

On the Similarity of Colonialist Policies Implemented Against the Ottoman Empire and the Far East: The Bargains Over Korea After the Shimonoseki Agreement*

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Abstract

The industrialized Western powers, seeking free trade, raw materials and market, turned their faces to the underdeveloped states of the Middle and the Far East in the 19th century. First Ottoman Empire, then China and Japan became the targets of this process in a short time. Ottoman Empire was transformed into a semi colony between 1856-1881. After China's defeat against Japan, the French and British diplomats had discussed repeating the policy which they implemented against Ottoman Empire after the Crimean War in 1853-1856, for China. Colonial effects had begun with trade agreement in Ottoman Empire and continued with changes in judiciary, land laws and increasing the rights of foreigners. Also Japan, who learned how to be a colonialist from British Empire, captured the sovereignty and made changes to judicial and social laws in Korea.

In this study, we emphasized that the colonial policies were the same everywhere in both the Near East or the Far East. The Archival documents show the similarities to colonial policies implemented in the Ottoman Empire and Korea. The main source of the findings in this study is the diplomatic correspondence of British diplomats in the region, in the National Archives.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire, Great Britain, Korea, Japan, Colonialism, Far East, the Treaty of Shimonoseki

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Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda ve Uzak Doğu'da Uygulanan Sömürgeci Politikaların Benzerliği Üzerine: Şimonoseki Anlaşması Sonrasında Kore Üzerindeki Pazarlıklar

Öz

Sanayileşmiş Batılı devletler serbest ticaret, hammadde ve pazar arayışı için 19. yüzyıldan itibaren yüzlerini Orta ve Uzak Doğu'ya çevirmişti. Önce Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Çin ve Japonya da kısa sürede bu arayışın hedefleri olmuştur. Osmanlı Devleti 1856-1881 arasında yarı sömürge haline getirildi. Çin'in Japonya'ya yenilmesinin ardından Fransız ve İngiliz diplomatlar, 1853-1856 Kırım Savaşı'ndan sonra Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na karşı uygulanan politikayı Çin için tekrarlamayı tartışmışlardı. Sömürgeciliğin etkileri ticaret anlaşmasıyla başlamış, hukuk ve toprak alanında değişimler ve yabancıların haklarının artırılmasıyla gelişmişti. Sömürgeciliği İngiltere'den öğrenen Japonya da hakimiyeti altına aldığı Kore'de hukuki ve sosyal kanunlarda değişiklikler yapmıştı.

Bu çalışmada, sömürgeci politikaların Yakın Doğu'da ve Uzak Doğu'da aynı olduğuna vurgu yapılmıştır. Arşiv kaynakları Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Kore'de uygulanan sömürge politikalarının benzerliğini göstermiştir. Bu çalışmadaki bulguların ana kaynağı bölgedeki İngiliz diplomatlarının İngiliz Milli Arşivindeki yazışmalarıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Büyük Britanya, Kore, Japonya, Kolonyalizm, Uzak Doğu, Şimonoseki Anlaşması

Introduction

During the nineteenth century, the priority of the colonialist western states has been finding markets for their increasing production and supplying raw materials for production. It is seen that the colonialist states that used military power in order to supply their needs, invaded a vast amount of land that many times more than their own countries in a short time. While at the beginning of the nineteenth century, one-third of lands in the world was under the Europeans' invasion, at the end of the century this amount became two-third. Therefore, the nineteenth century is called as the century of imperialism. Imperialist invasion had been formed similarly in Near East, Middle East and Far East and same policies were performed. In this article, it is tried to point out that there is great similarity between methods used by western states mainly in commercial invasion in Ottoman Empire and in the Far East.

While the Great Britain was the leader of imperialist policies in Europe, the Russia became the representative of it, in Asia. Great Britain had controlled world trade in 19th century through her powerful navy and incredibly growing industry between 1760-1830. Instead of improving her Army, She developed policies for investment in new colonies with her income from existing colonies¹.

By the end of the century, Great Britain's main aim was to keep the trade of the colonies under control, rather than expanding their colonies, and to keep them away from foreign attacks². In Asia, Russia had completed the invasion of Turkestan Khanates till 1880's, accelerated his industrialisation and got Iran under control. The other great state Iran in the Middle East had lost the control of the country and faced dramatic territorial and economic losses to Russia and the Britain. At the first half of the century, the Great Britain, Russia and the France had nearly taken the control of the Middle East.

Colonialists' Policies in the Ottoman Empire

Tired of repeated uprisings, the Ottoman Sultan removed the Janissaries, special forces of his army, who allegedly prevented reform movements with the alliance of Ulema in 1826³. Then while Ottoman Government was busy with suppressing the Greek uprising, the allied navies of Great Britain, Russia and the France burnt Ottoman Navy in the harbour of Navarino in 1827.

Before the Ottoman Empire replaced the Janissaries with a new and complete army, it lost the wars against Russia in 1828-1829 and was forced to accept the independence of Greece in 1830. After the Ottoman armies were being defeated by Egyptian provincial army under the command of İbrahim Pasha in Konya, the vanquishers reached to Kutahya. The Ottoman Sultan had to accept the Russian aid proposal in order to defend her capital in 1833⁴.

- 1 For the increased production and market capacities of the states and the development of Britain in this century see Paul Kennedy, *Büyük Güçlerin Yükseliş ve Düşüşleri*, (translated by Birtane Karanakçı), Ankara 1990, pp. 176-186.
- 2 Eric Hobsbawm, *İmparatorluk Çağı 1875-1914*, (translated by Vedat Aslan), Dost Kitabevi, Ankara 1999, p. 88.
- 3 See Bernard Lewis, *Modern Türkiye'nin Doğuşu*, (translated by Metin Kıratlı), Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara 1984, p. 81.
- 4 For details of the Egyptian Question of Ottoman Empire see H. M. Kutluoğlu, *The Egyptian Question (1831-1841). The Expansionist Policy of Mehmed Ali Paşa in Syria and Asia Minor and the Reaction of the Sublime Porte*, İstanbul 1998; Also see Kemal Beydilli, "Hünkâr İskeleyi Anlaşması", *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi(DİA)*, Vol. 18, İstanbul 1998, pp. 488-490.

