

The Origins of the Korean War

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ABSTRAKT

Tato práce vysvětluje podíl Japonska na vzniku Korejské války. Zabývá se historií vztahů Koreje a Japonska obecně, a dále rozebírá Japonský vliv na rozdělení poloostrova, polarizaci korejské společnosti, přerušení vnitřního vývoje Koreje a narušení korejské ekonomiky.

Klíčová slova:

Korejská válka, Korea, Japonsko, Korejský poloostrov, japonský imperialismus, Kanhwaská smlouva, Portsmouthská smlouva, Taft-Katsurovo memorandum, 38. rovnoběžka, Japonsko-korejská protektorátní smlouva.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explains Japan's share of the blame for the Korean War. It examines the history of relations between Korea and Japan in general and further examines the Japanese influence on the division of the Korean peninsula, the polarization of Korean society, and the disruption of Korea's internal development and economy.

Keywords:

Korean War, Korea, Japan, Korean peninsula, Japanese imperialism, Treaty of Kanhwa, Treaty of Portsmouth, Taft-Katsura Agreement, 38th parallel, Japan-Korea Protectorate Treaty.

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INTRODUCTION

I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.¹

— Albert Einstein

Events on the Korean peninsula arouse concerns even today, two decades after the end of the Cold War. Although from time to time it may appear that there is at least partial improvement, the situation there is still relatively tense. Even a small spark can again ignite the fifty-year-old smoldering conflagration which is the conflict between North and South Korea. Part of the reason the conflict has been so long-lasting is that the roots of the conflict run very deep. To locate these roots it is necessary to focus not only on Korea but also on its relations with its eastern neighbor, Japan. Although separated by a sea, Japan has significantly interfered in Korean matters and influenced the course of events on the Korean peninsula. This thesis will prove that Japan has laid the foundation on which the conflict known as the Korean War has later arisen.

1. Joseph Prindle, "Albert Einstein Quotes," Albert Einstein Website Online, <http://www.alberteinsteinsite.com/quotes/einsteinquotes.html> (accessed April 22, 2012).

1 HISTORY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN KOREA AND JAPAN

One of the first official contacts between the Korean region and the region of today's Japan dates back to the fourth century AD. During this period, King Geunchogo, who ruled from 346-375 AD in the southwestern part of Korea called Baekje, established friendly relations with the Japanese state of Wa.² Initial economic relations began in the sixteenth century with brisk trade. There was an export of culture and necessities such as grains from Korea, which were bartered for raw materials and luxury goods such as medicine and spices.³ Nevertheless, at that time the most important and significant trade partner for Korea was China, whose goods and knowledge were being imported.

In the late-sixteenth century, Korea for the first time experienced Japanese expansionism. In the Imjin War, 1592 to 1598, Japan invaded Korea. Almost the entire country was occupied by Japanese troops, who massacred and plundered. Finally the Korean army supported by Chinese units forced Japanese intruders to withdraw back to Japan. China willingly supported Korea in its fight against foreign enemies each time her interests and suzerainty over Korea were in danger. Such circumstances gave China the chance to strengthen her influence in this area. Although close relations between Korea and Japan were reestablished in 1609, the enmity of Koreans towards the Japanese had long outlived the Imjin War.

The next wave of Japan's aggressive policies towards Korea came with the Meiji era that started in Japan in 1867. There were four main reasons for aggression against Korea. Besides the desire to spread the imperial glory of Japan abroad, the remaining three reasons were more practical. First, it was necessary to use samurai, who were largely superfluous in these times. Second, the Japanese wanted to secure new markets for their goods. And last but not least, for strategic reasons they needed to make Russian interferences on the Korean peninsula impossible and thus prevent the increase of Russian influence in this area.⁴

2. Carter J. Eckert et. al., *Dějiny Koreje*, ed. Edward W. Wagner, trans. Marta Bušková, Štěpánka Horáková, and Miriam Löwensteinová (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2001), 22-23.

3. Ibid., 94.

4. Ibid., 146.

Japan, however, was not the only state to pressure Korea. Other states had interests there as well. Mainly, western countries and Russia wanted to penetrate into the Korean market. This led to two big foreign invasions. In 1866, an invasion initiated by an anti-Christian pogrom was made by the French, but their troops were defeated and forced to retreat. The second one was an American attack in 1871. The pretense was the destruction of an American ship that had encroached on Korean territory via the Taedong River. This action was not successful and Koreans forced Americans to retreat, just as they had done with the French. These two invasions were not successful in reaching their intentions, which were mainly to open up Korean ports for trade. Moreover, they led to an even more intense strengthening of the official Korean policy of isolation.

This policy of isolation was discontinued on February 22, 1876 after the signing of the Treaty of Kanghwa between Korea and Japan, the first modern treaty in the history of Korea. It contained terms typical of a non-equal treaty since Japan had provoked the conflict and subsequently forced Korea to sign it. One of the most important points of the Kanghwa treaty was the declaration that Korea was an independent state and thus had the same rights as Japan. This way, China could not claim sovereignty over Korea. As a result, Japan could, in the future, begin aggression against Korea without China's interference. Because of the Korean policy of isolationism, its ports were closed for free international trade. This changed with the Kanghwa Treaty. The opening of the Pusan harbour and another two harbours within twenty months was another important aspect of the treaty. Japan also received permission to carry out explorations of Korean coastal waters at its will. This would prove to be a great strategic advantage for future expansion. And the last important point of the treaty was that the Japanese could found settlements in opened harbours where Japanese residents would subordinate to Japanese law instead of Korean law. Additional treaties signed later that year contained more economic advantages for Japanese merchants. The Treaty of Kanghwa was a clever way for Japan to fulfil its economic and military goals on the Asian continent. Nevertheless, the importance for Korea was not negligible because Korea became for the first time in its history a player on the international scene.⁵

5. Ibid., 148.

Korea maintained a strong orientation towards China, which led to the adoption of novelties in both culture and science. It also provided inspiration for internal organization. The inevitable conflict between the Chinese and Japanese influence occurred repeatedly, but the most important time for Korea was 1894-95 when what is now referred to as the Sino-Japanese War took place mostly on Korean territory. After China's defeat, Korea left the Chinese sphere of influence. This way, China lost its opportunities to secure its interests in this area. Nonetheless, intervention of the Triple Entente thwarted Japanese plans for the annexation of Korea. The Japanese would have to wait for a more favourable time.

