

Study on the Intervention of Outside Powers on the Korean Peninsula from the late 19th Century to the Mid-20th Century — From the Perspective of Intervention Theory

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Abstract

From the late 19th century to the mid-20th century, the geostrategic significance of the Korean Peninsula evolved, becoming a focal point for major powers' strategic interests. This paper analyzes the intervention behaviors of Russia, China, Japan, and the United States from the perspective of "intervention theory." Initially, China shifted from a passive to an active intervention policy to counter Japan's growing influence in Korea, especially after the First Sino-Japanese War. As China weakened, other powers, including Russia, the U.S., and Germany, increased their impact. In the early to mid-20th century, Japan's ambitions led to more aggressive interventions. The United States, departing from its Monroe Doctrine, used economic and cultural means to influence the region. After World War II, the U.S. and Soviet Union emerged as the main powers intervening, leading to a power vacuum and the outbreak of the Korean War. This historical analysis through intervention theory offers new insights into contemporary Korean issues.



Full Text Article



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Keywords: intervention theory; Korean Peninsula; geopolitical influence; outside power intervention

Introduction

The Korean Peninsula's unique geographical location, bordered by the Sea of Japan to the east, facing Japan across the Korea Strait to the south, and sharing a border with China to the northwest, has endowed it with significant geostrategic importance. This geographical positioning has had profound implications for the historical and security developments of the world.

This paper focuses on the late 19th century to the mid-20th century, examining the evolution of the geostrategic position of the Korean Peninsula from. The selection of this time frame is crucial

because the geostrategic position of the Korean Peninsula during this era was influenced by its status before the modern period and has directly impacted its position post-World War II, as well as its current state. A particularly noteworthy aspect of this period is the dramatic transformations experienced by countries with vested interests in the Korean Peninsula. These nations underwent significant historical transitions, either from prosperity to decline or from decline to prosperity, which in turn led to historical shifts in their policies towards the Korean Peninsula.

In terms of theoretical framework, this paper employs the perspective of intervention theory to study the complex issues of the Korean Peninsula from modern times onwards. This approach not only avoids the one-sidedness of arguments that focus solely on historical facts but also addresses the idealized issues of national strategic goal setting that existing research has often overlooked. By logically analyzing these issues from a theoretical standpoint, the research aims to achieve greater rigor in its examination and process. The paper will analyze the initial intentions behind the strategic goals set by neighboring countries around the Korean Peninsula, the diversity and evolution of their intervention methods, and the characteristics of their strategic choices. The Hypothesis is the change of the geopolitics status of the Korean Peninsula from the late 19th Century to the Mid-20th Century is constantly changing. Because of the inextricable relationship between the international system and the way of state behavior, the change of the international system will inevitably lead to the adjustment of the way of state behavior.

Based on the research questions, there are four major parts in the study. This study will firstly lay the groundwork by exploring the key principles and frameworks of intervention theory, which will be used to analyze the actions of external powers on the Korean Peninsula. Then this study will highlight significant events and socio-political conditions that shaped the region from the Late 19th to Early 20th Century. Part 4 examines the specific actions and influences of various foreign powers like China and Japan, focusing on their strategic interests and impacts on Korean sovereignty. The fifth part delves into the geopolitical dynamics and interventions by major powers such as Japan, Russia, and the United States surrounding World War I, analyzing their motives and consequences. Part six continues this exploration, assessing the intensified interventions and changing power dynamics before, during, and after World War II, leading up to the division of Korea and the onset of the Cold War.

Theoretical Framework

Intervention theory is a significant concept in the field of geopolitics, referring to the theoretical framework through which external forces interfere with or influence the internal affairs of a specific region or country.^[1] According to scholar Johan Galtung's definition in his book *Geopolitics*, intervention theory is described as an analytical tool for understanding how external powers influence the internal affairs of other countries or regions through political, economic, military, or cultural means. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye discuss different forms of intervention in international relations in their book *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*. They explore how major powers intervene in smaller countries and how multinational corporations influence national policies, addressing issues from political, economic, and military perspectives. They propose the concepts of interdependence and cooperation.^[2] Asher Arian, in his book *The*

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Politics of Intervention: International Interactions in a World of Sovereign States, analyzes the political motivations and behavior patterns of intervention in international politics, as well as the impact of intervention on the international system. He introduces the concepts of control and negotiation, examining how different countries achieve their interests through intervention. This theory involves the intentions, motivations, and methods of external forces, as well as the impacts and consequences of their actions on the target regions or countries.^[3]