Britain which did not want to let Russia alone at the partition of the Ottoman country, was involved in the process. By signing the Treaty of Balta Limanı in 1838, Ottoman Empire has nearly gone under the commercial control of the Britain⁵. With the impact of commercial treaties that signed after her military defeat, the Ottoman manufacturing power quickly collapsed and Ottoman Empire had to get on well with the Britain and kept balance policies among the Great Powers of that time. When she proclaimed the Imperial Edict of Gulhane in 1839, she had also attracted the attention of great powers in order to be the witnesses of her sincerity about the implementation of the edict, at the end of it⁶. This must have been driven by a desire to show that liberal reforms like those in Egypt can be carried out.

At the second half of nineteenth century, instead of permanent military invasion, the religious, economic and cultural activities of imperialism, with the aiming of more free trade and to become the most favourable nation in trade were emerged.

Although the Ottoman Empire was the winner of the Crimean War against Russia, the Empire had to make main changes in her legislation law of land and society in return for the help of her Allies⁷. Ottoman Empire declared the edict of reforms and accepted the equality of all citizen before the law in 1856. Until the declaration of the Reform Edict, all country lands belonged to the state and were ruled by the Ottoman Dynasty. In 1858, the Empire made a major change to the land system by allowing its citizens to purchase land in person. A few years later, the empire also allowed foreigners to purchase land. Ottoman accepted new penal, sea trade and commercial codes, inspired by French codes in a few years⁸.

In 1854, Ottoman Empire had to get a loan from her allies France and British Empire and got used to it in time. In two decades Ottoman government did it 16 times and finally proclaimed bankruptcy in 1875. During this period, leading Ottoman bureaucrats such as Âli Pasha and Fuad Pasha used the embassy of the

5 For details of Turco-British commercial relations See Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-İngiliz İktisâdî Münâsebetleri I: 1580-1838*, Ankara 1974; also same author "Baltalimanı Muadhedesi", *DİA*, Vol. 5, İstanbul 1992, pp. 38-40.

6 See Abdurrahman Şeref, *Tarih Muhasebeleri*, (prepared by Enver Koray), Ankara 1985, Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, p. 47; Yavuz Abadan, "Tanzimat Fermanının Tahlihi", in *Tanzimat I*, prepared by commission, İstanbul 1999, p. 44.

7 Bernard Lewis, *Modern Türkiye'nin Doğuşu*, p. 81; Kemal Karpat, *İslam'ın Siyasallaşması*, (translated by Şiar Yalçın), Timaş Yayınları, İstanbul 2013, p. 18.

8 Bernard Lewis, *Modern Türkiye'nin Doğuşu*, p. 118.

great powers as an element of pressure to get the Sultans to accept their ideas and activities related in both Ottoman foreign and internal policy⁹. Between 1856-1882, the Christian citizens of the Ottoman Empire became the privileged ones of Ottoman society with the help of foreign embassies. The Muslims became the third class of the society. It was naturally reflected in all parts of the Muslim community. This change naturally affected all parts of the Muslim community. Their representatives organized the Kuleli event against the Sultan Abdulmejid¹⁰. The failure of the Kuleli event triggered many Ottoman intellectuals in order to create a resurrection based on historical and religious culture. The New Ottomans offered an important administrative change, accession from absolutism to Constitutional Monarchy. With the cooperation of imminent bureaucrats and senior soldiers, the Ottoman Sultan/Caliph was dethroned and his nephew became the new Sultan who would declare a Constitutional Monarchy. Almost all assumed that the proclamation of the Constitution would prevent the intervention of the great powers into the Ottoman Empire using the claims of equality of the non-Muslim citizens of the Empire. Sultan Murad V became mentally ill due to his difficult administrative conditions and dethroned within three months without the Constitution being promulgated. Finally, his successor, Abdulhamid II, was enthroned in August 1876 on condition that the Constitution be proclaimed¹¹. Although the new grand vizier Midhat Pasha, who cared about the support of Great Britain, quickly drafted the Constitution, his efforts could not prevent Russia from taking the process to war. Great Britain which cared for control of the Mediterranean, allowed Russia to strongly shake up the Ottoman Empire. During the first and difficult years of the new Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II, Britain had taken first the administration of Cyprus, so-called the key of to Mediterranean and then Egypt, by promising to save the integrity of Empire, while France captured the Tunisia¹². Meanwhile, Ottoman Empire gradually lost its authority on the Balkan Peninsula.

9 E. P. Engelhart, *Türkiye ve Tanzimat*, (translated by: Ali Reşad Bey, Prepared by Erol Kılınç) Ötüken Yayınları, İstanbul 2017, p. 243.

10 For details of Kuleli Event, See, Uluğ İğdemir, *Kuleli Vak'ası Hakkında Bir Araştırma*, Ankara 1937; Zekeriya Türkmen, "Kuleli Vak'ası" *DİA*, Vol. 26, İstanbul 2002, p. 356-357.

11 Ahmet Turan Alkan, "II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Ordu ve Siyaset İlişkileri", in *Sultan II. Abdülhamid ve Dönemi*, Edited by Coşkun Yılmaz, İstanbul 2014, p. 164.

12 Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, Vol. VIII, Ankara 1983, p. 81-101; Kemal Karpat, *İslam'ın Siyasallaşması*, p. 349.

After having lost the war of 1877-1878, because of the war indemnity to Russian Empire, the other great powers almost seized the Ottoman Budget. Abdulhamid II, had to declare general debt administration (Duyûn-ı Umûmiye) in 1881¹³. The creditors began to collect certain tax from Ottoman citizens in Ottoman Empire till the end of the Empire.