Within a few years the situation began changing and important world powers made alliances and agreements with Japan. International permission for the Japanese annexation of Korea was granted or directly confirmed in several international treaties. First of the treaties was the secret Taft-Katsura Agreement of July 1905, in which the United States gave unspoken consent to the Japanese annexation of Korea. In exchange, Americans expected formal recognition of their control over the Philippines. Both of these topics were mentioned in the July 1905 meeting between United States Secretary of War William Howard Taft and the Prime Minister of Japan, Count Katsura Tarō. During this meeting, they both agreed to respect the interests of the other party. Count Katsura denied any Japanese interests in the expansion of the empire towards the Philippines:

. . . Secretary Taft observed that Japan's only interest in the Philippines would be in his opinion to have these Islands governed by a strong and friendly nation like the United States, and not to have them placed either under the misrule of the natives yet unfit for self government or in the hands of some unfriendly European power. Count Katsura confirmed in the strongest terms the correctness of his views on the point and positively stated that Japan does not harbour any aggressive design, whatever on the Philippines. . . .⁶

On the Korean issue, Count Katsura observed that "if left to herself after the war, [K]orea will certainly drift back to her former habit of improvidently entering into any agreements or treaties with other powers, thus resuscitating the same international complications as

6. U.S. Secretary of War, *Taft-Katsura Agreement memorandum*, William Howard Taft, 1905, <http://www.icasinc.org/history/katsura.pdf> (accessed March 30, 2012).

existed before the [Russo-Japanese] war.”⁷ Then he continued in depicting Japan basically as a peacemaker which would try to prevent further potential wars and keep the peace in the region. This was fully supported by Secretary Taft, who

. . . fully admitted the justness of the Count’s observations and remarks to the effect that in his personal opinion the establishment by Japanese troops of a suzerainty over [K]orea to the extent of requiring that [K]orea enter into no foreign treaties without the consent of Japan was the logical result of the present war and would directly contribute to permanent peace in the far East.⁸

Another important player in the matter was Great Britain, which also sanctioned Japanese efforts in August 1905 by recognizing Japan’s “paramount political, military, and economic interests in Korea” and taking adequate “measures for guidance, control, and protection in Korea.”⁹ All that remained was consent from the third important power player in the region, Russia. This consent was granted by the Portsmouth Treaty signed in September 1905 that ended the Russo-Japanese War. The Portsmouth Treaty reflected international agreement to Japanese domination over Korea. In the second article of this treaty, the Russian government recognizes the interests of the Japanese Empire in Korea and guarantees that it will not interfere with Japan’s actions in this territory.¹⁰

After the approval of these three powers, the United States, Great Britain and Russia, nothing could prevent the Japanese from seizing control of Korea and preparing for its occupation. These three countries sealed Korea’s fate, although Russia was more of an unwilling participant to the deal, being obligated by the peace conditions ending the Russo-Japanese war. On November 17, 1905, Korea was forced by Japan to sign the Japan-Korea Protectorate Treaty which gave the Japanese Foreign Office carte blanche to handle all aspects of Korean international relations as arranged in the Taft-Katsura Agreement. In 1907, another treaty was signed which allowed Japan to meddle in questions of Korean

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. G. Zay Wood, *China, the United States and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1921), <http://ia600408.us.archive.org/9/items/chinaunitedstate00woodrich/chinaunitedstate00woodrich.pdf> (accessed March 28, 2012).

10. Institute for Corean-American Studies, “The Treaty of Portsmouth 1905,” <http://www.icasinc.org/history/portsmth.html> (accessed March 30, 2012).

internal administration. Eventually, in August 1910, Japan annexed Korea. Simultaneously, the Korean emperor was forced to abdicate and Korea became a Japanese colony.

The Japanese had Korea under their control for thirty-five years. During this time they interfered into all areas of Korean internal and foreign affairs as well as to all social classes. When they forced Korean emperor to abdication, Japanese Governor-General, appointed directly by Japanese emperor, became officially the highest authority and representative of Japanese power. After Japanese power takeover, they announced policy of assimilation. Officially, it should mean Koreans integration into Japanese society and working as one nation with the Japanese for welfare of both nations. In fact, policy of assimilation served as pretence for Korean culture and nation suppression. Most of measures should secure peace and order in the country in order to Japan could use Korea as strategic base for another aggression in Asia. For this purpose, a development of infrastructure and industry started in Korea. However, Korean economy was built for Japanese aims support without any respect to Koreans' needs. That is why only Japanese and their empire profited from the most of measures in Korea, whereas Koreans were just persecuted.

Japanese occupation ended with the final defeat of Japan in World War II in 1945. Then Korea was divided into two occupation zones – American and Soviet. The Japanese occupation had lasted thirty-five years, but Japan had controlled most Korean state issues since 1905. Events in Korea after World War II culminated in the Korean War.

2 JAPANESE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE KOREAN WAR

According to today's more complex view of the Korean conflict, its roots can be found between 1945 and 1950.¹¹ However, the majority of causes reach back to the Japanese occupation of Korea, which created suitable conditions for the later outbreak of the Korean War.

2.1 Division of the Korean peninsula

The plans for dividing the Korean peninsula were not anything new that would be figured out by the Allies during World War II. A very similar division was secretly planned in 1896, when Russia and Japan discussed dividing Korea along the 39th parallel to satisfy their interests in the area of Korea and Manchuria. Nevertheless, this division did not happen until 1945 when a proposal for the division of Korea along the 38th parallel was submitted to the Soviet Union by the United States.

