The United States and the Sino-Japanese War 1894-1895

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Japan's crushing defeat of China in the fall and winter of 1894-5 forced the Cleveland administration to reexamine its Far Eastern policy. The initial American response to the Japanese incursions into Korea was to press Japan to withdraw from the peninsula. When Japan refused and war broke out the United States expected a stalemate. The Japanese victories which followed astounded the Western world, laid bare China's weakness, and disrupted the equilibrium of the Far East. United States' leaders responded to this unanticipated turn of events by reassessing their view of Japan. President Cleveland, Secretary of State Walter Q. Gresham, and other American diplomats came to consider Japan as a progressive rather than a disruptive influence in the Far East. In the midst of a domestic economic crisis which gave a heightened importance to overseas markets, American leaders turned their attention to the advantages which would accrue to the United States should Japan sweep away Chinese restrictions on foreign trade. Thus, the war provoked a significant shift in the United States' attitude toward a Japanese victory, although basic American interests such as the integrity of China and the preservation of neutrality remained unchanged.

The rebellion of the Tong-Haks, an outlawed Korean religious sect, precipitated the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. A blend of various eastern religions, the Tong-Haks were fanatically anti-foreign and anti-modern, similar to the Boxers in China. Their struggle against the corrupt and oppressive Korean regime quickly gained the support of the peasants in the southern provinces and the revolt rapidly gained momentum. The Tong-Haks defeated government forces in the south, captured the provincial capital of Chon-ju,

and forced the Korean Army into a disorganized retreat toward Seoul. It appeared that the government would not be able to suppress the insurrection and in early June 1894, the Korean King requested Chinese aid. He did so at the insistence of Yuan Shik-k'ai, the Chinese Resident of Seoul, who dominated Korean political affairs. The Chinese claimed suzerainty over Korea despite the Korean claim of independence. Li Hung-chang, the official who directed China's foreign policy, anxious to preserve a regime amenable to Chinese influence sent 1500 troops to Korea on June 6, 1894 in response to the king's request.[1] Japan, anxious to eradicate Chinese control of Korea, responded to the Chinese move by ordering troops into Korea. The Japanese controlled ninety per cent of the foreign trade of Korea as well as the bulk of banks, concessions and trading establishments, and they had long resented Chinese political influence in the peninsula.[2]

While the Chinese force prepared to move against the Tong-Haks, the Japanese constructed permanent positions directed toward the Chinese. However, before either went into action, the Korean government forces rallied and dissipated the main force of the insurrection. Only remnants of the Tong-Haks remained at large, and Korea requested withdrawal of the Chinese and Japanese armies. China was agreeable to simultaneous withdrawal. Japan was not. Alarmed at the prospects of a major conflict on Korean soil, Cho piong-Chik, President of the Korean Foreign Office, sought the aid of the English, Russian, French, and United States representatives at Seoul. He said that although Korea had requested Chinese aid, the Japanese had landed "without invitation and against the protest of the Korean Government." [3] Moreover, since there was no longer any necessity for foreign troops Cho piong-Chik wished to see them leave. Following Cho's request, John Sill, the United States minister to Korea, joined with the representatives of the other three nations in requesting a simultaneous withdrawal of Chinese and Japanese troops.[4] China repeated its willingness to participate in a simultaneous withdrawal. Japan refused to withdraw its army until the Korean Government implemented a series of reforms. Despite Japa-

nese contentions that the purpose of the "reforms" was to make Korea "prosperous and strong" so that "the friendship between our two nations may be maintained," the reforms would reduce Chinese influence on the peninsula.[5]

The United States ministers in Tokyo and Seoul were sympathetic to the Japanese aims. Edwin Dun, the U. S. minister to Japan, believed that the Japanese feared continued chaos in Korea would provide European powers an excuse to occupy the peninsula. Dun regarded the Japanese move as an attempt to destroy Chinese "quasi suzerainty," to foster Korean "autonomy and sovereign independence," and to create a buffer state that would stand between Japan and its Russian and Chinese mainland rivals.[6] John Sill, an aging ex-school superintendent whose main interest in becoming U. S. minister to Korea was to rest and study the country's flora and fauna, reported to Gresham that the Japanese appeared "to be very kindly disposed toward Korea." Japan would foster Korean independence "by aiding her in such reform as shall bring peace, prosperity, and enlightenment to her people." This, Sill noted, pleased "many Korean officials of the more intelligent sort," and it was a motive which would "not meet with disapproval in America." [7]

Grover Cleveland and Walter Gresham did not respond to Japanese ambitions in Korea quite as Sill anticipated. They adhered to the traditional United States' policy of encouraging Korean independence. Neither the President nor Gresham saw any advantage accruing to the United States from Japanese control of Korea. Gresham thus instructed Dun to inform the Japanese government that the United States looked with "severe regret" upon Japan's refusal to withdraw its troops and its insistance that "radical changes be made in the domestic administration of Korea." Dun was to tell the Japanese "that the President will be painfully disappointed should Japan visit upon her feeble and defenseless neighbor the horrors of an unjust war." [8] Furthermore Gresham told Tatano, the Japanese minister, that Japan's "apparent determination to engage in war on Korean soil was nowhere more regretted than here." [9] Former Secretary of State Thomas Bayard, then

the U. S. ambassador to Great Britain, also attempted to convey to the Japanese the seriousness with which the Cleveland administration viewed the Korean situation. Bayard warned Viscount Aoki, the Japanese minister in London, that American-Japanese relations would suffer from any disagreement "as to the measure of consideration and justice" with which Japan treated Korea.[10]