After the Crimean War, Britain focused on commercial benefits, while France preferred to work on long-term projects in the fields of education and culture, whose effects lasted until the Second World War. During the Tanzimat period, France became the role model of Ottoman reformers especially in the field of education. She also got the privilege of constructing railway tracks and ports till the beginning of the First World War. Even in the brink of War, the Ottoman government offered France to reorganize the Ottoman gendarmerie powers and provide with ammunition.

With the effects of huge losses, Abdulhamid II had to carefully follow the activities of Russia and the Great Britain that concentrated sharing of underdeveloped countries of the Far East¹⁴. Abdulhamid tried to strengthen his authority with Islamic policy among his Muslim citizens, while stressing the importance of solidarity with the Muslim world.¹⁵

Because of the huge profits due to the very advantageous commercial and cultural privileges in the Ottoman Empire, the France had also hoped to implement same methods to the China in the Far East, that lost the war in 1895 with Japan.

Colonialist Policies in the Far East

The Western States had spread their activities in missionary, economic and cultural fields at the second half of the century. After starting with China in the first half of the century, they continued the project of opening up underdeveloped countries for free trade, such as Japan and Korea. It is a commonly accepted phenomenon that Imperialism had contributed to spreading of modern social, technological and political tools among to the people of hermit states. Beside this,

13 Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, Vol. VIII, Ankara 1983, p. 421; Rıfat Önsoy, *Mâli Tutsaklığa Giden Yöl: Osmanlı Borçları, 1854-1914*, Turhan Kitabevi, Ankara 1999, p. 153.

14 See, Eraslan, Cezmi and Dere, Umut. "The Position of Abdulhamid II And Ottoman Diplomacy in The Developments of Far East (1895-1904)" *Turkish Journal of History*, 71 (2020): pp. 317-346. <https://doi.org/10.26650/TurkJHist.2020.017>.

15 For details of his Islamic policy, Cezmi Eraslan, *II. Abdulhamid ve İslam Birliđi*, Ötüken Yayınları, İstanbul 2019.

having the same privileges by other industrialised States from the colonies that were opened free international trade one after, brought huge social differences together with.

When Britain -the biggest colonialist state in the world at that time- had sent experienced diplomat Lord Macartney to China in order to establish constant and reciprocal relationship in 1793, he was regarded as an outer barbarian by Chinese rulers. While Lord Macartney has pressed to establish on permanent embassy, Chinese officials had wanted British diplomat to perform the traditional greeting including 'nine prostrations' towards the Emperor¹⁶. The Ambassador was told that otherwise, 'China would not send envoys to foreign countries and would not allow those who came and stay 40 days'. It was an understandable attitude for Chinese because in their world the centre was the Emperor who was the son of the heaven. During the opium war 1839-1842, Britain has taken some advantages as exempting her merchants from Chinese jurisdiction and goods from Chinese duties¹⁷. In the second half of the 19th century, Britain and the other big states tried to widen their trade and their missionary activities in China.

After having conflicts because of Opium trade, Britain had signed commercial treaties with China and Japan and gained the title of the 'most favoured state'. France and the others followed her. Under the leadership of Britain, America and France with the permanent consulates and new ports opened up for free trade, the colonialist States had transported the wealth of Far East to their countries.

During this time it was evaluated that instead of partitioning China or attempting its conquest, the British pinned their hopes on reforming China's systems of law and finance and pushing open the door for more railways and trade¹⁸. She developed relations with Japan at the same time while making agreements directed to more free trade in 1858. After that for the sake of Britain interest, London has become even a kind of political adviser to Japan, in order to take for her own control of East Asia as well.

From the first opium war to 1895 Chinese/Japan war, Britain has become the most effective state over Chinese trade. While the Great Britain that started to perform the three quarters of Chinese trade, she was also controlling all Chinese

16 John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire, the Global Expansion of Britain*, London, 2012, p. 122.

17 Darwin, *Ibid.*, p. 124.

18 Darwin, *Ibid.*, p. 124

customs system¹⁹. Thus, the center of the Chinese World, the Emperor, began to take orders from British Empire.

The Korean Encounter with Colonialism

Korea took her share from this colonialist attack too. Indeed, the first British trade vessel came to Korea in 1845 and a French one followed her in 1846, then the Russian one in 1854. The American Vessel's - General Sherman- incident emerged in 1866 and the attack of French Navy the next, did not only brought free trade, but also "*draw China and Japan into the stream of a new World order*". These events were accepted as harbingers of sinister imperialism for Korea as well²⁰. The Frenchs had attacked for retaliation of killing the Catholic priests who secretly entered the Korea in 1866.

After these attacks, the Americans' Sherman retaliation in 1871, revealed Korean Kingdom's fighting perseverance. Taevongun the Regent, the father of the Child King of Korea, had warned the Koreans, with the stone plates he had put in front of government offices in the country²¹. The warning - "*western barbarians invading our country. Being unsuccessful against them means making concession. Making concession means to be traitor*"- became effective²². In spite of all resistance, the treaty of Ganghwa signed with Japan in February 1876, symbolized the beginning of Korea's opening to the outer world. After that, The Korean Administration tried to modernize by sending students and research committees to the Japan, China, America and the Great Britain. Korea, at the same time became a ground for the struggle of an actual domination especially between China and Japan. While Korean reformers turned their face to Japan, the conservators neared to China²³.

While Japan was signing treaty with Korea, The Great Britain had advised Ottoman Empire establishing good relation with Japan²⁴. At the same time, this

19 Burak Samih Gülboy, "19. Yüzyılda Uzak Doğu Asya'daki Güç Dengesinin Evrimi", *Çinin Gölgesinde Uzak Doğu*, Edited by: Deniz Ülke Arıboğan, Bağlam Yayınları, 2001, p. 23.