Many scholars have begun to study intervention behavior as a significant pattern of action in international relations. American international political scientist Kenneth N. Waltz posits that the United States has two tendencies in its intervention policies. One is optimistic non-interventionism, which believes in inaction and lack of responsibility, assuming that the world will naturally evolve into a state of peace, harmony, and democracy. The other is messianic interventionism, which imbues intervention with a messianic spirit, justifying interventions as a sacred mission and moral obligation.^[4] Hans Morgenthau and Henry Kissinger, from a realist perspective, discuss the impact of a conflict-ridden international society and its anarchic nature on state behavior. They explain the pattern of American foreign actions as based on the fundamental hypothesis of political realism, where the motivation for state intervention is driven by selfish national interest considerations.

James N. Rosenau defines the concept of intervention from multiple dimensions, including moral, legal, and strategic perspectives. His definition is broad enough to encompass the common perceptions of the term, viewing intervention as the actions of external forces exerting influence on state sovereignty with the aim of changing the status quo, such as subverting another country's legitimate government.^[5] Following Rosenau, Vincent's understanding of intervention theory emphasizes the coercive nature of intervention actions and their targeting of internal authority. He argues that "the threat of using force can be seen as a precursor to an intervention event, while using force to enter a country and forcibly change its political authority structure is an act of interference." Furthermore, "intervention must be an 'active' behavior. The neutral attitudes of countries like Britain and the United States during the Spanish Civil War, as well as the so-called 'non-interference principle,' should not be included in the scope of 'intervention' studies.^[6]

In summary, scholars at home and abroad have provided multi-dimensional perspectives and rich historical case studies by defining the concept of intervention and theorizing intervention behavior. They have thoroughly organized and analyzed the characteristics of interventions in different periods and state behaviors, greatly aiding the observation of inter-state interference phenomena and the realistic political understanding of intervention behavior patterns.

This study uniquely examines the intervention of outside powers on the Korean Peninsula from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century through the lens of intervention theory. By integrating historical events with theoretical frameworks, it provides a comprehensive analysis of the motivations, strategies, and impacts of foreign interventions. Unlike previous works that may focus solely on historical narratives or theoretical constructs, this study bridges the two, offering a nuanced understanding of how global power dynamics and evolving international norms influenced interventions and shaped the geopolitical landscape of the Korean Peninsula.

Brief Historical Background of Korean Peninsula from the Late 19th to Early 20th Centuries

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Before the 19th century, changes in the international political situation in Northeast Asia were mainly influenced by shifts in national power. However, with the continuous impact of external powerful forces, by the late 19th century, significant forces from outside the Northeast Asia region began to intervene on a large scale, leading to a transfer of national power dominating the Korean Peninsula. The modern history of international relations in Northeast Asia has been constantly evolving around the Korean Peninsula, with neighboring major powers continuously engaging in strategic maneuvers. They have demonstrated their unique characteristics in the interactions within Northeast Asian countries, between these countries, and with regions outside Northeast Asia. Overall, the trend of change has shifted from relationships among feudal states to opposition between feudal and capitalist countries, and then toward confrontation between capitalist powers. The focal point of interstate conflicts has gradually shifted from peripheral areas to the region centered around the Korean Peninsula.

This period marked the beginning of a tumultuous era for Korea, as it became a strategic battleground for external powers. The late 19th century saw the intrusion of Western imperialism, with countries such as the United States and various European nations seeking to establish their influence through trade agreements and diplomatic missions. Concurrently, Japan, following its Meiji Restoration, rapidly modernized and militarized, setting its sights on Korea as part of its imperial ambitions. The First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) were significant conflicts that underscored the intense rivalry between these powers for dominance over Korea. These wars resulted in Korea's transformation from a tributary state of China to a Japanese protectorate and eventually its annexation by Japan in 1910. The late 19th and early 20th centuries thus represent a critical juncture in Korean history, where the peninsula was profoundly shaped by the geopolitical machinations of powerful foreign nations, leading to substantial and lasting impacts on its national sovereignty and regional dynamics.