President Cleveland thus remonstrated with the Japanese to disengage from Korea. How much further he would go was still open to question. The Korean situation was tense in the month after the Japanese landed, yet there was no large scale fighting. During this period Ye Sung-Soo, the Korean Minister at Washington, sought the aid of the United States. He told Gresham that since his government lacked the capability to resist Japan it "relied on the disinterested friendship of the United States." Although the United States "sympathized" with Korea and "wished to see its sovereignty respected," Gresham told Ye Sung-Soo that the United States "must maintain toward it and the other powers an attitude of impartial neutrality." The administration would attempt to influence Japan only "in a friendly way." [11]

The United States also rejected a British request for cooperation to end the crisis. Early in July 1894, the British ambassador at Washington inquired formally "whether the United States would unite with Great Britain to avert war between China and Japan." Although the British ambassador though his government contemplated only "friendly intervention," Gresham rejected the proposal. The U. S. had already intervened as a "friendly neutral," and Gresham "did not think the President would feel authorized to go further in the exercise of our good offices." [12] The Chinese then appealed directly to the United States, and Gresham replied that although he "earnestly desired" peace he could do no more than the "strong but friendly representation" already made to Japan.[13]

The Cleveland administration clung to the hope that mild diplomatic pressure would induce Japan to resolve the crisis through direct negotiations with China. Gresham thought a negotiated settlement possible because he accepted Edwin

Dun's appraisal that Japan would not attack Korea and that there was "no probability of war between Japan and China." [14] The administration ignored Charles Denby, Jr.'s warning that China would not give way because "to yield preeminence in the peninsula would be to invite future interference in the adjoining provinces of Manchuria." [15] However, the administration, not Denby, misread Japanese intentions. The Tokyo government decided to bring Korea under its control, and on July 23, 1894 Japanese troops assaulted the Korean palace and captured the king.[16] Major clashes with Chinese troops followed, and nine days later China and Japan declared war.

The immediate United States reaction was concern that Japan might have allies. This raised the specter of a war to partition China. However within a few days Gresham was convinced that Japan had acted alone. He still thought that the war might possibly affect United States interests, but he did not conceive of an outcome which would significantly alter the balance of power in the Far East. Gresham conceded an edge in naval warfare to Japan, yet he could "see no reason why China should not speedily move a large force into Korea by land" and neutralize the Japanese naval victories.[17] While Gresham expected a standoff, the opinion of most westerners was similar to that of Charles Denby Jr. who wrote from Peking that the war, "if left to take its course free from interference on the part of other powers, must inevitably result in the triumph" of China.[18] Even British and German bankers, confronted with unstable investment opportunities as a result of the economic depression of the United States, were intrigued with the idea of backing "China's gigantic reserve forces" with war loans they could redeem "later in enormously profitable mortgages on customs." [19]

Anticipating an outcome of the war which would not disturb the balance of power in the Far East, the Cleveland administration concentrated on securing pledges from China and Japan to exclude treaty ports from the fighting and to respect neutral rights.[20] Japan soon dispelled any illusions of stalemate, however. Inflicting major defeats on the Chinese in the first two months of the war the Japanese eliminated

the possibility of stalemate or Chinese victory. On September 16, 1894 the Japanese Army routed the Chinese at Pinyang killing or capturing all but 4,000 of 20,000 Chinese troops. The following day a Japanese naval squadron decimated a major part of China's naval strength in a battle off the mouth of the Yalu River.[21] Within two days the Japanese destroyed the Chinese military presence in Korea and loomed as a potential threat to the power equilibrium of the Far East. Shinichiro Kurino, the Japanese minister to the United States denied that Japan had any intention of doing so, insisting that his country fought "only to preserve the peace of the East." He explained that peace depended upon the maintenance of "the balance of power," which was "as much a factor in Oriental politics as it is in European affairs." [22] According to Kurino a Korea free from Chinese control was essential to the Asian balance of power.

As the remnants of its army retreated across the Yalu, China sought the aid of the Western powers. The Chinese appeal centered on Japan's threat to Western interests in the Far East.[23] The British were responsive because the war was disturbing the China trade. The Russian Council of Ministers had already decided to thwart Japanese gains by cooperating with England and was anxious to act.[24] The British were willing to cooperate with their Far Eastern rival, Russia, but they also sought the support of the United States as a potential partner in East Asia.