20 Kyung Moon Hwang, *Köre Tarihi*, (translated by Ayşe Su Doğru), İstanbul, 2018, p. 101.

21 Gojong, the distant relative of the last King of Korea, has been seated to the throne at the age of 12 in early 1864, his father was appointed as regent with the title of Tewongun. Gojong would remain at the throne until 1907, See Andrew C. Nahm, *Köre Tarihi ve Kültürü*, (translated by Ali Rıza Balaman), İzmir 1998, p. 103.

22 Hwang, *Köre Tarihi*, p. 106.

23 Oktay Gökhan Banbal, *Jaпон İşgal döneminde Köre Yarımadası ve Uzakdoğu'nun Siyasi Görünümü*, Ankara University, Unpublished MA thesis, Ankara 2015, p. 16.

24 For more information see, Selçuk Esenbel, *Jaпон Modernleşmesi ve Osmanlı, Jaпонya'nın Türk Dünyası*

advice was seeking to control of Russian Empire's threat towards British benefits in India and in the Far East. After Russia finished the invasion of the Turkish Khanates in Turkestan in 1881, Britain had to implement projects aimed at preventing Russia's advance to India. The above-mentioned British projects had led Russia to make plans on Manchuria and Korea with the goal of landing in warm water²⁵.

Prius Victory of Japan or the Negotiations of Great Powers on the Treaty of Shimonoseki

In this part of the article, it will be tried to examine the treaty and discussions that began immediately after the Treaty, which was signed on 17 April 1895 and came into force on 8 May 1895. Reading the negotiations on the fate of Korea and Manchuria from the correspondence of British diplomats in Tokyo and Pekin with Foreign Office is very useful for understanding the imperialist point of view.

While following the British policy, we must not forget the treaty of Trade and Navigation signed on 16 June 1894 and the Alliance Treaty of 1902 signed at the end of this process.

Japan's Position in the Second Half of the 19th Century

With the forcing of the necessities of sperm-whale hunting industry, first America and later the others had to move the trade from north Atlantic to the north Pacific and communicate with secluded Japan. At the end of two missions in 1853 and 1854 by commodore Perry²⁶, who was one of the most experienced sailor of the navy, to Japan, Japanese rulers had to accept termination of two centuries seclusion, the beginning of intercourse with America and her commercial demands²⁷.

Japan was forced to be opened up for free trade in 1858 and gave capitulations to industrialized and colonialist states of West. Although Japan was unsuccessful on

ve İslam Politikaları, İstanbul 2015, p.283.; Also see, *İsmail Kemal Bey'in Hatıratı*, (translated by: Adnan İslamoğulları-Rubin Hoxha), Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, İstanbul 2016, p. 103.

25 Hobsbawm, *İmparatorluk Çağı*, p. 304.

26 For details of Commodore Perry and the aims of United States' colonial plan for Pacific see, William S. Rossiter, "the First American imperialist" *The North American Review*, Feb. 1906, Vol. 182/ No. 591, pp. 239-254, Published by, University of Northern Iowa, p. 241

27 About the United States' counteracting policies, against the colonial and commercial invasion of British Empire in the North Pacific Sea also *ibid.* pp. 242; Nicole CuUnjieng Aboitiz (2021) "Restoring Asia to the Global Moment of 1898", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 49:3, 527-552, DOI:10.1080/03086534.2021.1920801, p. 532.

attempts and meeting with the addressee states for invalidating these capitulations in 1870's, it gradually gets the status of great state with the Alliance of Britain, from 1895. In the 1894-1895 War, although her opponent was China, Japan evaluated that real menace will come from imperialist western States. She worried about their potential political and military attack by using the weak China and Korea. From the first years of Meiji reform era, Korean question was at the centre of the "existence" debate as a big state Japan. According to this understanding, including Korea that has strategic position, the states of East Asia should have not been under the western influence. According to the imperialist understanding of Japan that had to seek new colonies and new markets for its fast developing economy, Korea was the first step for expanding. She also had to export population because the inefficiency of her land. Japanese dignitaries described Korea, controlled by China as a dagger ready to enter Japan's heart ²⁸.

While the struggle was going on for domination over Korea between Japan and China, the Donghag uprising arose and developed because of the relatively exploitation of peasant by local administrators. When the King of Korea had to request help from China the protector state, also Japan sent troops according to the Tientsin Treaty of 1885. Japans who maintained control in Seoul, has constituted the negotiating assembly that would make series of reforms²⁹.

Clashes began between the Chinese and the Japanese army during the work of the Negotiating Assembly. Declaring War on August 1, 1894, Japan heavily defeated China at sea and on land.

The Treaty of Shimonoseki

Japan became the dominant power in the region and took Korea under her control with the Treaty of Shimonoseki signed on 17 April 1895³⁰.

28 Mehmet Beşikçi "1894-1895 Çin Japon Savaşı: Japon Emperyalizminin Yükselişi ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu", *Toplumsal Tarih*, nu: 161, (May 2007) p. 61; A. Merthan Dündar, *Japonya'nın Orta Asya Politikaları, Rapor*, Ahmet Yesevi Üniversitesi Yayınları, Ankara 2011, p. 16.

29 Eun Kyung Jeong, *Kore Milliyetçiliği*, İstanbul, 2016, pp. 67-68.

30 The National Archives (TNA), Foreign Office (FO) Confidential Print Japan, 405/411; According to this Treaty:

- China recognizes definitively the full and complete independence and autonomy of Korea,
- China cedes to Japan in perpetuity and full sovereignty the following territories, together with all fortifications, arsenals, and public property thereon:
- The southern portion of the province of Fêngtien [Fengtian] within the following boundaries [Liaodong agreement in November 1895 deleted this and replaced it with an indemnity of 30 million taels of silver to be paid Japan]

A reaction emerged among the European Great Powers against Japan's gaining big state status and having the same commercial privileges like them. But gaining this status firmly with the diplomatic support of the Great Britain and the help of 1902 Agreement, Japan has annexed Korea in 1910 as the new imperial and colonial power of the East³¹.