Initially, the United States gave to the Soviet Union basically *carte blanche* throughout Asia, because its military leaders expected a lengthy and severe battle with Japan, which was supposed to inflict a huge number of casualties on America, and therefore they needed Soviet participation in the war against Japan on the Asia mainland. The price for this was leaving Korea and Manchuria in the hands of the Soviet Union. However, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki changed the situation. After the Japanese capitulation, the Soviet military participation in the conflict was not necessary. Moreover, control of this area by the Soviet Union would have endangered American dominion in Japan. For this reason Korea drew the attention of United States foreign policy makers. The main problem was that the Soviet troops had already started advancing through Manchuria and Korea whereas American troops were not able to get there fast enough. U.S. officials decided to divide the Korean peninsula into two occupation zones, an idea they hoped would be accepted by the Soviet Union. The 38th parallel was chosen as the most suitable dividing line due to the fact that it allowed control of the capital city of Seoul by Americans and did not violate the existing administrative organization of Korea. Surprisingly, this proposal was accepted by the Soviet Union, and the United States entered Korea on September 8,

11. Carter J. Eckert et. al., *Dějiny Koreje*, ed. Edward W. Wagner, trans. Marta Bušková, Štěpánka Horáková, and Miriam Löwensteinová (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2001), 247.

1945.¹² The most probable reason why the Soviet Union agreed with this proposal was that Soviet leaders did not want to risk a direct confrontation with their powerful ally, the United States.

If there had not been the Japanese annexation, the occupation by the Soviet and American troops might not have happened and there would have been no division of the Korean peninsula. When examining the reasons for the dividing of the peninsula, it is important to understand why the Allies had concern for Korea being a free and independent country. The liberation of Korea played a crucial role in the defeat of Japan during World War II. As an island country, Japan suffered from a lack of raw materials and that is why Korea, as the nearest neighbor, became the first victim of Japanese aggression. After overrunning Korea, Japan made it the heart of its industry and it was a gateway for further invasions in Asia and the Pacific. This led to intensification of Korean iron ore extraction and logging as well as to the mining of strategically important minerals like gold and tungsten. Given that rich deposits of iron ore were located in the north of the country, this part was newly industrialized. Establishing a free and independent Korea was therefore a means of weakening the Japanese empire. The United States, the United Kingdom and China considered it as a way “to create dissension within the Japanese Empire and help split it up.”¹³ Korea’s importance for the Japanese economy was discussed by these Allies in 1943 at the Cairo Conference. Their considerations are outlined in the document, “The Truth About Korea.”¹⁴

The defeat and overthrow of the Japanese resulted in a geopolitical vacuum on the Korean peninsula.¹⁵ With the fall of the colonial administration, there was no one to run the country and determine its direction. And neither the United States nor the Soviet Union were willing to permit the peninsula to fall under the other’s sphere of influence. The Soviet Union’s considerable interest in Korea came from its geographic location; they wanted to integrate Korea into their system of Far East defense. This would ensure protection of the whole continental coastline, making it difficult for an enemy to establish a

12. Ibid., 241.

13. U.S. Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, “The Truth About Korea,” ca. 1950, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ki-18-4.pdf#zoom=100 (accessed March 28, 2012).

14. Ibid.

15. Carter J. Eckert et. al., *Dějiny Koreje*, ed. Edward W. Wagner, trans. Marta Bušková, Štěpánka Horáková, and Miriam Löwensteinová (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2001), 236.

beachhead during a potential invasion. On the other hand, the United States did not want to have its dominion in Japan seriously endangered by the imminent proximity of a Soviet satellite state, and so it needed a state that was at the very least not hostile to its interests in the region. Americans considered for their defensive perimeter zone stretching from the Aleutians through Japan, the Ryukyu Island to the Philippine Islands included. Yet, they did not want to give up the Korea, which was outside this perimeter. The determination of the American defensive line was confirmed by United States Secretary of State Dean Acheson's speech to the National Press Club on January 12, 1950, in which he stated:

The defensive perimeter runs along the Aleutians to Japan and then goes to the Ryukyus. We hold important defense positions in the Ryukyu Islands, and those we will continue to hold. . . . The defensive perimeter runs from the Ryukyu to the Philippine Islands. Our relations, our defensive relations with the Philippines are contained in agreements between us. Those agreements are being loyally carried out and will be loyally carried out. Both peoples have learned by bitter experience the vital connections between our mutual defense requirements. We are in no doubt about that, and it is hardly necessary for me to say an attack on the Philippines could not and would not be tolerated by the United States. . . .¹⁶

Dean Acheson's next words convinced communist strategists that in case of an attack on South Korea, the United States would definitely not directly help the South Korean government. According to Acheson, it was impossible to protect other areas in the Pacific against military attack. He implied that if an attack occurs on any country outside the American defensive perimeter, "the initial reliance must be on the people attacked to resist it and then upon the commitments of the entire civilized world under the Charter of the United Nations. . . ."¹⁷

Even despite these proclamations, the United States was not willing to permit the formation of a communist puppet state, which would increase Soviet advantages in southeast Asia. This was the reason why the U.S. chose to get involved in Korea. The United States' strong determination to prevent communists from gaining any advantages in this region reflected the Truman Doctrine. It was a strict policy of containment towards communism, introduced by President Harry Truman in 1947, that compelled the United

16. U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson, "Speech on the Far East" (speech presented in National Press Club, January 12, 1950), <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=1612> (accessed March 30, 2012).

17. Ibid.

States to get involved anywhere in the world to protect other states from communist coercion and intimidation.¹⁸

2.2 Polarization of Korean society

Thanks to the Japanese control of the Korean peninsula, Korean society became polarized. The Japanese created by their actions in Korea a basis for the establishment of the later left wing and right wing parties. Polarization further increased as a result of American and Soviet influences during the occupation, leading to diverse political opinions on different parts of the peninsula. It meant right-wing oriented people in the southern American zone, while people with leftist beliefs held sway in the northern Soviet zone.

