup> For an account of the British occupation of Kōmundo Island, see Stephen A. Royle, *Anglo-Korean Relations and the Port Hamilton Affair, 1885-1887*, Empires in Perspective (London ; New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017); Deok-kyoo Choi, 'Rōshia Haegunsang Swesūt'ak'op'ūwa Kōmundo Sagōn(1885-1887) [Minister of Russian Navy Admiral I.A.Shestakov and Port Hamilton Incident, 1885-1887]', *Segye Yōksawa Munhwa Yōn'gu [World History and Culture]*, 37 (2015), 59–89; Yung-Chung Kim, 'The Komundo Incident, 1885-1887: An Early Phase in British Korea Relations' in Chong-Hwa Chung and J. E. Hoare (eds), *Korean-British Relations*., pp. 9-38; James E. Hoare, 'Komundo – Port Hamilton', *Asian Affairs* (1986) Vol. 17, pp. 298-308.

<sup>451</sup> CIK, *Inoue to Kim Yunsik*, 17 August 1895, No. 105, Vol. 6.

<sup>452</sup> Hunt to Jordan, 10 April 1897, Inclosure 2 in No. 81, FO 405/73.

<sup>453</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 20 April 1897, Inclosure 1 in No. 81, FO 405/73.

<sup>454</sup> Waeber to Min, 16 August 1897, Inclosure 2 in No. 117, FO 405/73.



*importance in the event of a future war were, he said, considerations to which Japan could not be indifferent.*<sup>455</sup>

It is worth noting that Russia attempted to gain the ground on Chōryōngdo Island when they vigorously exerted influence upon the Korean Government thanks to Kojong's asylum at the Russian Legation. Although Britain did not share the same security concern, at that time British interests in Korea were clearly being challenged by Russia, who aggressively attempted to replace McLeavy Brown with a Russian advisor. Thus, Britain and Japan, together with the United States Minister and the German Consul, took a joint action on this issue and formally opposed to the proposed Russian gaining of a land on Chōryōngdo Island on the grounds that "the concession of the site required by the Russians would absorb the larger and best portion of the ground naturally suited for a future foreign settlement". In response to it, the Korean Government assured that the place designated on Chōryōngdo Island would not be transferred without consulting other foreign representatives.<sup>456</sup> Because of the objection from foreign representatives, the Korean Government declined the Russian request for a site on Chōryōngdo Island and even signed a protocol declaring that any portion of the land for a future foreign settlement would not be given to Russia without a previous understanding between the Korean Government and foreign representatives in Seoul.<sup>457</sup>

Jordan did not clearly understand why the Russian Legation had wanted to announce their failure in obtaining a place on Chōryōngdo Island in such an explicit declaration. However, since the Russian and Anglo-Japanese sides were fiercely confronting against each other over the replacement of Brown at that time, Russia's declaration likely intended to ease tension between the two parties.<sup>458</sup> In spite of the declaration, on 21 January 1898, the Russian warship "Sivoutch" arrived at Pusan and Russia resumed their approach to the Korean Government for the lease of land on Chōryōngdo Island. Jordan reminded Yi To-Chae, the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs who would replace Cho Byung-Sik on 31 January 1898, that any portion of land for a proposed foreign settlement should not be exclusively granted to Russia in accordance with the previous declaration.<sup>459</sup>

Jordan, who had already seen Cho Byung-Sik acting on behalf of the Russian interests, believed that the new foreign minister would not respect the agreement of 1897. However, Yi To-Chae instructed the local authorities not to approve the purchase of the land that had been chosen by the

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<sup>455</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 28 August 1897, Inclosure 1 in No. 117, FO 405/73.

<sup>456</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 20 September 1897, Inclosure 1 in No. 136, FO 405/73.

<sup>457</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 25 September 1897, No. 137, FO 405/73.

<sup>458</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 24 September 1897, Inclosure 1 in No. 137, FO 405/73.

<sup>459</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 26 January 1898, Inclosure 1 in No. 55, FO 405/80.

Russian side but to lease another site to the Russian naval authorities on the same terms as the Japanese coal depot on the island.<sup>460</sup> Yi seemed concerned if such an acquisition of coal depot might lead to the establishment of an exclusive foreign concession. Yi asked Jordan about the nature of the German occupation of Jiaozhou in China, the French and Portuguese concessions in India. While trying to remove his incorrect comprehension, Jordan expressed his view that the Korean Government were obliged to arrange a foreign settlement in a treaty port before separating any land.<sup>461</sup>

Yi To-Chae held a meeting of foreign representatives to discuss the questions of foreign settlements in treaty ports, including Chōryōngdo Island. As Jordan believed the meeting was “evidently intended to block the Russian scheme for the acquisition of a site for a coal depot” on Chōryōngdo Island, the meeting was held without the presence of the Russian and French representatives.<sup>462</sup> While United States Minister Allen Horace and German Consul Ferdinand Krien expressed their dissatisfaction that the Korean Government had not taken their objection to the Russian lease into consideration, Yi To-Chae assured that the Korean Government had not yet decided on anything regarding the proposed lease of an excessively large area on Chōryōngdo Island. Yi To-Chae agreed with Japanese Minister Katō, who suggested that the Korean Government would circulate letters to foreign representatives, stating they were prepared to issue a site for a foreign settlement in Pusan, and then foreign representatives would organise a meeting to consider the offer.<sup>463</sup> Yi To-Chae and other foreign representatives were convinced that Russia would be unable to solely press upon the Korean Government in this way.

However, despite their efforts to prevent Russia from exclusively obtaining the lease on Chōryōngdo Island, Russia managed to obtain the approval of their lease proposal on 25 February. On 16 February, Min Chong-Muk, the Minister of Treasury, was temporarily appointed an acting Foreign Minister while Yi To-Chae was unavailable to conduct his duty because of his illness. Min Chong-Muk was a well-known “Russian partisan”, who actively engaged in the attempted dismissal of McLeavy Brown from his office. Jordan had worried that “the advantage will be taken of the opportunity to have both questions [one about the site for a coal depot on Chōryōngdo Island and the other about the sites of Russian Consulates in Chinampo and Mokpo] settled to the satisfaction of the Russian Legation”.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 30 January 1898, Inclosure 1 in No. 69, FO 405/80.

<sup>461</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 12 February 1898, Inclosure 1 in No. 72, FO 405/80.

<sup>462</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 20 February 1898, Inclosure 1 in No. 75, FO 405/80.

<sup>463</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 20 February 1898, Inclosure 1 in No. 75, FO 405/80.

<sup>464</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 20 February 1898, Inclosure 1 in No. 75, FO 405/80.

While the Japanese and British representatives were unable to take any action towards the question of the lease on Chōryōngdo Island due to the confusion caused by the appointment of the acting Foreign Minister, on 25 February, Min Chong-Muk wrote to the Japanese Minister that the proposed scheme of a foreign settlement on Choryongdo Island was only provisional and required to be confirmed by foreign representatives. He argued that no consensus on the establishment of a foreign settlement had been made due to the absence of the Russian and French representatives in a previous meeting and hence he asserted that “the Korean Government has absolute rights over the land”.<sup>465</sup> Once Min Chong-Muk denounced his predecessor’s proposal for a foreign settlement, which had already been discussed with other foreign representatives, he notified the Russian Chargé d’affaires that the site for a coal depot would be leased to Russia. In his letter to the Russian Legation, he expressed that he was “ashamed that it has not yet been concluded” and that “Korea is on more friendly terms with Russia than with any other country, and therefore I will grant special favours and enter into a still closer relationship”.<sup>466</sup>

On the following day, Japanese Minister Katō contacted all foreign representatives in Seoul and called for a meeting to discuss the matter urgently. In response to Katō’s circular, Russian Chargé d’affaires Alexis de Speyer expressed his understanding that the meeting would be held on the condition that “Russian rights over the ground selected should not be discussed at the conference”.<sup>467</sup> On 28 February, the meeting was held by the representatives of the United States, Japan, France, Germany and Britain, where the Russian Chargé d’affaires did not attend because he was “too busy”. Most of them reached a conclusion that a larger area of a site should be granted to a foreign settlement on Chōryōngdo Island. Katō notified the following to Min Chong-Muk.

*“After the full consideration of the circumstances, (...) it was finally agreed that the proposal of the Foreign Minister [Yi To-Chae] for the allotment of a foreign settlement on the north-eastern part of Deer Island should be accepted, but it was considered that the area of the proposed site, as marked in the plan which accompanied his Excellency’s dispatch, was insufficient to meet the present requirements and provide for the commercial development of the port. The foreign Representatives therefore decided that the Korean Government should be requested to give effect to the obligations imposed upon it by the Treaties concluded with foreign Powers, and to allot on the same scale as*

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<sup>465</sup> Min to Katō, 25 February 1898, Inclosure 2 in No. 87, FO 405/80.

<sup>466</sup> Min to Speyer, 25 February 1898, Inclosure 3 in No. 87, FO 405/80.

<sup>467</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 13 March 1898, Inclosure 1 in No. 87, FO 405/80.

*that recently adopted at Chenampo and Mokpo, an area of 900,000 square metres (225 acres), as the site of a general foreign Settlement on the north-east end of Deer Island.*"<sup>468</sup>

Katō's letter clearly points out that the Korean Government was obliged to allocate a foreign settlement in Pusan, which had been open to foreign trade for several years without any allotted settlement for foreigners, in accordance with the Treaties with Western Powers, regardless of Min Chong-Muk's stance on the matter. Also, they called for the expansion of a foreign settlement to the same scale as others recently granted at the new Treaty ports, which would include the site already occupied by a Japanese coal depot and the other site requested by the Russian Legation for a similar purpose.<sup>469</sup> Although Russian Chargé d'affaires Speyer did not take part in the discussion, he subsequently gave his assent to the decision and made it a formal joint action taken by all foreign representatives in Seoul.

The decision should be seen by Russian and other foreign representatives as a favourable compromise. From the Russian perspective, they managed to gain the ground they had initially demanded for a coal depot without avoiding any further conflicts against other foreign representatives. For other foreign representatives, it was also a successful result because it realised the establishment of the foreign settlement on Chōryōngdo Island, which had already been discussed with Yi To-Chae. Of course, American and British representatives previously appealed to the Korean Government when the Russian Legation had applied for the lease of a site for a coal depot on Chōryōngdo Island in 1897. However, when the Russian Legation resumed their proposal for the lease of the site on Chōryōngdo Island, the United States Minister Horace Allen was unable to take any aggressive action because the United States Government would not oppose to the lease of the grounds to Russia, even though he shared the opinion of the British and Japanese representatives that "nothing should be done until arrangement had been made for the selection and the determination of a suitable settlement area".<sup>470</sup> At that time, Japanese Minister Katō's stance regarding the issue was also unclear and did not intend to actively protest against the Russian scheme because Japan had already occupied a coal depot on the island.<sup>471</sup> Thus, this agreement was the most satisfactory and practical decision for them to make it a part of a foreign settlement.

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<sup>468</sup> Katō to Min, 10 March 1898, Inclosure 5 in No. 87, FO 405/80.

<sup>469</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 13 March 1898, Inclosure 1 in No. 87, FO 405/80.

<sup>470</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 12 February 1898, Inclosure 1 in No. 72, FO 405/80.

<sup>471</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 26 January 1898, Inclosure 1 in No. 55, FO 405/80.

From the British perspective, it was not only the successful containment of Russian penetration into the Korean Peninsula but also the acquisition of a foothold for Britain's commercial activities. When Russian Chargé d'affaires Nikolai G. Matunine, the successor of Speyer, asked Jordan not to offer any opposition to his negotiation with the Korean Government over the lease of the site, Jordan answered the following.

*"I told M. Matunine that I had never offered any opposition to the establishment of a Russian coal depot as such. What had appeared to me and some of my colleagues as objectionable in the Russian proposal was that it would absorb the best part of the only ground which was practically available for a foreign settlement at Fusan, and that the interests of trade had, in my opinion, a prior claim. (...)*

*Fusan might possibly some day become of more commercial importance than it was at present, and the Corean Government was under a Treaty obligation, which it had hitherto neglected to fulfil, of providing a site for a foreign Settlement."<sup>472</sup>*

Matunine expressed his pessimistic view about the future of Pusan by telling Jordan that his contention was "rather theoretical than practical". Matunine argued that British merchants would hardly settle in Pusan and that Masanpo, a port approximately 60 kilometres west of Pusan, would become the focal point even if the trade of southern Korea increased.<sup>473</sup> His remark on the foreign settlement in Pusan must have stemmed from his dissatisfaction with the joint proposal by foreign representatives to make the Russian site included within the foreign settlement. Speyer, his predecessor, once frankly informed the United States and the Japanese representatives that the grounds Russia had demanded at the new Treaty ports were intended not only for a consulate, but also for a goal depot, barracks and other military requirements.<sup>474</sup> However, once it became a part of a foreign settlement, a foreign country's allotment within it should not be used for hostile military purposes. Jordan admitted that his view on the prediction of the commercial development in Pusan might be proven to be correct in the future. At this point, Britain's only commercial interest in Pusan was the import of British goods, which was mainly conducted by Chinese merchants who had a separate settlement of their own.<sup>475</sup> However, in defence of his support for the establishment of the

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<sup>472</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 23 April 1898, No. 106, FO 405/80.

<sup>473</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 23 April 1898, No. 106, FO 405/80.

<sup>474</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 20 February 1898, Inclosure 1 in No. 75, FO 405/80.

<sup>475</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 23 April 1898, No. 106, FO 405/80.

foreign settlement, Jordan argued that he should not assume that British merchants would be never interested in settling in Pusan and pointed out that the first British company was established in Chemulpo, whose reputation was similar to that of Pusan until very recently.

On 29 May 1898, Cho Byung-Sik, who was appointed the Foreign Minister on 15 April 1898, informed all foreign representatives in Seoul that the Korean Government had agreed to the request for the allotment of an area of 900,000 square metres for the foreign settlement, which would be the same scale as those granted at Mokpo and Chinnampo.<sup>476</sup> Russia's attempt to obtain the lease of a site for a coal depot and other military facilities was challenged and stopped by other foreign representatives, especially those of the United States, Japan and Britain. It is also worth noting that how Britain dealt with Russia's penetration into Korea. When Russia attempted to exclusively gain a part of the Korean territory to serve their own purposes, Britain brought up the Treaties that Korea had signed with other foreign Powers to counterargue against Russia as well as to force Korea to respect the Treaty by granting the same privileges as those of Russia. In addition to its political effect, Britain's approach to claim Treaty ports also helped Britain gain a foothold for their commercial activities in the area.

#### The Change of Russia's Korea Policy, 1898

Russia's failed attempt to gain an exclusive area for a coal depot on Chōryōngdo Island exemplified the changes of the international politics of Northeast Asia, which was caused by the German occupation of Jiaozhou in November 1897. Since Germany participated in the Triple Intervention of 1895 to prevent Japan from taking the Liaodong Peninsula, Germany became interested in gaining a port in Northeast Asia in order to operate the Cruise Division for East Asia, which had been created in 1894, without relying upon coal supply provided by Britain and Japan. With support from Knorr Hollmann the Chancellor, Germany made a list of eight possible ports for acquisition. It included Jiaozhou Bay and Wei-hai-wei on the Shantung Peninsula; Amoy Island, which had served as a makeshift base for the German Navy since the 1860s; Swatow between Amoy Island and Hong Kong; Mirs Bay in the north of Hong Kong; Chusan Islands in the south of Shanghai; Montebello Island off the southern coast of Korea; Penghu Islands off the Japanese-occupied Taiwan.<sup>477</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> Cho to Salisbury, 23 April 1898, No. 106, FO 405/80.

<sup>477</sup> Patrick J. Kelly, *Tirpitz: And the Imperial German Navy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), pp. 117-118.

Since the acquisition of other seven ports would be likely to provoke such neighbouring powers as Russia and Japan, Germany chose Jiaozhou Bay as their primary target because other Powers showed less interest in the port. Jiaozhou Bay also had great strategic importance because it was located between Beijing and Shanghai, where Germany would be able to control the traffic between the two major cities. Also, Jiaozhou Bay was on the south coast of the Shantung Peninsula, where German Catholic missionaries mainly resided and operated. Therefore, Jiaozhou Bay would be an ideal place for Germany to protect and support their missionaries in the region.<sup>478</sup> Germany cautiously waited for the right pretext for the occupation of Jiaozhou Bay until 1 November 1897, when two German missionaries, Franz Nies and Richard Heule, were murdered in a small village in southwestern Shandong. Once the news was heard, Germany deployed their squadron and on 14 November, the German fleet entered Jiaozhou Bay.

In response to the German seizure, Qing China invited Russia to directly intervene in order to neutralise Germans in Jiaozhou Bay. In accordance with the secret Russo-Chinese Alliance of 1896, Qing China also offered the temporary seizure of a Chinese port as a countermeasure against the German occupation. Having received the information, Russian Foreign Minister Mikhail N. Muraviev suggested that Russia should occupy either Talienwan or Lüshun on the Liaotung Peninsula. Although the Russian Tsar favoured the occupation of an ice-free port on the Liaotung Peninsula or on the north-western coast of Korea, the Russian Navy preferred the ports on the southern coast of Korea because they believed that it would be more appropriate for their Pacific fleet to operate. Moreover, Russian Finance Minister Sergei Witte argued that Russia should not take any compensation for the occupation of Jiaozhou because Russia had already defended the integrity of China when Japan had claimed the Liaotung Peninsula as part of their reparation from Qing China. Witte believed that it would be an inappropriate move for Russia to take. Since his ministers failed to reach a consensus due to their different, the Tsar decided not to occupy Lüshun at this point.<sup>479</sup>

However, Muraviev believe that this opportunity should not be wasted and hence persuaded the Tsar that Russia must occupy a Chinese port on the Liaotung Peninsula before Britain would do. Thus, the Tsar changed his mind and duly accepted the Chinese invitation on 11 December 1897 and Russian troops arrived in Lüshun on 19 December 1897. Once Russia anchored their squadron at Lüshun, they attempted to strengthen their position in the Liaotung Peninsula by taking advantage of the German occupation of Jiaozhou Bay. On 6 March 1898, Germany successfully obtained the 99-

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<sup>478</sup> George A. Lensen, *Balance of Intrigue: International Rivalry in Korea and Manchuria, 1884-99*, 2 vols (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1986), II, pp. 707-708.

<sup>479</sup> Andrew Malozemoff, *Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, with Special Emphasis on the Causes of the Russo-Japanese War*. (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1958), pp.97-101. For a detailed account, see Lensen, *The Balance of Intrigue*, pp.707-749.

year lease of Jiaozhou Bay in return for an Anglo-German loan to complete the full payment of reparation to Japan, which had been demanded as a consequence of Qing China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5. Russia also insisted that the lease of Lüshun and Talienwan should be granted on the same terms as the German lease. Consequently, on 27 March 1898, Qing China signed an agreement to grant the lease of Lüshun and Talienwan for 25 years and approved that Lüshun would be an exclusive naval port for Russian fleets whereas Talienwan should strictly remain as a trading port open to all other nations. Additionally, Russia was granted the rights to build branch railway lines that would connect the leased territories with the network of the Chinese Eastern Railway Company.<sup>480</sup>

Japan saw the Russian acquisition of the lease of Lüshun on the Liaotung Peninsula as an opportunity to settle the question of Korean affairs with the Russian Government. By the beginning of 1898, Japan already coped with Russia's aggressive policies towards Korea. For instance, then Japanese Minister to Russia Hayashi Gonsuke, mentioned that the Russian attempt to dismiss McLeavy Brown was a very hostile action to place under "the Korean financial administration under the control of a Russian Agent".<sup>481</sup> Thus, since Russia obtained a stronghold in Manchuria, which would be less significant to Japan's interests, then Japanese Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi aimed to reach an agreement based on the so-called 'Man-Kan Kōkan (the Exchange of Manchuria and Korea)', where Japan and Russia would admit each other's special interest to their favoured territories. Russia also realised that they should make a compromise on their Korean policies to ease tension against Japan. After a successful negotiation by the representatives of both Governments, Japanese Foreign Minister Nishi Tokujirō and Russian Minister in Tokyo Roman Rosen signed a protocol on 25 April 1898, which stated the following:

*The Imperial Governments of Japan and Russia definitively recognize the sovereignty and entire independence of Corea, and mutually engage to refrain from all direct interference in the internal affairs of that country.*

*Desiring to avoid every possible cause of misunderstanding in the future, the Imperial Governments of Japan and Russia Mutually engage, in case Corea should apply to Japan or to*

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<sup>480</sup> Ian H. Nish, *The Origins of The Russo-Japanese War* (London: Longman, 1985), pp.42-44. For an account of the German occupation of Jiaozhou Bay and the Russian lease of Lüshun, see Lensen, *The Balance of Intrigue*, pp.750-795.

<sup>481</sup> O'Connor to Salisbury, 5 March 1898, No. 54, FO 405/80.



*Russia for advice and assistance, not to take any measure in the nomination of military instructors and financial advisers, without having previously come to a mutual agreement on the subject.*

*In view of the large development of Japanese commercial and industrial enterprises in Korea as well as the considerable number of Japanese subjects resident in that country, the Imperial Russian Government will not impede the development of the commercial and industrial relations between Japan and Korea.*<sup>482</sup>

The main objective of the Nishi-Rosen Protocol was to prevent either from obtaining dominant influence within the country. However, the protocol mainly recognised Japan's current special interest in Korea and stipulated that Russia should not send any instructors and advisors without a consensus from the Japanese Government. Therefore, it was a successful agreement for Japan to an extent that it enabled Japan to defend their current position in Korea, even though Russia significantly improved their standing in Northeast Asia by gaining the lease of the ports on the Liaotung Peninsula.<sup>483</sup>

While Russia's Korea policy was compromised with Japan by the Nishi-Rosen Protocol, Russia faced a surge of anti-Russian sentiment, led and organised by the Independence Club (*Tongnip'yŏp'oe'* in Korean). The Independence Club was established in 1896 by Soh Jaipil, also known as Philip Jaisohn. He was one of the main conspirators of the Kapsin Coup of 1884, a failed attempt to overthrow the Korean Court and to establish a progressive administration. Immediately after the failure of the coup, Soh Jaipil fled to the United States via Japan for safety in 1885 and eventually gained an American citizenship in 1890. Soh Jaipil was unable to return to Korea until 1895, when a charge of treason against the Korean Court was pardoned by Kojong. Once he came back to Korea in December 1895, he was appointed by Prime Minister Kim Hong-Jip an advisor to the State Council in January 1896. He strongly believed that the enlightenment of the Korean public is the uppermost urgent matter and that a medium between the Korean Government and Korean people would be desperately necessary; for the Korean Government to inform the public of their progressive policies; and for the Korean people to deliver their opinions to the Government. Although the Kim Hong-Jip Cabinet, who initially agreed with the establishment of a newspaper agency, was overthrown after Kojong's flight to the Russian Legation in February 1896, the new administration led by Park Chung-Yang still favoured the idea of a Korean newspaper as a countermeasure against 'Hansŏngshinbo (Seoul Newspaper)', published by Japanese residents in

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<sup>482</sup> Lensen, *The Balance of Intrigue*, p.811.

<sup>483</sup> Nish, *The Origins of The Russo-Japanese War* pp.47-48.

Seoul and sponsored by the Japanese Foreign Ministry.<sup>484</sup> Hence, with governmental subsidies, he launched a newspaper called '*The Independent (Tongnipshinmun)*' on 7 April 1896, which was the first private newspaper in the history of Korea. After its successful launch, Soh Jaipil and his reformist colleagues realised that a political organisation would be necessary to materialise their political agenda. Hence, on 2 July 1896, they established The Independence Club, which mainly aimed to achieve the nation's independence, civil rights and self-strengthening reforms.<sup>485</sup>

At the beginning, *The Independent* took a friendly stance with the Korean Government and focused on interpreting their new policies to the public. However, since August 1897, when Russia pursued their aggressive policies by sending military instructors and financial advisors, *The Independent* started to criticise the Korean Government for allowing the imperialist and expansive policies of foreign Powers without standing against them. In December 1897, when the confrontation between *The Independent* and the Korean Government reached its peak, the newspaper was almost forced to stop publishing.<sup>486</sup>

Jordan also noticed the rise of anti-Russian sentiment and the activities of The Independence Club. On 24 February 1898, Jordan commented on an open memorial that criticised the Korean Government's current reactions to the aggressive policies by a foreign Powers, which obviously implied Russia. In the memorial, signed by 135 prominent members of the Independence Club including former Foreign Minister Yi Wan-Yong, they stated that an independent and sovereign state should; firstly, "not lean upon another nation nor tolerate foreign interference in the national administration"; and secondly, "help itself by adopting a wise policy and enforcing justice throughout the realm".<sup>487</sup> In his report, Jordan explained that the Independence Club approximately had 2,000 members, some of whom were educated in the United States. Although Jordan thought

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<sup>484</sup> Yong-Ha Sin, *Tongnip Hyŏphoe Yŏn'gu : Tongnip Sinmun, Tongnip Hyŏphoe, Manmin Kongdonghoe Ŭi Sasang Kwa Undong [The Studies of the Independence Club: The Independent, The Independence Club and the Ideology and the Movement of the People's Joint Association]* (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1990), pp.10-14. For an account of *Hansŏngshinbo*, see Yong-Gyu Park, 'Kuhanmal Ilbonŭi Ch'imnyakchŏng Őllonhwaltong - H'ansŏngshinbo(1895~1906)Rŭl Chungshimŭro [The Japanese Invasion of Korea and the Press, 1895-1906 - With a Focus on The Hansong Shinbo]', *Han'gugŏllonhak'po [The Korean Journal of Journalism & Communication Studies]*, 1.43 (1998), 149-83.