The international relations of modern Northeast Asia differed from those of today because the concept of sovereign states was not fully developed at the time. Both China and Japan were feudal autocratic states, and Korea was a vassal state of China. The foreign policies of the surrounding countries of the Korean Peninsula, based on Confucianism, influenced the relations among the neighboring countries of the Korean Peninsula. Under the traditional Sino-centric tributary system, China's relations with neighboring countries were maintained through trade and tributary relations. The central dynasty focused on the value of political relations, while the tributary states sought commercial benefits.

After the Meiji Restoration, Japan's ambitions for the Korean Peninsula grew increasingly ambitious. In February 1876, Japan forced Korea to sign the Treaty of Ganghwa, also known as the Japan-Korea Treaty of Amity and Commerce, under military threat.^[7] This treaty marked the beginning of unequal treaties imposed on Korea, forcibly integrating it into the capitalist world system. However, Japan's aggressive expansion policy on the Korean Peninsula collided with China's security and its policy toward Korea, highlighting the geopolitical importance of the Korean Peninsula in the struggle between China and Japan. Not only did the Sino-Japanese Treaty and the Treaty of Ganghwa challenge China's tributary order, but the intervention of Western imperialist powers also exacerbated the inherent contradictions within the traditional East Asian order, making

the geopolitical significance of the Korean Peninsula visible on the Eurasian continent for the first time.

In the 1880s, European and American countries vied to open Korea's doors. In October 1883, Chester Alan Arthur, the 21st President of the United States, received Korea's first envoy, Min Yeong Ik^[8], in Washington. Min Yeong Ik's visit to the United States opened up new perspectives for Korea's modernization and had a profound impact on Korea's political, economic, and technological development. The United States and Korea signed the Treaty of Amity and Commerce in May 1882, opening up Korea's relations beyond China and Japan to the West. During the signing of the Korea-US Treaty, the main contention centered around the issue of Sino-Korean suzerainty. Li Hongzhang^[9] insisted that this aspect be included in the treaty. However, the United States' stance was ambiguous, as it needed to consider which situation would be more beneficial for American trade—Chinese suzerainty or Korean independence^[10]. Korea was the last East Asian country to open up to Western countries, and the United States was the first Western country to sign a treaty with Korea. From the unintentional breach of the Sino-Japanese Treaty to Japan's challenge to Sino-Korean relations in the Treaty of Ganghwa, the Qing government inadvertently accepted certain aspects of the content and form of modern European and American international orders and incorporated them into Sino-Korean relations.

At the same time, in 1886, as the Jujin Island Incident had not yet concluded, Tsar Alexander III of Russia issued an order to "build a trans-Siberian railway along the shortest route."^[11] The construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway by Russia added pressure on Japan's security and formed a new pattern of international relations in Northeast Asia, prompting Japan to launch wars urgently and shape a relatively favorable international environment. It was at this moment that the internal turmoil in Korea provided Japan with an opportunity to implement its aggressive policies toward Korea, leading to the Donghak Peasant Revolution in Korea in 1894. This internal turmoil in Korea became the fuse of the First Sino-Japanese War, making the Korean Peninsula once again the focal point of geopolitics in East Asia and even the entire world. The core of the conflict between China and Japan lay in the Korean Peninsula, and the First Sino-Japanese War further highlighted the geopolitical importance of the Korean Peninsula.

The Intervention of outside Powers on the Korean Peninsula from the Late 19th Century to Early 20th Century

In May 1882, the King of Korea dispatched an envoy to China, stating, "Given that foreign powers are monopolizing trade profits, and their ships are sailing the seas, whereas only the Celestial Empire and our nation are adhering to the maritime prohibition, it is clear this is not in line with treating us as an integral part of the empire. It is urgent to issue a decree allowing mutual trade at already open ports and to permit envoys to reside in the capital, thereby fostering good relations, enhancing prestige, resisting external insults, and bolstering public confidence."^[12] This proposal suggested comprehensive trade and an adjustment of the tributary relationship. The request for comprehensive trade was greatly appreciated by the Qing, as they had already accepted the modern concept of commercial trade and hoped for a prosperous and strong Korea. They believed that only a powerful Korea could effectively serve as a buffer state, which was a positive outlook. However,

the overall framework of Sino-Korean relations could only adapt within the tributary order, which was evident in the prohibition against Korean envoys residing in Beijing. Meanwhile, China could dispatch envoys to the Korean capital under the tributary system to demonstrate its status as the suzerain state. This principle of not departing from the tributary relationship guided the signing of the Sino-Korean agreements. Due to the impact of the Imo Incident in Korea, it was not until November 1882 that China and Korea formulated the Regulations for Maritime and Overland Trade between China and Korea. Subsequently, they also established the Regulations for Trade between the People of Fengtian and Korea and the Regulations for Trade between the People of Jilin and Korea. To maintain and highlight the Sino-Korean tributary relationship, it was specifically noted that "Korea has long been a vassal state of China, and the established maritime and overland trade regulations reflect China's preferential treatment of its vassal state, rather than the equal treatment applied to other nations."^[13]