Wealthy and well educated people were mainly rightists and conservative. Great numbers of them were former collaborators. That is why they were tolerant to the problem of collaboration and supported the old order. Any change in the old social organization would have for these people meant a loss of influence and power. Without their previous high social status, they would have become a target for revenge of other Koreans and would have been punished for their collaboration with the Japanese during colonial period. Not only wealthy and educated Korean people inclined to this political opinion, but also impecunious and less educated people who had formerly served the Japanese state, for example as colonial police. Leftists, such as students, intellectuals, peasants and workers some of whom were directly members of the communist party, came from various backgrounds. Communism for them symbolized power, which was fighting for them to get rid of colonial oppression and bring justice for poor people. These people were politicized mostly by the colonial experience. However, it is not possible to claim that there were just these two opinion camps, for between these two main political opinions stood an indefinite, and very often apolitical, mass.¹⁹

Even under colonial rule the basis for a divided society was laid. The basis for the later rightist-wing was laid when Koreans started to be accepted into the services of the

18. U.S. President Harry Truman, "Recommendation for Assistance to Greece and Turkey," (address to Congress, March 12, 1947), http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/doctrine/large/documents/pdfs/5-9.pdf#zoom=100 (accessed April 25, 2012).

19. Carter J. Eckert et. al., *Dějiny Koreje*, ed. Edward W. Wagner, trans. Marta Bušková, Štěpánka Horáková, and Miriam Löwensteinová (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2001), 237.

Japanese empire. For example, the colonial police offered opportunities mostly to lower class people so that they might improve their lot in life. Almost half of this force was comprised of Koreans, and it included also the secret police which used a wide net of Korean collaborators and informers. However, the arbitrariness and brutal behavior of these Korean forces, misusing their newly gained powers, caused great resentment among Korean inhabitants. This put Koreans against Koreans at an early stage, and foreshadowed later conflict. But also the people who profited from the opportunities which the Japanese colonial system offered, like entrepreneurs or land owners, were generally hated. On top of that, the Japanese used Koreans from the high social and intellectual circles to persuade Korean residents to volunteer their services for Japanese war mobilization purposes. These leading personalities were persuaded or forced to become part of the Japanese propaganda campaign. This led to their discrediting, and ordinary people lost a lot of their leading examples.²⁰

In contrast, the foundations of the future left-wing were laid on completely different principles than collaboration with the colonial regime. It was the guerilla fight against Japanese colonial oppression that defined the leftists. These foundations were formed by the guerrilla warfare mainly in the northern part of the Korean peninsula. This warfare in this location resulted from three main factors: First was the influence of the Japanese, which emanated out from the Japanese mainland, a centre of occupation power and oppression. Because of the desire of the Japanese authorities to destroy this resistance movement and get rid of inconveniences associated with such a movement, these groups tended to concentrate as far as possible from the Japanese mainland. Second, the most effective fighting can be conducted on home soil, which gives the fighters the advantage of being supported by the local people and has a positive psychological effect on them. Thereby the area of warfare remained limited to the territory of the Korean peninsula. The third factor was the proximity of rear support. The Manchuria region, which bordered Korea on the north, was the most suitable for support and supply. Until Manchuria was taken by Japan in 1931, it had provided refuge for communist groups fighting against the Japanese ascendancy. Nonetheless, after the occupation of Manchuria by Japan, there left just one possible place which could offer similar base as Manchuria region. It was the tip of

20. Ibid., 229-231.

the Soviet Union, which border with Korea is about sixteen kilometers long and quite mountainous. There, the guerilla fighters could safely retreat, and the Soviet Union thus strengthened its influence over these groups.

In respect to these factors, the southern part of Korea was unsuitable for the guerilla way of fighting. It was very close to the Japanese central power, which could send the forces there to restore order very easily if trouble should arise. With the southern part of Korea being surrounded by the sea, it was impossible to provide the kind of support that could be achieved from the mainland in the Manchuria region.

This is how the strong influence of the Soviet Union started to form in the northern area of the Korean peninsula. This was further strengthened after World War II when this area was occupied by the Soviet troops. At this time, the former collaborators and people who could potentially disagree with communist policy were subjected to such terror and coercion that they fled from communists to the south on a mass scale. Wanton behavior of the Soviet troops is described in the report on the conditions in the north Soviet occupation zone. The report was written by Leonard E. Barsdell, a member of the Australian Department of Information. Barsdell describes “widespread and indiscriminate looting of both Korean and Japanese property; and . . . indulging in rape and robbery of both Koreans and Japanese by armed force.”²¹ He also describes how Russians would meet their need of food supplies by obtaining them from poor farmers, whom they would not pay, thereby rendering them unable to feed their families. Said document also describes how the Korean Communists made use of the Soviet soldiers’ presence. Soviet soldiers took an active role in searching for people with anti-communist attitudes and people who did not agree with the takeover of Korea by the Soviet Union, as such people could be potentially dangerous for the communist regime. These people would then be banished from their houses, seized, searched and their property would be confiscated. They were told to go south and the Korean Communists confiscated their homes.

This document states that the Russian oppression was so strong that it even made friends of the Koreans and the Japanese. Namely it says that “the attitude of Russians is

21. Commander in Chief Army Forces Advance Tokyo Japan to U.S. War Department, September 28, 1945, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/kr-6-13.pdf#zoom=100 (accessed March 28, 2012).

bringing together the Japs and Koreans-for the first time in 40 years.”²² But it is important to bear in mind that the persecuted people were mostly rather rich people, such as land owners and former collaborators who had benefited from the past Japanese colonial regime and therefore could have had closer relationship to the Japanese than the rest of the Korean nation. That’s why the statement may be slightly misleading in this point. Because of Soviet occupation, however, thousands of both Korean and Japanese people were looking for refuge in the southern, American zone. This caused that there was almost any right-wing force capable of opposing against the communist pressure, which had been gathering strength.