<sup>485</sup> For an account of the ideological backgrounds of the Independence Club, see Sin, *Tongnip Hyŏphoe Yŏn'gu : Tongnip Sinmun, Tongnip Hyŏphoe, Manmin Kongdonghoe Ŭi Sasang Kwa Undong*, pp.134-247.

<sup>486</sup> Sin divided the development of *The Independent* into four periods; the first period, 4 April – 2 July 1898, before the establishment of *The Independence Club*; the second period, 4 July 1896 – 11 May 1898, when *The Independence* actively supported the activities of the Independence Club; the third period, 12 May 1898 – 30 December 1898, when Yun Ch'ihŏ became the editor-in-chief of *The Independent*; and the fourth period, 1 January 1899 - 4 December 1899, when *The Independent* started to focus on the enlightenment of the public. Sin, *Tongnip Hyŏphoe Yŏn'gu : Tongnip Sinmun, Tongnip Hyŏphoe, Manmin Kongdonghoe Ŭi Sasang Kwa Undong*, pp.40-42.

<sup>487</sup> *The Independent*, 24 February 1898; 22 February 1898, Vol.37, *Kojong Sillok*.

“the language of its spokesmen is occasionally extravagant and even grotesque, and their motive always not above suspicion”, he believed that “a considerable proportion of the signatories of the present Memorial are thoroughly in earnest, and realise most keenly the helpless condition into which their country is gradually drifting”.<sup>488</sup> Jordan saw the memorial as a clear sign that the high-ranking officials and intellectuals correctly understood how aggressive Russia’s recent policies were and yet how weakly Kojong reacted against them.

Jordan also took the attempted assassination of Kim Hong-Niuk, a Korean interpreter at the Russian Legation, as another example of the rise of anti-Russian feeling in Seoul. On 22 February 1898, three assassins attacked Kim Hong-Niuk on the lane between the British Consulate-General and the Russian Legation. He was one of the most influential people in the country and yet hated by the public because of the notorious reputation he had earned by taking advantage of his position as an interpreter for Kojong at the Russian Legation. Jordan also commented that “the only feeling which the incident has produced amongst Koreans [...] is one of almost universal regret that it did not succeed”.<sup>489</sup> Jordan shared a general belief that the attack upon Kim Hong-Niuk had been indirectly encouraged by Kojong, who had been irritated by the Russian Legation via their interpreter.

The anti-Russian movement reached its peak on 10 March 1898, when the Independence Club held their first mass protest in Seoul. Three days before, on 7 March 1898, Speyer sent an ultimatum to the Korean Government and warned their Government would take any necessary measure if the Korean Government would not accept the hiring of Russian military instructors and financial advisor within 24 hours.<sup>490</sup> Speyer believed that Kojong and his Government would eventually accept the Russian requests due to their weakness. However, once the news was heard, the Independence Club saw it as a right opportunity to abandon the Korean Government’s weak stance in face of Russian threats and argued that the Korean Government should decline the Russian offer. With approximately 10,000 people gathered, the first *Manmin'gongdonghoe* (the People’s Joint Association) took place in Jongno, Seoul and they publicly condemned Russia’s aggressive policies including the hiring of Russian advisors, the attempted lease of Chōryōngdo Island and the proposed establishment of the Russo-Korean Bank.<sup>491</sup> Foreign representatives shared a view that “they have

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<sup>488</sup> *Jordan to MacDonald*, 24 February 1898, Inclosure in No. 76, FO 405/80.

<sup>489</sup> *Jordan to MacDonald*, 24 February 1898, Inclosure 1 in No. 77, FO 405/80.

<sup>490</sup> *Speyer to Min Chongmuk*, 7 March 1898, No.997, Vol. 1, *A'an* [Russia Collection].

<sup>491</sup> Sin, *Tongnip Hyōphoe Yōn'gu : Tongnip Sinmun, Tongnip Hyōphoe, Manmin Kongdonghoe Ŭi Sasang Kwa Undong*, pp.297-299.

witnessed no similar outburst of hostility, and that it far exceeds in extent and intensity any demonstration that ever took place against the Japanese".<sup>492</sup>

Having been encouraged by the public support, on 11 March 1898, Foreign Minister Min Chong-muk officially notified the Russian Legation that Kojong and the Korean Government had decided not to employ any Russian military instructors and finance advisors and told them that those Departments would be only run and supervised by Koreans. Min also emphasised that the decision had been made by "the unanimous approval of former Prime Ministers and the Government" and that it reflected "the desire publicly expressed of the people at large", which means the success of The Independence Club's mass protest.<sup>493</sup> Speyer was apparently unprepared to receive such a complete rejection but eventually on 17 March 1898, Speyer agreed that their military instructors and finance advisors would be withdrawn.<sup>494</sup> Soon, only more than just one month after the opening, the Russo-Korean Bank, which had been severely damaged by the withdrawal of the Russian financial advisor, closed permanently on 9 April 1898.<sup>495</sup> Moreover, Speyer was also replaced with Nikolai G. Matunine, who adopted more moderate policies than those of his predecessors Waeber and Speyer. Jordan had an impression that the change by Matunine of Russia's Korea policy was affected by a rumoured Russo-Japanese negotiation over the questions of Korea, which would result in the Nishi-Rosen Protocol of 1898.<sup>496</sup>

Russia's withdrawal of military instructors and finance advisors and the change of Russia's Korea policy were a magnificent victory the Independence Club won. It was significant not only because the imperialist policies of a foreign power were hindered by the people of Korea, but also because it materialised the political power of the Independence Club, which had been used as an instrument against Russia for now, that might eventually challenge Kojong's authority in the future.<sup>497</sup> However Jordan was very sceptical of the decision made by the Korean Government. He particularly criticised the announcement that only Koreans would be employed to run the Departments of War and Finance by saying that it was "largely the outcome of their craze for independence".<sup>498</sup> Jordan evaluated that it was successfully for the country to have 4,000 Korean men of their national military force drilled by Russian instructors and believed that the number

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<sup>492</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 15 March 1898, Inclosure 1 in No. 88, FO 405/80.

<sup>493</sup> Min Chongmuk to Speyer, 12 March 1898, No.1001, Vol. 1, *A'an*.

<sup>494</sup> Speyer to Min Chongmuk, 17 March 1898, No.1002, Vol. 1, *A'an*.

<sup>495</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 9 April 1898, No. 99, FO 405/80, TNA, London, England.

<sup>496</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 29 April 1898, No. 108, FO 405/80, TNA, London, England.

<sup>497</sup> Sin, *Tongnip Hyŏphoe Yŏn'gu : Tongnip Sinmun, Tongnip Hyŏphoe, Manmin Kongdonghoe Ŭi Sasang Kwa Undong*, p.302.; Vipin Chandra, *Imperialism, Resistance, and Reform in Late Nineteenth-Century Korea : Enlightenment and the Independence Club*. (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1988), pp.168-172.

<sup>498</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 21 March 1898, Inclosure 1 in No. 90.

would be sufficient to deal with any domestic disorders. However, Jordan was strongly convinced that Korea's financial administration would revert to "the status of chaos from which they emerged two years ago" without foreign assistance.<sup>499</sup>

Jordan's reaction once again reveals his strong point of view that the independence of Korea should be underpinned by first achieving the modernisation and the stabilisation of the Korean administration. He believed that it would seriously undermine the independence of Korea if the disorganisation of the financial administration eventually caused a possible foreign intervention by any means. However, Jordan's such view also provided a ground to justify the current position of Brown within the Korean Government. Immediately after the withdrawal of Russian advisors, when the question of the re-employment of Brown as a Financial Advisor arose, Jordan argued that Brown should gain some assurance on the permanency of his position, based on his intact contract with the Korean Government.<sup>500</sup>

#### Russia's Attempted Lease of Masanpo and Kōjedo Island, 1899-1900

Russia's Korea policy remained moderate and even quiet while Matutine oversaw the Russian Legation. However, in May 1899, Russia resumed their interest in the idea of leasing a port on the southern coast of Korea, which was triggered by two main reasons. Firstly, the Korean Government announced to open the new Treaty ports of Sōngjin in Hamgyōng-do, Kunsan in Chōlla-do and Masanpo in Kyōngsang-do.<sup>501</sup> The Russian Navy was particularly interested in the possible lease of Masanpo, located in the west of Pusan. Russian admiral Admiral Yevgeni Alekseyev already surveyed Kōjedo Island and nearby ports in 1895 and concluded that Masanpo would be desirable as a naval port.<sup>502</sup> Furthermore, it was only 40 kilometres from Chōryōngdo Island, where Russia attempted to gain a site for their exclusive use of a coal depot and other military facilities but eventually lost to a foreign settlement on the island. Jordan also confirmed that, although its commercial value was doubtful, Masanpo was considered by many naval authorities of various nations as "one of the finest

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<sup>499</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 21 March 1898, Inclosure 1 in No. 90.

<sup>500</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 21 March 1898, Inclosure 1 in No. 90.

<sup>501</sup> Pak Chei Sun to Jordan, 21 March 1899, Inclosure in No. 40, FO 405/88.

<sup>502</sup> Chong-Hyo Park, *Rōshia kungnim munsō pogwanso sojang han'gung kwallyōn munsō yoyakchip [The Summary of Korea-Related Documents at the Russian National Archives]* (Seoul: Korea Foundation, 2002), p. 419.

in the world” because of its uniform depth of water, excellent holding grounds and plenty spaces to anchor up to 60 or 70 warships.<sup>503</sup>

Secondly, Aleksandr Ivanovich Pavlov, the new Russian Chargé d'affaires who replaced Matunine in December 1898, pursued a more aggressive policy than his predecessor. He was the main architect of Russia's expansive policies in Qing China and thus Tokyo was alarmed by the appointment of him as the Russian Chargé d'affaires in Seoul. In his conversation with British Minister in Tokyo Ernest Satow, Japanese Foreign Minister Aoki Shūzō mentioned a report about the resumption of Russian activities, including Russia officers allegedly surveying in the northernmost provinces of Korea without permission from the Korean Government.<sup>504</sup> Jordan at first pointed out Aoki's allegation was based on an “anti-Russian bias” and stated that the events concerned had been caused by other causes than Pavlov's new approaches.<sup>505</sup>

However, once Jordan saw Russia and Japan started to purchase a site for their own consulates within a week from the opening of the harbour, he realised how much importance both countries attached to this port and followed the development of the event.<sup>506</sup> In July 1899, when Stein visited Masampo to purchase the land that had been already selected by Pavlov, he found out that the site had been already purchased by a Japanese national through a Korean employee.<sup>507</sup> While the Korean Government declined to intervene, Japanese Minister Hayashi Gonsuke rejected the transfer of the land purchased by the Japanese on the ground that Russia had not actually obtained any title-deeds for the site.<sup>508</sup>

In response to the Japanese refusal of the transfer of the land, Russia took two different approaches. Firstly, Russia started to look for an alternative outside the Treaty port. In the mid-October of 1899, London and the British Minister in St. Petersburg became aware of the information that Russia had been interested in the lease of Kōjedo Island.<sup>509</sup> The British Admiralty also showed their concern by reporting a Russian article on the Russian attempt to secure a lease of Kōjedo Island.

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<sup>503</sup> *Report by Jordan on a Visit to Masampo, Fusan, and Mokpo*, Inclosure in No. 67, FO 405/88.

<sup>504</sup> *Satow to Salisbury*, 1 April 1899, No. 44, FO 405/88.

<sup>505</sup> *Jordan to Salisbury*, 25 April 1899, No. 47, FO 405/88.

<sup>506</sup> *Jordan to Salisbury*, 15 May 1899, No. 54, FO 405/88.

<sup>507</sup> *Jordan to Salisbury*, 20 July 1899, No. 69, FO 405/88.

<sup>508</sup> *Jordan to Salisbury*, 24 August 1899, No. 79, FO 405/88.

<sup>509</sup> *Salisbury to Satow*, 15 October 1899, No. 81, FO 405/88; *Hardinge to Salisbury*, 14 October 1899, No. 82, FO 405/88.

*... The geographical position of Cargodo [Kojedo] Island is excellent. Situated 50 miles from Takeshiki, and 135 miles from Sassebo [Sasebo] (the two Japanese ports which close the entrance to the gulf and render our position in the Sea of Japan somewhat analogous to that which we occupy in the Baltic and Black Seas), a port in Cargodo would enable us to watch the movements of our neighbour. A sudden sailing away of 10,000 Japanese soldiers in peace time from Fusan, an event quite possible at present, would be made impossible when once an 'eagle's nest' was built in Cargodo. And then Cargodo, being 490 miles from Vladivostok, and 560 miles from Port Arthur, would serve as a link between the chief port in the Pri-Amur district and that in Manchuria.<sup>510</sup>*

Kōjedo Island shared the same strategic values as those of Masanpo due to its proximity to the Treaty port. Therefore, if Russia gained a lease of Kōjedo Island exclusively for their military purposes, the island would provide a foothold for the Russian fleet to operate in the Chinese Seas as well as in the Pacific Ocean, which would impose a great threat upon Japan as well as British territories and dominions in the region.

Secondly, Russia threatened the Korean Government that they would take any necessary measure to safeguard their interests if the Japanese remained in the possession of the land, which Russia claimed that they had selected first.<sup>511</sup> However, the Korean Government maintained their stance that the purchase by the Japanese national of the disputed land was duly made in accordance with the regulations of Treaty ports and pointed out all foreign legations were allowed freely purchase the land owned by Koreans within 10 kilometres from a Treaty port. Korean Foreign Minister Park Che-Sun, thus, declined any responsibility for the transfer of the purchased land.<sup>512</sup>

After failing to gain any support from the Korean Government, Pavlov met Hayashi to discuss the matter at the end of January 1900. In this conversation, Pavlov asserted that the Russian Legation would demand compensation from the Korean Government, which would be in the form of the grant of a site equivalent in value to the site selected by Pavlov and then subsequently purchased by the Japanese. Hayashi answered that he would not give any objection to Pavlov's proposal for compensation on two conditions; that Pavlov's demand should be limited within a radius of 4 kilometres stipulated by the Treaty; and that Russia should not be granted any site on Kōjedo or any other islands in the bay.<sup>513</sup> Also, while Kojong referred the question of the disputed in 'the usual

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<sup>510</sup> Extract from the "*Cronstadt Messenger*" of November 5, 1899, Inclosure in No. 95, FO 405/88.

<sup>511</sup> Kehrberg to Pak Chesun, 13 September 1899, No.1450, Vol. 2, *A'an*; Stein to Pak Chesun, 2 October 1899, No.1454, Vol. 2, *A'an*.

<sup>512</sup> *Pak Chesun to Stein*, 15 September 1899, No.1451, Vol. 2. *A'an*.

<sup>513</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 30 January 1900, No. 31, FO 405/99.

way' to Foreign Minister Min Chong-Muk, Hayashi told him that any land given as a compensation should be strictly used not for military or naval purposes, even though Jordan doubted that the pro-Russian Foreign Minister would oppose Russia's requests.<sup>514</sup>

Interestingly, in the early March 1900, while Russia pressed the Korean Government into granting a site as a compensation for the land that had been purchased by the Japanese, Pavlov accused that it was not Japan but Britain that had actually funded and made the purchased the disputed land. According to Pavlov's source, who claimed to have witnessed the process of the purchase, a British admiral allegedly bought the land by paying with the check in the name of Jordan.<sup>515</sup> Jordan, who thought this accusation was "the most extraordinary one that had ever been brought" to his notice, he assured that no British national had been involved in the alleged purchase of the land because "the British system did not admit of transactions of that kind".<sup>516</sup> Russia's concern over the alleged British engagement stemmed from their experience about the British opposition to their aggressive policies in 1897-8. Aside Japan, it was the British representative that most actively opposed Russia's Korea policies, such as the replacement of Brown and the attempted lease of an exclusive site on Ch'oryŏngdo Island. Speyer once mentioned the British opposition as one of the main reasons why his Korea policies failed, and Jordan also agreed that the presence of a British fleet at Chemulpo "undoubtedly contributed [...] to the reaction against British influence".<sup>517</sup> Thus, Pavlov's friendly attitude towards Jordan stemmed from his anxiety to avoid any serious objection from the British representative and to have good-will in the settlement of the event.<sup>518</sup>

After a Russian squadron had examined Masanpo and its surrounding ports, the Russian Legation made a proposal for the grant of a site on the Ch'ilwon Peninsula near Kōjedo Island, which was still outside a radius of 4 kilometres from Masanpo Treaty port.<sup>519</sup> However, at the end of March 1900, Russia modified their proposal and assured to the Korean Government that his choice of the site would be confined into the 4 kilometre radius of the treaty port. Pavlov explained that he changed their request because he did not fully support the demand of the site outside the designated area of the Treaty port had been made by the Russian Navy and admirals.<sup>520</sup> Russia also gave an assurance that Russia would no longer seek the lease of a site on Kōjedo Island. However, in return for it,

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<sup>514</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 14 February 1900, No. 34, FO 405/99.

<sup>515</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 5 March 1900, No. 36, FO 405/99.

<sup>516</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 5 March 1900, No. 36, FO 405/99.

<sup>517</sup> Jordan to MacDonald, 21 March 1899, Inclosure 1 in No. 90, FO 405/99.

<sup>518</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 19 March 1900, No. 38, FO 405/99. Even while making the accusation of the British participation, Pavlov tried to deliver the message "so quite privately and in a perfect friendly manner". Jordan to Salisbury, 5 March 1900, No. 36, FO 405/99.

<sup>519</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 19 March 1900, No. 38, FO 405/99.

<sup>520</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 29 March 1900, No. 40, FO 405/99.



Pavlov requested demanded a guarantee by the Korean Government that Kōjedo would not be alienated to any other foreign Power in the future. When he was asked by Min Chong-Muk for his opinion regarding the non-alienation of Kōjedo Island, Jordan answered that it would make an unfavourable precedent and provide a ground for a foreign Power to request the reversion of the island.<sup>521</sup>

Pavlov's demands were accepted by the Korean Government and both parties signed two agreements regarding the lease of an exclusive site to Russia and the non-alienation of Kōjedo Island on 30 March 1900. The first agreement about the site of Masanpo contained the six clauses:

- A piece of ground within the 10-*li* [4-kilometre] radius prescribed by Treaty at Masanpo shall be leased by Corea to the Russian Government, either permanently or temporarily, as the latter choose.
- A delegation from the Foreign Office in Seoul and the Russian Consul at the port shall arrange details which shall be embodied in an Agreement.
- Private land of Coreans shall be purchased by the Korean Government.
- Russian Government to enter into possession of Concession after a month from date of settlement arrived at between the Foreign Office Delegate and the Russian Consul.
- When the Russian Government enter into possession, the Corean Government shall be indemnified for their expenses and paid the price of the ground.
- Existing Treaties shall regulate the storage and landing in Concessions of Russian naval supplies.<sup>522</sup>

The second agreement regarding the non-alienation of Kōjedo Island also included the clauses that; “the Russian Government engages never to ask for, in connection with any industrial or commercial enterprises whatsoever on behalf of its subjects or itself, the purchase or lease of any land on Koje Do or neighbouring islands, or on the mainland in the vicinity”; and “the Corean Government enters into a reciprocal engagement never to permit any other Government to buy or lease for similar purposes any ground in the places mentioned”.<sup>523</sup> It was followed by the signing of a protocol between the Russian Vice-Consul and the Korean local authority at Masanpo on 12 April

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<sup>521</sup> *Jordan to Salisbury*, 29 March 1900, No. 40, FO 405/99.

<sup>522</sup> *Gubbins to Salisbury*, 19 May 1900, No. 45, FO 405/99.

<sup>523</sup> *Gubbins to Salisbury*, 19 May 1900, No. 45, FO 405/99.

1900, which an area of 900,000 square metres had been exclusively leased to the Russian Government for a coal depot, a hospital and other purposes.<sup>524</sup>

Jordan was already aware that Russia and Korea had reached an agreement to meet Russia's demand for the lease of a land as a compensation for the Japanese purchase of the designated site. On the other hand, he was uncertain about the existence of the non-alienation clause because there were two contradictory statements; one from Korean Foreign Minister Min Chong-Muk that the question of a guarantee of the non-alienation of Kojedo Island had been excluded during the negotiation; and the other that the Korean Foreign Ministry had already informed the agreement to the Japanese Legation.<sup>525</sup> However, Jordan became fully aware of the agreements, he raised serious strategic concerns regarding the Russian lease of the land. He commented that "Masanpo and its approaches, which constitute by common consent by far the finest harbour in the East, are virtually placed within the exclusive sphere of Russian influence".<sup>526</sup> He also worried that Masanpo, would not only serve as a link between Vladivostok and Lüshun, but also become a much more important naval port due to its strategic significance.

The Parliament also raised concerns when the Russian lease of Masanpo was reported by *The Times* that it would be the violation of Russia's assurance of 1886 that they would not occupy any part of Korea.<sup>527</sup> Many members of the Parliament asked if the Russian lease of the land within Masanpo actually violated any assurance given by Russia in 1886, which became a pretext for Britain to withdraw from the British-occupied Kōmundo Island, also known as Port Hamilton. The members of the Parliament also asked if; any explanation had been made by the Russian Government before their action; and if Russian troops were currently present at Masanpo for the military occupation of the port.<sup>528</sup>

In response, Lord Salisbury clarified the fact that the main objective of the Russian lease of Masanpo was mainly for a coal depot and a naval hospital but mentioned it was still unknown whether Russia would deploy their forces to Masanpo or fortify the leased land. He also pointed out that Masanpo was a Treaty port open to all nations and thus Russia's any naval supply would be supervised by existing Treaties with other foreign Powers. Therefore, he concluded that no exclusive rights were given by the Korean Government to Russia. Also, neither the integrity of Korea nor the

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<sup>524</sup> *Jordan to Salisbury*, 30 April 1900, No. 54, FO 405/99.

<sup>525</sup> *Jordan to Salisbury*, 9 April 1900, No. 48, FO 405/99.

<sup>526</sup> *Jordan to Salisbury*, 1 May 1900, No. 55, FO 405/99.

<sup>527</sup> *The Times*, 17 May 1900.

<sup>528</sup> *Question Asked in the House of Commons*, 21 May 1900, No.46, FO 405/99; *Question Asked in the House of Commons*, 22 May 1900, No.47, FO 405/99; *Question Asked in the House of Commons*, 24 May 1900, No.49, FO 405/99; *Question Asked in the House of Commons*, 28 May 1900, No.51, FO 405/99.

interests of British nationals were affected or damaged by the Russian lease of Masanpo. Regarding the Russian assurance of 1886, Salisbury answered that, technically speaking, the guarantee of the integrity of Korea of 1886 was given not to Britain but to Qing China, who claimed their traditional suzerainty over Korea. Thus, he concluded that it would not be answered until “circumstances arise affecting the rights or interests of Great Britain”.<sup>529</sup>

Salisbury’s answers to the members of the Parliament exemplified Britain’s Korea policy at that time at this time. According to British Minister in Tokyo Ernest Satow, Britain’s interest in Korea were of “a secondary order” and it was so obvious that even the Japanese Government expected that they could not look for British assistance when facing Russian penetration into Korea.<sup>530</sup> In the period between 1897 and 1900, when Russia attempted to maximise their interest in Korea by securing the lease of the ports on the southern coast of Korea, Britain utilised the existing Treaty rights as a countermeasure against the expansion of Russian influence upon Korea. The level of British intervention arose only when British interests in Korea were seriously challenged, for instance, by the Russian attempt to replace Brown with the Russian financial advisor.

While Britain took diplomatic approaches to refrain Russian from securing exclusive privileges in Korea, Russia also did not pursue aggressive policies any more. Although the Russian Navy was interested in the ideas of leasing of a port on the south coast of Korea and fortifying it to be their main naval base for the Russian fleet in Northeast Asia, the Russian representatives and key members of the Russian Government were aware that any international conflict would be sparked if Russia insisted on the seizure of a non-Treaty port on the Korean Peninsula. Thus, the Russian Government and Navy agreed that Russia’s exclusive concessions at Masanpo would only serve as a link between Vladivostok and Lüshun, with a coal depot and a naval hospital.<sup>531</sup> Instead of fortifying it, the Russian Legation attempted to attract Russian investors to settle in Masanpo because Russia believed that its exclusive concession at Masanpo also had a commercial potential to become a hub of maritime trade in Northeast Asia thanks to its geographical importance.<sup>532</sup> The confrontation between the Russian Legation and the British-Japanese representatives in Korea, which had been triggered by Russia’s aggressive policies, became much quieter by the middle of 1900.

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<sup>529</sup> Question Asked in the House of Commons, 28 May 1900, No.51, FO 405/99.

<sup>530</sup> Satow to Salisbury, 1 April 1900, No. 44, FO 405/88.

<sup>531</sup> Ho-Yeon Cho, ‘19 Segi Hubanbut’ö 20 Segi Ch’okkajiüi Masanp’owa Röshia (Russia and Masanpo from the End of the 19th Century to the Beginning of the 20th Century)’, *Karamunhwa*, 25 (2013), 83–110, p. 94.

<sup>532</sup> Park, Chong-Hyo, *Rosia Kungnip Munso Pogwanso Sojang Han’guk Kwallyon Munso Yoyakchip [The Summary of Korea-Related Documents at the Russian National Archives]*, p.198.