On October 6, 1894 the British ambassador proposed that the United States cooperate with Britain, Germany, France, and Russia to secure a cessation of hostilities on the basis of a war indemnity for Japan and an international guarantee of Korean independence.[25] The President rejected the idea of joint intervention. Subsequent British assurances that they contemplated only "diplomatic action" did not alter Cleveland's decision, although he claimed to "earnestly" desire peace.[26] Despite a policy of fostering Korean claims to independence as advantageous to the United States' commercial ambitions, the President had no intention of entering a coalition to force terms upon Japan or to assume the burden of an

open ended international guarantee of Korean independence. Gresham explained the United States refusal in terms of a diplomatic tradition that "with few exceptions . . . shows no departure from the wise policy of avoiding foreign alliances and embarassing participation in guaranteeing the independence of distant states." [27]

Adherance to a conservative diplomatic tradition of nonintervention provided an immediate guide for the Cleveland Administration. Yet Japan's sudden emergence as a threat to the stability of East Asia undercut the administration's assumption that the war would end with no major shift in power. This forced American leaders to reassess their frame of reference regarding the Far East. The Cleveland administration confronted this new situation in Asia against a background of the domestic economic crisis that followed the Panic of 1893. As unemployment, strikes, and bankruptcy wracked the country many in the United States believed that only expanded overseas markets would resolve the crisis which the American economy faced. Following the violence of the Pullman strike, Walter Gresham, who realized that the nation could "not afford constant unemployment" without risking social upheaval, anticipated a future, "by no means bright" when "mills and factories [could] supply the demand by running seven or eight months out of twelve." [28] Many shared Gresham's concern, and as Americans scanned for expanded opportunities the potential of the China market took on added importance.

Yet at the very time that overseas markets seemed essential to the preservation of the United States economic system, American trade with the Far East expanded only haltingly. In fact Thomas Jernigan, United States Consul at Shanghai, insisted that the United States was falling behind in the quest for control of the China market. As he surveyed the American position in China he saw other nations pushing ahead of the United States while "not many years ago, the American interest was of first consideration at Shanghai." Jernigan was convinced that the United States, because of its proximity to the Far East, "should dominate and supply with the over-

production of their fields the markets of the swarming millions of Asia."[29] Jernigan and Charles Denby were among the most vocal critics of the American failure to exploit the potential of the China market. Denby complained that even American shipping had declined in importance. A week before the Sino-Japanese war he observed, "the passing ships bear the flags of all nations—Chinese, Japanese, English, French, Austrian, and German predominate; that of the United States is seldom seen, unless upon some oil or lumber-laden bark." [30]

United States trade with China had increased from less than nine million dollars in 1888 to just under twenty-one million dollars in 1894.[31] China was the largest foreign market for American cotton goods, and only Great Britain exported more cotton to China. Yet, since they believed that the American economy was faltering due to a lack of markets, men such as Denby and Jernigan were discontended with the fact that the United States exported less than twenty-eight million yards of cotton to China while Britain exported over 365 million yards.[32] One major reason American economic penetration of China seemed slight compared to what appeared needed or possible was that American businessmen seemed to talk more about the China market than to exploit it. There was not an American owned bank in China although there were French, German, and British banks. Thus, United States merchants added to British profits by transacting most of their business through British banks. Jernigan reflected the tenuous state of American economic penetration of China when he pleaded for the founding of an American bank, arguing that "the establishment of a bank in China or Japan by American capitalists would, at least, give the color of permanency to American enterprise in Asia." [33]

Yet American diplomats did not consider the lack of sustained interest on the part of American businessmen as the fundamental reason the China market was more myth than reality. They termed the basic cause "Chinese conservatism;" restrictions on foreign trade and residence, internal taxes on the movement of goods, and the general reluctance to emulate

western methods. United States officials believed that these restrictions discouraged American commerce and reasoned that in the absence of these obstacles United States trade would flourish. John W. Fowler, United States Consul at Ningpo, believed that "the administration of the likin and the guilds" were the "great obstacles to commerce in China." "Remove the likin," Fowler argued, and the United States would "have an immense market open to us." [34] William Fales, Acting U. S. Consul at Amoy, maintained that "the only obstacle in the way of the extension of trade in American wheat flour is the 'likin' or barrier tax levied all through China." [35] Fowler and Fales reflected a frustration with Chinese restrictions on trade common to American businessmen and diplomats. Yet despite acceptance of the idea that removal of these obstacles would provide markets to ease the economic crisis confronting the United States, it was clear that the United States lacked either the military power or the inclination to take the lead in forcing such major changes upon China.

President Cleveland did not consider an attempt to expand foreign trade through the acquisition of colonies as a viable alternative. The Berlin newspaper that charged, in the midst of the war, that "Americans covet territory in East Asia and see in the present crises an opportunity" missed the anti-colonial thrust of the Cleveland administration. While there no doubt was truth in the German paper's assertion that "linked by the ocean with Asiatic trading interests . . . Californians are especially eager for a foothold on the East Asiatic Coast," [36] the administration opposed territorial acquisitions because a "free government can not pursue an imperial policy." With arguments paralleling those of anti-imperialists five years later, Walter Gresham believed that colonies would deny the United States the natural advantages of an insular position, and he reminded imperialists that a "nation, like a chain, is no stronger than its weakest point." And while a lack of markets seemed ominous to Gresham, he was convinced that a military establishment large enough to police a colonial empire would subvert free government.[37]

Against this background of economic crises American lead-

ers reshaped their views of the Far East taking onto account the surprising Japanese victories. Impressed by Japan's success and taking pride in the westernization of the Japanese military, the Cleveland administration ceased to view Japan as a disruptive force and instead saw it as an ordering, westernizing and civilizing influence in Asia. American leaders began to believe the Japanese would force China to modify its restrictions on foreign trade and thus open to penetration the markets which the American economy required.[38] In short, a view emerged in the fall and winter of 1894-5 that Japan provided a partial answer to the dilemma confronting the United States, which needed greater access to the China market but lacked the means to force the Chinese to eliminate burdensome barriers to trade.