The main anti-communist program in the south started with inauguration of the Republic of Korea in August 1948. As the report of the Central Intelligence Agency about Communist capabilities in South Korea says: “All Communist activity was officially outlawed with the passage of the Law on the Nation’s Public Peace in November 1948.”²³ This law forced many communist leaders forced to leave the south part of Korea and seek bases in the North Korea.

End of the Japanese rule in Korea created a need for both post-World War II powers to secure their influence and establish their sphere of power in this territory. It meant persecution of people with different opinions. When people in any zone were persecuted for their political opinions, they often retreated into a zone which was suitable to their political persuasion. This resulted in the accumulation of people with the same political orientation in individual zones, leading to polarization of the whole Korean peninsula into two irreconcilable camps. That was the final shape of the political polarization of the peninsula which had been started by the Japanese, continued through driving of people with differing opinions out to the opposite zone and culminated in two states with completely different political opinions. The tensions between these two countries had grown until an outbreak of the Korean conflict in 1950.

22. Ibid.

23. U.S., Central Intelligence Agency, *Communist Capabilities in South Korea*, Office of Reports and Estimates 32-48 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1948), 3, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/kr-8-6.pdf#zoom=100 (accessed March 28, 2012).

2.3 Disruption of internal development

The Japanese occupation interrupted the process of gradual internal development of the Korean state and prevented it from progressing into an independent state capable of succeeding on the international scene. Korea had existed for very long time as a unified country. Just three dynasties had ruled the country during the period between 668-1910. From the very beginning, Korea practiced a policy of isolationism and accepted cultural and scientific innovations and matters relating to internal organization exclusively from China.

However, other countries of the world, like the United States, France and Great Britain, also longed for access to the Korean market. This led to several conflicts and military engagements and finally the policy of isolationism was broken by the Treaty of Kanghwa in 1876. This brought a spread of new knowledge from the western world that influenced residents and started their desire for reforms.

The process of the reformation and transformation of Korea was eventually stopped by the Japanese occupation. Although the reforms were initially made under the auspices of Japan, it was a way of interfering in Korean internal matters. It began right with the Treaty of Kanghwa in 1876.

After the defeat of China in the Sino-Japanese War and the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki on April 17, 1895, the Japanese had brought to an end the old Korean-Chinese relations and exclusively pushed their own interests. Moreover, in addition to the elimination of Chinese influence on the peninsula, this gave Japan the opportunity to install pro-Japanese officials into the Korean government. They seized upon this opportunity and, in order to calm the residents, who were outraged by the Japanese interferences into internal matters, Japan began a period of reforms under their auspices.

Nonetheless, their influence was considerable and some of these reforms were inspired by the Japanese model. However, Japan was not strong enough to keep only the pro-Japanese government officials in power. This led to changing factions, oriented in different directions. This situation culminated when the anti-Japanese faction of Korean Queen Min came to power, advocating a pro-Russian policy. The Japanese, aware the threat to their position, resorted to the desperate step of the assassinating Queen Min in October of 1895. They did it because Queen Min, although not the official head of the country, had great influence over Korean internal policy. Following this act, the Japanese domination on the Korean peninsula was temporarily ended.

The next important event affecting the internal matters of Korea was the Russo-Japanese war, which culminated in the competition of these two countries for control over the areas of Manchuria and Korea. During this war, Korea declared its neutrality. In spite of its efforts to remain impartial, Korea was occupied by the Japanese and forced to sign several very disadvantageous agreements.

As a result of these agreements, Korean Civil Service was required to submit the supervision of Japan and the Japanese took over strategic points throughout the country. As regards the Civil Service, Koreans had to accept the appointment of advisors into strategic departments, such as State Department and the Treasury. Advisors for these departments were directly Japanese or at least appointed by the Japanese side. Furthermore, there were also advisors installed who were not part of the agreements, such as advisors for matters of police and defense, etc.

The Treaty of Portsmouth, brokered by U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, and which ended the Russo-Japanese war in September 1905, completely freed the Japanese hand in regards to Korea. The enforced Protectorate Treaty of November 17, 1905 officially gave full control over all aspects of Korean relations with foreign countries to the hands of the Governor-General. Following agreement from August 1907, it was formally given to the Governor-General the power to interfere in all matters of internal administration of the Korean state.

Another very important thing was that immediately after a signing of this agreement, the Korean army was disbanded and Korea became defenseless. This state was, by the authors of the book *Dějiny Koreje*, likened to an empty shell.²⁴ This expression is really accurate because the entire kernel that secured self-sufficiency and the ability to resist surrounding pressures, had been eliminated. The shell in the form of a seemingly independent state merely remained as camouflage for other states, to disguise the iniquities committed by the Japanese in the area of a formerly sovereign Korean state.

In 1910, the dissolution of Korean patriotic organizations and mass arrests of representatives of the fight for Korean independence took place in Korea. By this means,

24. Carter J. Eckert et. al., *Dějiny Koreje*, ed. Edward W. Wagner, trans. Marta Bušková, Štěpánka Horáková, and Miriam Löwensteinová (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2001), 176.

the Japanese prepared the soil for the final annexation of the country. This event finally occurred on August 22, 1910.

Koreans, of course, were not willing to accept the position of a subjugated nation. The greatest organized resistance wave against the Japanese was The March First Movement in 1919. The specific thrust of these demonstrations was against injustices the made Japanese made on Koreans, and referenced United States president Woodrow Wilson's declaration of the Fourteen Points in 1918. In his speech, Wilson declared the right of all nations to self-determination.²⁵ Yet, these points were focused primarily on Europe and its post-war organization. None of the post-war powers counted upon its fulfilment elsewhere, because that would threaten their influence and colonial interests, whether in Africa or Asia. For this reason, the March First Movement was left without international support and was thus doomed to failure and a final suppression by Japanese forces.