## Chapter 4: The Deterioration of Anglo-Korean Relations, 1899-1902

### The Changes of the Domestic and International Circumstance of Korea, 1898-1901

#### The Centralisation of Kojong's Power, 1898-99

The political circumstance of Korea and its surrounding region were dramatically changed by several factors by the summer of 1900. By the end of 1900, Kojong successfully consolidated his influence and power upon the Korean Government and his nation by removing his political enemies, including the Independence Club, led by American-educated reformists. Since its foundation in 1896, the Independence Club vigorously promoted the ideas of the self-strengthening and the independence of the nation. Especially after the successful organisation of the first *Manmin'gongdonghoe* of March 1898, which resulted in Russia's withdrawal of their military and financial advisors and the subsequent changes of their policies in Korea, the Korean Government started to worry about the rise of support for them. In order to undermine the Independence Club, Kojong, with help from foreign representatives including the United States Minister Horace Allen, removed Soh Jaipil from his position as a foreign advisor to the Korean Government by offering a compensation for the cancellation of his contract.<sup>533</sup>

Jordan also worried about the emergence of the Independence Club as a political party. In July 1898, for instance, when Kojong appointed Cho Byung-Sik, who had played a key role in helping Russia pursue their aggressive policies in 1897. In response to the appointment, approximately 600 members of the Independence Club came to Cho's house and called for an interview and once they failed to meet him, they sent a delegation to Kojong and requested his resignation. Due to the protest, Kojong eventually dismissed him from his position.<sup>534</sup> Jordan commented that this was the symbolic moment that the Independence Club sensibly damaged Kojong's authority for the moment

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<sup>533</sup> Vipin Chandra, *Imperialism, Resistance, and Reform in Late Nineteenth-Century Korea : Enlightenment and the Independence Club*. (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1988), pp. 169-170; Yong-Ha Sin, *Tongnip Hyöphoe Yön'gu : Tongnip Sinmun, Tongnip Hyöphoe, Manmin Kongdonghoe Ŭi Sasang Kwa Undong (The Studies of the Independence Club: The Independent, The Independence Club and the Ideology and the Movement of the People's Joint Association)* (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1990), pp. 54-68.

<sup>534</sup> 21 July 1898, Vol. 37, *Kojong Sillok*.

and it was also of a great danger that “the Club will abuse the influence it has obtained, and proceed to revolutionary measures, which may result in an appeal of force”.<sup>535</sup>

The confrontation between the Independence Club and Kojong became much fiercer by the end of 1898, mainly by two events; Kim Hong-Niuk’s plot to poison Kojong and the Crown Prince to death on 12 September 1898; and *Kwanmin’gongdonghoe* (the Assembly of the officials and people) and Kojong’s subsequent announce of the transformation of the Privy Council into a representative assembly in November 1898. In case of Kim Hong-Niuk, he and his accomplices were immediately arrested and only a month later, after the alleged tortures, ill-treatment and lack of proper legal process for justice, they were executed on 10 October 1898.<sup>536</sup> When it was rumoured that Kim Hong-Niuk was being tortured in prison, Jordan sent a warning to the Korean Government that such measures allegedly taken against Kim Hong-Niuk would be “a violation of all kinds of humanity” and damage “the reputation Korea has acquired as a Power anxious to enter upon the path of progress and enlightenment”.<sup>537</sup> The Independence Club also saw this incident as a serious violation of the Royal Edict of 9 July 1894 regarding the complete abolishment of torture and demanded the resignation of Sin Ki-Sun, the Minister of Law, after one of the arrested had been found injured by a knife in prison.<sup>538</sup> At first, Kojong only reduced his salary for a month in responsibility for the mistreatment of the arrested.<sup>539</sup> However, due to the increased pressure from the Korean public, who showed their solidarity with the Independence Club by closing their doors of all the shops in Seoul, Kojong eventually sacked Law Minister Sin Ki-Sun and Head Judge Yi Yin-Woo.<sup>540</sup>

Encouraged by the success of enforcing a ministerial change upon the Korean Government, the Independence Club started to strongly demand the establishment of a more progressive government.<sup>541</sup> The Independence Club materialised the ideas into six demands at the

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<sup>535</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 24 July 1898, No. 128, FO 405/80.

<sup>536</sup> For an account of Kim Hongryuk’s plot to poison Kojong and the Crown Prince, see Kyoung-ho Chang, ‘Agwanp’ach’ön Chõnhu (1896-1898) Chõngch’igwõllyõng Pyõnhwawa Kimhongnyung Tokch’asagõn Chaegõmt’o [The Change of Political Authority and the Reexamination of Kim Hong-Ruk’s Poison Attempt, 1896-1898]’, *Han’gukkũnhyõndaesayõn’gu* [Journal of Korean Modern and Contemporary History], 81.18961898 (2017), pp. 89–117.

<sup>537</sup> Jordan to Pak Chesun, 1 October 1898, Vol. 2, *Yõng’an*; Jordan to Salisbury, 31 October 1898, No. 144, FO 405/80.

<sup>538</sup> *Jordan to Salisbury*, 14 October 1898, No. 142, FO 405/80.

<sup>539</sup> 6 October 1898, Vol.38, Kojong Sillok.

<sup>540</sup> 11 October 1898, Vol.38, Kojong Sillok.

<sup>541</sup> The Independence Club had three main objectives to achieve it; firstly, the Privy Council should be turned into a representative assembly in order to represent the people’s interests to the Korean Government; secondly, a progressive cabinet should be selected to introduce self-strengthening reforms for the country; and thirdly, the Government and the people should be united to underpin the independence of the country while facing foreign penetrations. Sin, *Tongnip Hyõphoe Yõn’gu* : *Tongnip Sinmun, Tongnip Hyõphoe, Manmin Kongdonghoe Ŭi Sasang Kwa Undong*, pp.378-9. For an account of the Independence Club’s movement for the

*Kwanmin'gongdonghoe* between 28 October and 2 November 1898 and Chief State Councillor Park Chung-Yang presented them to Kojong.<sup>542</sup> Kojong approved the proposal and announced that the Privy Council would be turned into a form of a representative assembly, where 25 out of 50 representatives should be selected amongst the members of the Independence Club by ballot.<sup>543</sup> However, such conservative high-ranking officials as Cho Byung-Sik, who were threatened by the movement, spread a rumour that the long-term objective of the Independence Club was to establish a republic.<sup>544</sup> Having been surprised by the rumour, Kojong issued an order to disband the Independence Club, to arrest the key members of the Independence Club and to dismiss the officials who had agreed to present the six demands.<sup>545</sup>

Kojong also took a countermeasure against the Independence Club by appointing Cho Byung-Sik as a State Councillor and Min Chong-Muk as a Foreign Minister, who had closely worked with former Russian Minister Speyer.<sup>546</sup> In fear that Cho Byung-Sik might resort to the use of force in order to repress the public, who were organising a series of mass protests to call for the release of the arrested members of the Independence Club, Jordan and American Minister Allen visited Matunine to tell him that any use of force should not be approved by the Russian Legation because they believed that the current measures taken by Kojong and the Korean Government complied with a view of the Russian Legation.<sup>547</sup> Additionally, Jordan also sent a message to Min Chong-Muk and asked to notify two or three days in advance if the Korean Government would like to repress the public by means of force in excuse that “the British Legation currently does not have any means to protect the safety and the properties of British nationals in Seoul”.<sup>548</sup>

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establishment of a national assembly, see Chandra, *Imperialism, Resistance, and Reform in Late Nineteenth-Century Korea*, pp. 173-210.

<sup>542</sup> For a detailed account of the development of *Kwanmin'gongdongho*, see Sin, *Tongnip Hyöphoe Yöng'u : Tongnip Sinmun, Tongnip Hyöphoe, Manmin Kongdonghoe Ŭi Sasang Kwa Undong*, pp.378-397. For an account of civil rights movement at that time, see Jong-jun Kim, 'Taehanjegukki Min'gwöndong Yöng'guŭi Chaeinshik [Re-Cognition of Civil Rights Study during the Great Han Empire]', *Han'guk'akyöng'u [The Journal Fo Korean Studies]*, 31 (2013), pp. 573–606.

<sup>543</sup> 2 November 1898, Vol.38, Kojong Sillok.

<sup>544</sup> *Jordan to Salisbury*, 12 November 1898, No. 146, FO 405/80; Sin, *Tongnip Hyöphoe Yöng'u : Tongnip Sinmun, Tongnip Hyöphoe, Manmin Kongdonghoe Ŭi Sasang Kwa Undong*, pp.402-3. For an account of how Confucian scholars saw the Independence Club, see Dae-Shik Youn, 'Tongnip'yöp'oe Taehan Yugyo Kwallyowa Chishigindürüi Inshik [Confucian Intellectuals' Views on Korean Independence Society: Focusing on Public Appeals]', *Sahoeiron*, 50 (2016), pp. 103–40.

<sup>545</sup> 4 November 1898, Vol.38, Kojong Sillok.

<sup>546</sup> 5 November 1898, Vol.38, Kojong Sillok.

<sup>547</sup> *Jordan to Salisbury*, 12 November 1898, No. 146, FO 405/80.

<sup>548</sup> Japanese Acting Minister Hioki Eki saw it as a subtle warning not to use any force against the people. CIK, Hioki to Aoki, 16 November 1898, No. 42, Vol. 12. However, Jordan duly requested the deployment of Her Majesty's Ship Hermione from Weihaiwei and it arrived at Chemulpo on 22 November 1898. Jordan to Salisbury, 25 November 1898, No. 2, FO 405/88.

The joint action taken by Jordan and Allen prevented Kojong from using military or police forces against the public supporting the Independence Club.<sup>549</sup> Thus, Kojong mobilised 'the Peddlers' Guild' and allowed them to attack the participants of the mass protests.<sup>550</sup> In his audiences with Kojong on 22 and 24 November 1898, Jordan denounced that the Korean Government had employed the mob force, which Kojong denied, and argued that the dismissal of the peddlers should be critical to avoid further disturbances.<sup>551</sup> However, despite his efforts to avoid any violence, Kojong deployed military forces in Seoul on 22 December 1898 and issued a decree to ban any mass protest in the street, which eventually resulted in the disbandment of the People's Joint Assembly and the Peddlers' Guild.<sup>552</sup>

In November 1898, Jordan showed his sympathy with the Independence Club. When the Independence Club protested Russia's demands regarding the employment of advisors and the lease of Ch'oryŏngdo Island, Jordan worried about their nationalist and anti-foreign sentiments. However, when the Independence Club were challenged by Kojong and the Korean Government, he made a comparison between the Independence Club and Kojong, in favour of the former.

*It is extremely difficult to say how far the movement represents a genuine demand for reform as distinguished from mere political agitation so common in Corea; but many of the prominent men connected with it have gathered their ideas of progress in foreign countries and are to all appearance convinced that the only hope for their country lies in a radical reform of the Government.*

*The Emperor and the old aristocracy, on the other hand, naturally regard the proposed change as a curtailment of the prerogatives and privileges which they and their ancestors have enjoyed for five centuries and are not disposed to yield without a struggle.*<sup>553</sup>

Thus, immediately after the illegalisation of the Independence Club, Kojong pardoned the conservative aristocrats that had been criticised and accused by the Independence Club and their supporters. Kojong replaced such key reformists as Park Chung-Yang, Min Yong-Hwan, Yi Hak-Kyun,

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<sup>549</sup> CIK, Hioki to Aoki, 13 December 1898, No. 47, Vol. 12.

<sup>550</sup> Sin, *Tongnip Hyŏphoe Yŏn'gu : Tongnip Sinmun, Tongnip Hyŏphoe, Manmin Kongdonghoe Ŭi Sasang Kwa Undong*, pp.440-51.

<sup>551</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 25 November 1898, No. 2, FO 405/88.

<sup>552</sup> For an account of the dismissal of the Independence Club, see Sin, *Tongnip Hyŏphoe Yŏn'gu : Tongnip Sinmun, Tongnip Hyŏphoe, Manmin Kongdonghoe Ŭi Sasang Kwa Undong*, pp.493-515.

<sup>553</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 12 November 1898, No. 146, FO 405/80.

Yi Jong-Kon and Yi Sang-Jae with those conservative aristocrats by January 1899. Yun Chi-Ho even had to flee into exile in order to avoid any prosecution. The Independence Club's ideologies of a progressive administration and their mass actions to organise protests were indeed inherited by the Korean nation and they were vividly expressed in the March First Movement of 1919 and the subsequent establishment of the Provisional Government of Korea.<sup>554</sup> However, the immediate impact of the Independence Club's failure to establish a progressive government was the enhancement of the reactionary administration.

After the disbandment of the Independence Club, the conservative Korean Government realised that a new "constitution" would be necessary to create a codified ground to avoid any request by the public for the introduction of representative democracy. As a result, on 17 August 1899, Kojong declared the Taehan'gukjukche (The Constitution of the Great Han Empire), which consisted of the following articles:

- *Article 1: The Empire of Korea is an independent empire recognised by all nations of the world.*
- *Article 2: The political system of the Empire of Korea has been handed down for last 500 years and it will remain an unchangeable absolute monarch for eternity.*
- *Article 3: The Emperor of Korea has absolute and unlimited power. It intends to independently establish a political system in accordance with the International Law.*
- *Article 4: If any subject of the Empire of Korea violates the Emperor's authority, they should be treated as unreasonable men, no matter whether or not any action has been actually taken to do so.*
- *Article 5: The Emperor of Korea holds the authority to command the army and the navy of the nation; to organise his troops, and declare or lift martial law.*
- *Article 6: The Emperor of Korea holds the authority to legislate; to promulgate, and to administer justice. His Majesty also has the authority to amend domestic legislation to pardon criminals. It intends to independently legislate in accordance with international law.*
- *Article 7: The Emperor of Korea regulates the administrative system of each Ministry and the salaries of clerks and officers. His Majesty also issues a decree required for administrative purposes. It intends to independently govern in accordance with international law.*

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<sup>554</sup> Chandra, *Imperialism, Resistance, and Reform in Late Nineteenth-Century Korea*, p. 216.



- *Article 8: The Emperor of Korea has rights to appoint and dismiss all ranks of officials; and to award or deprive any knighthoods, orders and any other promotion. It intends to independently employ staff members in accordance with international law.*
- *Article 9: The Emperor of Korea has the authority to assign an envoy to any country with the Treaty; to declare war, and to sign treaties. It intends to independently send an envoy in accordance with international law.*<sup>555</sup>

Usually, the constitution of a country stipulates the title of a nation, the source of sovereignty, the rights and responsibilities of its national and the jurisdiction of sovereignty.<sup>556</sup> However, Kojong's Taehan'gukgukche only defined the official title of Korea and the source of sovereignty and yet, it specified that the political system of Korea was an absolute monarchy, where the administration, jurisdiction and legislation of Korea should be centralised to the Emperor of Korea.<sup>557</sup> Comparing with the Independence Club's proposal to establish a representative assembly and select representatives by ballot, the Taehan'gukgukche was mainly designed to avoid any challenge by a representative body or an individual against the Emperor's authority.<sup>558</sup>

Despite the reactionary and authoritarian nature of the Taehan'gukgukche, it is conceivable that the introduction of the "constitution" provided a legal ground for the Emperor to apply universal laws and systems within the territory of his nation. Although the authority of the sovereignty was exclusively enjoyed by the Emperor, it is undeniable that the Taehan'gukgukche became a starting point to define Korea as a modern sovereign state in the form of absolute monarchy.<sup>559</sup> On top of that, the Taehan'gukgukche defined the Emperor's sovereignty "in accordance with the international law", which was repeated in Articles 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9. In these articles, international law was mentioned as the norm and used to justify that the Emperor's absolute power meant to govern the nation without any intervention from overseas.<sup>560</sup> Therefore, the introduction of the

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<sup>555</sup> 17 August 1899, Vol.39, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>556</sup> For a comparison between Taehan'gukgukche and the constitutions of other major powers, see Jae-Gon Cho, 'Taehan'gukgukcheüi Punsökkwa Kakkung Hönböp [Daehankookkookjae and Constitution of Each Country]', *Han'gukkünhyöndaesayön'gu [Journal of Korean Modern and Contemporary History]*, 84 (2018), pp. 111–49.

<sup>557</sup> Hyeon-Jong Wang, 'Taehanjegukki Kojongüi Hwangjegwön Kanghwawa Kaehyöng Nollu [Gojong's Reinforcement for Emperor's Power and His Argument for Reform during Daehan Empire Period]', *The Korean Historical Review*, 208 (2010), pp. 1–34, pp. 16–27.

<sup>558</sup> Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1995), p.131.

<sup>559</sup> Tae-Woong Kim, 'Taehan'gukgukcheüi Yöksajöng Maengnakkwa Kündae Chugwön'gukka Könsöl Munje [The Historical Context of Daehankookkookjae and Problems of Building Modern Sovereign State]', *Yeoksa Yeongu [The Journal of History]*, 24 (2013), pp. 207–324 (pp.222-334).

<sup>560</sup> Gye-won Jo, 'Taehan'gukgukche Panp'o(1899nyön)üi Chöngch'isasangjöng Maengnakkwa Hamüi: Chönje Kaenyömlül Chungshimüro [Context and Implication of the Promulgation of the Constitution of the Daehan

Taehan'gukkukche should be viewed as an extension of Kojong's assumption of the title of emperor in 1897, where officials and aristocrats used the international law as a norm to explain why Kojong was qualified to address himself an Emperor.

The Taehan'gukkukche clearly demonstrates what the main principle of Kojong's policy to underpin the independence of Korea was. Despite their weakness and limitations, the Independence Club argued that the independence of the integrity of Korea should be achieved by a series of reforms for the improvement of the administration; that any concessions including metal mines, railways, coal mines, forests and loans should not be given to foreign Powers without an approval by a consensus of the Korean Cabinet and the Privy Council; that the financial administration should be centralised to the Ministry of Finance; that serious criminals should be on public trial; and that the appointment of government officials should be discussed between the Emperor and the Minister.<sup>561</sup> On the other hand, Kojong chose completely contrary approaches to the question of the nature of a political system. Kojong authorised the Ministry of Household to exclusively supervise 43 mines across the nation and, with his monopoly over diplomacy, Kojong was the only person who could decide if the transfer of mine concessions to a foreign Power would be approved.<sup>562</sup> Furthermore, Kojong had absolute power over the administration, the jurisdiction and the legislation and thus his power could not be checked or balanced by any opposition within the country. Thus, although Kojong's Taehan'gukkukche could be seen as a prototype for a constitution of a modern state, it did neither reduce the corruption of the Korean Court nor improve the efficiency of the Korean administration. Rather, the Taehan'gukkukche encouraged competition and rivalry amongst different factions to gain the Emperor's "favour". Without any institution to share the authority of administration, the Emperor's favour would be a "source of income as well as a source of pride".<sup>563</sup>

#### The Proposed Neutralisation of Korea, 1900-1

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Empire : Focusing on Jeonje], *Han'gukchöngch'ihak'oebo [Korean Political Science Review]*, 49.2 (2015), pp. 137–58.

<sup>561</sup> 30 October 1898, Vol. 38, *Kojong Sillok*.

<sup>562</sup> 23 June 1898, Vol. 37, *Kojong Sillok*. On 13 November 1898, Kojong issued an order to return the mines under the supervision of the Ministry of Work. However, the Ministry of Household still held the most important mines. 13 November 1898, Vol. 38, *Kojong Sillok*. For an account of the management by the Ministry of Household of Imperial properties and monopoly business, see Yoon-Sang Lee, 'Taehanjegukki Naejangwönüi Hwangshilchaewön Unyöng [The Management by the Ministry of Household of the Imperial Treasury]', *Han'guk Munhwa [Korean Culture]*, 17 (1996), 227–82; Bae-Yong Lee, 'Yölgangüi Igwönch'imt'algwä Chosönüi Taeüng [Foreign Powers' Acquisition of Concessions and Korea's Response to It]', *Han'guksa Simin'gangjwa*, 7 (1990), pp. 97–126, (pp. 105-112).

<sup>563</sup> Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, p.131.

By the summer of 1900, Northeast Asia also faced a serious challenge to the regional order when the Boxer Rebellion reached its culmination. The Boxer Rebellion was an accumulation of a series of peasant uprisings across northern China since 1898. Yihetuan (The Society of the Righteousness and Harmony), also known as the Boxers in English, who were a group of peasants who practised martial arts as with religious beliefs mainly in Shandong Province. They were threatened by the expansion by Western missionaries of Christianity into the region and then became very anti-Christian and anti-foreign, especially after Germany seized Jiaozhou Bay in excuse of the murder of their two missionaries in Shandong. Since the end of 1898, the Boxers started to attack foreign missionaries in Shandong and Zhi'li provinces and it soon became a nationwide movement. In June 1900, having been encouraged by the scale of the Boxer Uprising, Qing China officially expressed their sympathy with the Boxers and declared war against foreign Powers and immediately the Boxers encircled the Foreign Settlement in Beijing and started to attack foreigners.<sup>564</sup>

Kojong was also concerned about the development of the Boxer Rebellion in Qing China. On 25 June 1900, Kojong invited foreign representatives to the palace and expressed his sorrow for those who had been murdered amid the Boxer Rebellion. On behalf of the foreign representatives, Japanese Minister Hayashi Gonsuke thanks him for his sympathy and informed him that the allied forces were preparing to liberate foreign settlements in Tianjin and Beijing. He also assured that the foreign representatives would be of any assistant in their possession to offer if the Boxer Rebellion would cause any problem on the Korean side. The United States Minister Horace Allen suggested sending three steam ships, owned by the Korean Government to run between Yantai and Chemulpo to carry refugees running from the Boxer Rebellion as well as to obtain information on the course of the events. Kojong gave his assent to the suggestion and promised that he would arrange it immediately.<sup>565</sup>

During the audience, Kojong particularly showed strong concurrence when Hayashi and Russian Minister Pavlov commented about the roles of a government. Following his assurance of assistance to Kojong, Hayashi also argued that "the duty of Korean Government [...] was to take steps to preserve order amongst their subjects both in the capital and in the provinces, and the central and local authorities should co-operate for the attainment of this object".<sup>566</sup> Having agreed to Hayashi's

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<sup>564</sup> For an account of the Boxer Rebellion, see Paul A Cohen, *History in Three Keys : The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth*, ed. by American Council of Learned Societies (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: Berkeley, 1987). For an account of racial tension between Manchus and Hans at that time, see Edward J M Rhoads, *Manchus & Han : Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861-1928* (Seattle : University of Washington Press, 2000).

<sup>565</sup> Gubbins to Salisbury, 27 June 1900, No. 61, FO 405/99.

<sup>566</sup> Gubbins to Salisbury, 27 June 1900, No. 61, FO 405/99.

comment, Kojong stressed that the Boxer Rebellion happened because the Qing Chinese Government seemed powerless to control the rebellious mobs. Furthermore, when Pavlov accused the Chinese Government of failure in repressing the disorder, Kojong strongly agreed and pointed out that the regrettable split within the Chinese Government eventually prevented them from acting upon the events. It is plausible to think that Kojong's expressions were a guarantee that he and his Government would be able to prevent such disorder within the nation, which might result in foreign intervention.

In August 1900, while the allied forces were successfully marching towards Beijing and Russian troops were advancing towards Manchuria in justification for the protection of their nationals in the region, Kojong appointed Cho Byung-Sik as a special envoy to Japan with a mission to acquire support for international recognition of the neutrality of Korea. In his meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister Aoki, Cho Byung-Sik asked if it would be possible to pursue the neutralisation of Korea on the model of Belgium or Switzerland.<sup>567</sup> The idea of the neutralisation of Korea on the basis of Belgium or Switzerland was originally designed by Foreign Advisor Paul Georg von Möllendorff in the 1880s because of similar geopolitical situations, where both countries were surrounded by Great Powers but managed to leave independent thanks to an international guarantee. This idea was shared by Korean intellectuals and foreign officials but only remained at a level of individual discussion.<sup>568</sup>

However, the idea was fully adopted by the Korean Government as one of their main objectives in diplomacy. In 1899, William Franklin Sands, Foreign Advisor to the Korean Ministry of Household and a former secretary at the United States Legation, played a key role in materialising it. Following the model on Belgium or Switzerland, Sands's neutralisation plan aimed to acquire an international guarantee by Great Powers and Japan and Russia must be included amongst the signatories. While the previous plans only relied upon the good-will of other Great Powers for the assurance, Sands's scheme emphasised that Great Powers would be beneficial from the neutralisation of Korea because; it would contribute to the maintenance of the status-quo and open-door policy in Northeast Asia; and the guarantors would be allowed to supervise the Korean Government's reforms.<sup>569</sup> Sands's neutralisation was approved and supported by the pro-American ministers

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<sup>567</sup> Whitehead to Salisbury, 18 September 1900, No. 69, FO 405/99

<sup>568</sup> Kwang-Ho Hyun, *Taehanjegugŭi Taeoejŏngch'aek [The Foreign Policy of the Korean Empire]* (Seoul: Sinseowon, 2002), pp.77-81. For an account of Koreans' view on Belgium, see Hyun-Sook Kim, 'Taehanjegugŭi Pelgie Inshigŭi Ch'uiwa T'ŭkching [Various Images of Belgium Formed during the Late 19th Century Korea]', *Yŏksawa Tamnon [History and Discourse]*, 78 (2016), pp. 199–230.