There were two aspects to this new view of how Japan could advance American interests. The first was an acceptance of Viscount Aoki's claim that the war was "one between progress and conservatism." [39] Americans expected Japan to demand extensive commercial privileges as a condition of peace. These would then accrue to the Western nations by virtue of the "most favored nation" clauses in their treaties with China. Denby speculated that Japan would force China to abolish the likin tax, open the interior to foreign residence, initiate currency reform, eliminate exclusive trading privileges and open all Chinese ports to foreign commerce. He wrote Gresham that since Japan "proposes to do these things, or some of them for Korea, why not for China?" [40] This reversal of attitudes was apparent with Gresham who, in July, had been critical of Japanese intentions in Korea and months later spoke of Japan as having "stepped out into the light of a better day." [41] And at the height of his optimism over the opportunities Japan might create for the United States, Denby, who had little use for the Japanese, thought that Japan might go "beyond her own selfish interest" in reaching a peaceful settlement and become "the champion of civilization." [42]

The other aspect of the war that intrigued Americans was that humiliating defeats would lead China, which Gresham termed "a vast inert mass of humanity," to recognize the need

for westernization.[41] Charles Denby, Jr. quickly came to see the war as "beneficial" because it forced China to "see the necessity for a renovation of her methods and the desirability of entering on the path of Western civilization." [44] In Denby's opinion, China could "only be brought back into harmony with the world by force," and hence repeated Chinese defeats would "be a salutory experience up to the point at which the dynasty may be threatened." [45] Only then he advised Gresham would it be time for foreign intervention. Denby agreed with the United States' rejection of the British mediation proposal in October, and he hoped the British effort would fail because the war should continue.

Although the opportunities which might accrue to the United States as a result of the war intrigued American leaders, a two-pronged Japanese assault on Manchuria forced the Cleveland administration to face more basic questions. One was whether extensive Japanese penetration of the mainland of China in itself was detrimental to the interests of the United States. Another more disturbing question was how far Japan could pursue the war without toppling the Manchu Dynasty or provoking a European intervention that would result in the partition of China. By the end of October the Japanese had won a major victory at Chielien Ch'eng and were attacking Port Arthur which was expected to fall, leaving China virtually defenseless.[46] In Peking, the U. S. minister no longer spoke of the "salutory" effect of the war; instead he warned the State Department that the Manchu "dynasty is threatened with ruin and the empire is crumbling away." [47] Still seeing advantages in a Japanese victory the Cleveland administration had no desire to see it result in a partition of China. The United States was firmly committed to the territorial integrity of China for two basic reasons. Partition would destroy the balance of power in the Far East. It would also likely be followed by European nations establishing areas of special trading privileges which the United States would be powerless to counter. This would not only be more detrimental to United States trade than the Chinese restrictions, but it would foreclose the possibility of opening all of China to

American economic penetration. And the men who shaped United States policy were convinced that if the China trade was free trade the United States was destined to dominate it.

President Cleveland responded to the specter of partition with the argument that Japan was entitled to legitimate (but not precisely defined) gains, but American interests required a quick end to the war.[48] Peace would save the dynasty and prevent partition. Moreover, Russia and Great Britain, the two powers considered most likely to intervene, were committed to the restoration of the status quo ante bellum, while United States diplomats were concerned that Japan should not be denied "the fruits of her splendid campaign in which so much skill and courage of the highest order had been exhibited." [49] Committed to a termination of the war which would recognize limited Japanese gains, put an end to the "disturbance of our growing commercial interests" in China and Japan, and preclude a European intervention, the President decided to make an independent offer of mediation.[50]

While the mediation offer was in its formative stages Gresham met frequently with Kurino, the Japanese minister, to insure that Japan "fully comprehended and appreciated" President Cleveland's "benevolent and impartial motives." [51] The President thought the likelihood of European intervention mounted with each Japanese victory, and in the first week of November, 1894, he ordered the State Department to prepare a despatch to Edwin Dun in Tokyo offering mediation.[52] Determined that the Japanese not misinterpret Cleveland's plan and think it directed against them. Gresham showed the despatch to Kurino before telegraphing Dun on November 6, 1894.[53] The despatch instructed Dun to convey the President's personal offer of mediation and to emphasize to the Japanese government that "the deplorable war between Japan and China endangers no policy of the United States in Asia." The note also expressed Cleveland's fear that if the war continued "without check to Japan's military operations on land and sea," it was "not improbable that other powers having interests in that quarter may demand a settlement not favorable to Japan's future security and well being." [54] The Japanese

minister read the despatch and thanked Gresham for the "friendship which the President's action displayed toward Japan." [55] Cleveland offered to mediate an "honorable peace" provided both China and Japan found his proposal acceptable.[56] He was anxious to see his offer accepted, and he volunteered to aid the peacemaking process "by conference at this capital or in any other practicable way." [57]