Desire of Repeating the Ottoman Example to China: Negotiations After the Ratification of the Shimonoseki Agreement

Japan's victory over the China, the ancient ruler of the region, was faster than expected and made western Powers surprised. At first, it was for Russian Empire who had some projects on Manchuria and Korea and for France, Germany and the USA, this victory was unacceptable, so they made it to protest. Firstly, France, tried to lead the sharing discussion on the ground of her alliance of 1894 with Russia, but she was not alone, the Germany is interfered the process. British charge d'affaires N.R. O'Connor wrote very confidential from Peking to the Earl of Kimberley, Secretary of the State for Colonies that French Ambassador evaluated the Japanese demand about cession of Liaotung³² peninsula was intolerable case for Western Powers, as well as Russia³³. Nobody could have expected that Russia would accept keeping away from open seas in Pacific as well as Bosphorus.

According to French Ambassador, at the end of the first China –Japanese War, China was not a big power anymore, “*Because China's destiny was at the mercy of Japan*”. French diplomat thought that in this helpless situation of China was a danger for the peace of the world. Naturally the Great powers must have considered their

-The island of Formosa, together with all islands appertaining or belonging to the said island of Formosa.

- The Pescadores Group, that is to say, all islands lying between the 119th and 120th degrees of longitude east of Greenwich and the 23rd and 24th degrees of north latitude,

- China agrees to pay to Japan as a war indemnity the sum of 200,000,000 Kuping [Gubing] taels; the said sum to be paid in eight instalments for seeing the full text of agreement see, <https://china.usc.edu/treaty-shimonoseki-1895>; see also correspondence dated 29 October 1895, From Turkish Embassy in London to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry, Ottoman State Archive (BOA), Yıldız Evrakı Hususi Maruzat (Yahus), 338/68.

31 Oktay Gökhan Banbal, *Çağın İzzal döneminde Kore Yarımadası ve Uzakdoğu'nun Siyasi Görünümü*, Ankara 2015, p. 31.

32 It is a peninsula notable for its strategic location in northeast China. Port Arthur at its southernmost end has been the main subject of international competition.

33 The National Archive, Foreign Office (FO)405/335, nr.445, from R.N.O'Connor, 1 May 1895, Peking and received 24th of June.

respective sphere of interest in Chinese Empire. The most interesting point of this evaluation was the suggestion that came from French diplomat related the Ottoman Empire. “Proceed to treat the (Chinese) government in the same way as Turkey”³⁴.

The British Ambassador has related this suggestion with his colleague’s inconveniency that emerged from German government’s interference in Tokyo that prevent the pleasure of acting alone with Russia in Far East. “It was evident he had derived little satisfaction with the interference of Germany in Tokyo in common with his Government and that of Russia and that the extra weight given to the representations was meagre compensation, in his eyes, for the pleasure of acting alone with Russia in the Far East”³⁵. Actually, according to his point of view the French Ambassador was right. Because after having made a military agreement between armies first in 1892, France developed cooperation with Russia, and had signed a political agreement in March 1894. British charge d’affaires, told the French colleague, that he thought it was premature to speculate upon the necessity of treating China in the same way as Turkey, and that the historical example was not an encouraging one³⁶. British diplomat did not encourage his French colleague and sought to opportunities for cooperation with Japan.

Russian Pressure on Japan

Thus, under the leadership of Russia, the France and the Germany as being three colonialist states (we use as the triple alliance from now on) gave a memorandum to Japan at on 23 April 1895. Three states underlined “the presence of Japan in Liaodong Peninsula bothered Chinese capital and threatening the independence of Korea, both of these situations was threatening the peace of Far East”³⁷.

Because of newly exiting from a tiresome war, Japan had to accept the memorandum of the triple alliance, after long discussions and seeking international help because her army and the navy were injured. Japan would also leave Liaotung Peninsula in November 1895 in exchange for increasing the indemnity of War that China will pay³⁸.

34 *Ibid*, ; As symbols of economic and political penetration the rights of construct and manage railway were often discussed among colonialist great states, see Kees Van Dijk, *Pasific Strife*, especially the chapter 2, *Rivalries in West Pasific*, Published by Amsterdam University Press, 2015, p, 23.

35 The National Archive, Foreign Office (FO) 405/335, nr.445, from R.N.O’Connor, 1 May 1895, Peking and received 24th of June.

36 *Ibid*, It must be underlined that the message was remarked as very confidential.

37 Gülboy, “Uzak Doğu Asya’daki Güç Dengesinin Evrimi”, p. 27.

38 Beşikçi “1894-1895 Çin Japon Savaşı”, pp, 60-64.

Russia's insistence on preventing Japan's progress and guaranteeing her own interests seems to have impacted British diplomats. Truly the British diplomat in Tokyo, said: "*Russia having insisted that she would admit nothing but unconditional abandonment of Peninsula. Exchange of Treaty ratification expected tomorrow. Treaty to be revised later*". With her army and navy exhausted, the Japan was seeking help of the Britain by sharing the knowledge with her that Russia has attempted for a treaty with her for getting a port in Korea and also sure that she will get privileges in Manchuria from China.

O'Connor drew attention to the fact that the political parties in Beijing took action with his letter to the Foreign Minister on 7 May. "*After ratification of Shimonoseki by Chinese Emperor, frequent visits between Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the delegations of Russian, French and German began.*" According to O'Connor, China needs help for paying indemnity of war. The triple alliance wanted to convince Japan for an agreement without giving official guarantees to China. "*China wants to take positively guarantees for war indemnity. The triple alliance refrained giving official guarantees to China and made pressure on her not to approve the treaty without being accepted their demands for Liaodong Peninsula*"³⁹. At the end, Japan under the political pressure of the triple alliance, accepted review the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki.