<sup>569</sup> Hyun-Sook Kim, 'Taehanjegukki Kungnaebu Komun'gwan Saenjŭ ( W . F . Sands ) Ŭi Kaehyŏngnon'gwa Chungnip'waanŭi Sŏnggyŏk [The Royal Advisor W. F. Sands and Political Activities]', *Yŏksawa Tamnon [History and Discourse]*, 51 (2008), 69–103 (pp.83-87). For an account of Sands's view regarding his diplomatic activities for Korea, see William F. Sands, *Undiplomatic Memories: The Far East 1896-1904* (Seoul: Korea Branch royal Asiatic Society, 1975).

within the Korean Government, who pursued administrative, economic and educational reforms with the funding of American loans.<sup>570</sup>

Considering the conversation between Cho Byung-Sik and Aoki, Cho's neutralisation based on the model of Belgium or Switzerland was the same scheme Sands had designed. Aoki declined the Korean Government's proposal by pointing out that the material conditions and historical developments enabled these relatively small countries to maintain their independence against Great Powers, whereas Korea currently lacked such conditions. Cho still argued that the neutralisation of Korea would be a desirable agreement despite the current conditions, but Aoki concluded that it was "not of a serious nature".<sup>571</sup> John H. Gubbins, Acting British Chargé d'affaires in Korea, reported that the condition Aoki suggested was Korea's capacity to "provide herself with a standing army of 50,000 men", which must be impossible for Korea to fulfil at this time.<sup>572</sup> Kojong also approached the United States Minister Allen and asked for the participation of the United States in the neutralisation of Korea but Allen, whose Government had been unwilling to deeply engage in the political affairs of Korea, declined and discouraged Kojong's proposal.<sup>573</sup> In November 1900, the British Legation in Korea concluded that Cho's mission to acquire Japan's support for the neutralisation of Korea failed.<sup>574</sup>

While Korea's proposal for the neutralisation of the Korean Peninsula was unwelcomed by Japan, Russia also became interested in an arrangement with Japan regarding the neutralisation of Korea. On 30 June 1900, Russian Minister in Seoul Pavlov telegraphed to the Russian Government that, if the Boxer rebels crossed the Yalu River and enter a Korean territory, it would be exploited as an excuse by Japan to deploy troops to Korea and to eventually seize the nation.<sup>575</sup> Moreover, since Manchuria was placed under the *de facto* military occupation of Russia, the Russian Government aimed to focus on consolidating its dominant position in Manchuria.<sup>576</sup> Therefore, on 7 January 1901, the Russian Legation in Tokyo approached the Japanese Government to ask if they intended to reach

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<sup>570</sup> For an account of the pro-American reformists in the Korean Government, see Chul-Ho Han, *Ch'inmigaehwap'a Yŏn'gu* (Seoul: Kuk'akcharyowŏn, 1988).

<sup>571</sup> Whitehead to Salisbury, 18 September 1900, No. 69, FO 405/99

<sup>572</sup> Gubbins to Salisbury, 14 September 1900, No. 69, FO 405/99

<sup>573</sup> *Allen to Hay*, 2 October 1900, No. 284, Scott S Burnett, *Korean-American Relations : Documents Pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States. Vol.3, The Period of Diminishing Influence, 1896-1905* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), pp. 69–70.; Seung-Young Kim, *American Diplomacy and Strategy toward Kora and Northeast Asia, 1882–1950 and After* (New York: Palgrave, 2009), p.25.

<sup>574</sup> Gubbins to Salisbury, 3 November 1900, No. 87, FO 405/99

<sup>575</sup> Jong Heon Kim, '1900nyŏn Ihu Rŏilganŭi Hanbando Chungnip'wa Mit Punhallonŭi Sŏulchuch'a Rŏshiangongsa Ppabŭllop'ŭi Yŏk'arŭl Chungshimŭro [About Discussion on Neutralization of Korean Peninsula and Division between Russia and Japan since 1900: The Russian Envoy in Seoul,' *Han'guktongbuganonch'ong [Journal of Northeast Asian Studies]*, 53 (2009), 29–55 (pp. 32–34).

<sup>576</sup> Malozemoff, *Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904*, pp. 153–56. Also see Nish, *The Origins of The Russo-Japanese War*, pp. 83–93.

an agreement regarding the neutralisation of Korea to settle the question of their interests in Korea.<sup>577</sup> The Japanese Government rejected the Russian offer by linking it with the current Russian occupation by of Manchuria. Katō Takaaki declined by pointing out that “the current presence of Russian troops in Manchuria would be the main source of disorder and unrest in Korea unless Russia publicly announced their intention to withdraw from Manchuria”.<sup>578</sup>

The British Legation in Korea only acquired the information in March 1901. Hayashi confirmed that the rumour about the Russian proposal of placing Korea under an international protectorate. However, while Japan raised the Russian occupation of Manchuria as the main reason why the neutralisation was unacceptable, Hayashi told John Harington Gubbins that his Government had rejected the Russian proposal because of the current internal situations of Korea, which Hayashi saw it very “backwards”.<sup>579</sup>

Hayashi’s additional reasoning might be intended not to show their strategic concern that Russia’s seizure of Manchuria would damage Japan’s interests in Korea. However, the poor status of Korea was also an acceptable reason for the British representatives in Seoul. At some points, Britain considered the neutralisation of Korea when in 1896, when it was rumoured that Japan and Russia were trying to reach an agreement over Korea, Britain offered the neutralisation of Korea to Japan, even though they withdrew the proposal when Japan asked Britain to take a leading role in arranging the international recognition of the neutrality of Korea. When Kojong asked whether Britain would be interested in an international guarantee of the independence of Korea, Claude MacDonald, then British Minister to China, declined the proposal and suggested it would be achieved by the modernisation of the country. By the beginning of 1901, Britain came to a realisation that Korea still had a long way ahead to strengthen itself sufficiently to maintain independence from neighbouring Powers.

## Anglo-Korean Confrontation, 1900-1901

British Acquisition of Ŭnsan Mine, 1899-1900

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<sup>577</sup> CIK, *Katō to Hayashi*, 9 January 1901, No. 127, Vol. 18.

<sup>578</sup> CIK, *Katō to Hayashi*, 17 January 1901, No. 132, Vol. 18.

<sup>579</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 13 March 1901, No. 37, FO 405/127.

By 1900, one of Britain's main policies in Korea was to deter the penetration of Russian influence in co-operation with Japan, whose interest in the country could be threatened by a Russian advance. However, in the meantime, Britain also had great interests in obtaining concessions in Korea, just like other Great Powers who had already acquired in a form of compensations for the damages caused by Korean locals; or in form of equal privileges in accordance with most-favoured-nation clauses in their Treaties with Korea.<sup>580</sup> Brown, whose position as the Chief-Commissioner of the Korean Customs and Financial Advisor to the Korean Government, played a significant role in identifying the most desirable concessions and rendered help for the British side when requested.

On 30 April 1898, on behalf of a British syndicate in Shanghai, Jordan filed an application for the grant of a mining concession in P'yöngan-do Province.<sup>581</sup> In reply, the Korean Government declined the application for mainly two reasons; one that most of mines in the province were currently under the exclusive management of the Ministry of Household; and the other that the Council of State passed a resolution not to yield any concessions to foreigners.<sup>582</sup> However, Jordan pointed out that the Korean Government had already granted several concessions to other foreign Powers even after the introduction of the resolution and warned that "what has been conceded to the subjects of other Powers cannot be withheld from those of Great Britain".<sup>583</sup> He once again asserted that the Korean Government should approve the proposal if the terms were "identical, word for word, with the language of the contract between the Korean Government and the German firm".<sup>584</sup> Thus at the end of September 1898, the Korean Government agreed to grant a mining concession in P'yöngando Province.<sup>585</sup> The course of Britain's negotiation with the Korean Government demonstrates two facts; that Jordan exploited the most-favoured-nation clause of the Treaty and made an aggressive demonstration to acquire the concession; and that Jordan had to discuss the matter with three different Foreign Ministers in charge. Such frequent changes of government officials were seen by

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<sup>580</sup> Bae-Yong Lee, 'Yölgangüi Igwöñch'imt'algwa Chosönüi Taeüng [Foreign Powers' Acquisition of Concessions and Korea's Response to It]', pp. 98–100. For an account of mines and mining in Korea, see Edwin W. Mills, 'Gold Mining in Korea', *Transaction of the Korea Branch Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. VII, (191), pp. 5-39, reprinted in *Discovering Korea at the Start of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed. By Brother Anthony of Taizé (Seoul: Korea Branch Royal Asiatic Society, 2011), pp.297-342; Spencer J. Palmer, 'American Gold Mining in Korea's Unsan District', *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 31, Pt. 4 (November 1962), pp. 379-391.

<sup>581</sup> Jordan to Cho Pyongsik, 30 April 1898, No. 1351, Vol. 1, *Yöng'an*.

<sup>582</sup> Yu Kilhwan to Jordan, 11 June 1898, No. 1377, Vol.1, *Yöng'an*.

<sup>583</sup> Jordan to Yu Kilhwan, 14 June 1898, No. 1381, Vol. 1, *Yöng'an*. Jordan also reminded that a German firm had acquired a mining concession in April 1897 and he resubmitted his application on similar terms with the German contract. Jordan to Yu Kilhwan, 15 June 1898, No. 1383, Vol. 1, *Yöng'an*.

<sup>584</sup> Yu Kilhwan to Jordan, 29 June 1898, No. 1393, Vol.1, *Yöng'an*. He rejected any changes to the original terms of the contract when Acting Foreign Minister Yi Tochae asked. *Yi Tochae to Jordan*, 15 August 1898, No. 1428, Vol.1, *Yöng'an*; *Jordan to Yi Tochae*, 15 June 1898, No. 1429, Vol. 1, *Yöng'an*.

<sup>585</sup> Pak Chesun to Jordan, 26 September 1898, No. 1449, Vol. 2, *Yöng'an*; *Jordan to Pak Chesun*, 27 September 1898, No. 1450, Vol. 2, *Yöng'an*.

many foreigners as one of examples to show how inefficient and how corrupt the Korean administration was.<sup>586</sup>

The concession was originally given to Mr Chance but soon transferred to Pritchard Morgan, a Member of Parliament, and Morgan claimed to activate his mining concession in November 1899. In the original agreement, the British national was only granted a mining right but which mine to be given had not been decided. However, Jordan and Morgan unilaterally selected Ŭnsan mine in P'yŏngando Province and notified the Korean Government.<sup>587</sup> Park Che-Sun replied that Ŭnsan mine was under the management of the Ministry of Household and thus be used for the Royal Court and recommended to select other mines within the region.<sup>588</sup> Jordan had even sent a group of engineers to examine the mine without permission from the Korean Government and they were blocked by Yi Yong-ik, the Minister of the Household.<sup>589</sup>

Jordan's action regarding the concession of Ŭnsan mine was so unilateral that even Lord Salisbury questioned how it would be possible to have selected the mine even before the signing of the contract of September 1898.<sup>590</sup> Jordan even admitted that the rights to select a mine for the concession was reserved by the Korean Government. However, Jordan still insisted on acquiring their developing rights at Ŭnsan mine by arguing that the original contract had not listed Ŭnsan mine as an exempt. Jordan even coerced that "nothing can do more harm to the good name of His Imperial Majesty's Government than any attempt to evade the written pledges given to the Representative of a friendly Power".<sup>591</sup> Park Che-Sun replied that the German contract, which the British contract modelled, did not include Ŭnsan mine because it was already out of the negotiation and thus the Ŭnsan mine should not be granted in the same manner.<sup>592</sup>

Since Foreign Minister Park Che-Sun strongly opposed Jordan's claim over Ŭnsan mine, Jordan had an audience with Kojong and received a promise that Kojong would "instruct the Minister for Foreign Affairs to arrange the matter within one week" to Jordan's satisfaction.<sup>593</sup> Jordan saw it as a

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<sup>586</sup> Seung-young Kim, 'Russo-Japanese Rivalry Over Korean Buffer at the Beginning of the 20th Century and Its Implications', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 16.4 (2005), pp. 619–50 (pp. 628–29). According to Palais, the frequent reshuffle of the Cabinet was made in order to satisfy many Yangban aristocrats by giving them high status and prestige with a ministerial title. James B Palais, *Politics and Policy in Traditional Korea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge, Mass., 1975), pp. 55–56. For an account of Kojong's reliance upon the inner circle of the Government, see Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, pp. 131–33.

<sup>587</sup> Jordan to Pak Chesun, 11 November 1899, No. 1672, Vol. 2, *Yŏng'an*.

<sup>588</sup> Pak Chesun to Jordan, 16 November 1899, No. 1678, Vol. 2, *Yŏng'an*.

<sup>589</sup> Jordan to Pak Chesun, 24 November 1899, No. 1685, Vol. 2, *Yŏng'an*.

<sup>590</sup> Salisbury to Jordan, 30 November 1899, No. 97, FO 405/88.

<sup>591</sup> Jordan to Pak Chesun, 2 December 1899, No. 1698, Vol 2, *Yŏng'an*.

<sup>592</sup> Pak Chesun to Jordan, 14 December 1899, No. 1711, Vol 2, *Yŏng'an*.

<sup>593</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 18 December 1899, No. 106, FO 405/88.



*de facto* approval, even though Kojong probably meant to leave this complicated problem to his minister, and duly notified that the work would commence by the end of January 1900 and despite Pak's opposition, Morgan hired 150 Japanese men to protect their mining activities and headed towards Ŭnsan mine.<sup>594</sup> In response to it, the Prefect of Ŭnsan issued an order to require each village to supply 10 men.<sup>595</sup> Jordan even warned that he would apply for a warship to protect British nationals if any measure taken by the Korean side to deter their mining activities.<sup>596</sup>

When the confrontation escalated to an extent that the Korean Government deployed military troops to Ŭnsan to maintain order, the Japanese and the Russian Legations urged to reach an agreement regarding the mine. Acting Russian Minister Stein proposed a settlement with British compensation for existing interests to the Korean Government.<sup>597</sup> When London questioned the nature of Russia's mediation in the matter, Jordan explained that the main objective of the Russian involvement was to keep Min Chong-Muk, a well-known pro-Russian official, in the office to facilitate a favourable arrangement over the disputed lease of Masanpo.<sup>598</sup> Regardless of Stein's intention, Jordan was satisfied with the idea of settlement with compensation and finally reached an agreement stating that; money already spent on mine should be refunded; Koreans should be allowed to work at the mine for next 12 months, and the armed men employed by the company should be withdrawn.<sup>599</sup>

The Anglo-Korean confrontation over Ŭnsan mine reveals two important facts. Firstly, it revealed the nature of Britain's Korea policy. Since the complete independence of Korea from Qing China was internationally recognised in accordance with the Treaty of Shimonoseki, Britain advocated that the independence of Korea should be achieved by means of the self-strengthening and modernisation. They advised Korea to remain open to all foreign nations and thus any Power would not insist on the acquisition of an exclusive concession. However, when Jordan saw an opportunity to develop one of the finest mines in the country, Jordan did not hesitate to gain it despite the lack of documented evidence to show that the mine had been granted to the British national. Jordan even resorted to coercion when he faced strong opposition from the Korean Government. This Ŭnsan mine dispute

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<sup>594</sup> Jordan to Pak Chesun, 25 December 1899, No. 1717, Vol 2, *Yŏng'an*; Pak Chesun to Jordan, 29 December 1899, No. 1719, Vol 2, *Yŏng'an*; Allen to Hay, 17 March 1900, No. 234, Korean-American Relations, *Korean-American Relations* Vol. 3, pp. 264-265.

<sup>595</sup> Jordan to Min Chongmuk, 28 February 1900, No. 1760, Vol 2, *Yŏng'an*.

<sup>596</sup> Jordan to Min Chongmuk, 15 February 1900, No. 1743, Vol 2, *Yŏng'an*.

<sup>597</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 28 February 1900, No. 21, FO 405/99.

<sup>598</sup> Salisbury to Jordan, 28 February 1900, No. 23, FO 405/99; Jordan to Salisbury, 1 March 1900, No. 24, FO 405/99.

<sup>599</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 15 March 1900, No. 29, FO 405/99. The British firm agreed to pay a royalty of 25% net for next 25 years. Allen to Hay, 17 March 1900, No. 234, Korean-American Relations, *Korean-American Relations* Vol. 3, pp. 264-265.

shows that Britain's Korean policy mainly intended to maximise their interests in the country, especially when Korea failed to show decent progress in the modernisation of the country.

Secondly, the Korean Government's response to the Ŭnsan mine dispute shows that there were two different groups regarding their relations with Britain. Min Chong-Muk and Yi Yong-Ik, who strongly opposed to the transfer of Ŭnsan mine as the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Household, were very well-known pro-Russian politicians within the Korean Government. Especially in case of Yi Yong-Ik, his firm resistance against the transfer of the mine under the management of the Ministry of Household was seen as proof of his close relationship with Russia because Russia was advising the management of mines when the question arose.<sup>600</sup> However, it should be remembered that all the properties, including mines, of the Ministry of Household, belonged to Kojong and he was the one who would eventually approve any transfer of concessions from his possession. Furthermore, since Morgan was not only a businessman but a Member of Parliament who could exert influence upon the British Government. Therefore, Kojong's approval of the transfer of the mine reflected his willingness to gain Morgan's favour so that he would positively represent the interest of Korea to the British Government.<sup>601</sup>

### **Brown's Attempts to Obtain Foreign Loan, 1899-1901**

The concession of Ŭnsan mine was not the only measure Kojong took to maintain a close relationship with Britain. In August 1899, John McLeavy Brown, who defended his position as the Chief-Commissioner of the Korean Customs from Russia's attempt to replace with Russian advisors in 1898, requested the renewal of his contract to extend 5 years from the original expiry date. His contract was still valid for another year, but he insisted on the renewal because he thought "the uncertainty of his tenure of office militated against his making arrangements of a permanent nature which were required in the interests of the service".<sup>602</sup> Financial Minister Cho Byung-Sik was reluctant to agree with the renewal of the contract in excuse that it would require the express approval from the Council of State. However, Kojong assured that the sanction from the Council of State would be unnecessary and gave a new contract that would expire in October 1905.<sup>603</sup>

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<sup>600</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 9 December 1899, No. 3, FO 405/99.

<sup>601</sup> Hyun, 'Taehanjegugŭi Ŭnsan'gŭmgwang Ch'aegulgwŏn Hŏyŏwa Kŭ Oegyojŏk Ŭimi [Diplomatic Plan of Eunsan Mining Concession in the Great Han Empire]', pp. 17–18.

<sup>602</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 6 August 1899, No. 73, FO 405/88.

<sup>603</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 6 August 1899, No. 73, FO 405/88.

After the renewal of his contract, he was ordered by Kojong to raise a loan up to an amount of 5,000,000 Wons, approximately equivalent to £500,000, for establishing a stable currency system. Brown was also authorised by the imperial decree to offer the customs revenue as security. The decree also allowed him to keep the collection of the customs revenue under his control until loan he was ordered to raise should have been paid.<sup>604</sup> Having been officially authorised by Kojong, Brown headed for Shanghai to have a preliminary negotiation with the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank Corporation (hereafter the HSBC).<sup>605</sup> Jordan was sceptical of gaining a loan from the HSBC because of several reasons; firstly, the average custom revenue of £60,000 per year would be barely sufficient to provide for the service and the redemption of the loan, even though it was unlikely to raise the whole amount at once; secondly, he doubted if the HSBC would take it as a sufficient assurance of payment that the Korean Customs was under British control.<sup>606</sup>

The negotiation with the HSBC was, from Brown's perspective, very satisfactory. In October 1899, the HSBC already authorised their agents in Chemulpo to establish and run a branch in Seoul for 10 years. Brown commented that the HSBC had "waken up at last to the possibilities of the country".<sup>607</sup> The loan from the HSBC could be beneficial for two reasons; firstly, a loan from a British bank would cause less political intervention, especially comparing with Russia or Japan; secondly, the presence of Brown at the Korean Customs would defer any attempt by either Japan or Russia to replace him in their favour.<sup>608</sup> However, the HSBC eventually declined to offer the proposed loan to the Korean Government. Brown was convinced that the HSBC worried their financial commitment to Korea would affect their ongoing negotiations for the transfer to Russia of the loan on the Chinese Northern Railway. Despite a denial by the chief manager of the HSBC, Brown believed that "something had occurred in connection with this matter sufficient to hamper the Bank's freedom of action in Korea".<sup>609</sup>

After the failed attempt to gain a loan from the HSBC, Japan and Brown entered a negotiation of a new loan from the Daiichi Bank of Japan. The Korean Government previously had a loan of 3,000,000 Wons (£300,000) contracted in 1895, 2,000,000 Wons of which was paid off by 1897. The payment of the remainder of 1,000,000 Wons should be paid by the end of 1899. However, after an

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<sup>604</sup> Imperial Decree Dated October 26, 1899, Inclosure in No. 105, FO 405/88.

<sup>605</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 7 November 1899, No. 105, FO 405/88.

<sup>606</sup> Jordan believed that any more British control over the Korean Customs would cause opposition within the country. Jordan to Salisbury, 7 November 1899, No. 105, FO 405/88.

<sup>607</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 27 November 1899, No. 1, FO 405/99.

<sup>608</sup> Joon-Hwa Hong, 'Taehanjegukki Ilbonch'agwan Kyosöpkwa Kù Sönggyök(1898~1904) [Korea's Loan Negotiations with Japan and Its Characteristics(1898~1904)]', *Han'guksahakpo [The Journal of the Studies of Korean History]*, 38 (2010), 161–92 (pp. 170–71).

<sup>609</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 31 December 1899, No. 14, FO 405/99.

arrangement between Brown and the Imperial Bank of Japan, the Korean Government was allowed to pay only 750,000 Wons by at present and the remaining 250,000 Wons should be paid 6 months later or longer.<sup>610</sup> Japan used this remainder as a pretext that the collection of the Customs revenue was still held by Japan for security and it should not be guaranteed as security for raising any other foreign loan. Japan already protested on the same ground to the proposed loan of 10,000,000 Wons from the United States.<sup>611</sup>

The Japanese proposal for the loan coincided with the needs of both parties. For Brown, a new foreign loan was urgently necessary to hold his position and keep the Customs under his control because the collection of the Customs revenue would be very likely to be offered as security for the loan. If Brown gains a loan to be repaid in the next 30 years, the Customs would remain under British control for the same duration.<sup>612</sup> Japan expected that a new loan would be an opportunity to enhance their influence over the Korean Government. Japan's main objectives of the loan were; to prevent the Korean Customs revenue from handing over to the corrupted Korean officials; to balance off the penetration of any other Foreign Powers, and to make it reinvested into Japanese business in Korea.<sup>613</sup> Furthermore, both were alarmed when pro-American officials had attempted to gain an American loan and thus they hastened to reach an agreement. This loan obviously intended to enhance their co-operation between Brown and Japan. Brown's draft proposal even included a clause that, in case of Brown's retirement or death, "the choice of his successor shall lie with the British and Japanese Governments".<sup>614</sup> Acting Minister Gubbins advised Brown to edit off the clause not to cause any opposition by gaining more British control over the Customs. Gubbins also worried that it would be exploited as a pretext for Japanese interference.<sup>615</sup>

However, just before presenting it to Kojong for confirmation, the Japanese Legation withdrew from the loan negotiation because the ministerial changes within the Japanese Cabinet were imminent.<sup>616</sup> However, Hayashi was still hopeful that new ministers would still support the proposed loan via the Daiichi Bank to the Korean Government with some modification of the terms.<sup>617</sup> At the

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<sup>610</sup> Jordan to Salisbury, 31 December 1899, No. 14, FO 405/99.

<sup>611</sup> Not only was it a too large amount of loan for the Korean Government to handle at once, but also only 3,000,000 Wons out of it was allotted for the establishment of a currency system, while 5,000,000 Wons would be injected into an American company with waterworks concessions in Seoul. Hyun-Sook Kim, 'Taehanjegukki Kungnaebu Komun'gwan Saenjū ( W . F . Sands ) Ŭi Kaehyōngnon'gwa Chungnip'waanūi Sōnggyōk [The Royal Advisor W. F. Sands and Political Activities]', pp. 79–82.

<sup>612</sup> Gubbins to Salisbury, 8 October 1900, No. 77, FO 405/99.

<sup>613</sup> CIK, Hayashi to Aoki, 27 September 1900, No. 94 (Confidential), Vol. 14.

<sup>614</sup> Gubbins to Salisbury, 26 September 1900, No. 74, FO 405/99.

<sup>615</sup> Gubbins to Salisbury, 26 September 1900, No. 74, FO 405/99.

<sup>616</sup> Gubbins to Salisbury, 9 October 1900, No. 79, FO 405/99.

<sup>617</sup> Gubbins to Salisbury, 13 October 1900, No. 81, FO 405/99.

end of November 1900, the president of the Daiichi Bank came to Korea to renew the negotiation of the loan on modified terms. The Daiichi Bank was willing to render loan from their own resources and requested privileges to print the Customs' paper notes and to use some parts of the Customs revenue for the operation of their branch in Korea.<sup>618</sup> Therefore, the negotiation remained unsettled and the president of the Daiichi Bank left for Japan. Immediately, Brown was asked by the Vice-Councillor of the Council of State and the Finance Minister about the nature of the negotiation with the Japanese banker. The Russian Chargé d'affaires also raised a question about the negotiation in an audience with Kojong. Having realised the strong opposition against the Japanese loan scheme, Brown eventually cancelled his negotiation with the Daiichi Bank.<sup>619</sup>

Brown's plan to obtain a Japanese loan shows a close relationship between Britain and Japan. The loan scheme negotiated between Brown and Japan could offer many benefits to both sides. While it was difficult to obtain a loan from other sources, Japan's loan offer with the 30 years of repayment duration would enable Britain to keep the Korean Customs under control for such a long time. Since Brown played a key role as an insider who delivered key information for British interests, the loan could make Britain stay influential within the country. For Japan, it would enhance their influence over Korea. As was shown in case of their opposition to an American loan, the loan could be weaponised to balance off the economic and political penetration of other foreign Powers. Furthermore, since the creditor usually determined where the loaned money would be spent in priority, it could be used to fund Japanese business in the country. Despite its eventual failure, the negotiated loan exemplifies the current Anglo-Japanese relations.

#### Anglo-Korean Dispute over the Position of Brown, 1901

Britain's Korea policies between 1899 and 1901 excited opposition, especially a group of pro-Russian politicians. Yi Yong-Ik was one of the most prominent figures amongst them. Yi Yong-Ik started his political career as the Prefect of Tanch'ŏn in Hamgyŏngdo Province in 1883 thanks to Kojong's favour for Yi's help amid the Imo Mutiny of 1882. In 1887, he was appointed the Superintendent of mine works in Hamgyŏngdo Province and after taking various positions in the central and provincial governments, he was promoted to be the Superintendent of nationwide mine works in 1897. In 1900, he became the Minister of Household and oversaw the asset of the Royal

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<sup>618</sup> Hong, 'Taehanjegukki Ilbonch'agwan Kyosŏpkwa Kŭ Sŏnggyŏk(1898~1904) [Korea's Loan Negotiations with Japan and Its Characteristics(1898~1904)]', p. 177.