From the unintentional breach of the tributary order by the Sino-Japanese Treaty to the challenge posed by the Japan-Korea Treaty of Ganghwa to Sino-Korean relations, China gradually shifted from a passive policy of non-interference to an active intervention policy to counter Japan's expanding influence in Korea. By the time the Korea-US Treaty was signed, China actively played the role of the suzerain state, using an interventionist policy to plan a future for Korea. The Sino-Korean regulations, in written form, reinforced the tributary relationship within Sino-Korean relations, providing a basis for enhancing China's position in Korea. Throughout this historical process, the Qing government inadvertently accepted certain aspects of the modern international order from Europe and America, integrating them into the Sino-Korean tributary relationship. The fundamental aim was to maintain a dominant position on the Korean Peninsula through an active policy towards Korea, competing with expansionist forces represented by Japan, thereby ensuring the independence of Korea and the security of China.

Although the Sino-Korean relationship remained unequal during this process, the Qing government's goal was to promote Korea's independence and development, reducing its reliance on expansionist nations, which objectively benefited Korea's national interests. The transformation of the tributary order had a significant impact on the subsequent development of Korean history.

After the First Sino-Japanese War, Japan and Russia engaged in an intense struggle over the Korean Peninsula. Following the "Triple Intervention" which forced Japan to return the Liaodong Peninsula, Japan entered a phase of "enduring hardship to prepare for revenge." During this period, Japan was still in the process of building up its strength and lacked the capacity and international conditions to wage war against Russia, so it adopted a policy of compromise towards Russia. Russia, on the other hand, had not yet completed the Trans-Siberian Railway and did not have a strong presence in Northeast Asia. Moreover, Russia's political advantage in Korea had just been established, so it also pursued a peaceful policy. Consequently, in May and June 1896, Japan and Russia signed two interrelated agreements: the Komura-Weber Memorandum and the Yamagata-Lobanov Protocol. These agreements granted Russia considerable and significant rights in Korea.^[14] Leveraging its newly acquired political advantages in Korea, Russia began to strengthen its control over the Korean Peninsula. After the agreements, Russia took steps such as sending military and financial advisors to Korea, establishing the Russo-Korean Bank, and setting up Russian language schools, aiming for comprehensive control over Korea in political, military, and financial aspects.

Russia's series of actions caused significant dissatisfaction among major powers. More importantly, in November 1897, the German occupation of Jiaozhou Bay—a major event that shook East Asian international relations—occurred. This event spurred Russia, which was eager to build a branch of the China Eastern Railway, secure an ice-free port in China, and possibly partake in the partition of China, to seek to ease tensions with Japan over Korea. As a result, after resolving the Liaodong Peninsula issue in March 1898, Russian Minister to Japan Roman Rosen and Japanese Foreign Minister Nishi Tokujirō signed the Nishi-Rosen Agreement in April. This agreement recognized Japan's economic dominance in Korea.^[15] Through the 1898 agreements between Japan and Russia, Japan gained a superior position in the struggle for the Korean Peninsula, leading to a resurgence in Japan's policy towards Korea, signaling a comeback.^[16]

In August 1910, the signing of the Treaty of Annexation between Japan and Korea led to Korea becoming a colony of Japan, marking the beginning of Japan's 36-year-long colonial rule over Korea. During this period, trade between the United States and Korea was mainly facilitated through the Japanese embassy in Washington and the Tokyo government. However, trade development did not bring as much economic benefit to the United States as expected; instead, missionaries, teachers, doctors, and individuals engaged in charity work in Korea played a significant role in promoting American culture in Korea.^[17]

Britain's primary objectives in East Asia were to protect its trade interests and prevent Russian expansion southward. Initially, Britain supported China's suzerainty over Korea to counterbalance Russian expansion in East Asia.^[18] However, as Japan's power rapidly increased, Britain's strategic focus gradually shifted towards aligning with Japan. Russia adopted a strategy of balancing power in the Far East to prevent any single country from threatening its interests in Korea. Although Russia was skeptical of Chinese control over Korea, it initiated mediation between China and Japan before the outbreak of war to avoid unfavorable consequences for its Far Eastern policy.