Tranquil rule over Korea and its incorporation into the Japanese Empire was absolutely necessary to prevent a repeat of protests or even the far-reaching uprisings of residents, such as the March First Movement. Therefore, Japan strived to present itself before the Korean population as an elder brother, trying to help his younger sibling with modernisation. The Japanese constantly claimed as obsolete, outdated and backward all courses of action and organization adopted and implemented during the past centuries under the rule of Korean dynasties. For these reasons the Japanese introduced assimilation policies.

Within this ideology, Koreans and the Japanese should become one nation and together work for the development and prosperity of the great Japanese Empire. The Japanese incessantly stressed the benefits and opportunities of their auspices. Development of the country was represented to Koreans as the main benefit. In contrast to the appealing words about the benefits of assimilation was a completely different reality. At the beginning Japanese policy towards Korea was quite modest, but because of internal development within Japan, it began changing. This development heavily influenced the Great Depression.

25. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, "Fourteen Points," (speech presented to Congress, January 8, 1918), <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=62&page=transcript> (accessed April 3, 2012).

In Japan, struggling with crisis and internal problems, began a change in the political mood of the Japanese from a liberal and pro-west direction toward the ultranationalist and militarist that urged the necessity of imperialist expansion in Asia.²⁶ Moreover, ultranationalists began to increasingly stress and instill feelings of superiority and the right to unlimited domination over other, inferior nations to Japan. Thus began a period of even greater control over subjugated nations' territories and the source of further support for Japanese expansive ambitions.

Instead of helping Koreans with the modernisation of their country, caused by their policy of isolation, the Japanese strived to erase remaining Korean customs, traditions and culture by replacing them with theirs. This included use of Japanese language in preference to Korean. It was common practice as well in the press and schools, until the Korean language was totally overshadowed and finally banned. Neither was the very delicate question of religion spared from Japanese intervention. In a country where religious freedom had been guaranteed more or less for centuries, a decree was issued that forced students and government officials to participate in Shinto ceremonies. And last but not least, was a decree called Name Order, issued in 1939. It graciously allowed Koreans to stop the use of their names and choose new, Japanese names.

However, it de facto pressured Koreans to abandon the thousand years old traditions their names represented. It meant the interrupted continuity of long-standing lineages reaching back to ancient ancestors. This meant a great loss for Koreans brought up in old dynasty orders. Nonetheless, eighty-four percent of residents²⁷ were forced to submit to this humiliating order. Even the many Koreans who submitted were considered second class citizens. Ethnic citizenship remained registered in public records and because of their subsidiarity, when taken on to jobs in Civil Service, banks and police, Koreans were placed on lower or even substandard positions.

Neither did economic development turn out to be what the Japanese had presented as modernisation for the flourishing of both now united nations. There was development of infrastructure such as railway network, but the Japanese made it for military purposes rather than to benefit Koreans, because advanced and reliable communications would

26. Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present* (Lenham; Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 293.

27. *Ibid.*, 296.

guarantee faster army movements for the future Japanese aggression in the Asian mainland. The industrialization of the northern part of the country was also in the interest of the occupiers because it became source of raw materials for Japan, following the discovery of rich raw material deposits in this area, as Japan lacked such resources.

All in all, everybody had to collaborate with the colonial regime. Koreans had mostly two options: first to collaborate with the regime and open a path to success or at least to survive in repressive system, or secondly to resist. However, this meant a fall into disgrace before the regime by entire families and thus exclusion from society, imprisonment or exile. On the other hand, active collaboration might open paths to better employment or even profit. Reliable Koreans had the opportunity to work as officials within the Civil Service and government agencies, or became members of the infamous colonial police forces. Yet inferior citizens within the empire found just lower posts available.

A change came during World War II, when the imperial war machinery necessitated the departure of Japanese officials back to Japan or other place within the empire. At that time, Koreans were promoted to higher positions to fill this gap. As human resources dried up as the result of Allied pressure, in 1943 Japan issued a general call-up and created units from involuntary recruited Koreans.

The draining away of Korean human resources for the sake of welfare of the common empire also impacted Korean girls and women. They were abused in 'comfort women' units. With the promise of better positions, good jobs and greater earnings, they were sent from their homes to locations over the entire empire. There they essentially became Japanese brothel personnel.²⁸ Ordinary people were treated very ruthlessly during Japanese colonial rule, as was the whole Korean nation.

One of profitable stratum in this system were Korean entrepreneurs. Their reasons for collaboration were mainly practical and economic, for their activities necessarily needed access to Japanese capital. It was also important to get permission for establishing private enterprises and because the Japanese government, via its Governor-General, intervened at both the lowest levels of Korean society as well as the economy, it became necessary to collaborate in order to get such permission. Supply was another reason to have

28. Carter J. Eckert et. al., *Dějiny Koreje*, ed. Edward W. Wagner, trans. Marta Bušková, Štěpánka Horáková, and Miriam Löwensteinová (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2001), 229-233.

good connections with the Japanese. Japanese suppliers were able to cover needs the domestic market could not – mainly because of its prevailing agricultural orientation. These reasons forced small entrepreneurs into a very tight cooperation with the colonial administration, which was perceived as a collaboration for own benefit by Korean residents.²⁹

The defeat of Japan and its capitulation on August 15, 1945 rid Korea of the Japanese yoke. However, the problems associated with collaboration did not end with the surrender of the Japanese Empire. On the contrary, the United States especially had to deal with this circumstance after Korea's liberation and subsequent occupation by the superpowers.

Koreans were not entirely unanimous in their ideas about the future of their post-colonial state. Yet, their desire for administering the country on their own and the joy from the release of a colonial oppressor unified them and they spontaneously began establishing People's Committees. These committees came into existence as branches of the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence, which resulted from agreements between Koreans and Japanese. Following the end of war, the Japanese needed to ensure the safety of Japanese national's lives and property within Korea and in order to accomplish this, it permitted the establishment of this committee. The committee later transformed itself into an interim government and declared the Korean People's Republic, in September 1945, having rather a left-wing character.