<sup>619</sup> Gubbins to Salisbury, 8 December 1900, No. 4, FO 405/127.

Court, some of which were the mines that had been transferred from the Ministry of Works to the Ministry of Household.<sup>620</sup>

Thus, when Jordan unilaterally decided to select Ŭnsan mine, which was managed by the Ministry of Household and proceeded with the development without Kojong's approval, Yi Yong-Ik immediately intervened in the dispute and opposed the operation of the British firm at the mine. The confrontation between the British company and Korean miners became so fierce that even military troops had to be deployed to prevent further violence between them. The dispute over Unsan mine was eventually settled by Kojong's assent to the concession. However, Yi Yong-Ik, whose duty was to protect Kojong's assets, must be antagonised by the aggression of Britain.

Moreover, Yi Yong-Ik was unhappy with Brown's complete control over the collection of Customs revenues. At this time, the financial administration of the Korean Government was run by two different ministries; The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Household.<sup>621</sup> While reformists in the Korean Government were open to foreign loans and investment into the private sector, royalists at the Ministry of Household preferred the Government-led development with financial resources in possession of the Korean Government.<sup>622</sup> They believed that the Customs revenue would be of additional resources for the development plan. However, Brown consistently declined any requests from the Ministry of Finance for the transfer of the revenue income to the treasury.<sup>623</sup> Such antipathy against Brown reached its peak when Yi Yong-Ik heard of the negotiation between Brown and the Daiichi Bank of Japan for a new Japanese loan. Yi Yong-Ik also had his own loan plan for the establishment of a stable currency system, the same objective as Brown's loan plan. Not only was it provoking that Brown attempted to draw a new loan just after completing the payment of the

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<sup>620</sup> For an account of the management by the Ministry of Household of their mines, see Sang-Hyun Yang, 'Taehanjegukki Naejangwŏnŭi Kwangsan Kwalliwa Kwangsan Kyŏngyŏng [The Supervision and the Management by the Ministry of Household in the Period of the Korean Empire]', *Yŏksawa Hyŏnshil [Quarterly Review of Korean History]*, 27 (1998), pp. 209–46. For an account of Great Powers' interest in mining concessions, see Bae-Yong Lee, 'Kaehanghu Han'gugŭi Kwangŏpchŏngch'aek kwa Yŏlgangŭi Kwangsant'amsa [Competitive Mining Surveys by Foreign Powers in Korea with Emphasis on the 1880's]', *Idaesawŏn*, 10 (1972), pp. 69–94.

<sup>621</sup> Two ministries often competed over the jurisdiction of income sources. See Seong-Jun Park, 'Taehanjegukki Haese Kwanhalgwŏnŭl Tullŏssan Kaltŭnggwa Naejangwŏnŭi Haese Kwanhalgwŏn Changak [The Complication of the Jurisdiction of Maritime Tax and Capturing of the Jurisdiction of Maritime Tax of the Office of Crown Properties in the Period of the G', *Han'guksahakpo [The Journal of the Studies of Korean History]*, 26 (2007), pp. 245–84.

<sup>622</sup> Hyun, 'Taehanjegugŭi Ŭnsan'gŭmgwang Ch'aegulgwŏn Hŏyŏwa Kŭ Oegyojŏk Ŭimi [Diplomatic Plan of Eunsan Mining Concession in the Great Han Empire]', pp. 235–36.

<sup>623</sup> Hyun-Sook Kim, 'Hanmal Komun'gwan J. McLeavy Browne Taehan Yŏn'gu [The Politics of Foreign Advisers in Korea with Special Reference to J. McLeavy Brown]', *Han'guksayŏn'gu [The Journal of Korean History]*, 66 (1989), pp. 103–56 (p. 116).

previous loan to Japan, but also both loans could not be consistent because Yi Yong-Ik's French loan also took the collection of the Customs revenue for security.<sup>624</sup>

Therefore, Yi Yong-Ik plotted to remove Brown from the Korean Customs. Yi Yong-Ik proposed the dismissal of Brown from the post of the Chief-Commissioner of the Korean Customs, on the basis that Brown had not obeyed his promise with Kojong that he would have evacuated from their residential building, which was the property of the Korean Government, by 19 March 1901. Once Gubbins received the note from Foreign Minister Park Che-Sun, he saw that Yi Yong-Ik's action "has its origin in a Palace intrigue, has Russian encouragement, and depends on Russian and other backing".<sup>625</sup> Gubbins appealed that sufficient time should be given before vacation, where he suggested 1 October 1901, and he demanded an expression of regret. In return, Park Che-Sun said he would withdraw the note if the following conditions were met:

- *An expression of regret for ejecting Palace officials from his [Brown's] premises to be tendered by Mr Brown to Household Minister.*
- *An account for all Customs money up to the present to be furnished to the Finance Department by Mr Brown, and this course to be continued in the future.*
- *In future Mr Brown to comply with all instructions received by him from the Korean Government.*
- *His Excellency and myself to settle the question of Mr Brown's vacation of his house.*<sup>626</sup>

As Pak was mentioned, "there were other matters besides house question, this latter being of minor importance",<sup>627</sup> the second and the third clauses were not the question of the house but this obedience to the Ministry of Finance and the Korean Government. Since Brown assured that no such promises about the evacuation of the house had been made, Gubbins decided to complain to the Korean Government. It was worth noting that Japanese Minister Hayashi showed his support for Britain by saying that "to remove him would entail serious consequences". Gubbins also emphasised

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<sup>624</sup> Ae-ja Na, 'Iyongigüi Hwap'yegaehyöngnon'gwa Ilbonjeirünhaenggwön [The Currency Reform Attempted by Lee Yong-Ik and First Bank's Notes of Japan]', *Han'guksayön'gu [The Journal of Korean History]*, 45 (1984), pp. 59–86 (p. 71).

<sup>625</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 21 March 1901, No. 9, FO 405/127. The Russian Legation reported that the Korean Government intended to sack Brown because of his rejection to report to the Korean Government; and not to complete the full payment of the Japanese loan of 1897, even though Korea was only due £25,000, which had been already agreed with Japan. Boris Dmitrievich Pak, *Rösia Wa Han'guk [Russia and Korea]*, ed. by Kyong-hyon Min (Seoul: Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2010), p. 582.

<sup>626</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 22 March 1901, No. 9, FO 405/127.

<sup>627</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 22 March 1901, No. 9, FO 405/127.

that a warship was on its way to Korea and later he telegraphed the Admiralty that the presence of more warships would be required if the situations did not improve.<sup>628</sup> While the Marquess of Lansdowne answered to the questions by the Members of Parliament that both Governments would reach a satisfactory agreement shortly, he instructed that Britain “cannot admit their right to dismiss Mr Brown before the expiry of his contract”.<sup>629</sup>

On 1 April 1901, Gubbins met Yi Yong-ik and accepted his explanation that the intrusion by Palace officers of Brown’s house on 19 March 1901 had occurred on a complete misunderstanding. Park Che-Sun also confirmed that the proposal to dismiss Brown had been cancelled and that the interpreter would be punished for the misconduct.<sup>630</sup> However, the question of Brown’s vacation from the official residence was not settled yet because the Korean Government insisted that the official buildings, belonging to them, should be taken back for their use. Thus, while having British warship “Endymion” at Chemulpo, Gubbins and the Korean Government started to discuss the arrangement for the vacation of the official resident buildings.<sup>631</sup> However, the Korean Government not only insisted that Brown should vacate his residence by 1 June 1901, less than two months away, but also added a new demand that they should leave Customs office buildings as well.<sup>632</sup> Furthermore, the Korean Government started to use the dispute over the house vacation as a pretext to attack Brown by; questioning the validity of his contract, which had not been approved by the Council of State; or arguing that Brown’s services as the Chief Commissioner would be no longer necessary.<sup>633</sup>

At this point, Gubbins strongly called for the cooperation of Japan claiming that;

*“The importance of the retention of Mr. Brown as Chief Commissioner is, I venture to suggest, greater for Japan than for us, for, apart from the fact that she is the only Power with large commercial interests in this country, the retention of the present Chief Commissioner constitutes a*

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<sup>628</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 22 March 1901, No. 9, FO 405/127; *Gubbins to Lansdowne*, 22 March 1901, No. 9, FO 405/127. Since Britain had already used the presence of warships at Chemulpo during Russia’s attempts to replace him with a Russian advisor, Gubbins aimed to adopt the same approach.

<sup>629</sup> Lansdowne to Gubbins, 23 March 1901, No. 11, FO 405/127; Question Asked in the House of Commons, 25 March 1901, No. 12, FO 405/127; Question Asked in the House of Commons, 28 March 1901, No. 15, FO 405/127; Question Asked in the House of Commons, 28 March 1901, No. 16, FO 405/127.

<sup>630</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 1 April 1901, No. 20, FO 405/127.

<sup>631</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 9 April 1901, No. 23, FO 405/127.

<sup>632</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 13 April 1901, No. 25, FO 405/127.

<sup>633</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 21 April 1901, No. 31, FO 405/127.



*modus vivendi between the rival interests of Russia and Japan, which it would be difficult to disturb without detriment to present international relations.*<sup>634</sup>

Gubbins clearly saw that Japanese interest in Korea would be compatible with that of Britain and called for Japanese support on the British side in the matter. Japanese Minister Hayashi sent a correspondence with a request for permission to protest strongly against the removal of Brown and a suggestion that “Corea should be definitely requested by the Japanese Government to consult Japan in future when appointing a Chief Commissioner”.<sup>635</sup> While thanking Tokyo’s strong assistance in the matter, Japanese Foreign Minister Katō Takaaki and British Minister in Japan MacDonald believed that the suggestion about Japan being consulted in the appointment of a Chief Commissioner should not be considered because Korea should be treated as an independent state.<sup>636</sup> While Britain still tried to reach an agreement over Brown’s vacation of official residence buildings, new Acting Foreign Minister Choe Yong-Ha asserted that Brown should obey an order by the Ministry of Finance of the vacation, which was an initial request made by Yi Yong-Ik. While cooperating with Hayashi to give the same representation in each separate audience with Kojong, Gubbins even started to entertain an idea of reinforcing a naval guard from British warship “Barfleur” at Chemulpo but his idea faced disagreement from Tokyo.<sup>637</sup>

However, the dispute over Brown’s vacation of the official residence suddenly came to an agreement. On 22 May 1901, Foreign Minister Park Che-Sun admitted that the initial attack upon Brown was linked with a French loan from the so-called Yunnan Syndicate. The question of the negotiated loan should be brought forward once Brown had been removed from the position of the Chief Commissioner of the Korean Customs.<sup>638</sup> The Yunnan Syndicate loan also took the collection of the Customs revenues as security and hence the removal of Brown was a prerequisite for the loan.<sup>639</sup> On 24 June 1901, Brown’s vacation of the official residence was finally settled by allowing Brown one

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<sup>634</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 21 April 1901, No. 31, FO 405/127.

<sup>635</sup> MacDonald to Lansdowne, 30 April 1901, No. 38, FO 405/127.

<sup>636</sup> MacDonald to Lansdowne, 30 April 1901, No. 38, FO 405/127.

<sup>637</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 1 May 1901, No. 42, FO 405/127; MacDonald to Lansdowne, 6 May 1901, No. 51, FO 405/127.

<sup>638</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 23 May 1901, No. 63, FO 405/127.

<sup>639</sup> Joon-Hwa Hong, ‘Unnam, Taehanshindik’eit’üch’agwan’gwa Yölgangüi Kaeip (1901-1902) [Yunnan and Taehan Syndicated Loans and the Intervention of the Foreign Powers: 1901-1902]’, *Han’guksahakpo [The Journal of the Studies of Korean History]*, 28 (2007), pp. 45–84 (p. 51).

year from the date on which the new site for his new residence was selected and placed at Brown's disposal.<sup>640</sup>

The Korean Government's attempt to remove Brown implies how important his presence was for British interest in Korea. British control over the Korean Customs, which was largely independent of either the Royal Court or the Korean Government, became strong leverage over Korea. Since customs revenue was one of the few stable income sources in the country, any loan should take the customs revenue as security. Moreover, As Gubbins pointed out, British control over the Customs played a significant role to control the balance of influence between Russia and Japan. Additionally, this incident clearly demonstrated the close co-operation amongst London, Tokyo and Seoul to defend Brown's current position. It confirmed the facts; that they had shared interests within the country; and that their close co-operation would be beneficial to each other.

## Anglo-Korean Confrontation over the Proposed Loan of Yunnan Syndicate, 1901-2

### Britain's Reaction to the Yunnan Syndicate Loan

The Yunnan Syndicate (Syndicat de Yunnan), whose loan offer threatened Brown's position as the Chief Commissioner of the Korean Customs, was established in 1898 by the French and the British nationals with the main objective of the acquisition of mining concessions in Yunnan Province, China. Its concession for 60 years covered a half of Yunnan Province and they were authorised to dig for all kinds of minerals within their concession.<sup>641</sup> In 1900, Min Yong-Chan, who was taking part in Paris Exposition 1900 was introduced by French Minister in Korea Victor Collin de Plancy to the Yunnan Syndicate and they discussed if the Syndicate would be interested in rendering a loan to the Korean Government. Once Plancy returned to Korea for his duty in March 1903, Auguste Cazalis, the representor of the Yunnan Syndicate, immediately came to Korea for the negotiations with Yi Yong-Ik.<sup>642</sup> Yi Yong-Ik had a great interest in establishing a sound currency system, but the Korean Government did not have a sufficient amount of fund to underpin it. Hence, since 1899, Yi Yong-Ik

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<sup>640</sup> Gubbins to Cheh, 5 May 1901, Inclosure 3 in No. 67, FO 405/127; Gubbins to Lansdowne, 25 June 1901, No. 68, FO 405/127.

<sup>641</sup> Chi-Ming Hou, *Foreign Investment and Economic Development in China, 1840-1937* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 68.

<sup>642</sup> Hong, 'Unnam, Taehanshindik'eit'üch'agwan'gwa Yölgangüi Kaeip (1901-1902) [Yunnan and Taehan Syndicated Loans and the Intervention of the Foreign Powers: 1901-1902]', p. 49.

contacted several Powers for a loan.<sup>643</sup> Furthermore, the idea of a French loan was also consistent with the Korean Government's intentions to establish a closer and friendlier relationship with Great Powers other than Japan and Russia.<sup>644</sup> On the other hand, Yunnan Syndicate mainly focused on the acquisition of mining concessions in Korea.<sup>645</sup> Thus, both parties signed the loan contract on 16 April 1901. The terms of the loan contract were the following;

- *Article 1: Cazalis provides a loan of 5,000,000 wons, which is approximately 12,500,000 francs, to the Korean Government. This loan will be used for establishing gold and silver coinage in Korea, and to exploit coal mines in Pyongyang. Two-thirds of it would be delivered in the form of gold bullion and one third would be in the form of silver bullion.*
- *Article 2: The interest of the loan is 5.5% per year and the rate of bank commission is 10%. The loan and its interest are paid for 25 years.*
- *Article 3: The loan is paid in 25 instalments and each instalment equals is paid each year. The Korean Government pays to a bank designated by Cazalis, in form of what Cazalis demands; or gold; or silver; or other foreign currencies.*
- *Article 4: If the Korean Government fails to pay it in time, then the collection of the Customs revenues would be facilitated.*<sup>646</sup>

Gubbins became aware of the Yunnan Syndicate loan while meeting Cazalis on 20 April 1901. While Cazalis told him that the Korean Government would grant an important mining concession in return for a loan, Gubbins believed that the loan would destabilise Brown's position as the Chief Commissioner of the Korean Customs.<sup>647</sup> Furthermore, after surveying the nature of the loan, Gubbins concluded that he should have requested not to support the loan if he knew it for four main reasons.<sup>648</sup> Firstly, Gubbins pointed out that the loan had been negotiated by Yi Yong-Ik, who led recent attacks on Brown's position as the Chief Commissioner of the Customs. He also pointed out

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<sup>643</sup> Na, 'Iyongigüi Hwap'yegaehyöngnon'gwa Ilbonjeirünhaenggwön [The Currency Reform Attempted by Lee Yong-Ik and First Bank's Notes of Japan]', pp. 79–80.

<sup>644</sup> Hong, 'Unnam, Taehanshindik'eit'üch'agwan'gwa Yölgangüi Kaeip (1901-1902) [Yunnan and Taehan Syndicated Loans and the Intervention of the Foreign Powers: 1901-1902]', p. 50.

<sup>645</sup> Hong, 'Unnam, Taehanshindik'eit'üch'agwan'gwa Yölgangüi Kaeip (1901-1902) [Yunnan and Taehan Syndicated Loans and the Intervention of the Foreign Powers: 1901-1902]', p. 50.

<sup>646</sup> CIK, No 2, Vol. 15.

<sup>647</sup> *Gubbins to Lansdowne*, 21 April 1901, No. 32, FO 405/127.

<sup>648</sup> *Gubbins to Lansdowne*, 26 April 1901, No. 36, FO 405/127.

that he was a prominent pro-Franco-Russian figure, suggesting his action had been encouraged by the Russian the French and Legation.

Secondly, he believed that the influx of such an amount of money would “not only encourage them [the Korean Government] in their present reckless expenditure but also to lead to further disorganisation of the finance of the country” without supervision by qualified foreigners.<sup>649</sup> It demonstrates Gubbins’ perception on the status of the Korean Government, whose efficiency was below satisfaction. He also suspected that the term “exploiting Pyongyang coal mines” had intended to disguise the construction of the Seoul-Uiju railway, which he believed to have been encouraged by the Russian Government for strategic reasons.<sup>650</sup> Thirdly, Gubbins believed that Brown, as the Chief Commissioner of the Customs, should have been consulted if the Customs revenue was taken as security for the loan. Lastly, Gubbins argued that the Customs revenue should be used for the improvement of navigation on the coast of Korea.<sup>651</sup> He also criticised that a syndicate registered in London should have consulted its operation with the British representative in the country.<sup>652</sup>

Cazalis explained the nature of the loan to reduce any suspicion on the British side. Firstly, he argued that the Yunnan Syndicate’s interest was not in Korean loan but mining concession and that the loan was only provided in return for the mining concession. He clarified that the loan would not be provided if the concession was not granted by the Korean Government. Secondly, the main objectives of the loan, stipulated in the contract, were just nominal. Cazalis argued that the Korean Government would be at liberty to use the loaned money for their own wills other than the development of Pyongyang coal mines. Thirdly, Cazalis explained that this French syndicate had registered in London only because of the favourable terms of English Company Law. However, Gubbins still suspected that they might have deliberately recruited British shareholders for “silencing any opposition”.<sup>653</sup>

Gubbins’s suspicion still did not vanish when Cazalis and Yi Yong-ik modified some terms of the original contract to the following;

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<sup>649</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 26 April 1901, No. 36, FO 405/127.

<sup>650</sup> The British Legation understood that French engineers were employed for the construction by the Korean Government of the Seoul-Uiju Railway. *Gubbins to Salisbury, 20 October 1900, No. 82, FO 405/99; Gubbins to Salisbury, 20 October 1900, No. 83, FO 405/99.*

<sup>651</sup> The urgent improvement of lighthouse had been discussed amongst foreign Representatives. *Gubbins to Salisbury, 26 September 1900, No. 73, FO 405/99; Gubbins to Salisbury, 11 October 1900, No. 80, FO 405/99; Gubbins to Salisbury, 4 December 1900, No. 3, FO 405/127.*

<sup>652</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 26 April 1901, No. 36, FO 405/127.

<sup>653</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 30 April 1901, No. 40, FO 405/127.

- Interest on loan to be raised from 5.5% to 6%, in return for which banker's commission of 10 % to be waived.
- A limit of six months to be given in which to supply the gold and silver bullion for the loan.
- A foreign bank in Japan or Shanghai to be selected as the medium for repayment.
- Loan to be repayable in less than twenty-five years if Korean Government desires it.<sup>654</sup>

Gubbins found the wording of this modified agreement very "defective".<sup>655</sup> The agreement lacked the starting date of "six months" given to choose between gold and silver. Neither no price per ounce nor the rate of exchange between gold and silver was clarified in the agreement as well. Furthermore, regarding the medium of for repayment, Gubbins also reminded that "agencies of Russo-Chinese Bank are established at both Shanghai and Yokohama" and suspected Russia's engagement in the loan.<sup>656</sup>

To avoid Britain's opposition to the French loan, Herbert Bourke, the British represent of the Yunnan Syndicate in London, suggested adding a clause that "the Chief Commissioner of Customs and the Commissioner at any open ports should be English for the period during which the loan may run".<sup>657</sup> However, Gubbins declined the suggestion by arguing that "Customs service in Korea is largely recruited from Chinese Customs, and is, as in China, international in character" even if it would be possible.<sup>658</sup> Therefore, after careful considerations, Gubbins suggested that the loan should be definitely cancelled; and that The Yunnan Syndicate's attempt to gain mining concessions would be backed only if the Customs revenue would not be pledged to any concession.<sup>659</sup> London also approved his suggestion and instructed not to give any support to the loan on the ground that the Customs revenue should not be pledged as security for it.<sup>660</sup>

Britain's reaction to the Yunnan Syndicate loan reaffirms the two core principles of Britain's Korea policy. Firstly, it was another example that Britain would never question the position of John McLeavy Brown as the Chief Commissioner of the Korean Customs. While Brown was being severely challenged by Yi Yong-ik and the Korean Government, London and the British Legation were

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<sup>654</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 4 May 1901, No. 47, FO 405/127.

<sup>655</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 4 May 1901, No. 47, FO 405/127.

<sup>656</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 4 May 1901, No. 47, FO 405/127. For an account of the Russo-Chinese Bank, see Kazuhiko Yago, 'The Russo-Chinese Bank (1896–1910): An International Bank in Russia and Asia', in *The Origins of International Banking in Asia*, ed. by Shizuya Nishimura, Toshio Suzuki, and Ranald C. Michie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Olga Crisp, 'The Russo-Chinese Bank : An Episode in Franco-Russian Relations', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 52.127 (2019), 197–212.

<sup>657</sup> Lansdowne to Gubbins, 3 May 1901, No. 46, FO 405/127.

<sup>658</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 5 May 1901, No. 48, FO 405/127.

<sup>659</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 5 May 1901, No. 48, FO 405/127.

<sup>660</sup> Lansdowne to Gubbins, 7 May 1901, No. 52, FO 405/127.

convinced that the French loan with the collection of the Customs revenue as security would eventually remove British control over the Korean Customs, which Britain had benefitted from since his appointment. Secondly, Britain was anxious about any possible Russian advance towards Korea, especially when Russian troops were stationed in Manchuria as a result of the Boxer Rebellion.<sup>661</sup> Although French Minister Plancy said the loan had been negotiated not by the French Government but by a French national,<sup>662</sup> Plancy asked Pavlov if the loan could be backed by the Russo-Chinese Bank.<sup>663</sup> Britain was unaware of the talk between the French and Russian Ministers but Britain would not tolerate any action that would lead to enhancing Russia's strategic position in Korea.

#### Anglo-Japanese Opposition to the Loan

Britain was not the only foreign state who were concerned about the negotiated Yunnan Syndicate loan. Japan also feared that the loan would seriously undermine Brown's position as the Chief Commissioner of the Korean Customs as well as Japan's interests that could be protected by his presence in the country. Hayashi especially mentioned that the Customs revenue should not be taken as security.<sup>664</sup> Having understood that the French and the Russian Ministers denied their involvement in the Yunnan Syndicate loan,<sup>665</sup> Hayashi attended an audience with Kojong and demanded not only the abandonment of the Yunnan Syndicate loan but also the dismissal of Yi Yong-ik, who was responsible for the French loan and the Korean Government's attack upon Brown.<sup>666</sup> Gubbins first thought Hayashi had misunderstood his position regarding Brown's vacation of official residence buildings.<sup>667</sup> However, it is conceivable that Hayashi intended to use this dispute over the Yunnan Syndicate loan and the attack upon Brown as pretexts to remove Yi Yong-ik from his position permanently. As of May 1901, Yi Yong-ik was the most influential and powerful aristocrat within the Korean Government. When the question of the French loan was brought forward to the

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<sup>661</sup> Despite their concern, Britain preferred the maintenance of the status-quo over Manchuria via the Anglo-German agreement. See L K Young, *British Policy in China, 1895-1902* (Oxford: Oxford : Clarendon, 1970, 1970), pp. 281–94.

<sup>662</sup> CIK, Katō to Hayashi, 30 April 1901, No. 26 (Confidential).

<sup>663</sup> However, Pavlov declined Plancy's suggestion on the basis that the Russian Government would not support other Power's loan to Korea. Boris Dmitrievich Pak, *Rōsia Wa Han'guk [Russia and Korea]*, pp. 582–583.

<sup>664</sup> CIK, Hayashi to Ch'oe Yōngha, 19 April 1901, No. 28.

<sup>665</sup> CIK, Katō to Hayashi, 30 April 1901, No. 26 (Confidential).

<sup>666</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 5 May 1901, No. 50, FO 405/127.

<sup>667</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 5 May 1901, No. 50, FO 405/127.