As the mediation offer was on its way to the Far East, a telegram from Charles Denby arrived at the State Department. It contained an appeal from the Chinese government to the United States, France, Germany, and Russia to intervene to end the war. Denby, convinced that China was on the verge of disintegration, recommended "mediation as a last effort to save [the] dynasty and the empire." [58] The State Department's reaction was that the Chinese appeal to the European nations would "embarrass the President's freedom of action." [59] President Cleveland saw nothing to be gained by acting in concert with any other nation. He squelched a cabinet member's suggestion that the United States take advantage of the opportunity to partition China, and he announced his rejection of the Chinese appeal. The president still hoped, however, that his own mediation proposal would be accepted.[60]

Japan rejected the United States mediation offer and ended Cleveland's hopes for being peacemaker of the Far East. The Japanese government took the position that the scope of its victories made mediation unnecessary, and it insisted that China initiate negotiations.[61] The Chinese, however, still hoped for European aid and were reluctant to sue for peace. While they hesitated the Japanese onslaught continued against Mukden and Tientsin.[62] Denby wrote Gresham that the situation in China "nearly approaches chaos," and that "the way to Peking seems open." [63] The United States minister advised the Chinese leaders, who turned to him "with childlike confidence," to seek peace.[64] The Chinese military situation continued to deteriorate, and late in November 1894, China made initial peace overtures through Denby and Edwin Dun in Tokyo.[65] Thus, President Cleveland's plans for mediating an oriental conflict shrank to American diplomats functioning as go-betweens.

Little progress toward peace took place through the winter of 1894-5. In Washington, Gresham attempted to convince Japanese diplomats that it was in Japan's interest to end the war before it led to European intervention. He met with little success largely because the Japanese cabinet was under intense domestic pressure to continue the war. The military wanted control of ports and strategic areas on the mainland of China, and, in Edwin Dun's opinion, would "be satisfied with nothing less than the occupation of Peking and the complete humiliation of China." [66] Powerful Japanese civilian interests also demanded continuation of the war. They sought control of China's internal trade and of the development of Chinese railroads and mines.[67] It was difficult to know how long Japan would continue the war. However, by December 1894, Edwin Dun thought that the Japanese cabinet, despite the pressure it was under, realized that continuation of the war was "not of sufficient importance to justify the possibility of disaster that may overtake their forces in the field or that may result from intervention by European powers." [68]

Chinese leaders still hoped to escape from the war with an indemnity and recognition of Korean independence, and they continued to place more emphasis on foreign intervention than on coming to terms with Japan. On February 17, 1895, the Chinese government asked President Cleveland to secure an armistice.[69] The President refused because to do so would be inconsistent with the United States' policy of "impartial neutrality." [70] In the weeks that followed Li Hung-chang and other Chinese leaders made repeated visits to the foreign legations in Peking in search of support that would enable them to resist Japanese peace terms. Only the Japanese knew exactly what their terms would be, but it was probable that they would demand territory in Manchuria. Li Hung-chang thus tried to secure a commitment from the western powers to intervene if China should refuse to cede mainland territory to Japan.[71]

The Chinese ministers called at the United States legation where Denby argued that since resistance was impossible, China should avoid "useless destruction and bloodshed" and

make peace on the most favorable terms that it could.[72] Denby also attempted to persuade the Chinese to forget intervention. He warned them that European intervention was "more likely to produce dismemberment [of China] than any action that may be taken by Japan." Denby believed that "unless Russia and England and France are more disinterested than history shows them to be they will each demand heavy compensation for any services rendered to China." He pleaded with Chinese leaders to dismiss the idea of foreign assistance and to follow "China's true policy . . . a sincere, friendly reapproachment with Japan." Denby thought that the Japanese would agree "that the two great oriental nations ought to have the same interests in the long run." He advised Li Hung-chang "That he should turn his back on European powers," abandon the idea of intervention, and persuade Japan that a prostrate China would adversely affect its commercial interests. Denby suggested that the Chinese "use all the arguments drawn from geographical situation, national analogies and commercial interests to induce Japan not to dismember China." [73]

The Chinese ignored Denby's advice. Yet their tours of the foreign legations convinced them that the Europeans would not consider intervention until the actual Japanese peace terms were known.[74] China thus entered into serious negotiations with Japan in March 1895. Advising the Chinese delegation was John W. Foster, counsel of the Chinese legation in Washington and former United States Secretary of State. Prior to leaving the United States for the peace conference at Shimonseki, Foster had attempted to arrange a 400 million dollar loan which China could use to pay a war indemnity. Foster denied the story, although Walter Gresham was convinced that it was true. Since Foster's commission would be a percentage of the loan Gresham wrote Thomas Bayard, U. S. Ambassador to Britain, that "if Foster is not already a very rich man his prospects for becoming a millionaire are flattering." [75]

Despite an assassination attempt on Li Hung-chang which delayed negotiations for a short time, by the end of April

1895, China and Japan had concluded a treaty which shifted the balance of power in the Far East. China agreed to recognize the independence of Korea, to make commercial concessions including the opening of additional ports to foreign trade and to cede Formosa, the Pescadores Islands, and the Liaotung Peninsula to Japan.[76] The last provision was the most important because it made Japan a mainland power, gave it control of Port Arthur and blocked Russian plans for a southward extension of the Trans-Siberian Railroad.