Germany maintained a neutral stance on the Korean issue, believing that conflicts between China and Japan could lead to conflicting interests between Britain and Russia in Korea, and Germany had no interest in being involved in this dispute.^[19] The United States, due to its close economic ties with Japan and its disdain for the Qing government, chose to support Japan. Economically and morally, the United States leaned towards Japan, considering it an essential partner in implementing American Far East policy.^[20]

Japan's thorough preparation contrasted sharply with China's internal turmoil and insufficient military modernization before the war. China's pre-war response was hasty and lacked strategic unity, leading to a disastrous defeat in the early stages of the war. The signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895 forced China to recognize Korea as an independent country, ending the longstanding tributary system and signaling a significant shift in the power dynamics of East Asia. The treaty not only highlighted Japan's ambitions in Korea but also indicated the profound influence of the strategic orientations of the great powers on the regional situation.

Through an examination of this history, it can be observed that Japan and Russia's competition and aggression towards Korea in the late 19th to early 20th centuries were incorporated into their expansion strategies of "Northern Expansion" and "Far Eastern Expansion." The conflict between the two ultimately reached a climax over the Korean issue, which was an inevitable result of resorting to armed intervention. The different outcomes of the war also influenced the subsequent

formulation of expansion strategies by both countries. Japan, with the benefits gained from its victory, continued to expand its dominance in Northeast Asia, while Russia's Far Eastern policy underwent a strategic shift from fierce competition with Japan to the "Russo-Japanese Entente" expansion strategy.

Compared to Japan and Russia's direct armed intervention, the United States adopted a more covert and acceptable intervention policy, employing cultural, religious, and financial means as a more diversified intervention method than China's tributary system and Japan's colonial policies. This intervention approach served the Roosevelt administration's Far East policy, aiming to balance the power among neighboring great powers through Korea.

The struggles of various countries for their respective interests on the Korean Peninsula not only profoundly affected the political landscape of East Asia but also had extensive implications for the global situation. Korea's departure from the Qing tributary system and its nominal independence not only led to the complete disintegration of the East Asian tributary order but also resulted in the collapse of the Qing Dynasty's security barrier in Northeast Asia. At the same time, after losing the protection of the suzerain state, Korea's sovereignty and security faced greater threats. In the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 and the subsequent international maneuvers, the Korean Peninsula demonstrated its unique geopolitical value, with far-reaching significance for the evolution of East Asia and the world situation.

The intervention of major powers around Korea Peninsular before and after the First World War

After China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War and the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki with Japan, Korea severed its tributary relationship with China, leading to the collapse of the tributary system. Following the Russo-Japanese War, Russia, due to its defeat, was forced to withdraw from its competition over Korea and cede the southern part of the occupied area in Northeast China. During this period, as the Ottoman Empire had already established a relatively stable balance of power in Europe after years of competition among the great powers, and Britain and Russia had also reached a relatively stable status quo in Central Asia, almost all major European and American powers shifted their policy focus to East Asia, "because all the great powers are interested in similar enterprises".^[21] The importance of East Asia in the competition among the world's major powers continued to rise.

After the early 20th century, within the framework of the treaty system, capitalist countries utilized every means of expansion to nearly divide the world completely, leading to the escalation of competition for overseas colonies and trade markets, which became the primary contradictions among imperialist nations. As the rivalry for interests intensified and contradictions deepened among imperialist countries, along with conflicting expansion policies, it eventually led to the formation of two opposing imperialist military blocs in Europe and the outbreak of the First World War.

The United States became increasingly vigilant and concerned about Japan, demanding that Japan agree to joint intervention with the United States in the Far East within the framework of "limited military deployment." Under these conditions, the United States timely adjusted its intervention strategy after its initial mistaken neutral stance towards Japan's colonization of Korea,

thus achieving a relatively balanced approach in its strategies towards the Soviet Union and Japan. However, the new intervention strategy proposed by the United States in the current international environment is inherently contradictory.