Council of State, half of the council were in favour while the other half were against the plan. However, he was sufficiently influential to gain Kojong's support at that time.<sup>668</sup>

Gubbins asked London if he should support his demand for the dismissal of Yi Yong-ik, which might seem like a drastic action, but he was given an instruction to fully support Hayashi's proposal to remove Yi Yong-ik from his current position. Gubbins was also instructed to oppose the French loan on the ground that the Custom revenues should not be pledged as security.<sup>669</sup> Once Kojong hesitated to proceed with the loan in face of strong opposition from Britain, Japan and the United States,<sup>670</sup> French Minister Plancy exerted great pressure upon the Korean Government.<sup>671</sup> However, until 15 May 1901, Plancy did not realise that the Yunnan Syndicate was registered in London and once he knew the fact, he stopped pressing the Korean Government for a while.<sup>672</sup>

While the confrontation between France and the Anglo-Japanese coalition was deepened, Gubbins came up with a plan to protect Brown's position. Brown has accounts with his name at the HSBC and the Japanese Bank in Korea and he deposited Customs revenue in those accounts. Since both banks were supervised by either Britain or Japan, Brown would be able to keep his absolute control under the Customs revenue by not allowing the money to be used for the repayment of the loan.<sup>673</sup> This proposal was fully approved by Britain and it became his ground to claim that his position was now protected by the British and Japanese Governments.<sup>674</sup>

However, when Gubbins had an audience with Kojong, he had an impression that it was Kojong who favoured the idea of the French loan and encouraged the attack against Brown. Regarding the Anglo-Japanese opposition to the Yunnan Syndicate loan, Kojong made several questions to the Japanese and British Ministers.

*His Majesty [Kojong], in referring to the contract for the loan, questioned me as to the reason for negotiations with concerned a British Syndicate having been conducted through the medium of the French Legation. Mr Hayashi was also asked by the Emperor why the loan contract was not opposed*

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<sup>668</sup> Na, 'Iyongigüi Hwap'yegaehyöngnon'gwa Ilbonjeirünhaenggwön [The Currency Reform Attempted by Lee Yong-ik and First Bank's Notes of Japan]', p. 71; Hong, 'Unnam, Taehanshindik'eit'üch'agwan'gwa Yölgangüi Kaeip (1901-1902) [Yunnan and Taehan Syndicated Loans and the Intervention of the Foreign Powers: 1901-1902]', p. 54.

<sup>669</sup> Lansdowne to Gubbins, 7 May 1901, No. 52, FO 405/127.

<sup>670</sup> The United States Minister Allen's opposition stemmed from his personal confrontation against him, not from the customs revenue issues. Allen to Hay, 11 May 1901, No. 346, *Korean-American Relations* Volume 3.

<sup>671</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 14 May 1901, No. 55, FO 405/127.

<sup>672</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 15 May 1901, No. 58, FO 405/127.

<sup>673</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 15 May 1901, No. 57, FO 405/127.

<sup>674</sup> MacDonald to Lansdowne, 16 May 1901, No. 60, FO 405/127.

*by the Japanese Government on the ground that a portion of the Japanese loan was still unpaid (...) and further why, if the loan contract was viewed with disfavour by the British Government, they had not opposed it more actively.*<sup>675</sup>

It must be reminded that Yi Yong-Ik, who had been accused by the British and Japanese Ministers for the plot, was the Minister of Household in charge of Kojong's assets. Furthermore, despite speculation by Gubbins and Hayashi that the new influx of money would be only wasted by corrupt Korean aristocrats, Yi Yong-Ik had been trying to establish a stable currency system since 1898 and a large amount of foreign loan was crucial to funding it. Brown's initial attempt to gain a loan from the HSBC was also authorised by Kojong to establish a sound currency. Therefore, it was plausible that Kojong wanted the Yunnan Syndicate loan to succeed as much as Yi Yong-Ik did. Kojong's questions about the nature of their opposition indicate; that Kojong understood why those Powers strongly opposed his loan scheme; and that Kojong realised his currency reform would have to be postponed again.

#### Transfer of Loan to Syndicate of Korea

The Yunnan Syndicate loan did not proceed further, not only because of the strong opposition from the British and Japanese Legations but also because Mr Cazalis, the representer of the Yunnan Syndicate in Korea, died of illness in September 1901.<sup>676</sup> However, in December 1901, the Korea Syndicate, who had taken over the Yunnan Syndicate's loan rights, resumed their efforts to re-negotiate the terms of the loan.<sup>677</sup> Baron de Bellecize, a French man and the representer of the Korea Syndicate, negotiated the new loan with Yi Yong-Ik and other Korean officials. The Japanese Legation in Seoul also became aware of the new negotiations by the Korea Syndicate because Baron de Bellecize made an enquiry to a Japanese steamship company about the cost of "bringing a large quantity of gold bullion from Antwerp".<sup>678</sup> Acting Japanese Minister Hagiwara Shuichi and British Minister to Korea John Jordan agreed that this loan would once again damage the independence of the Korean Customs and decided to protest against it.

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<sup>675</sup> Gubbins to Lansdowne, 25 May 1901, No. 64, FO 405/127.

<sup>676</sup> Na, 'Iyongigüi Hwap'yegaehyöngnon'gwa Ilbonjeirünhaenggwön [The Currency Reform Attempted by Lee Yong-Ik and First Bank's Notes of Japan]', pp. 72–73.

<sup>677</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 28 December 1901, No. 79, FO 405/127.

<sup>678</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 28 December 1901, No. 5, FO 405/129.



On 7 January 1902, Baron de Bellescize visited Jordan for a meeting to discuss the possibility of British support for the loan, which he hardly expected. Jordan argued; that the Customs revenue should not be pledged to security for a loan; and that the loan to Korea would not be profitable because a 3,000,000 wons of the Japanese loan of 1895 had been quickly squandered by corrupt Korean officials in months.<sup>679</sup> However, Baron de Bellescize showed his hope that the newly injected money via the Korea Syndicate loan would be used in a beneficial way and two days later notified the British Legation that the first shipment of gold bullion, worth 1,000,000 wons, would be delivered by a steamship from Antwerp by the end of February 1902.<sup>680</sup>

Having noticed that the Korea Syndicate loan had been proceeding, Jordan, in his audience with Kojong on 14 January 1902, he argued that the new loan would place the Korean Customs in the hands of “a Power which had no interest in the foreign trade of Corea”.<sup>681</sup> While stating how serious consequences were faced by a country with a disoriented loan, Jordan mentioned Siam as a fine example of its stable economy and argued that “Siamese finances had attained a flourishing condition under British direction”.<sup>682</sup> When Kojong asked why Jordan opposed the proposal that had been made by British capitalists, Jordan also argued that “the political stability of Corea was of more importance to us than the interests of a few individual British subjects” and that “the history of all countries showed that political independence was incompatible with national insolvency”.<sup>683</sup> Comparing with the fact that Japan and Russia opposed to the Korea Syndicate loan because the Syndicate should not be granted a monopoly of mining concession,<sup>684</sup> Britain’s opposition was on the basis that the British control over the Korean Customs should not be disturbed. It shows where Britain’s interest in Korea lay.

After facing opposition from other Powers, on 28 January 1902, Foreign Minister Park Che-Sun notified the cancellation of the Korea Syndicate loan to the French Legation on the grounds; that it had no legal ground for the Yunnan Syndicate to transfer the loan rights to the Korean Syndicate without the agreement from the Korean Government; that the Yunnan Syndicate still remained intact and thus the contract with them was now expired because the Yunnan Syndicate had not delivered the agreed sum of gold bullion.<sup>685</sup> Considering the fact that Kojong worried about the

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<sup>679</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 8 January 1902, No. 8, FO 405/129.

<sup>680</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 8 January 1902, No. 8, FO 405/129.

<sup>681</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 15 January 1902, No. 13, FO 405/129.

<sup>682</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 15 January 1902, No. 13, FO 405/129.

<sup>683</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 15 January 1902, No. 13, FO 405/129.

<sup>684</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 28 December 1901, No. 5, FO 405/129; Jordan to Lansdowne, 17 January 1902, No. 14, FO 405/129.

<sup>685</sup> Hong, ‘Unnam, Taehanshindik’eit’üch’agwan’gwa Yölgangüi Kaeip (1901-1902) [Yunnan and Taehan Syndicated Loans and the Intervention of the Foreign Powers: 1901-1902]’, p. 74.

compensation the Korean Government had to make in case of cancelling the loan, it was a very practical and reasonable approach by Park Che-Sun to compromise the current situations. Therefore, by the end of February 1902, Jordan reached a conclusion that this case was closed, even though French Minister Plancy insisted on the proceeding of the loan until June 1902.<sup>686</sup>

Since Kojong repressed civil rights movement in 1898 and became an absolute monarch in the following year, Kojong aimed to achieve two objectives; the neutralisation of Korea and self-strengthening. However, changing circumstances in and outside Korea severely challenged Kojong. With the fear of the Boxer Rebellion and a possibility of Russian penetration, Kojong wanted to gain international recognition of the neutrality of Korea. However, it was largely ignored by Japan, who feared it would weaken their strong influence within the country; and the United States, whose Korea policy was not to interfere with the Korean affairs. Britain, who had once considered the idea in the past, was indifferent towards Kojong's neutralisation of Korea.

However, Britain vigorously reacted when Britain saw an opportunity to obtain concessions or when Britain's interest was directly offended by Korea and did not hesitate to resort to coercion and threat when their national obtained a mining concession at Ŭnsan mine or when Brown's position was attacked by Yi Yong-ik and other Korean royalists who aimed to deliver their own reform and modernisation programme by pledging the Customs revenue as security for a foreign loan. One of Kojong's main foreign policies was to invite other foreign Powers into Korea and let them balance each other. However, Britain's attempts to deter the Korean Government's efforts to gain a foreign loan show that such an approach, especially when Korea was incapable of maintaining its own independence, was improper.

Moreover, it was an important stage for the development of Anglo-Japanese cooperation within Korea. Through a series of events that threatened Brown's control over the Korean Customs, both Governments reaffirmed that they have shared interests in Korea. The closed tie became much stronger when the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was signed on 30 January 1902 and Britain recognised Japan's special interest in Korea. Having failed to gain the French loan from the Yunnan and Korea Syndicates, Kojong and Korea now had to cope with the upcoming Russo-Japanese rivalry.

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<sup>686</sup> Hong, 'Unnam, Taehanshindik'eit'ŭch'agwan'gwa Yŏlgangŭi Kaeip (1901-1902) [Yunnan and Taehan Syndicated Loans and the Intervention of the Foreign Powers: 1901-1902]', pp. 76-77.

## Chapter 5: Britain and the Question of Korean Independence, 1903-1905

### Anglo-Korean Relations before the Outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War

#### The Expansion of Russian Influence over Korea, 1903

The tension between Japan and Russia escalated again after the outbreak of the Boxer Rebellion of 1900. When the uprisings spread nationwide and reached Manchuria, the rebels destroyed Russia's Chinese Eastern Railways. Qing China, who had been encouraged by the nationwide anti-foreign uprising, declared war against Great Powers and in July 1900. Since then, even Qing Chinese forces united with the Boxers and started to attack the Russians. Therefore, in justification of protecting the property and safety of Russians in the region, Russia deployed their troops to Manchuria and by October 1900, Russia placed Manchuria under their military occupation.<sup>687</sup> In August 1900, Russia announced its intention to withdraw in the near future. Despite the withdrawal announcement, however, Russia attempted to negotiate several separate agreements with Qing China to maintain their military presence in Manchuria. Due to Russia's aggressive attempts, Great Powers showed their grave concerns towards the Russian occupation of Manchuria.

The United States Secretary of the State John Hay announced its support for Open Door policy in Manchuria, by stating "the territorial and administrative entity" of China should be respected.<sup>688</sup> Britain and Germany also concluded the Anglo-German Agreement, also known as "Yangtze Agreement", in October 1900 and supported the maintenance of the Open-Door trade within China.<sup>689</sup> However, the Anglo-German Agreement became no longer valid when German Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow announced that "there were no German interests of importance in Manchuria, and the fate of that province was a matter of absolute indifference to Germany".<sup>690</sup> Therefore, Britain needed a new strategic partner in Northeast Asia.

Meanwhile, Japan became threatened by the Russian occupation of Manchuria. By 1900, Japan's main principle of Korea policy was so-called "*Mankan-kokan-Ron* (The Exchange of Manchuria and

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<sup>687</sup> For an account of the Russian occupation of Manchuria, see Malozemoff, *Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904*, pp. 131-44.

<sup>688</sup> John White, *Transition to Global Rivalry: Alliance Diplomacy and the Quadruple Entente, 1895-1907* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 78.

<sup>689</sup> For a detailed account of the Anglo-German Agreement, see Young, *British Policy in China, 1895-1902*, pp. 193-213.

<sup>690</sup> Young, *British Policy in China, 1895-1902*, p. 290.

China”, the idea of Russia and Japan recognising Korea and Manchuria as each other’s sphere of influence. However, when Russia offered the naturalisation of Korea while occupying Manchuria, which obviously wanted Japan to recognise the status quo, came to a realisation that Manchuria and Korea were inseparable. Therefore, both nations started to negotiate an alliance and on 30 January 1902, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was officially concluded.<sup>691</sup> In response to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, France and Russia also issued a mutual declaration that either party would reserve a right to join any conflict if a third party disturbed the status quo in Northeast Asia, which was practically no significance.<sup>692</sup>

Therefore, under the international pressure calling for the withdrawal of troops, on 8 April 1902, the Qing Court and the Russian Government signed a convention regarding Manchuria and set a three-stage evacuation plan. The convention included the following;

*The Russian Government provided that no disturbances arise and that the action of other Powers should not prevent it, to withdraw gradually all its forces from within the limits of Manchuria;*

- *Within six months from the signature of the Agreement to clear the south-western portion of the Province of Mukden [Liaoning] up to the River Liao-che [Liao River] of Russian troops, and to hand the railways over to China,*
- *Within further six months to clear the remainder of the Province of Mukden [Liaoning] and the Province of Kirin of Imperial Troops,*
- *Within the six months following to remove the remaining Imperial Russian troops from the Province of Heilungchiang [Heilongjiang].<sup>693</sup>*

Russia respected the agreement and conducted the first withdrawal of their troops from the agreed region in October 1902. However, right after the first withdrawal, Sergei Witte, who preferred a moderate and diplomacy-based policy regarding Manchuria, became powerless. Witte believed that Russia had been overstretched to Northeast Asia without properly colonising Siberia

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<sup>691</sup> For an account of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, see Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894–1907*.

<sup>692</sup> Malozemoff, *Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904*, p. 174.

<sup>693</sup> Ian Nish, *The Origins of The Russo-Japanese War* (London: Longman, 1985), pp. 140–41.

and that the withdrawal of troops from Manchuria would be much more beneficial for Russia.<sup>694</sup> However, his failure to deliver separate agreements with Qing China seriously undermined his influence within the Russian Government. Instead, Aleksandr Mikhailovich Bezobrazov and other hawkish officials successfully earned the Tsar's favour and became the advocates of new expansionist policies in Northeast Asia. They argued that it would be a catastrophic mistake for Russia if Russian troops were withdrawn in the second phase.<sup>695</sup> Furthermore, although the seizure of any territory in Korea would not be desirable because it would eventually lead to a war against Japan, Bezobrazov was particularly interested in placing Korea under the Russian sphere of influence. Thus, since early 1903, Russia resumed their aggressive policies by demanding concessions.

First, Russia attempted to gain railway concession between Seoul and Ŭiju. In January 1903, a Russian national visited Korea and showed his interest in taking over the concession of railway construction that was believed to have been given to the Cie de Fives-Lilles, a French company, or advancing fund to the Korean Government for the completion of the railway on the security of the railway itself.<sup>696</sup> Once his intention was known, Japanese Minister Hayashi Gonsuke warned that "its acceptance would not be consonant with Japanese interests in the Peninsula".<sup>697</sup> Ŭiju was located on the Yalu River and the northern border with Manchuria. Thus, its potential to be linked with railway networks in Manchuria had great strategic values.<sup>698</sup> Hayashi coerced that the Japanese government would demand great privileges if the railway concession was granted to Russia.<sup>699</sup> Therefore, under Japanese pressure, Korean Foreign Minister Cho Byung-Sik rejected the Russia offer on the grounds; that the Korean Government had an agreement only regarding the origin of materials and the nationality of engineers; and that the Korean Government were still responsible for the construction of the railway.<sup>700</sup> Stein showed his satisfaction that the railway between Seoul and Ŭiju would be constructed by the Korean Government and not transferred to any other Foreign Power. Jordan observed that Russia seemed "not prepared to undertake extensions of that great work into Corea, but, in the meantime, she wishes to exclude her Japanese rival from the field which she reserved for herself".<sup>701</sup>

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<sup>694</sup> Malozemoff, *Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904*, pp. 202–204.

<sup>695</sup> Synn, *The Russo-Japanese Rivalry over Korea, 1876-1904*, pp. 332–36; Nish, *The Origins of The Russo-Japanese War*, pp. 168–74.

<sup>696</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 24 February 1903, No. 6, FO 405/137.

<sup>697</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 24 February 1903, No. 6, FO 405/137.

<sup>698</sup> White, *Transition to Global Rivalry*, p. 13.

<sup>699</sup> Hayashi to Korean Minister for Foreign Affairs, Inclosure 1 in No.7, 18 February 1903, FO 405/137.

<sup>700</sup> Corean Minister for Foreign Affairs to Russian Charge d'Affaires, Inclosure 3 in No. 7, 20 February 1903, FO 405/137.

<sup>701</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 26 March 1903, No. 9, FO 405/137.

However, Russia's main interest in northern Korea was their lumber concessions on the Korean bank of the Yalu River, which had been granted in 1896. While Kojong was staying at the Russian Legation in September 1896, J. I. Bryner, a Russian merchant from Vladivostok, successfully gained timber concessions on the banks of the Yalu River and the Tumen River and Ullŭngdo Island. In return, Bryner must pay 25% of profit to the Korean Government.<sup>702</sup> On 3 January 1897, Bryner officially established "Korea Timber Company" and started a business. In May 1898, after one year, then Russian Minister in Seoul N. G. Matiunin became interested in the purchase and running of the timber company. Matiunin approached Bezobrazov and other close aides of Tsar Nicholas II and shared his idea. At that time, Russian military instructors and finance advisors were withdrawn from Korea after facing strong opposition from the Korean public and other foreign Powers, especially Britain.

While the focus of Russia's Northeast Asia policy shifted from Korea to Manchuria after the Russian acquisition of the lease of Lüshun and Dalian, these officials preferred the idea of purchasing the timber concession and establishing "The East Asiatic Development Company". The Tsar also entertained the proposal because it would give Russia a pretext to intervene in the affairs of Korea and enable them to check Japanese influence within the country.<sup>703</sup> The Tsar promised to inject 70,000 rubles as an investment to start a survey in the country.<sup>704</sup>

With the full support, an expedition team, led by Williams Neporozhnev from the Russian Ministry of Household, was sent to Korea for surveying the forests and mines in northern Korea. He purchased Bryner's timber company and inherited his timber concession as well. After negotiating with Kojong, he gained the rights to establish a special management organisation to supervise the mines belonging to the Korean Ministry of Household.<sup>705</sup> Neporozhnev also demanded other concessions including railway construction between Chinnamp'o via Wonsan to the Russo-Korean border, road construction and mining along the railways. They aimed to obtain exclusive concessions throughout northern Korea and "build a wall against the Japanese who had already settled in southern Korea".<sup>706</sup> Russian Chargé d'affaires Aleksandr Ivanovich Pavlov worried that it would be

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<sup>702</sup> Young-Shim Kang, 'Kuhanmal Rōshiaūi Samnimigwōnhoektūkkwa Samnimhoesaūi Ch'aebōlshilt'ae [Russia's Forest Concession and Deforestation in the Late Yi Dynasty]', *Ihwasahakyōn'gu*, 18 (1988), pp. 483–502 (pp. 485–87).

<sup>703</sup> Boris Dmitrievich Pak, *Rōsia Wa Han'guk [Russia and Korea]*, pp. 622–23.

<sup>704</sup> Y.S. Kang, 'Kuhanmal Rōshiaūi Samnimigwōnhoektūkkwa Samnimhoesaūi Ch'aebōlshilt'ae [Russia's Forest Concession and Deforestation in the Late Yi Dynasty]', p. 490.

<sup>705</sup> Later, when Jordan and Morgan selected Ŭnsan mine for mining concessions, it became a ground for Stein to oppose their proceeding. Jordan to Salisbury, 9 December 1899, No. 3, FO 405/99.

<sup>706</sup> Boris Dmitrievich Pak, *Rōsia Wa Han'guk [Russia and Korea]*, p. 625.

catastrophic if Russia provoked the Korean Government and other foreign Powers by demanding too many concessions throughout a large area and controlling them exclusively.<sup>707</sup>

As Pavlov concerned, the Korean Government declined to grant other concessions but the establishment of a supervision organisation for the Korean Ministry of Household.<sup>708</sup> Moreover, Matiunin, who had organised all the important correspondences between the Korean Government and Neporozhnev's team thanks to his position as a diplomat, was newly assigned to Melbourne, Australia in October 1898.<sup>709</sup> Therefore, the ambitious establishment of the East Asiatic Development Company' had to wait until 1901. To maintain their concession, in 1900, Russian Minister Pavlov asked the Korean Government to extend the validity of the timber concession in northern Korea because the timber company should have established within three years from when Neporozhnev had newly acquired the timber concession.<sup>710</sup>

Considering Bezobrazov's immense interest in northern Korea, it was not a coincidence that Bezobrazov reclaimed Russia's timber concessions when Russia decided to pursue "the New Course" in Manchuria and Korea. On 21 March 1903, former Russian Minister to Seoul N. G. Matiunin reported the following;

*Russia now needs commercial interest to exert influence upon Korea, especially since military instructors, finance advisors and the Russo-Korean Bank had withdrawn in 1898. We must use the timber concession, originally granted to Bryner, and fortify along the Yalu river in preparation for a possible war against Japan. The validity of the timber concession will soon expire so we must establish a timber company operating along the Korean-Manchurian border. The concession must be protected by military troops.*<sup>711</sup>

Therefore, on 27 February 1903, Russia officially notified that a Russian firm would activate their timber concession and on 4 March 1903, the operate timber business.<sup>712</sup> Before long, the Korean Government officially complained to the Russian Legation that Russian and Chinese labours should

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<sup>707</sup> Boris Dmitrievich Pak, *Rösia Wa Han'guk [Russia and Korea]*, pp. 625–26.

<sup>708</sup> Y.S. Kang, 'Kuhanmal Röshiaüi Samnimigwönhoektükkwa Samnimhoesaüi Ch'aebölshilt'ae [Russia's Forest Concession and Deforestation in the Late Yi Dynasty]', p. 491.

<sup>709</sup> Malozemoff, *Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904*, p. 181.

<sup>710</sup> Y.S. Kang, 'Kuhanmal Röshiaüi Samnimigwönhoektükkwa Samnimhoesaüi Ch'aebölshilt'ae [Russia's Forest Concession and Deforestation in the Late Yi Dynasty]', p. 492.

<sup>711</sup> Park, *Rosia Kungnip Munso Pogwanso Sojang Han'guk Kwallyon Munso Yoyakchip [The Summary of Korea-Related Documents at the Russian National Archives]*, p. 230.

<sup>712</sup> Stein to Yi Tochae, 27 February 1903, No. 2007, Vol. 2, *A'an* [Russia Collection].

not work at Paengmasan Mountain because the mountain was outside the basin of the Yalu River.<sup>713</sup> Paengmasan Mountain was located on the way between Uiju and Pyongyang and well-known for its strategic values since the pre-modern era. Furthermore, since April 1903, Russians started to purchase land and houses in Yongamp'o, a port located at the mouth of the Yalu River. It was also an important port as a link between Uiju and Lüshun. It was not a treaty port and thus any purchase by foreigners of land and house was strictly prohibited.<sup>714</sup> However, Russia still insisted that Paengmasan Mountain and Yongamp'o were located on the basin of the Yalu River, where they claimed to have timber concessions. These activities show that the Russian timber business in the Yalu River area had some military purposes.<sup>715</sup>

#### The Yongamp'o Crisis and the Question of Opening the Yalu River, 1903

In May 1903, the British Legation was alarmed when a French national was granted a mining concession in Changsong, P'yöngando Province. Changsong was located on the Korean basin of the Yalu River, where Russia claimed their timber concessions, and it was 80 kilometres away north of Uiju. British Minister John Jordan believed that the choice of the mine was made on the basis that it was very accessible to the Russian timber concession and Uiju. Jordan saw it as a strategically significant action to establish a foothold of the Russo-French alliance on the Korean basin of the Yalu River.<sup>716</sup> Moreover, the British Legation in Seoul noticed that the Russian company had already started to establish houses and workshops at Yongamp'o, a small port at the mouth of the Yalu River. The Korean government appealed to the Russian Legation that such buildings should not be erected until the full-scale survey of the Yalu River basins had been undertaken by the Korean and Russian authorities in accordance with the timber concession agreement of 1896. Nevertheless, the Russian Legation denied any responsibility for the matter and asserted that it should be discussed between the Korean government and the Russian timber company.<sup>717</sup>

The British Legations in Seoul and Tokyo also understood that approximately 40 Russians and 100 Chinese workers were present at Yongamp'o with a small detachment of Russian guards and they were mostly engaged in building operations. Since there was no significant military activity, Jordan

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<sup>713</sup> Yi Tochae to Stein, 24 April 1903, No. 2039, Vol. 2, *A'an*.

<sup>714</sup> Yi Tochae to Stein, 5 May 1903, No. 2043, Vol. 2, *A'an*.

<sup>715</sup> Y.S. Kang, 'Kuhanmal Röshiaüi Samnimigwönhoektükkwa Samnimhoesaüi Ch'aebölsilt'ae [Russia's Forest Concession and Deforestation in the Late Yi Dynasty], pp. 494–96.

<sup>716</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 19 May 1903, No. 2, FO 405/138.