The United States had expected a great deal from the war. Acting Secretary of State Edwin F. Uhl summarized American expectations when he instructed Denby that the United States "will expect equal and liberal trading advantages—certainly in Korea and presumably in China—as the result of the war." [77] As it turned out, the commercial provisions of the peace treaty as well as the Japanese attitude toward free trade proved disappointing to Americans.[78] Far from receiving "equal and liberal trading advantages," the United States was soon protesting a Japanese attempt "to secure a monopoly of all concessions from the Korean Government." [79] Yet Japan's failure to insist upon the abolition of Chinese restrictions on foreigners was in Denby's opinion and admission that demands such as "residence in the interior, non-taxation of goods until they reach the consumer and reduction of [the] likin are untenable." [80] Thus, the barriers to American commerce not only remained, but seemed more entrenched than ever.

Although the peace treaty opened additional Chinese ports to foreign trade and liberalized some trade regulations, it did not approach doing all that Denby had anticipated. He criticized the Japanese failure to insist that China open several ports to foreign trade "which would have greatly extended British and American trade." Instead the Japanese demanded that foreigners be allowed to import machinery and engage in manufacturing in China, a concession which Denby attacked as "valuable to Japan, but of doubtful value to Western powers." The U. S. minister revealed the extent of his disappointment when he complained to Gresham that Ja-

pan, "posing as the knight errant of civilization," had intimated that it "intended to many great things for foreign commerce." In the end, however, the Japanese had pursued their "own aggrandizement . . . and the Western powers gain practically nothing." [81]

Although Denby had advised the Chinese to make peace at any price he considered the territorial cessions "appalling." [82] Japan had become a "continental power" and a permanent threat to the integrity of China. Control of the Liaotung Peninsula would enable Japan to "stand as a sentinel at the gate at the Gulf of Phihli" and to dominate Northern China.[83] The treaty obviously was a direct provocation to the Russians. Yet the Russians faced a dilemma. Clifton Breckenridge, the United States minister to Russia, believed that "the present and prospective need of commercial outlets . . . upon the Pacific Ocean" motivated Russian expansionism. However the Russians were not in a position to make a concerted move to the south because "this war has come too early for Russia. Her Siberian road is not completed and the great increase of her navy is not finished." Despite the premature timing of the disruption of the Far East from the Russian viewpoint, Breckenridge believed that Russia would "at least leave nothing undone to prevent Japan from gaining a foothold upon the continent and to prevent anything like a protectorate over Korea." [84] Aware of the provocation they were giving to Russia, the Japanese partially relied upon Anglo-Russian rivalry in the Far East to inhibit the Russians. They also attempted to forestall Russian action by probing the willingness of European powers to initiate a partition of China which would leave Japan in control of the Liaotung Peninsula.[85]

Russia was unwilling to see Japan remain in Manchuria on any terms. Late in April 1895, before the Chinese ratified the treaty, Russia, Germany, and France protested that Japanese control of the Liaotung Peninsula would permanently menace China and nullify Korean independence. They demanded that Japan return the peninsula to China. Russia was the main force behind this move. France cooperated because

of its alliance with Russia. The Germans acted out of fear of isolation in Europe and because of concern that cession of the Liaotung Peninsula might lead to a general partition of China. Germany opposed partition but was determined to be on hand if it took place.[86]

Great Britain failed to join in the intervention even though Lord Kimberley, the British Foreign Minister, believed that Japan had upset the balance of power in the Far East. The peace treaty contained commercial provisions benefiting England, and this made the British reluctant to act. In addition, Lord Kimberley believed that Japan would resist and that intervention would require the use of force. English public opinion had become dramatically pro-Japanese during the war, and the prospect of conflict with Japan did not appeal to the British Government.[87]

Japan thought it might successfully resist Russian demands with the support of England and the United States. The British responded to a Japanese inquiry concerning aid with an expression of "cordial sympathy" while stating that they intended to remain neutral. Minister Kurino broached the subject in Washington, but the United States would not violate its neutral position.[88] Thus, the Japanese government standing alone had no alternative but to bow in the face of overwhelming odds. Japan notified the three powers that if China would ratify the treaty as originally negotiated, it would conclude a separate agreement with China for the retrocession of the Liaotung Peninsula.[89]

The war ended as American leaders feared it would following Japan's refusal to limit its gains and seek peace in the fall of 1894. The European intervention humiliated the Japanese, drove them from the mainland, and set the stage for the Russo-Japanese War a decade later. China fared little better than Japan for having ignored Denby's warnings not to risk involving the European powers. Russia, Germany, and France lost little time in fulfilling Denby's prediction that they would exact a heavy price for any aid rendered China. Less than three years after the three European powers intervened on behalf of China, Germany seized Kiaochow,

Russia occupied Port Arthur, and France leased Kwangchow Bay. As Denby had repeatedly warned the Chinese, a European intervention might well bring China face to face with partition.