As tensions heightened, the United States' strategic focus expanded to include the broader implications of Japanese expansionism for regional stability and its own national interests. This strategic shift was evident in the Washington Naval Conference of 1921-1922, where the United States sought to limit Japanese naval power through diplomatic means, aiming to prevent an arms race and maintain a balance of power in the Pacific. Furthermore, the U.S. adopted a more proactive stance by fortifying its own military presence in the Pacific, including the Philippines and Guam, to counteract Japanese advances. These actions reflected a growing recognition of the interconnectedness of security concerns across the Asia-Pacific region. The United States also began to strengthen its alliances with other Western powers and regional actors, fostering cooperative security arrangements. Despite these efforts, the contradictions within U.S. policy—oscillating between cooperation and containment—highlighted the complexities of managing relations with an increasingly assertive Japan. This period set the stage for the eventual clash between the two nations, culminating in the Pacific War during World War II, which drastically reshaped the geopolitical landscape of Northeast Asia.

The anti-Soviet alliance jointly established by the United States and Japan requires cooperation between the two countries to be effective. However, if either party wavers, the alliance could collapse at any moment. Moreover, the United States mentions the need to contain Japan's further expansion in its Far East policy, which could lead to the deterioration of US-Japan relations, thereby resulting in the disintegration of the anti-Soviet alliance.^[22] Since the United States' power in the Far East region is far from being able to control Japan, it must rely on other countries to interfere simultaneously with both the Soviet Union and Japan. This also became one of the reasons for the subsequent shift in the United States' attitude towards the Korean issue.

After the end of World War I, one of the most direct outcomes was the decline of Europe and the rise of the United States and Japan. The United States replaced Britain as the world's largest creditor and capital-exporting nation, while also holding nearly 40% of the world's gold reserves. During the Paris Peace Conference and the Washington Conference, the United States convened meetings for small countries and the Second Conference of Small Nations respectively. After the conclusion of the Paris Peace Conference, the hopes of the Korean people for the major powers, including the United States, turned into disappointment and frustration. While the plan advocated surface-level principles of just and lasting peace and the right to national self-determination, its strategic objectives were geared towards countering the expansion of Soviet influence and creating conditions for the United States to become a hegemonic power. It did not help Korea to fully break free from Japanese colonial rule nor prevent major powers from sacrificing the territorial integrity and sovereignty of weaker nations for their own interests. Japan continued its "continental policy" at this time, further enhancing its political oppression and economic exploitation of Korea as it expanded its military operations on the Chinese mainland. To strengthen its wartime regime and maintain control over the territories it occupied in China, Japan intensified its political repression and economic exploitation in Korea. Japan enacted various laws such as the "Public Safety

Preservation Law" and the "Publishing Law" to brutally suppress and control the Korean people. However, this situation quickly changed with the advent of World War II.

The Intervention of Major Powers around Korea Peninsular before and after the Second World War

Before being drawn into the battlefields of the Pacific and Europe, the United States had always adhered to a policy of isolationism, primarily due to geopolitical considerations. On December 7, 1941, the day after Japan's surprise attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the United States declared war on Japan, marking the beginning of the "Pacific War" between the two nations. The United States once again abandoned its long-standing isolationist policy due to the exigencies of war and adopted an "offshore balancing strategy," engaging in interventionist actions in European and Asian affairs^[23]. This shift aligned with the theoretical framework of an "interventionist strategy." The post-war economic recovery and reconstruction would take a considerable amount of time to materialize, so the immediate impact of post-war Europe on U.S. overseas interests was limited. Through post-war economic aid programs, the United States helped Europe rebuild its economy and began exerting comprehensive control over Western European countries by consolidating Western capitalism and political democracy. The success of the Marshall Plan enabled the United States to achieve its strategic goal of politically and economically integrating Western Europe into a new liberal international political and economic order.

While the United States implemented the Marshall Plan to integrate the economic and political order of Western European countries, the Soviet Union was also evolving Eastern European countries, including the Soviet zone in Germany, into Soviet-style states. As the war in the Pacific theater against Japan approached its end, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, on August 6, 1945, and the Soviet Union abrogated the Soviet Japanese Neutrality Pact. However, due to the onset of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States and the fragmentation of political forces on the Korean Peninsula, a unified and independent country did not emerge on the Korean Peninsula. Instead, with the support of the United States and the Soviet Union, the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were respectively established in the south and north in August and September 1948.