<sup>717</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 3 June 1903, No. 20, FO 405/138.



and British Minister in Japan Claude MacDonald believed the current statue was “quiescent”.<sup>718</sup> However, when E. Laporte, a French national and the commissioner of the Korean Customs, sent a report after surveying the Yalu River, the British Legation realised that the Russian seizure of Yongamp’o was on a larger scale than expected. In his report, Laporte explained the status of Yongamp’o in the following;

*(...) the Russian Timber Concession Company have, under the name of their Korean interpreter, purchased about 50 acres of ground in the best location, which they are inclosing with a mud wall, and where they are erecting barracks, &c. Fifty Russians and more than 200 Chinese, who live in barracks within the enclosure, are at work, and though no soldiers in uniform are seen, the presence of horses and rifles seems to indicate a military status. (...) The Selection of a site at Yong Am Po suitable for an open port is difficult, as the Russians have the best location; but probably a section alongside and behind the above location is as good as ca be found.*<sup>719</sup>

Furthermore, according to the Chinese Legation, Russian officers hired hundreds of Chinese mounted bandits. Allegedly, approximately 500 bandits had been recruited and deployed to the Korean basin of the Tumen River for the protection of timber concessions.<sup>720</sup> Having received various reports regarding Russian aggression on the Korean border, Jordan reached a conclusion that “the Russian Timber Concession is probably only a screen to cover ulterior political designs and to extend the policy which is being pursued in Manchuria to the adjacent portions of Corea”.<sup>721</sup>

Additionally, Russia also attempted to connect their telegram lines between Andong on the Chinese side of the Yalu River and via Yongamp’o to Uiju without any permission from the Korean Government. Russia’s measure could have secured a direct communication line between Korea and Europe via Manchuria, which was Russia’s “long-desired junction”.<sup>722</sup> The Korean Government instructed local officials to remove these telegraph poles in justification that it had not been consulted with the Korean Government beforehand. The Russian Legation strongly condemned the Korean Government’s action by saying that the telegraph lines would have used for the Timber Company. However, the Korean Government notified that Russia’s claim had no ground because the

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<sup>718</sup> MacDonald to Lansdowne, 11 June 1903, No. 24, FO 405/138.

<sup>719</sup> Report by M. Laporte, Inclosure 1 in No. 63, FO 405/138.

<sup>720</sup> Tseng Ch’i to Hsu, 8 May 1903, Inclosure in No.57. FO 405/138.

<sup>721</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 24 June 1903, No. 63, FO 405/138.

<sup>722</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 21 July 1903, No. 127, FO 405/138.

question of telegraph line “can only be decided between the Timber Company and His Majesty the Emperor” and warned that “it will give rise to unpleasant consequences” if the Timber Company would retry to erect telegraph poles again.<sup>723</sup> With a military presence at Yongamp’o, Russia’s attempts to connect telegraph lines with Manchuria indicates that the timber concessions along the Yalu River had military considerations.<sup>724</sup>

Russia’s suspicious activities at Yongamp’o and the Yalu River threatened other foreign Powers, especially Japan, who had been antagonised by the Russian occupation of Manchuria and Russia’s hard-line policies towards Korea, and Britain, who were in an alliance with Japan. In response to this, Jordan argued that the Korean government should be advised to open the Yalu River to foreign trade.<sup>725</sup> It is worth noting that Britain chose the opening of Yongamp’o as a countermeasure to the Russian fortification of its concessions along the Yalu River. In the past, when Russia attempted to secure an exclusive concession on Chōryōngdo Island and Masanp’o Island, Britain also took the same approach against Russia. Furthermore, since Russia occupied Manchuria in 1900, the Open-Door policy provided a justification for other Foreign Powers to urge Russia to respect the integrity of China.<sup>726</sup>

By 1902, British and Japanese Ministers recognised their shared interests in the affairs of Korea and closely co-operated with each other. Once the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was concluded, both parties agreed with the following;

- *The Japanese and British Government should decide all important questions for Korea concerning home and foreign affairs.*
- *A loan to Korea should only be made by England, Japan or the United States.*
- *The employment of foreign advisors should be discouraged.*
- *Unity should be promoted between the Korean Court and the Korean Government.*<sup>727</sup>

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<sup>723</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 28 July 1903, No. 138, FO 405/138.

<sup>724</sup> For an account of the history of telegraph networks, see Ahvenainen Jorma, *The Far Eastern Telegraphs - The History of Telegraphic Communications between the Far East, Europe and America before the First World War* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tied Akatemi, 1981); Headrick Daniel, *The Invisible Weapon: Telecommunications and International Politics 1851-194* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>725</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 25 May 1903, No. 11, FO 405/137.

<sup>726</sup> MacDonald to Lansdowne, 2 July 1903, No. 4, FO 405/138.

<sup>727</sup> Allen to Hay, 20 June 1902, No. 476, *Korean-American Relations*, Volume 3.

Thus, Jordan and Hayashi agreed to take joint action. They believed that any direct confrontation against Russia would worsen the current situations. Hence, they decided to appeal to Kojong for the opening of the Yalu River to international commerce.<sup>728</sup> In his audience with Kojong on 15 July, Jordan tried to persuade Kojong to open the Yalu River for two reasons; commercial and political. Jordan asserted that the Yalu River was already being used for a massive scale of foreign trade, which could have been an additional source of tariff revenues if the Korean government officially opened the river to foreign traders. Meanwhile, Jordan also warned about Russia's territorial designs in Korea. He emphasised that Manchuria was slipping into the hands of Russians since Russia had successfully gained a firm footing and expanded influence throughout the region. Jordan argued that Korea would be turned into "the state of tutelage" by a similar process of what had happened in Manchuria, but He insisted that it could be deterred by opening the Yalu River and Yongamp'o to international trade.<sup>729</sup> Japan also took parallel but more aggressive approaches. While arguing that the Yalu River should be open to all nations, Japan relocated their consul from Pyongyang to Uiju to deal with consistent conflicts between Japanese lumber traders and Chinese employees of the Russian Timber Company.<sup>730</sup>

In the audience, Kojong assured Jordan that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would take the question into account immediately. However, Foreign Minister Yi To-Chae, despite his support for the idea of the opening of the Yalu River, admitted that the Korean Government were seriously concerned about Russian opposition.<sup>731</sup> In June 1903, Russian Minister Pavlov already told Jordan that Russia would oppose the opening of the Yalu River because "the Russian Government considered that the moment was inopportune for opening to foreign trade a place in close proximity to Manchuria while the question relating to that portion of the Chinese Empire was still pending".<sup>732</sup> It was compatible with Russia's main stance on the opening of the Yalu River, which was seen by Russia as "a countermeasure against Russia's interest".<sup>733</sup> In fact, the Korean government did not hasten to open the river. In response to Jordan's continuous demands, the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs replied that the opening procedure would take a long time due to surveys to be undertaken before the opening of the river.<sup>734</sup> In September 1903, Jordan particularly mentioned

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<sup>728</sup> Kwang-Ho Hyun, 'Taehanjegukki Yongamp'osagõne Taehan Chuhanilbon'gongsaüi Taeüng [A Counterplan of The Japanese Ministers to the Great Han Empire for Yongampo Incident]', *Inmunhakyõn'gu*, 34.1 (2007), pp. 247–72 (pp. 258–61).

<sup>729</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 17 July 1903, No. 126, FO 405/138.

<sup>730</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 6 July 1903, No. 106, FO 405/138.

<sup>731</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 23 July 1903, No. 135, FO 405/138.

<sup>732</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 25 June 1903, No. 85, FO 405/138.

<sup>733</sup> Boris Dmitrievich Pak, *Rõsia Wa Han'guk [Russia and Korea]*, p. 638.

<sup>734</sup> Yi Chung-Ha to Jordan, 21 July 1903, Vol. 2, *Yõng'an*.

Yongamp'o would be the most suitable and convenient port for foreign trade but it was again ignored by the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>735</sup>

However, the Korean Government was not the only one responsible for the delayed opening of the Yalu River. By the mid-October of 1903, Foreign Minister Yi Ha-Yong told Jordan that he and his predecessor favoured the idea of opening the Yalu River, but nothing was decided yet. His answer indicated that it was Kojong who was deterring the opening of the port.<sup>736</sup> Jordan suspected that Kojong was waiting for the outcome of the Russo-Japanese negotiation they entered in August 1903.<sup>737</sup> As Kojong thought, Yongamp'o was one of the significant points in the Russo-Japanese negotiations. The Intelligence Department of the British Ministry of War evaluated the strategic importance of Yongamp'o in the following;

*Further, Russia is already in possession of a Concession at Yong-am-po, at the mouth of the Yalu, where she is reported to be building fortifications, and if, as seems certain, she remains in Manchuria, she will eventually extend her military posts higher up the river. Having done this, she may be expected gradually to acquire a preponderating influence in the neutral zone, and as far south at Seoul, where, according to the Japanese Minister in London, she has commenced "serious intrigue".*<sup>738</sup>

Later in November 1903, even the United States joined Japan and Britain to exert pressure upon the Korean government for the opening of Yongamp'o.<sup>739</sup> The United State Secretary of State John Hay was promoting the Open-Door policy as the main principle of the United States' foreign policy, especially regarding Northeast Asia.<sup>740</sup> Therefore, although the United States Minister Horace Allen personally believed; "that it had been fully explained to them that Üiju was some distance from the Yalu and a place of no commercial importance" and "that the river at that point was not navigable by steamers", the United States Government took the opening of the Yalu River as the main

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<sup>735</sup> Jordan to Yi Chung-Ha, 4 September 1903, vol. 2, *Yöng'an*.

<sup>736</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 18 October 1903, No. 37, FO 405/139.

<sup>737</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 13 October 1903, No. 31, FO 405/139.

<sup>738</sup> *Memorandum respecting the Russo-Japanese Negotiation*, Inclosure in No. 29, FO 405/139. For an account of the question of Yongampo during the Russo-Japanese negotiations, see Won-soo Kim, 'The Russo-Japanese War and the Crisis Diplomacy of Great Han Empire - Connected with Yongampo Incident'.

<sup>739</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 10 November 1903, No. 88. FO 405/139.

<sup>740</sup> White, *Transition to Global Rivalry*, p. 78.

objective.<sup>741</sup> Despite such pressure, Kojong hesitated to open the port to foreign trade until the Russo-Japanese War broke out and Seoul was occupied by Japanese troops.<sup>742</sup>

Korea's reluctance to open Yongamp'o might stem from Kojong's expectation that it would keep Russia and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance competing each other so that neither would eventually take a dominant position within the country. However, the delayed opening of the port was not a measure to counterbalance Japanese influence. Russians revealed their obvious ambition in Korea by fortifying Yongamp'o without any consent from the Korean government.<sup>743</sup> Rather, it was more conceivable that Kojong was waiting to see the result of negotiation between Russia and Japan, which had started in August 1903. If Russia and Japan reached an agreement regarding Yongamp'o before Kojong making any decision, then Kojong would have just accepted it without upsetting either party. However, Kojong failed to see either country's design regarding Korea. Japan wanted Russian recognition of Japan's special influence in Korea while Russia only wished to acknowledge Japan's influence in Korea south of the 39th parallel. Therefore, both governments failed to reach an agreement and Kojong missed an opportunity to open Yongamp'o by their own decision.

#### The Question of Korean Neutrality in Event of War

While taking a very careful policy regarding the Russo-Japanese confrontation over Yongamp'o, Kojong aimed to obtain international recognition of the neutrality of Korea before any war between Russia and Japan broke out. The neutralisation of Korea was Kojong's long-desired foreign policy and he enjoyed the idea since the 1880s. Kojong's latest attempt to gain the international guarantee of the neutrality of Korea was 1900 when Kojong sent Cho Byung-Sik to Japan to discuss Japan's support for the neutrality of Korea. Kojong also continuously contacted the United States for their support to gain an international assurance of the neutrality of Korea. However, such attempts eventually came without fruit because; Japan saw Korea as a country incapable of defending the fate of the nation on their own; and the United States were reluctant to interfere with the affairs of Korea.<sup>744</sup>

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<sup>741</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 11 December 1903, No. 101, FO 405/146.

<sup>742</sup> Hyun, 'Taehanjegukki Yongamp'osagöne Taehan Chuhanilbon'gongsaüi Taeüng [A Counterplan of The Japanese Ministers to the Great Han Empire for Yongampo Incident]', pp. 261–64.

<sup>743</sup> Young-hee Suh, *Taehanjegung Chöngch'isa Yöngu* (*The Political History of the Korean Empire*) (Seoul: Söuldaehakkyo Ch'ulp'anbu, 2005), pp. 134–44.

<sup>744</sup> Seung-Young Kim, *American Diplomacy and Strategy toward Kora and Northeast Asia, 1882–1950 and After*, pp. 24–26.

Other foreign powers also considered the idea of Korean neutrality. In 1896, London proposed the recognition by Japan, China, Russia and Britain of the neutrality of Korea when it was rumoured that Russia and Japan would reach an agreement regarding Korea. However, Britain soon abolished the proposal because Britain had no desire to take a leading role.<sup>745</sup> In 1901, while occupying Manchuria, the Russian Government proposed the neutrality of Korea to the Japanese Government. However, Japan believed that Russia only intended to gain recognition by Japan of Russia's special interest in Manchuria while making Korea a neutral zone. Russia's attempt to neutralise Korea continued again in 1902. Russia invited the United States, along with Japan to organise an international neutralisation of Korea. However, the United States' traditional foreign policy did not allow a high level of engagement with other Great Powers and thus Russia again failed to reach an agreement.<sup>746</sup>

In 1903, as the tension between Russia and Japan escalated to a point where a war between two countries now seemed inevitable, Kojong tried to organise the international recognition of the neutrality of Korea. To do so, Kojong aimed to improve their relationship with Britain by a reconciliation. On 24 July 1903, General Yi Kun-Taek, one of Kojong's favourites, came to the British Legation to deliver Kojong's message. According to Yi, Kojong was very disappointed and concerned when he heard that Britain had entered an alliance with Japan. Even Jordan could feel Kojong's frustration because Kojong's attitude to Jordan had become "from having been uniformly cordial and friendly" to "somewhat cold and unsympathetic".<sup>747</sup> However, General Yi Kun-Taek added that watching Britain's actions taken after the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Kojong reached a conclusion that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had exercised "a moderating and restraining influence upon the policy of our allies [Japan] in Corea".<sup>748</sup> He particularly mentioned Article 1 of the alliance, which stipulated the recognition of the independence of China and Korea and showed his belief that Britain would make efforts to support the integrity of Korea.<sup>749</sup>

On 18 August 1903, the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs instructed Korean representatives Russian and Japan to contact both Governments to consult neutrality of Korea if war broke out between two countries. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested a definitive reply from both Governments, stating none of their operations would take place within the boundary of the

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<sup>745</sup> Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894–1907*, pp. 43–44.

<sup>746</sup> Seung-young Kim, 'Russo–Japanese Rivalry Over Korean Buffer at the Beginning of the 20th Century and Its Implications', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 16.4 (2005), 619–50 (pp. 632–36).

<sup>747</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 25 July 1903, No. 137, FO 405/138.

<sup>748</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 25 July 1903, No. 137, FO 405/138.

<sup>749</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 25 July 1903, No. 137, FO 405/138.

country.<sup>750</sup> Nonetheless, Japan declined the Korean offer in an excuse that it would cause a misunderstanding as if Japan's aggression were very likely.<sup>751</sup>

On 21 January 1904, just before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, Korea declared the maintenance of neutrality in event of war to European Powers, the United States and Japan, thanks to helping from the French Legation in Seoul. Japan and Russia, two belligerents, declined to accept the declaration because they had no intention to neutralise the country that would inevitably become the main battlefield. Besides them, other Great Powers acknowledged the declaration of Korean neutrality. Kojong and the Korean Government were so encouraged by the broad acceptance of their neutrality declaration and relieved that the country would not be caught up in the upcoming war. Kojong even intended to turn this wartime declaration into permanent neutrality and hence ordered his government to consult with the French Legation for procedures required.<sup>752</sup>

Korea's neutrality declaration was also recognised by Britain. While welcoming Korea's declaration of their neutrality in an event of war, Britain also demanded the Korean government to neutralise Russia's exclusive concessions on the Korean basin of the Yalu River, especially the Russian-seized Yongamp'o, in spirit of their neutrality declaration. Nevertheless, the Korean Government seemed uninterested in hastening to open the Yalu River. The opening of the Yalu River had been deliberately postponed by Kojong in order to avoid any suspicion that Korea would incline to either Russia or Japan. Therefore, once the Korean Government believed to have gained the international recognition of Korea's wartime neutrality, the opening of the Yalu River was not a priority of Kojong's foreign policy any more, especially in comparison with permanent neutrality issues.

On the contrary, Jordan saw the opening of the Yalu River as proof of the Korean Government's commitment and determination to remain neutral. Thus, he believed that the Korean Government were naïve to believe that the country would not suffer from a war between Russia and Japan on the wrong belief that both belligerents would have to respect the neutrality of Korea because of international pressure.<sup>753</sup> Jordan was convinced that the Korean Government should undertake additional measures if they aimed to remove any other's perception of Korea, who were believed to be "cultivating a Russophile policy".<sup>754</sup> Despite his expectation, Jordan had an impression that Kojong, who was very satisfied with the international recognition of neutrality, would not be

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<sup>750</sup> Korean Ministry for Foreign Affairs to Korean Representatives in Japan and Russia, 18 August 1903, Inclosure in No. 6, FO 405/139; Jordan to Lansdowne, 26 August 1903, No. 6, FO 405/139.

<sup>751</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 12 October 1903, No. 107 FO 405/139.

<sup>752</sup> Hyun, *Taehanjegugŭi Taeoejŏngch'aek [The Foreign Policy of the Korean Empire]*, pp. 121–22.

<sup>753</sup> Hyun, *Taehanjegugŭi Taeoejŏngch'aek [The Foreign Policy of the Korean Empire]*, pp. 122–23.

<sup>754</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 30 January 1904, No. 143, FO 405/146.

interested in the opening of the Yalu River to foreign trade any longer. His view was shared by the Japanese and American ministers who jointly requested the opening.<sup>755</sup>

A series of the events prior to the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War obviously demonstrates why Korea's declaration of neutrality in case of war failed to obtain Britain's support. Firstly, the declaration of Korean neutrality was not followed by the neutralisation of Russia's exclusive concessions in Korea. Yongamp'o and Russia's timber concessions along the Yalu River were being fortified by Russians without permission from the Korean Government. However, even after announcing their neutrality, the Korean government did not take any further action to prevent Russia from strengthening their foothold and enjoying their exclusive privileges on the Yalu River. Therefore, Britain was convinced that the Korean government deliberately neglected or even encouraged the expansion of Russian influence in the country. Secondly, it was critical that the Korean Government did not obtain the recognition of neutrality by Japan and Russia, two belligerents who would fight over Korea. If either belligerent determined to occupy Korea and facilitate the territories for their strategic purposes during the war. Consequently, Britain and other foreign powers were not fully convinced to support the neutralisation of Korea by all means. At this point, Jordan rather believed that "a peaceful solution might place them under the political tutelage of Japan".<sup>756</sup>

## Anglo-Korean Relations during the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-5

### British Pressure on the Korean Court after the Outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War

On 8 February 1904, the Russo-Japanese War broke out with Japan's sudden attack against a Russian fleet at Lüshun, even though the declaration of war was officially delivered two days later. On the same day, 3,000 Japanese troops landed at Chemulpo and headed for Seoul. The British Legation, as a representative of an ally of Japan, they fully cooperated with the Japanese Legation since the outbreak of the war. The first joint action by the British and Japanese representatives was to advise Kojong not to leave the palace. On 7 February, one day before the outbreak of the war, Japanese Minister Hayashi contacted the British Legation and told Jordan that he had already

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<sup>755</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 30 January 1904, No. 143, FO 405/146.

<sup>756</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 1 February 1904, No. 49, FO 405/147.



consulted Kojong and advised him to stay at the palace.<sup>757</sup> He asked Jordan to discourage Kojong if he would like to escape the palace and look for refuge at the British Legation. Hayashi also allowed Jordan to give any assurance that Kojong would not be disturbed by Japanese troops if he remained at the palace. Having already arranged their response to Kojong's refuge attempt, Jordan gave the same advice when Foreign Minister Yi Chi-Yong visited the British Legation just minutes after Hayashi's departure and asked for Kojong's asylum at the British Legation.<sup>758</sup>

Jordan's action fundamentally stemmed from Britain's traditional non-intervention policy regarding Korea. Kojong already made similar examples. For instance, when Japanese assassins killed Queen Min at the palace, 4 months later, he fled to the Russian Legation and his presence at a foreign legation severely damaged Japanese influence in the country. Due to a short distance between Kyöngun'gung Palace and the Britain Legation, Kojong asked about the possibility of seeking asylum at the British Legation in case of emergency after his departure from the Russian Legation. Britain always advised the British Legation in Korea not to engage with palace intrigues or any other deep intervention in the affairs of Korea. His rejection of Kojong's proposal was in alignment with Japanese minister Hayashi's intention. Since thousands of Japanese troops were heading for Seoul, it was necessary for Japan to seize the capital of the country and place Kojong under their control. Jordan facilitated the Japanese advance by urging to the Korean Foreign minister that Korean troops should restrain from taking any action against Japanese troops "which might result in useless bloodshed".<sup>759</sup> Therefore, Kojong had to give up the idea of seeking asylum at the British Legation and decided to rely upon the British government's good offices in accordance with the Anglo-Korean Treaty of 1883.<sup>760</sup>

While the British Legation in Seoul took actions in alignment with the Japanese Legation to exert pressure upon the Korean government, they also took a very cautious approach to avoid any direct confrontation against Russia. On 9 February, once Seoul fell under the *de facto* occupation of Japanese troops, Japan wanted to repel the Russian Legation staff and guards from Seoul. Japanese minister Hayashi believed that it would be more acceptable for the Russian minister if the withdrawal request was delivered not by him as a representative of the enemy but by the British minister.<sup>761</sup> However, the Foreign Office in London did not want to interfere with the matter because they were concerned the British Legation would be responsible for misrepresentation.<sup>762</sup> Hence, instead

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<sup>757</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 8 February 1904, No. 63, FO 405/147.

<sup>758</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 8 February 1904, No. 63, FO 405/147.

<sup>759</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 1 February 1904, No. 49, FO 405/147.

<sup>760</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 10 February 1904, No. 227, FO 405/146.

<sup>761</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 9 February 1904, No. 213, FO 405/146.

<sup>762</sup> Lansdowne to Jordan, 10 February 1904, No. 220, FO 405/146

of the British minister, the French Legation took charge of all arrangements for the evacuation of the Russian Legation from Seoul.<sup>763</sup>

London was very concerned about “misrepresentation” because the proposed mediation might give a false impression that Britain was actively participating in this war. According to Article 2 of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Britain should remain neutral if Japan was involved in a war against Russia over Korea. Thus, if the mediation was regarded by Russia as active support for the Japanese side, it could lead Britain into a war against Russia and its ally France. The possibility of a conflict against France was greatly reduced by the signing of the Entente Cordiale on 8 April 1904, but generally, Britain’s Korea policy during the Russo-Japanese War concentrated on helping Japan consolidate its control over Korea while avoiding any direct confrontation with Russia.<sup>764</sup>

#### Britain’s Response to the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1904

Immediately after the Japanese occupation of Seoul, Britain became aware of the signing of the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1904 on 23 February 1904. The Japan-Korea Treaty of 1904 stipulated the following;

- Article 1. In the matter of Administrative Reform, Korea will give effect to Japan’s disinterested advice.
- Article 2. The security of the Imperial family of Korea is guaranteed by Japan.
- Article 3. The integrity and independence of Korean territory is guaranteed by Japan.
- Article 4. Should there be any encroachment by a third Power, or any internal outbreak, or should the Imperial Family be in any danger or the integrity of the Empire be menaced, Japan will take such action as she may deem necessary and Korea will grant her, in such case, all facilities. In order that Japan may be able to carry out her undertaking, she will be allowed to make use of certain places in Korea for military purposes.
- Article 5. No arrangement which is inconsistent with the stipulations of this Agreement can be made by either party with a third Power without the mutual consent of both nations.

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<sup>763</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 11 February 1904, No. 226, FO 405/146.

<sup>764</sup> For an account of the Russo-Japanese War, see Nish, *The Origins of The Russo-Japanese War*; R Kowner, *Rethinking the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-5* (Laiden: Brill, 2007).

- Article 6. Matters not specified in this Agreement but connected with it shall be determined between the Korean Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Japanese Representative.<sup>765</sup>

Japan explained to Britain that the nature of the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1904 was “concluded with a view to facilitating military operations, in order to show that such use is with the full cognisance and consent of the Korean Government, and not in disregard or in violation of the independence and territorial integrity of Korea”.<sup>766</sup> Hayashi explained to Jordan that the Japan-Korea Treaty was merely a duplication of the Japanese proposal to Russia during their mutual negotiations in 1903, which had been declined by the Russian government.<sup>767</sup> Furthermore, Hayashi warned the Korean government that they should not consult the service of foreign advisors without his consent.<sup>768</sup> Although the Japanese Government argued that it was not intended to damage the integrity of Korea, which was stipulated in the Treaty, other articles clearly indicated the infringement of Korea’s sovereignty in administration, diplomacy and military.

However, despite Japan’s explanation that it obtained full consent of the Korean Government, Britain noticed that the Treaty had not been voluntarily signed by the Korean government. Jordan was aware that Yi Yong-ik, then Minister of Finance and War and a well-known anti-Japanese politician, was forced to leave for Tokyo under pressure from the Japanese Legation because he had rejected to sign the agreement for “his reluctance”.<sup>769</sup> Jordan also believed that the agreement, which had authorised Japan to intervene in Korea’s domestic affairs and to utilise Korean facilities for Japanese troops, intended to violate the independence of Korea. Nevertheless, Jordan did not raise any question regarding the Japanese violation of the Korean neutrality. He believed that Korea was incapable to defend the integrity of the country on its own and thus eventually Korea “would be obliged to act at the dictation of the belligerent power which first occupied her capital.”<sup>770</sup> From Jordan’s point of view, the violation of the neutrality of Korea was inevitable since the Korean Government failed to secure it by diplomacy or military means.