"*The Chinese Government has asked Japan to remove the testimony on the Liaodong Peninsula before the Treaty was ratified, via the US representative. However, there was not enough time to answer before May 8*". According to the British representative, a decision had to be made in one way or another. The Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Yamen made a call again to the triple alliance and asked whether he could trust their help in return to behave they want. The three alliances claimed that Japan would not dare to refuse. With this indirect assurance, China has declared not to exchange approval documents⁴⁰.

It is understood that Japan seriously feared from the triple alliance. Thus, G. Lowther was reporting from Tokyo on May 25 that "*It is spoken here that Russia will make a call to Japan pulling her soldier from Korea. But Minister for Foreign Affairs added that they have not got any attempt yet*". Although it is clear that Japan will be Russia's rival in Korea and Manchuria, it is spoken here that Japan is not ready for the following

39 TNA, FO, 405/335, Mr. O'Connor to the Earl of Kimberley, from Peking, May 7 1895.

40 FO 405/335, Confidential print China-Japan-Corea, from O'Connor to Kimberley, Peking May 7, 1895.

attempts after defeating China⁴¹. Here it must not be forgotten the possibility that Japan might want to see and understand the position of Britain against Russia. In this period, it is seen that Japan, which has been in direct contact with European states, brought statesmen familiar with western thought. Lowther shared the information with Count Hayashi who took place in the first student group that sent to the West in 1866, attracted attention with his fluency of English, and was elected as deputy foreign affairs minister⁴².

Is the Great Britain Becoming Political Advisor of the Japan?

As we mentioned above, Japan had showed some signals of her intention of developing diplomatic cooperation with Britain. Britain's priority also was to increase free trade. British Ministry of Foreign Affairs must have understood the Japan's request for the British help and advice for regional relations. Thus, it will be seen that the British diplomats in Far East, especially in Tokyo began to give some advices to Japanese government since 7 June 1895.

G. Lowther, British charge d'affairs in Tokyo, says: "*I privately advised the idea to Foreign Minister, in return for withdrawal from Liaodong Peninsula, that more river and ports would open for free trade, especially the Kanton River*"⁴³. The answer of Japanese Foreign Minister was negative. However, British diplomat was sure that he was on the right track: "*but idea seemed a good one! And he would seriously consider it*". Lowther asked: "*Am I authorized to say Her Majesty's Government would favour this line of negotiation?*"⁴⁴ in another saying he wanted permission declaring the support of the great state, the Great Britain who consider also the benefits of Japan.

Really, the British support against the efforts of directly restraining Japan's expansion, by America, Russia, France and the German was very precious for Japan at that time and the benefits would be seen at the treaty of 1902⁴⁵. With

41 Kees Van Dijk, *Pasific Strife*, especially the chapter 13, *Russia, Japan and the Chinese Empire*, Published by Amsterdam University Press, 2015, p. 248.

42 FO 228/1184, Correspondence From Tokio, From Lowther to Kimberley, 28 May 1895.

43 *Ibid.*, From Lowther in Tokyo to Sir O'Connor 7 June 1895.

44 *Ibid.*

45 For the early researches about 1902 Sino British Alliance, see Ian H. Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894-1907*, (Londra: The Athlone Press, 1985); Davis, Christina L. "Linkage Diplomacy: Economic and Security Bargaining in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-23." *International Security*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 2008, pp. 143-179. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40207144. Accessed 7 July 2021; John Karzakis, *World Geo-political Dynamics and the Anglo-German Conflicts: a Historical Review*, June 2011, Center for Defence, Energy and Geopolitical

following correspondence, it is seen that Lowther's suggestion was convenient for the triple alliance fundamentally. Lowther goes on "*I work in a way approved by the government. The German representative sends his regards to our foreign minister. He reported that German government is pleased with this offer*". The common aim of the great powers can be better seen here. In spite of not studying together with the triple alliance formally, The British empire would develop the friendship of Japan with this method and not to separate from other colonialists as well. This result can be considered as the success of British foreign policy.

Lowther was continuing in the same way: "*We support opening West River strongly for international trade. China's going under the control of the triple alliance because of the rising indemnity may cause big problem. Consequently, we believe this suggestion will be well received by China*"⁴⁶. It seems that British support made Japan comfortable. Indeed, two days later, "*the Japanese Government asked the three alliance representatives whether they could guarantee that if they were satisfied with Japan's response, China would be able to meet the conditions*". In the meantime Japan underlined her request that making meeting with China directly⁴⁷. In this way, Japan had given an important message to interlocutor that she wants to keep China under control but does not intend to struggle against triple alliance.

At this stage, we must question why Russia was so active in this problem?

First of all, when Russia was made limited in Black Sea, she has been turned to Turkestan and had completed its invasion in 1881. Russia had more penetrated to China with Trans-Siberian line that she constructed till Vladivostok on the shore of Pacific Ocean. On the other hand, as the Vladivostok was being under the snow for six months, Russia begun to seek another exit to the ocean, that will reach to Korea over Manchuria, suitable with her traditional aim to reach warm water⁴⁸.

Russia had realised that his plans towards Manchuria and the Korea have been threatened by the Japanese military victories and the Japan's benefits from the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Russia had planned to extend the Trans-Siberian Railway

Research, with University of Egean, p. 63.

46 FO 228/1184, from Lowther in Tokyo to Sir O'Connor in Peking 9 June 1895.

47 *Ibid.*, from Lowther in Tokyo to Sir O'Connor in Peking 11 June 1895

48 Kees Van Dijk, *Pasific Strife*, chapter 13, *Russia, Japan and the Chinese Empire*, Published by Amsterdam University Press 2015, p.250.

from Manchuria to the South, and would also planned to make Port Arthur⁴⁹ a military base instead of Vladivostok. But Japans had occupied this place. Because of this Russia has applied to the governments of British, French and German, in order to prevent Japan to take Liaotung Peninsula⁵⁰. While French and German governments showed positive response, The Great Britain that had already signed an advantageous treaty of trade and navigation with Japan in the summer of 1894 stayed impartial.