According to the US-Soviet agreement, Japan surrendered to the United States and the Soviet Union on the respective sides of the 38th parallel in 1945. However, this artificially drawn line became the dividing line that split Korea into two parts, north and south. To this day, there exist two internationally recognized sovereign states on either side of the 38th parallel. The first hot war of the early Cold War period was initially a civil war between two countries on the Korean Peninsula, among the same people. However, due to the direct or indirect intervention of the United States and the Soviet Union, this war had already transcended the meaning of a civil war and evolved into an international conflict.

The Soviet Union and the United States respectively announced their withdrawal from Korea at the end of 1948 and on June 30, 1949. However, the tension on the Korean Peninsula did not ease significantly as a result. The situation on the Korean Peninsula remained in a state of instability, and the withdrawal of the two countries led to a power vacuum.^[24] The collapse of the unstable system

would inevitably lead to unavoidable conflicts because both North Korea and South Korea insisted that they were the only legitimate governments. From the spring of 1949 onwards, conflicts between the two countries near the 38th parallel continued. Ultimately, the Southern government's proposal for "Northern advancement for reunification" and the Northern government's proposal for "liberating the South" evolved into a serious military conflict on June 25, 1950.

Conclusion

From the late 19th century to the mid-20th century, the international relations surrounding the Korean Peninsula underwent several phases, including the tributary system, the Versailles-Washington system, and the bipolar Yalta system. The interventionist behaviors of Russia, Japan, and the United States towards the Korean Peninsula during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as well as the reasons for the strategic conflicts among various countries during this period, can be analyzed. The paradigm of state behavior during this period was essentially a hegemonic imperialism system, where the formulation of international system rules was monopolized by imperialist countries. After the main territorial resources of the world were partitioned and the system of sovereign states had largely formed, the mode of annexation among the great powers transformed into a competitive mode.

During the period from the early 20th century to the mid-20th century, the forms of intervention by neighboring major powers in the Korean Peninsula also underwent adjustments. Japan's ambitions in East Asia remained unabated, and it intervened in and suppressed the Korean Peninsula more aggressively. The United States began to change its past "Monroe Doctrine" and intervened in the Korean Peninsula through relatively mild means such as economics and culture. The end of World War II had a significant impact on the geopolitical situation of the Korean Peninsula, with the United States and the Soviet Union becoming the major intervening powers. The withdrawal of the US and the USSR led to a power vacuum in the region, ultimately resulting in the outbreak of the Korean War.

Looking back at the history of conflicts among neighboring major powers over the Korean Peninsula in modern times, we can see that the main cause of all contradictions lies in the incompatible strategic goals and national interests of each country. Each country sought to maximize its national interests by all means, even resorting to war, based on a short-sighted perspective of protecting its own interests rather than considering the long-term perspective of protecting the interests of most countries or even future world peace. However, as the international system developed, various major powers also made changes in their intervention methods towards the Korean Peninsula in accordance with the rules of the international order at that time. Because there is an inseparable relationship between the international system and state behavior, changes in the international system inevitably led to adjustments in state behavior.

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Conflict of Interest

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- [7] Chinese Palace Museum, *Historical Materials on Sino-Japanese Diplomatic Relations During the Guangxu Reign*, Vol. 1 (Beijing: Chinese Palace Museum, 1932), p. 524.
- [8] Min Yong Ik (민영익) (1860-1914) was a prominent political figure and diplomat in the late Joseon Dynasty of Korea, known for his efforts in reform and diplomacy. Born into an influential noble family, he was a nephew of Heungseon Daewongun (the father of King Gojong). Min was a key leader of the Gapsin Coup in 1884, which aimed to modernize Korea's political and economic systems. Although the coup failed, his reformist ideas left a lasting impact. Min was heavily involved in Korea's diplomatic relations, particularly with China, Japan, and Western powers. Notably, he played a significant role in signing the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with the United States, Korea's first equal treaty with a Western nation.
- [9] Li Hongzhang (1823-1901) was a prominent Chinese statesman, military general, and diplomat during the late Qing Dynasty. He rose to prominence during the Taiping Rebellion, where he played a crucial role in its suppression. As a key figure in the Self-Strengthening Movement, Li advocated for the modernization of China's military and industry, promoting Western technology and expertise. Li's diplomatic missions took him across Europe and the United States, where he sought international support and investment.
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