Throughout the Sino-Japanese War the Cleveland administration operated within the framework of the conservative nineteenth century tradition of American diplomacy. The United States responded to Japanese penetration of the Asian mainland with a policy of non-involvement in foreign disputes not affecting vital national interests. Thus the President, though critical of Japanese intentions in Korea in the summer of 1894, refused to take part in an anti-Japanese intervention that would have committed the United States to an international guarantee of Korean independence. Similarly the administration refused to assume commitments toward China. The United States urged China and Japan to end the war before it raised the specter of a partition of China, but it would go no further. Realistically defining American interests and understanding the limits of American power, President Cleveland refused to involve the United States in the war. Although the United States consistently adhered to a policy of neutrality and non-involvement, the war did provoke a major shift in American attitudes toward Japan. Quick and impressive Japanese victories revealed China's weakness and undercut the assumption of the Cleveland administration that the war would not disturb the equilibrium of the Far East. Forced to reevaluate their approach to the Far East in the midst of an economic depression, American leaders came to see Japan as a progressive force which would destroy Chinese conservatism and open the illusory China market to American economic penetration. Walter Gresham believed that Japan had "stepped out into the light of a better day" and regarded "the United States as her best friend." [90] The new view of Japan soon led to unfulfilled expectations, yet Americans still gave it wide credence in the Spring of 1895. Despite this, the United States refused to depart from a policy of neutrality and non-involvement when France, Germany, and Russia forced Japan

to relinquish the Liaotung Peninsula. Basing its actions on national interest rather than emotional commitment, and adhering to a conservative policy of non-intervention, the Cleveland administration thus resisted entanglement in an Asian war.

NOTES

1. Heard to Gresham, April 4, 1893, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1894*. Appendix I, no. 1, p. 6 (Hereafter cited as F. R., 1894, App. I). Sill to Gresham, May 17, 1894, *Ibid.*, no. 9, p. 17. *Ibid.*, Oct. 12, 1894, no. 61, p. 72. *New York Times*, July 1, 1894, p. 3.

2. William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), p. 170-71.

3. Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs to Sill, June 24, 1894, F. R., 1894, App. I, inclosure in no. 16, p. 23.

4. Sill to Gresham, June 25, 1894, *Ibid.*, p. 24.

5. Sill to Gresham, June 29, 1894, *Ibid.*, inclosure in no. 18, p. 28.

6. Dun to Gresham, July 14, 1894. In Payson J. Treat, *Diplomatic Relations Between the United States and Japan 1853-1895*, Vol. II: 1876-1895 (Stanford University, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1932), p. 462-3.

7. Sill to Gresham, June 29, 1894, F. R., 1894, App. I, no. 18, p. 26.

8. Gresham to Dun, Telegram, July 7, 1894, National Archives, Records of the Department of State, Diplomatic Instructions, Japan, 4: 177-78. (Hereafter cited as Diplomatic Instructions, Japan).

9. Gresham to Bayard, July 20, 1894, National Archives, Records of the Department of State, Diplomatic Instructions, Great Britain, 30: 628-36. (Hereafter cited as Diplomatic Instructions, Great Britain).

10. Bayard to the Secretary of State, November 24, 1894, National Archives, Records of the Department of State, Despatches, Great Britain, 178: no. 346. (Hereafter cited as Despatches, Great Britain).

11. Gresham to Bayard, July 20, 1894.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

14. Dun to Gresham, July 10, 1894, in Treat, p. 462.

15. Denby, Jr. to Gresham, July 24, 1894, National Archives, Records of the Department of State, Despatches from United States Ministers to China, 1843-1906, 95: no. 1893. (Hereafter cited as Despatches, China).

16. Hilary Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea, 1868-1910: A Study of Realism and Idealism in International Relations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960), p. 261.

17. Gresham to Denby, August 3, 1894. In Gresham Papers (Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.), v. 48, p. 279-80. (Hereafter cited as Gresham papers).

18. Denby, Jr. to Gresham, June 26, 1894, Despatches, China, 95: no. 1871.

19. *New York Times*, August 19, 1894, p. 1.

20. Denby, Jr. to Gresham, August 21, 1894, Despatches, China, 95: 1937. Gresham to Denby, July 28, 1894. National Archives, Records of the Department of State. Diplomatic Instructions, China, 5: 95-7. (Hereafter cited as Diplomatic Instructions, China).

21. Denby, Jr. to Gresham, Sept. 22, 1894, Despatches, China, 96: no. 1976.

22. *New York Times*, August 21, 1894, p. 5.

23. Denby to Gresham, Telegraph, November 3, 1894, Despatches, China, 96.

24. Langer, p. 167, 174, 175.

25. Goschen to Gresham, October 6, 1894, F. R., 1894, App. I, no. 56, p. 70.

26. Gresham to Goschen, October 12, 1894, *Ibid.*, no. 58, p. 70. Gresham to Cleveland, October 12, 1894, in Gresham Papers, v. 43.

27. Gresham to Denby, November 24, 1894. Diplomatic Instructions, China, 5: 121-24.

28. Gresham to Colonel John S. Cooper July 26, 1894, in Gresham Papers, v. 48.

29. U. S. Consular Reports, Commerce, Manufacturers, etc., v. XLIX, nos. 180, 181, 182, 183, "Japanese Commerce with China and Korea," (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1895), p. 36. (Hereafter cited as Consular Reports).