The Colonial Activities of Japan in Korea

Lowther described the Count Inouye's report, which was full of interesting detections as "*as exactly as what we want*", Inouye had been appointed as commissar to Korea already during the Gabo Reforms in 1894. In his report, in which he shared his observations about every segment of Korean society, the Japanese bureaucrat claimed that Koreans, from the lowest class to the dynastic family, were in the childhood era of the civilization⁵¹.

This point of view is the trademark of European colonialism for spreading to Africa, Asia, Middle and Far East: Taking democracy and civilization to the undeveloped and underdeveloped countries. Because it was necessary to keep these societies and nations under tutelage of European civilized countries, till they will be grown up and modernized with the European law and political system.

According to Count Inouye, the insistence for preservation of the backwardness was more regrettable than the present backwardness. The Japanese bureaucrat, said that the basic requirement for a reform were money, people and enough national sprit, has delivered that even the Queen Min and her adviser Boku Eiko⁵² had superficial idea about modernization. He was saying "*Making laws and regulations is the easy part of case, the main difficulty is finding staff who can apply this*"⁵³.

49 A very strategic port at the far end of the Liaotung peninsula.

50 Gülboy, "Uzak Doğu Asya'daki Güç Dengesinin Evrimi", p. 26.

51 *Ibid.*, from Lowther in Tokyo to Sir O'Connor in Peking 2 July 1895. Nichi Nichi Shimbun newspaper cutting.

52 Moving from the example of Japan, one of the representatives of the Gabo reform movement (Yong Hyo Park), which carried out reforms in Korea, fled to Japan at the end of 1884 under the pressure of China.. See Nahm, *Köre Tarihi*, p. 112. As Count Inoye stated in the article, he was not an enemy of Japan but had an understanding that emphasized his nationalist identity. For Gabo reforms, see. Nahm, *Köre Tarihi*, pp. 118-119; Jeong, *Köre Milliyetçiliği*, pp. 69-71; Hwang, *Köre Tarihi*, pp. 111-113. I would like to thank my esteemed colleague Eun Kyung Jeong for helping me identify who Boku-Eiko is.

53 TNA, FO, 228/1184, from Lowther in Tokyo to Sir O'Connor in Peking 2 July 1895. Nichi Nichi

Despite every challenge, Count Inouye said he was not pessimistic, noting that bribery, abuse and corruption, the accumulation of many years, could not be repaired within a few months.

Taking attention to the economic life and the deficiencies of financial management, Count Inouye had determined “*first of all, there are no tax law and an account book and also guidance book for calculating annual expenditure and income*”. Count Inouye reported that the Korean economy has begun to rectify with the help of 3 million yen borrowed from Japan, and that they have been organizing a budget since April 1, taking into account revenues and expenditures. It seems that in Korea, where radical reforms in trade, finance and law had been taken place, more and more has been borrowed from Japan. According to the previous colonialist experiences, the next step would be on the laws and the social life. Thus Count Inouye had added “*we have postponed the reform on the constitution and law courts until the graduation of law students*”⁵⁴.

After having opening up to the free trade of great powers, it can be said that Japan became the owner of her own colony within forty years, at least, Japan has learned the colonialist logic in a half century.

At the same time, the criticism of Count Inouye, towards the Japanese in Korea, shows the brutal face of imperialism. According to his observations, the Japanese traders were highly intended to exploit trade and having great properties in the Seoul. “*Considering Japanese traders, there is need for another reform among the Japanese in Korea. The Japanese traders, only focusing on their immediate interest but not on improving cooperation, insulting to the people, do not take the Chinese as a sample*”.

Count Inouye pointed out that Koreans would prefer to work with Chinese traders if Japanese investors did not correct themselves, despite having the most favored nation status. “*Because Japanese traders are generally lazy, hasty and fond of luxury*”⁵⁵.

Reforms on the Laws and the developments in Korea were taken to the first row of the Japanese government agenda. Under the light of Count Inouye’s reports, it is understood that reform process would be difficult than expected and last long. British charge d’affaires has written to his prime minister Lord Salisbury and his

Shimbun newspaper cutting.

54 *Ibid.*, from Lowther in Tokyo to Sir O’Connor in Peking 2 July 1895. Nichi Nichi Shimbun Newspaper cutting

55 *Ibid.*

colleague in Peking that Japanese foreign minister and Count Inouye were sure that they would be successful⁵⁶.

Japan Wants the British Support

The British interest towards Japan rose rapidly in July 1895. Lowther narrates that the Japanese Prime Minister wanted to talk about Korea at the first opportunity. Later on Count Ito, the Japanese prime minister had asked whether Britain would help Japan to solve Korean issue, and took the answer from Earl of Kimberley that Britain would do her best for such a suggestion. Count Ito expressed his hope for reaching an agreement that would give the independence of Korea under the guarantee of great Powers. Japanese Prime Minister tried to specify that their wish for keeping Britain sided with Japan, by saying that such a time when Russia, France and the Germany were apparently working in harmony and this effort would not be well understood, so later on he wanted to talk on this⁵⁷.

It was not in vain for Japan to apply to Great Britain, as it seemed that Russia's aspirations would never end. The knowledge that Japanese minister for foreign affairs shared with Satow, the fully authorized British envoy, was about Korea. Korea that became a subject of the rivalry between Russia and the Japan. Russian representative in Tokyo, wanted the Japanese government to be respectful towards Korean independence and was saying "*The Korean King (in reality the Russians) was concerned that Japan's intervention had diminished his authority in Korea. If the Japanese activities are compatible with their declarations, Russia would be happy with that*"⁵⁸.