After their arrival, both superpowers took completely opposing attitudes toward this development. The leftist orientation of the People's Committees suited the Soviet Union in their north occupation zone, so they stayed away from main events and allowed events to run their course. However, in fact they tried to install their sympathizers into the ranks and ensure their influence. At the same time, the Soviets made sure that activities at the highest levels were in accord with their ideology.

In the southern occupation zone the Americans, who did not much sympathize with these leftist ideas, had orders not to accept any pre-established Korean government. The Korean People's Republic was ignored and eventually outlawed. The United States created

29. Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present* (Lenham; Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 281.

their own military administration, the United States Military Government in Korea, whose mission it was to renew the country and its indigenous administration.

Initially the United States considered temporary retention of Japanese officials at their posts. That confirmed the memorandum from Secretary of State Dean Acheson to U.S. president Harry Truman on September 14, 1945 that stated that “upon the occupation of the capital of Korea on September 9, 1945, by the American Forces, the American Commander stated that the Japanese officials would be temporarily retained at their posts. . . .”³⁰ But it was immediately added: “but subsequently it was announced that they would be removed as rapidly as possible”³¹ because Americans were forced into the earliest possible removal of former Japanese colonial officials, mainly by Korean public opinion.

This declaration had in fact called forth considerable outrage, not only from the Korean side but in the United States as well. As proven in the above mentioned document, “there has been very unfavourable reaction both in Korea and in the United States to the original announcement by the American Commander regarding the temporary retention of Japanese officials.”³² Accordingly, there was no other choice than to install indigenous Koreans as soon as possible to these posts, causing yet another obstacle.

After forty years of residents having been removed from participation in the functioning of their country, there were not sufficient qualified Koreans to understand these issues and immediately take the country’s administration into their hands. The problems associated with the removal of Japanese are illustrated by the message from the Commander in Chief, Army Forces, to the War Department on September 18, 1945. It states that “the problem of Government for Korea will be complicated and difficult for some period of time,” because “thirty years of a highly concentrated administration completely dominated by the Japanese throughout the important offices and Civil Service have left no Korean qualified personnel except in minor provincial and city jobs.”³³

30. U.S. Department of State, *Memorandum for the President: Proposed Statement on Korea*, Dean Acheson (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1945), http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/kr-1-2.pdf#zoom=100 (accessed March 28, 2012).

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*

33. Commander in Chief Army Forces Advance Tokyo Japan to U.S. War Department, September 18, 1945, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/kr-6-15.pdf#zoom=100 (accessed March 28, 2012).

On the other hand, it was most difficult to find those whose reputation was not tainted by collaboration, because everybody had (at least partially) been forced to cooperate with the colonial regime. This was the result of the former policy of assimilation. There were no options than to choose between two evils. One was the use of an unqualified workforce, most likely unable to control the country and risking collapse of the area governed by the U.S. In an atmosphere of the beginning of the Cold War, that would mean damaging the reputation of the United States, as Soviet propaganda could use it as ammunition for political attacks. The second option was the employment of people with experience in the Civil Service and government offices from previous years. Nonetheless, this option was, in the public opinion, too tightly connected with the past government. Americans chose the second option, which ensured maintaining their prestige in the world and relative stability in the southern Korean zone. They chose to ignore the collaborationist past of these people, mainly for administrative gains and mistrust of the left-wing oriented People's Republic of Korea that existed before their arrival.

Both superpowers in this way conspired to disrupt Korea's internal development, or rather can be said to again interrupt the path toward independence that Koreans hoped to immediately achieve after liberation. Nevertheless, before this final phase, long-standing development under the control of Japanese regime existed. On one hand, they had removed almost all features of an outdated system of government that was unable to succeed in the modern age. But on the other hand, it caused Korean disunity over which orientation to choose after the war. Along with new superpower ambitions in this area, this led to an implementation of communist versus capitalist systems of government and, ultimately, to war between these two antagonistic regimes.

2.4 Disruption of the Korean economy

The proximity of Japan and Korea led to brisk trade. Since the sixteenth century there had been regular trade and in this period Korea mainly exported to Japan such necessities as rice and other grain, cotton and porcelain ware. Their cultural exchange was important as well. There was export of Confucian and historic treatises, temple bells and Buddhist sacral objects such as statues and pictures. In exchange, the Japanese offered raw materials which

are not found in Korea, such as copper, tin, sulphur and luxury goods like medicines and spices.³⁴

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Japan began their aggressive policy toward Korea. The Japanese enforced treaties that gave them great economic advantages over other countries. Japanese pressure and economic activity caused a disruption of the traditional Korean economy. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, over ninety percent of exports headed to Japan and more than fifty percent of import came from it.³⁵ However, Japan was not the only country that exploited Korea economically. Other nations tried to gain market share for their goods and take as large as possible advantages for their traders. Yet, the Japanese exploited Korea by far the most in this way.

After Korea's annexation, Japan began economic changes and development of Korean industry. These steps disrupted one of the most stable landowner aristocracies in the world. Korea's inability to restrain Japanese imperialism was the result of the unwillingness of this class to change and existing economic and political system.

Economic reasons explain why Korea was important to Japan and why the Japanese needed it as a market for their products, as well as a source of food and raw materials. Japan, largely dependent on the import of raw materials, sought every possible new source. Deposits of gold, silver, iron, tungsten and coal³⁶ in the northern part of Korea were especially important. The gradual progress of Japanese expansions onto the Asian mainland made Korea an ideal economic base. These were the reasons behind development of the Korean economy, which was highly unequal, due to the allocation of resources.

The northern part of Korea was industrialized because of its sources, as well as for its proximity to Manchuria, which the Japanese chose as next aim of their aggressive expansion. Further development of this part of country came when the fighting in World War II hit the Japanese islands and bombardment damaged Japanese factories and other industrial facilities. There followed a movement of production to other states under Japanese control and thus continued the development of industry in Manchuria and

34. Carter J. Eckert et. al., *Dějiny Koreje*, ed. Edward W. Wagner, trans. Marta Bušková, Štěpánka Horáková, and Miriam Löwensteinová (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2001), 94.