Therefore, Jordan refrained from intervening in the neutrality issues when Russia warned that Korea would be regarded as a belligerent nation if Japan received any support from Koreans during the war. In response, Hayashi simply suggested that the Korean Government should instruct their

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<sup>765</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 23 February 1904, No. 300, FO 405/146; Jordan to Lansdowne, 24 February 1904, No. 304, FO 405/146.

<sup>766</sup> Lansdowne to MacDonald, 26 February 1904, No 325, FO 405/147.

<sup>767</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 25 February 1904, No. 74, FO 405/147.

<sup>768</sup> Suh, *Taehanjegung Chŏngch’isa Yŏn’gu [The Political History of the Korean Empire]*, pp. 188–200.

<sup>769</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 25 February 1904, No. 74, FO 405/147.

<sup>770</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 25 February 1904, No. 74, FO 405/147.

provincial governors to cut off any communication with Russia.<sup>771</sup> On 20 May, the Korean Government inclined to Japan when Kojong announced the abolition of all treaties and agreements with Russia, including the Russian timber concession of 1896. It was also a result of the advice of the Japanese Government, who emphasised the significance of Korean cooperation during the war.<sup>772</sup> Although it was another step to undermine the neutrality of Korea, the British Legation simply acknowledged the abolition of the treaties with Russia and avoided any interference with it. Britain's connivance at the Japanese control over Korean diplomacy facilitated Japan's consolidation of its influence within the country.

#### Japan's Introduction of Administrative Reforms

Since Japan successfully took control of the Korean Court and Government, Japan decided to undertake administrative reforms in Korea. In June 1904, Japanese Foreign Minister Komura Jutarō informed British Minister to Japan Claude MacDonald that they would initiate reforms in Korea as soon as possible. Komura justified the reform scheme for two main reasons; debased coinage and concessions given by Kojong to foreign merchants. Komura accused Kojong of making a profit with the depreciation of coins by fixing a higher value than its actual worth. Komura and MacDonald agreed that the debased coinage would be seriously damaging to all nations trading with Korea.<sup>773</sup> The second concern was Korean concessions given by Kojong to foreign firms. Komura complained that Kojong and the Korean Court gave these concessions "in the most foolish manner" and were concerned that the Korean government suffered the yielding of concessions.<sup>774</sup> Japanese minister to Korea Hayashi Gonsuke also shared a similar view with MacDonald. MacDonald agreed with Hayashi's scepticism of Korea's self-strengthening and said that the reform of Korea could be only done by two things, "to show strength and to use kindness."<sup>775</sup>

According to Komura's argument, the administrative reform intended to solve the financial issues of the Korean government. Yet, since he criticised Kojong for exploiting the monopoly of the coinage and thoughtlessly giving concessions to foreigners, the main objective of the reform was obviously

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<sup>771</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 15 March 1904, No. 14, FO 405/148.

<sup>772</sup> Suh, *Taehanjegung Chōngch'isa Yōn'gu* [*The Political History of the Korean Empire*], pp. 203–4.

<sup>773</sup> Yi Yong-ik was aware of the problem of debased coinage since the late 1890s and tried to initiate a currency reform. However, his efforts to gain a loan for the funding to establish such a stable currency system were deterred by Japan. Na, 'Iyongigūi Hwap'yegaehyōngnon'gwa Ilbonjeirūhaenggwōn [The Currency Reform Attempted by Lee Yong-ik and First Bank's Notes of Japan]', pp. 77-79.

<sup>774</sup> MacDonald to Lansdowne, 24 June 1904, No. 43, FO 405/149.

<sup>775</sup> MacDonald to Lansdowne, 29 June 1904, No. 44, FO 405/149.

to restrain Kojong's political influence. In August 1904, Hayashi duly requested the reforms to Kojong, which included the reorganisation by a Japanese advisor of the financial administration and the dismissal of foreign advisors currently hired by the Korean Government. Additionally, Hayashi also requested that Durham White Stevens, then foreign advisor to the Japanese Legation to the United States in Washington, should be appointed as an advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>776</sup> Kojong was unhappy with the proposed appointment of Stevens.<sup>777</sup> Therefore, Kojong privately told Jordan that he would prefer a British national as a foreign advisor and asked if he could intervene with Hayashi to make it happen. However, Jordan had no intention to pressure the Japanese minister on the matter and ignored Kojong's request.<sup>778</sup>

In addition to the administrative reforms, the Japanese government also requested the withdrawal of Korean legations abroad.<sup>779</sup> Since the opening of the nation to the world in 1876, Kojong relied upon diplomacy to secure the independence of Korea and thus maintained overseas legations despite the cost. On the contrary, it was for a long time seen by the British legation as a waste of the national budget, which was already insufficient for the modernisation of the administration and military. Jordan believed it was a reasonable step to enhance the financial situation of the country and also assured that Japanese legations would successfully handle Korean overseas affairs.<sup>780</sup> Jordan was particularly happy with Japan's assurance that James McLeavy Brown, a British national in charge of the Korean Customs, would not be affected by the proposed abolition of foreign advisors from the Korean government.<sup>781</sup> Jordan believed that the Korean Customs was largely a British administration and that there would be no difficulty in the renewal of Brown's contract.

After the Yongamp'o Crisis of 1903, Britain was convinced that the Korean government would neglect or even allow the expansion of the Russian influence beyond Manchuria. Furthermore, Britain became very sceptical of the Korean government's capacity to self-strengthen or modernise

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<sup>776</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 13 August 1904, No. 47, FO 405/149.

<sup>777</sup> D. W. Stevens spent most of his career to promote Japan's interests in the international community. For an account of his role in the Korean Government, see Chul-Ho Han, 'Taehanjegung Oegyogomun Sŭt'ibŭnsŭŭi Oegyogwŏn Changakkwa Ch'iniroegyo Ilbonŭi Tokto Kangjŏm Chŏnhurŭl Chungshimŭro [Durham W. Stevens's Control of Korean Diplomatic Affairs and Pro-Japan Diplomacy: The Period of Japan's Seizure of Dokdo]', *Sach'ong*, 79 (2013), 151–80.

<sup>778</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 14 August 1904, No. 48, FO 405/149; Lansdowne to Jordan, 15 August 1904, No. 49, FO 405/149.

<sup>779</sup> Suh, *Taehanjegung Chŏngch'isa Yŏn'gu [The Political History of the Korean Empire]*, pp. 200–204.

<sup>780</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 16 August 1904, No. 87, FO 405/149.

<sup>781</sup> Won-Soo Kim, 'Ilbonŭi Taehanjegung Pohoguk'wawa Yŏnggugŭi Taehanjŏngch'aeng - Yŏngiltongmaenggwa Rŏilchŏnjaengŭl Chungshimŭro [British Policy toward Korea before and after Japan's Protectoration of Korea - Focused on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Russo-Japanese War], *Han'guktongnibundongsayŏn'gu [Journal of Korean Independence Movement Studies]*, 51 (2015), pp. 187–215 (pp. 200–201).

its military and administration. Britain hence agreed to facilitate Japan's occupation of the country and concurred with Japan's administrative reform. Moreover, Japan assured that the position of Brown would not be threatened even if administrative reform would enhance Japan's dominant position in the country. Overall it was a favourable decision for British interests in the country because the Japanese occupation would stop Russian penetration into Korea and the Korean Customs would remain under British influence.

## The Establishment of a Japanese Protectorate over Korea, 1905

### Korea's Final Efforts to Secure British Support

Since the middle of 1904, the Japanese government believed that they were unable to afford a long-term war due to excessive casualties and limited resources and sought a third-party mediator who would arrange a peace negotiation with Russia. Russia was unwilling to enter a peace conference despite their successive defeats in Manchuria and the Korean seas. However, since their unsuccessful campaigns caused internal turmoil and the Battle of Mukden caused severe casualties, Russia agreed to negotiate a peace treaty with the Japanese government through the mediation of United States President Theodore Roosevelt. Therefore, since February 1905, Western newspapers started to report the progress of peace negotiations.

Yi Han-Eung, Korean Acting Minister to Britain in London, noticed that both Russian terms and Japanese terms included clauses that would severely affect the independence of Korea. Russian peace terms stated that "Korea to be placed under Japanese suzerainty" and Japanese peace terms stipulated the "recognition of Japan's influence in Korea as supreme."<sup>782</sup> Since both parties would recognise Japan's suzerainty over Korea regardless of which side would win the war, the Korean government sought British intervention in the peace talks. With the Korean government's instruction emphasising that Britain would be the only power to "give weight in this matter," Yi Han-Eung contacted the British Foreign Office in London and asked for intervention in peace negotiations. He argued that the integrity of Korea was recognised in accordance with the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 and thus it should be respected since Japan was a signatory.<sup>783</sup> However, Lord Lansdowne

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<sup>782</sup> *The Times*, 22 February 1905.

<sup>783</sup> Yi to Lansdowne, 3 March 1905, No. 60, FO 405/158.

rejected any talk with Yi by stating that “any discussion of the terms of peace as affecting Korea would not, in my opinion, be likely to have any useful results at the present moment.”<sup>784</sup>

Yi Han-Eung once again requested the British Foreign Office for intervention in peace negotiations on 22 March but Lord Lansdowne limited himself to acknowledge the receipt of his memorandum on 1 April. Having failed to secure British support, on 12 May, Yi committed suicide in his bedroom to take responsibility for it.<sup>785</sup> Despite Britain’s reluctance, Kojong still wished to gain British support for the integrity of Korea. Immediately after Yi’s suicide, Kojong instructed the Korean legation in Paris, France to take over the duties of the Korean legation in London. Nevertheless, such an attempt was soon stopped by Hayashi and Stevens.<sup>786</sup> Once again, in June 1905, Kojong attempted to directly contact Jordan while avoiding the channel of the Korean Foreign Ministry, which was under the control of Hayashi and Stevens. He requested Britain’s intervention in peace negotiations to guarantee the integrity of Korea that had been stipulated in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Jordan declined the request by pointing out that the negotiations were being undertaken exclusively between Japan and Russia.<sup>787</sup>

It is worth noting that both Yi Han-Eung and Kojong argued that the independence of Korea should be respected in accordance with the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902. At first, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was regarded by Koreans as Britain’s consent to Japan’s superior position in the country, but soon the Korean government used Article 1 of the alliance, which stipulated the integrity of Korea, to justify Britain’s assistance. They also believed that the independence of Korea would be maintained if the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Franco-Russian Alliance were checking each other.<sup>788</sup> However, since the main objective of the alliance was to prevent Russian penetration into China and Korea, Britain had no intention to make military and diplomatic commitment to secure the independence of Korea.

#### Japanese Acquisition of the Korean Customs

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<sup>784</sup> Lansdowne to Yi, 13 March 1905, No. 64, FO 405/158,

<sup>785</sup> Taeyeol Ku, pp. 73–87. Also see Myeong-ho Noh, ‘Hanmal Hangilt’ujaenge Nat’anan Myöngyejasare Kwanhan Yön’gu Ihanüng, Minyöngghwan, Ijunül Chungshimüro [A Study on Honorary Suicide Found in Struggles against Japan during the Late Period of the Korean Peninsular], *Minjoksasang [Korean Association of National Thought]*, 11.3 (2017), 57–100.

<sup>786</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 20 May 1905, No. 3, FO 405/160,

<sup>787</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 19 June 1905, No. 19, FO 405/160,

<sup>788</sup> Taeyeol Ku, pp. 73–76; Seung-young Kim, ‘Russo–Japanese Rivalry Over Korean Buffer at the Beginning of the 20th Century and Its Implications’, p. 629.

Since Japan introduced administration reforms to the Korean Government, the question of the position of James McLeavy Brown, the Chief Commissioner of the Korean Customs. His contract was to be expired in October 1905, but Jordan was confident that his position would be challenged by Japan. While he oversaw the Korean Customs, Japan acknowledged his control over the Korean Customs was beneficial to Japan's interest in Korea and thus both countries often stood together when his position was challenged by Russia in 1898 or Korean royalists in 1900. Moreover, British control over the Korean Customs was one of Britain's key interests in Korea. Therefore, Jordan emphasised the importance of keeping the Korean Customs under the British control, "whatever may be the future political status of Corea" because "the interests of British trade imperatively require the maintenance of the present Tariff arrangements, and that object can best be attained by continued British direction of the Customs Administration".<sup>789</sup>

However, despite Britain's high expectation, Hayashi notified the British Legation that the control of the Korean Customs would be transferred to Japan and advised that Brown should retire of his post of Chief Commissioner once the current contract with the Korean Government was expired. Since it would massively damage Britain's commercial interest in the country, Jordan asked London whether he should "make sure" to see Japan seriously wanted to remove him after the expiry of the contract.<sup>790</sup> However, London advised that "we could not insist on the retention of Mr Brown" against an ally's will, the discussion should be individually made in a friendly manner.<sup>791</sup> Lord Lansdowne once again confirmed that the Japanese Government currently had no intention to employ his service in the new Customs Administration and hence advised to retire on a favourable term.<sup>792</sup> After arranging Brown's retirement, Hayashi duly informed Kojong of his intention to retire from the post of the Chief Commissioner of the Korean Customs.<sup>793</sup>

Brown's replacement was originally arranged by Robert Hart at the Chinese Customs. However, Mr Brown, who came to Korea for the Chief Commissionership, was unhappy with his post and returned to China. It was a fresh reminder to Japanese residents in Korea that the Korean Customs was still affiliated to the Chinese Customs. Hence, some Japanese traders called for the establishment of a Customs Union between Japan and Korea.<sup>794</sup> However, In August 1905, Hayashi took a more realistic approach and officially announced that the Administration of the Korean

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<sup>789</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 8 May 1905, No. 52, FO 405/159.

<sup>790</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 22 August 1905, No. 53, FO 405/160.

<sup>791</sup> Lansdowne to Jordan, 23 August 1905, No. 53\*, FO 405/160.

<sup>792</sup> Lansdowne to Jordan, 26 August 1905, No. 61\*, FO 405/160.

<sup>793</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 28 August 1905, No. 68, FO 405/160.

<sup>794</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 15 August 1905, No. 92, FO 405/160



Customs would be supervised by the Japanese Finance Advisor.<sup>795</sup> Considering it was still an early stage of the colonisation of Korea, detaching the Administration of the Korean Customs from the Chinese Customs to the Japanese Finance Advisor was probably the best measure Japan could take. Moreover, Japan promised the current Treaties between Korea and other Foreign Powers would not be disturbed for a fixed period. Thus, a separate customs management was still required.

#### British Agreement with the Japanese Protectorate Scheme

As it became clear that Japanese influence in Korea would be acknowledged by Russia, Japan started to discuss a protectorate scheme with the British government. In July 1905, Japanese prime minister Katsura Tarō pointed out to MacDonald that the main cause of the Russo-Japanese War was “the habit of the Emperor of Korea, of high Korean officials, of intriguing with foreign Powers, and of making arrangements and agreements in the most irresponsible manner.” He thus argued that the power of the Korean emperor and ministers should be severely restricted “for the peace of the Far East and the future good government of Korea.”<sup>796</sup> While Katsura underlined the necessity of the limitation of the Korean emperor’s power, he also argued that such measures would not affect the treaty rights that foreign powers had been enjoying in Korea. Katsura confirmed that such privileges as consular jurisdiction and customs tariff would be dealt with through the same procedure as Japan’s unequal treaty revision if they should be changed.

Japan’s special rights in Korea was also acknowledged by the revised Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1905. Because the United States and Britain were seen by some Koreans as the potential protectors of Korea due to “good offices” clauses in their treaties, it was important for Japan to convince Britain that a Japanese protectorate would be preferable.<sup>797</sup> Britain also believed that the corrupt Korean government was incapable of maintaining its independence.<sup>798</sup> Therefore, Britain agreed to acknowledge Japan’s right to “take such measures of guidance, control and protection” in Korea.<sup>799</sup> After the Treaty of Portsmouth was concluded on 5 September 1905, the Japanese government once

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<sup>795</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 30 August 1905, No. 10, FO 405/161.

<sup>796</sup> MacDonald to Lansdowne, 31 July 1905, No. 89, FO 405/160.

<sup>797</sup> Seung-Young Kim, *American Diplomacy and Strategy toward Kora and Northeast Asia, 1882–1950 and After*, pp. 58–60.

<sup>798</sup> Seunghoon Han, ‘Ŭlsanŭkyakŭl Chŏnhuhan Yŏnggugŭi Taehanjŏngch’aek [British Policy toward Korean around 1905 Convention], pp. 399–404.

<sup>799</sup> Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894–1907*, pp. 320–22.

again revealed their willingness to establish a protectorate over Korea. Lord Lansdowne agreed to the protectorate scheme and assured that Britain would not oppose it.<sup>800</sup>

The Korean government was very worried that the revised Anglo-Japanese Alliance had officially recognised Japan's right to make Korea a protectorate. Therefore, the Korean Government demonstrated their dissatisfaction to the British Legation and claimed that the new agreement was inconsistent with the Anglo-Korean Treaty of 1883 that had recognised Korea as an independent state.<sup>801</sup> However, at this point, Jordan worried that even an acknowledgement of the receipt of the correspondence would lead to further protests from Kojong and thus he even refused to reply to it. With Britain's consent, the Japan-Korea Protectorate Treaty was eventually concluded on 17 November 1905 and Jordan believed that the protectorate scheme could be justified by Japan's considerations for their own national security since it would prevent Korea from forming an alliance with such a potential enemy as Russia.

Britain concurred in the Japanese establishment of a protectorate over Korea on the basis that the Korean court and emperor had destabilised the regional order. Moreover, Japan's assurance to maintain foreign powers' treaties with Korea was also an important reason why Britain agreed with the protectorate plan. On 1 November 1905, Lord Lansdowne wanted to ensure that Britain's current treaties with Korea would remain undisturbed and he was satisfied when the Japanese government agreed with it.<sup>802</sup> Even after the signing of the Protectorate Treaty, the Japanese government continuously assured that they would respect the open-door policy in Korea and that Korea's treaties with foreign powers would remain in effect.<sup>803</sup>

To sum up, Japan's establishment of a protectorate on Korea met Britain's expectations. First, since Kojong had destabilised the regional order by continuously inviting foreign powers to check Japanese penetration, the Japanese protectorate plan would prevent Russian advances towards the country. Secondly, Japan assured that Britain's treaty rights, which they had been enjoying since the Anglo-Korean Treaty of 1883, would be respected even if Korea became a Japanese protectorate. Britain was hence convinced that they would still maintain their commercial interest in the country thanks to the Japanese assurance.

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<sup>800</sup> Lansdowne to MacDonald, 26 September 1905, No. 91, FO 405/160,

<sup>801</sup> Jordan to Lansdowne, 18 October 1905, No. 18, FO 405/161,

<sup>802</sup> Lansdowne to MacDonald, 1 November 1905, No. 29, FO 405/161; Lansdowne to MacDonald, 9 November 1905, No. 36, FO 405/161.

<sup>803</sup> MacDonald to Grey, 29 December 1905, No. 94, FO 405/161.

## Conclusion

In this research, Anglo-Korean relations between 1895 and 1905 was divided into five chapters; British representative's engagement after the Japanese Murder of Queen Min, 1895; Britain's response to Kojong's presence at the Russian Legation, 1896-7; Kojong's assumption of emperor title and Anglo-Russian confrontation on the southern coast of Korea, 1897-1900; the deterioration of Anglo-Korean relations, 1900-1902; and Britain and the question of the independence of Korea, 1903-1905.

In the first chapter, London and British representatives in Northeast Asia confirmed that the independence of Korea would be the main principle of Britain's Korea policy. However, before long, British Consul-General Hillier had to witness the Japanese murder of Queen Min, which was not just a brutal murder, but also a physical attack against the Royal family. After Japan's failed attempt to deny any link with the murder, Hillier joined other foreign representatives. This group of foreign representatives appealed to the Japanese Legation for the disbandment of the Japanese-drilled Korean guards, who were mobilised by the Japanese Legation and acted against Kojong and the Crown Prince.

While Hillier was cooperating with other foreign representatives and exerting pressure upon the Japanese Legation and pro-Japanese Koreans to prevent further violence, London and the British Minister in Tokyo were concerned that the group of foreign representatives were led and presented by the Russian Minister, whose Government was seen by Britain and Japan as hostile. After receiving a complaint from the Japanese Government that the British representative in Seoul was disturbing the duty of the Japanese Minister, London instructed Hillier not to cooperate with the Russian Minister. This incident shows that Britain's view on the independence of Korea was different to what Korea believed. Thus, although Hillier was extremely unhappy with London's instruction, he had to act upon instruction.

In the second chapter, it was discussed how Russia consolidated its dominance over Korea while taking advantage of the presence of Kojong at their legation. When Kojong sought refuge at the Russian Legation, Kojong attempted to establish a closer tie by sending Min Yong-Hwan as a special envoy to the Russian Government for military and economic assistance. However, the Russian Government showed little interest in full support for the Korean Government and yet Russia used Min Yong-Hwan's proposal as a pretext for Russian penetration and attempted to strengthen Russia's influence in the country by appointing their advisors and establishing a bank to render a loan.

Interestingly, considering the fact that London and British Minister in Tokyo saw Russia so hostile that they had to instruct the British Consul-General in Seoul not to closely work together with Russia, Hiller rather had a positive view of the appointment of Russian military instructors and finance advisors. It was based on his observation that the Korean Government desperately needed someone capable of reducing corruption and improving efficiency within the Korean administration. He was satisfactory with the improvement of Korean troops under the supervision of Russian instructors.

However, once Russia attempted to remove Brown from the post of the Chief Commissioner of the Korean Customs, all British representatives and admirals in Northeast Asia closely worked together to deter Russia's attempts. Britain was even ready to display warships in the Korean Seas as means of protest against the Russian attempt. This exemplifies how much Britain take British control over the Korean Customs seriously. Thanks to Brown, they could maintain the favourable tariff for British products imported to Korea. Britain was the second largest exporter to the Korean Market and thus British control over the Korean Customs was Britain's most important interest in Korea. Furthermore, Brown exploited his extra position as a Finance Advisor and often helped Britain acquire concessions on favourable terms.

In the third chapter, Kojong assumed the title of emperor and officially announced the Empire of Korea in 1897. Kojong, whose foreign policies were based on the concept of international law, always thought to raise his international profile up to an equal point with other sovereigns. After centuries of tributary relations with Qing China, Kojong believed that the declaration of becoming an emperor would be the final step to be on the same level as Qing China and the Empire of Japan. Furthermore, once he had experienced Western representatives' opposition, arguing that the assumption of emperor title would make little difference to their relationship with Korea, Kojong justified the assumption of emperor title by citing international law. Many researches, especially in Korean, see Britain's promotion of the rank of their representatives in Seoul as a formal recognition of Kojong's emperor title. However, Britain's such action stemmed from the inconvenience the British representative in Seoul had to suffer due to his lower rank.

Britain's other concern was Russia's attempted lease on the southern coast of Korea. Britain protested on the basis that any Power should entertain any exclusive prestige in Korea and argued that Russian concessions on Chŏryŏngdo Island and Masanpo should violate the Treaty rights. Although Russia successfully obtained Masanpo concessions, Russia did not fortify or build a naval port on it because the focal point of Russia's Northeast Asia policy shifted from Korea to Manchuria when they gained concessions on the Liaodong Peninsula.

In the fourth chapter, it was mainly discussed the deterioration of Anglo-Korean relations. Kojong, having successfully repressed civil rights movement by the Independence Club in 1898, centralised all the power and became an absolute monarch in the following year. Since then, he also transferred the most valuable mines to the Ministry of Household and granted them to foreign powers only by his approval. However, when Britain activated their mining concession, Britain unilaterally selected Ŭnsan mine, one of the most profitable mines the Ministry of Household had, and it was immediately protested by Yi Yong-ik, the most prominent aristocrat at that time. The confrontation between both parties was so fierce that eventually troops were deployed to prevent any violence. Ŭnsan mine was eventually granted to a British firm.

However, Yi Yong-ik realised that British presence in the country should be weakened to pursue his reform to establish a stable currency. To do so, he needed a foreign loan and the only security they could offer to the creditor was the collection of the Customs revenue. Therefore, Yi Yong-ik attempted to remove Brown from this position of the Chief Commissioner of the Korean Customs. However, he was defeated by British and Japanese representatives and both representative realised that they had shared interests in Korea.

The co-operation was strongly reflected in the Yongamp'ŏ Crisis of 1903. When Russia activated their timber concessions and fortified it, Japan and Britain urged Korea to open the Yalu River basin, where the Russian concession lied on. When international pressure was piled upon and even the Korean Government now favoured the idea of opening the Yalu River to foreign trade, Kojong still rejected it. Once he heard the news that Russia and Japan were negotiating, Kojong waited until the end of the negotiation and pursue what had been decided. However, the negotiation came with no fruit and Ŭiju was eventually open after the Japanese occupation of Seoul. Furthermore, while insisting on closing the Yalu River, Kojong announced the neutrality of Korea in event of war. Britain saw it as an inconsistent gesture because Kojong still declined to neutralise the fortified Russian concession. It influenced Britain's view of Korea, which had been already bad enough, and Britain respected their ally and closely co-operated when Japan established a protectorate over Korea. However, Britain had to lose their control over the Korean Customs.

To sum up, in 1895, when Korea became completely independent and stepped forward, both Britain and Korea assured that the independence of Korea should be maintained by strengthened and modernised Korean Government. However, before long, both parties came to a realisation that it was a dream that would hardly come true. From the British perspective, the Korean Court was full of intrigues and the corruption and inefficiency were also too high to expect that the Korean Government would stand on their own. Form the Korean perspective, Britain's independence of

Korea was more of the Open-Door policy. Britain insisted that Korea should open more Treaty ports to international trade, but they did resort to their military presence when they saw concessions to be nailed. Furthermore, since Britain controlled the Customs revenue, the Korean Government had no right to gain a foreign loan at liberty. Yi Yong-Ik's long-desired currency

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