The Japanese minister for foreign affairs, who noted this conversation and said he would share it with his cabinet, added that although personally agree with Russian ambassador, he could not talk about next steps of Japan, till the acceptance of the Inouye's report by Korea. The Japanese Ambassador in Germany had advised that Germany should be informed about the Korean policy of the Japan. The new British charge d'affaires, Satow was evaluating that the Japanese Prime Minister was afraid of doing this without saying to France and Russia⁵⁹.

While Japan was intended beginning trade interviews with China with the advice of Britain, the triple alliance has declared that the Wuchow port⁶⁰ that Japan

56 *Ibid.*

57 TNA, FO, 228/1184, from Lowther in Tokyo to Sir O'Connor in Peking 13 July 1895.

58 TNA, FO, 228/1184, from Satow in Tokyo to Sir O'Connor in Peking 2-3 August 1895.

59 *Ibid.*

60 It is located in Manchuria where the Yalu River flows into the Gulf of Korea.

wanted to open up for free trade could only come to the agenda when Japan would reduce the war indemnity.

According to Satow the time was quite convenient because “*Russia will probably not facilitate a settlement, as long as she can fish in troubled waters*”⁶¹; so he asked his colleague in Peking whether China was ready for paying the indemnity. In this conjuncture, if the British diplomats could reconcile China and Japan, it could mean that the Great Britain would control the process. The prescience and the cooperation of the British diplomats are really amazing.

According to Satow’s reports, the Japanese Prime Minister had learnt that the triple alliance would request the reduction of indemnity to 30 billion tael and the withdrawal of Japanese soldiers not to be tied up with paying it. They would also remind him that the privilege in trade desired by Japan was tied up with the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Satow who understood that Japan would accept these requests, was saying that China must be faced with additional 50 billion tael indemnity and uncertain requests that would considerably increase the trade: “*I have insisted on opening Wuchow to trade, thus, the trade, from which Japanese merchants will get more share would considerable increased.*” Thus, British diplomats directed Japan appropriately for her own benefits separately from the triple alliance and also tried to effect by showing commercial interests instead of war⁶².

On the other hand, the Japanese Prime Minister answered that he got intelligence that French government would oppose the opening up of Wuchow port. In spite of not being objected officially, the opinion of diplomatic circles in Peking was the same too. Whereupon Satow had taken initiative and advised taking a goodwill step: “*I have pointed out that Japan could accept the reduction of indemnity, considering the economic difficulties in China, but in return the commercial conditions must have recouped the generosity of Japan. I also pointed out that if the triple alliance accept Japanese point of view, Japan will make further discussions directly with China*”⁶³. One day later from this correspondence the triple alliance has reduced the indemnity, besides underlining that this problem must be solved independently from the Treaty of Shimonoseki. When the three alliances announced that the army’s withdrawal would take place after the compensation was paid, the British diplomat stated that

61 TNA, FO, 228/1184, from Satow in Tokyo to Sir O’Connor in Peking 3 September 1895.

62 *Ibid.*, from Satow in Tokyo to Marki Salisbury in London, 12 September 1895.

63 *Ibid.*

he was most afraid of not being able to demand to open up Wuchow to trade. “*I have then recommended that he accept 30 million compensations, demand additional economic privileges and, after that, directly meet with China*”⁶⁴. With this statement, Satow officially accepted that they were mentoring Japan.

At this point, in accordance with her interests, the Great Britain suggested Japan opening up the West River for the trade. But it appeared that Japan which wanted to withdraw from the peninsula by quickly solving problems, if received guarantee on the payment of indemnity, she would make an agreement. Japanese prime minister was in expectation by saying “*we might not take indemnity in direct meetings but the triple alliance persuade China*”⁶⁵. In addition, Satow’s assessment: “*it is not possible to understand whether they demand opening West River as a condition*” shows us that the priorities of the two sides were different. Here we can conclude that Japan also uses Great Britain and rejects unprofitable proposals⁶⁶.

Britain had many expectations, but Japan’s priorities seemed to differ from those and the experienced British diplomat also was aware of it. As a matter of fact, on the 10 September, Satow shared the knowledge: “*Japanese foreign minister announced to French government that they will not demand of opening West River to trade as a condition and the mentioned government has thanked Japan for it*”. At this stage, Satow has shown the real goals of his state and what to do: “*There is only one clear way to get results; to pressure directly China with Germany.*”

Conclusion

The desire of great powers for much more free trade had brought complete turmoil to the people and states of the Near and Far Eastern countries. The documents show us that Colonialist great states performed very similar method both in the Ottoman Empire in Near East, and Korea in the Far East. The industrialised great powers all agreed to do much more free trade and benefit from the status of the most favoured nation. Lonely or all together, their common goal was making much more trade in their own conditions and styles.

Although the Ottoman Empire had carried out lots of reforms demanded and

64 *Ibid.*, from Satow in Tokyo to Sir O’Connor in Peking 13 September 1895.

65 *Ibid.*, from Satow in Tokyo to Sir O’Connor in Peking 26 September 1895.

66 in order to understand that how Japanese rulers used the British and German experiences for their Japanese modernisation, see Selçuk Esenbel, “Meiji Resterasyonu Hakkında Düşünceler,” in *Meiji Japonya’sına 150. Yılından Bakışlar*, Edited by: A. Merthan Dünder, Ankara 2019, pp. 50-72.

hinted by the great powers, the Empire collapsed at the end of the First World War. While Korea was described as “an oyster that crushed in the fight of the whales”, Japan, grasping colonial logic, emerged as an imperialist state by using Western methods in the first decade of twentieth century and annexed Korea as a colony. As we have tried to emphasize, the British diplomatic correspondence tells us that the European interest in the region was mainly based on more free trade and navigation. Great Britain sided with Japan in the process because of concerns about Russia and did not compromise on the traditional “*must save India First*” policy.

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