35. *Ibid.*, 158.

36. Michael J. Seth, *A History of Korea: From Antiquity to the Present* (Lenham; Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 282.

northern Korea. The southern part of the country remained more or less agricultural, with an associated textile industry.

Along with the accretion of Japan's ambitions, economic bonds were strengthened and growth came in the interconnection of both countries. Ninety-five percent of Korean export went to Japan and imports from Japan rose to eighty percent in 1934.³⁷ Also Korean entrepreneurs were restricted by the colonial regime and could not thrive without the permission of Japanese offices. Establishing one's own business required the permission of officials, to have contacts with Japanese investors for acquiring necessary capital, as well as good relations with suppliers who were able to ensure necessary materials.

Japan exploited Korea's natural resources as well as its human capital. Many Koreans left their homes and went to work in factories in northern Korea or even to Japan. Later, when Manchuria was taken by Japan and its industry grew, Koreans also went to work there. Despite the voluntary departure of Koreans to factories, this workforce became inadequate along with expanded Japanese ambitions. Thus the Japanese government began moving these people at its will. However Koreans, as the inferior members of the Japanese empire, could hold only secondary and unqualified work. Expert and managerial positions were occupied by the Japanese.

For Japan, the exploitation of Korean human and natural resources was far more important than the welfare of the country. Since Korea was designed to serve Japan merely as storehouse of these sources for their needs, its industry was unequally developed without regard for what consequences that might have. After the division of the country, there came a state of economic instability, because the northern zone was mainly industrial, whereas southern part was agricultural.

The very tight interconnection between the Japanese and Korean economies caused problems immediately after the break-up of Japanese colonial dominion. When the Japanese empire fell as a result of its defeat in the World War II, that meant the loss of a major trading partner for Korea and serious economic problems. First, losing these Japanese markets meant about ninety percent of Korean production had nowhere to be exported. And second, after the war all Japanese had to leave their posts and later return to

37. Carter J. Eckert et. al., *Dějiny Koreje*, ed. Edward W. Wagner, trans. Marta Bušková, Štěpánka Horáková, and Miriam Löwensteinová (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2001), 224.

Japan. In this way Korea lost both experts and managers, having great difficulties replacing them with at least the same qualified staff. Moreover, a huge number of Koreans who were working abroad, poured back into Korea after the war. These people returned on one hand because they were no longer forced to stay in foreign countries and work in Japanese factories, as well as because production for war machinery had stopped and they no longer had work. Back in Korea they became landless people looking for employment in a miserable economy, which was unable to absorb such a workforce at one time.

Loss of Japanese markets and Japanese expert repatriation caused a great rift in the Korean economy that further intensified divisions on the peninsula. Because of the unequal development of the country during Japanese rule, there was left an industrial north and agricultural south after the division of Korea by the superpowers. Although the north lost its source of food supplies, this loss was offset by supplies from the Soviet Union, which very skillfully utilized the bad economic situation in north to increase its influence in this part of country. By this way the Soviets welcomed a comparison of their functional zone with the American zone, which was in a significantly worsened situation.

By artificial partition, the mostly agricultural south lost its industry, sources of raw materials and most of its electric energy. According to the report of the Central Intelligence Agency this “area [could] supply no strategic raw materials other than small amounts of tungsten and graphite.”³⁸ Initially, South Korea got electric energy from the surplus of North Korean electric power.³⁹ However, in May of 1948, the North Korean regime cut off its power supplies and thus “South Korea lost 70% of normal sources of supply.”⁴⁰ Thus, southern zone was dependent on American supplies, although initially these supplies were not sufficient. This aroused discontent and demonstrations that were exacerbated by the local communists. The question of economic self-sufficiency was extremely important for

38. U.S., Central Intelligence Agency, *Consequences of US Troop Withdrawal from Korea in Spring, 1949*, Office of Reports and Estimates 3-49, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1949, 6, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/kr-9-1.pdf#zoom=100 (accessed April 11, 2012).

39. U.S., Central Intelligence Group, *The Situation in Korea*, Office of Reports and Estimates 5/1, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1947, 3, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/kr-8-4.pdf#zoom=100 (accessed April 11, 2012).

40. U.S., Central Intelligence Agency, *Prospects for Survival of the Republic of Korea*, Office of Reports and Estimates 44-48, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1948, 15, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/kr-8-7.pdf#zoom=100 (accessed April 11, 2012).

South Korean regime's survival, because as is exactly expressed in the document *The Truth About Korea*: "Empty stomachs and resentful minds [were] breeding places for Communism."⁴¹ However, continued economic support from the United States, after their withdrawal from the Korean peninsula, failed to prevent civil war.

41. U.S. Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, *The Truth About Korea*, Clinton P. Anderson, and Leslie L. Biffle, ca. 1950, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ki-18-4.pdf#zoom=100 (accessed March 28, 2012).

CONCLUSION

It is necessary to seek the origins of the Korean War further back in history than in the beginnings of the Cold War, when tensions rose between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Korean War was not merely a result of the actions and posturing of the two post-World War II superpowers. It is also important to take into consideration historical developments on the Korean peninsula, which were fundamentally influenced by Japan.

In general, it could be said that Japan did not influence Korea in such a negative way. It brought Korea on the international scene and modernized a largely obsolete, isolated and mainly agricultural state, which would not have had much chance to succeed in the modern international field. However, what must not be forgotten, are the injustices and atrocities perpetrated against Koreans during the suppression of their culture and the misuse of the human and natural resources of the country. As far as the development of infrastructure and industry is concerned, it is worth bearing in mind that almost everything was made in Korea because it had been transformed into a supply base for Japanese expansionary policy.

By its interventions and activities on the Korean peninsula, Japan created a breeding ground in which took root the seeds of later conflict. These seeds, nurtured by the two post-war superpowers, produced fruit in the form of a three year military conflict, that ended with an armistice and the permanent division of the Korean peninsula into two vastly different states. This situation continues to today.

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