30. *Commercial Relations of the United States During the Years 1894 and 1895*, v. I (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1896), p. 591.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 774.

32. Consular Reports, p. 326.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

34. U. S. Special Consular Reports, X: Extension of Markets for American Flour," (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1894), p. 466.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 469.

36. *New York Times*, July 30, 1894, p. 1.

37. Gresham to Overmeyer, July 25, 1894, in Gresham Papers, v. 48, p. 272-4.

38. Gresham to Morgan, January 10, 1895, *Ibid.*, p. 335-40. Denby to Gresham, January 17, 1895, Despatches, China, 97: no. 2014.

39. Aoki to Bayard, July 21, 1894, in Bayard to the Secretary of State, July 25, 1894, Despatches, Great Britain, 178: no. 248. Thomas J. McCormick develops a similar idea but concentrates on American reaction following the war. In *China Market, America's Quest for Informal Empire 1893-1901* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967), pp. 60-61.

40. Denby to Gresham, January 17, 1895.

41. Gresham to Morgan, July 10, 1895, in Gresham Papers.

42. Denby to Gresham, January 17, 1895.

43. Gresham to Denby, December 26, 1894, in Gresham Papers, v. 48, pp. 319-20.

44. Denby, Jr. to Gresham, October 3, 1894, Despatches, China, 96: no. 1987.

45. Denby, Jr. to Gresham, October 23, 1894, Despatches, China, 96: no. 2004.

46. Denby to Gresham, Telegram, October 30, 1894, Despatches, China, 96. *Washington Post*, November 25, 1864. p. 2.

47. Denby to Gresham, October 31, 1894, Despatches, China, 96: no. 2010.

48. *Washington Post*, December 12, 1894, p. 1.

49. Bayard to Gresham, November 24, 1894, Despatches, Great Britain, 96: no. 346.

50. James D. Richardson, ed., *Messages and Papers of the Presidents 1789-1897*, XII (Washington: Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1899), p. 5957.

51. Gresham to Denby, November 24, 1894, Diplomatic Instructions China, 5: 121-24. *New York Times*, November 16, 1894, p. 5.

52. *Washington Post*, December 15, 1894, p. 1.

53. Gresham to Denby, November 24, 1894.

54. Gresham to Dun, Telegram, November 6, 1894. Diplomatic Instructions, Japan, 5: 224.

55. Gresham to Denby, November 24, 1894.

56. Gresham to Denby, Telegram, November 6, 1894, Diplomatic Instructions, China, 5: 117-8. Gresham to Dun, Telegram, November 6, 1894.

57. Gresham to Denby, Telegram, November 6, 1894.

58. Denby to Gresham, Telegram, November 3, 1894, Diplomatic Despatches, China, 96.

59. Gresham to Denby, Telegram, November 6, 1894.

60. *Washington Post*, November 11, 1894, p. 1.

61. Dun to Gresham, November 16, 1894, F. R., 1894, App. I, inclosure in no. 74, p. 79.

62. Denby to Gresham, Telegram, November 6, 1894.

63. Denby to Gresham, November 16, 1894, Diplomatic Despatches, 96: no. 2027.

64. *Ibid.*

65. Denby to Gresham, Telegram, November 23, 1894, Diplomatic Despatches, China, 96.

66. Dun to Gresham, December 28, 1894, in Treat, p. 509.

67. Denby to Gresham, February 14, 1895, Diplomatic Despatches, China, 97, no. 2132.

68. Dun to Gresham, December 28, 1894.

69. Denby to Gresham, Telegram, February 17, 1895, Diplomatic Despatches, China, 97.

70. Gresham to Denby, Telegram, February 18, 1895, Diplomatic Instructions, China, 5: 148.

71. Denby to Gresham, February 26, 1895, Diplomatic Despatches, 97: no. 2148.

72. Denby to Gresham, March 23, 1894, Diplomatic Despatches, 98: no. 2176.

73. Denby to Gresham, February 26, 1895.

74. *Ibid.*

75. Gresham to Bayard, December 26, 1894, in Gresham Papers, v. 48, pp. 327-8.

76. Thomas J. McCormick, *China Market, America's Quest for Informal Empire 1893-1901* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967), pp. 58-9.

77. Uhl to Denby, June 8, 1895, Diplomatic Instructions, China, 5: 195-6.

78. Olney to Dun, June 22, 1895, Diplomatic Instructions, Japan, 4: 283.

79. Uhl to Denby, May 21, 1895, Diplomatic Instructions, China, 5: 189-91.

80. Denby to Gresham, April 24, 1895, Diplomatic Despatches, 98: no. 2206.

81. *Ibid.*

82. *Ibid.*

83. *Ibid.*

84. Breckenridge to Gresham, February 18, 1895, National Archives, Records of the Department of State, Despatches from United States Ministers to Russia 1808-1906, 46: no. 45.

85. Langer, p. 181.

86. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-5.

87. *Ibid.*, pp. 179-185.

88. Conroy, p. 291.

89. Denby to Gresham, May 9, 1895, Diplomatic Despatches, China, 98: no. 2219.

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