

**GEORGE KENNAN'S INFLUENTIAL 1905 DEPICTION OF
KOREA AS A "DEGENERATE STATE" AND JAPAN AS ITS
GRACIOUS SAVIOR**

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The power of the press to shape public opinion is immense, especially in cases where the public knows little if anything about the subject at hand. An excellent example of this proposition is the role that leading members of the American media reported on Japan's 1904 seizure of Korea at the outset of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). Two veteran American war correspondents, George Kennan (1844–1923) and Frederick Palmer (1873–1958), both informal but valued advisors to President Theodore Roosevelt, provided a deliberately distorted image of Japan and Korea that very likely played an important role in the shaping of American foreign policy and public opinion in favor of Japan's takeover of Korea during the Russo-Japanese War.

Until the start of World War II, very few Americans had any knowledge of Korea. The United States had no vital interests in Korea before 1941 and was mostly indifferent to its fate.¹ When Japan declared war on Russia in 1904, over a hundred Western journalists descended on Tokyo eager to cover the conflict, but the Japanese kept them marooned in Tokyo where Japanese military officials fed them an endless stream of propaganda.² Both Kennan and Palmer, both of whom commanded a large readership in the U.S, and who were on close terms with Roosevelt, caught the attention of the Japanese. The Japanese military invited Kennan and Palmer to accompany Japanese leaders on "fact-finding" missions in Korea and Manchuria with the implicit understanding that they would write a stream of articles showing the utter depravity of Korea and the magnanimity of Japan's desire to modernize a free and independent Korea.

¹ James I. Matray, "The Korean War 101: Causes, Course, and Conclusion of the Conflict," *Education About Asia* 17/3 (2012), 23.

² A tiny handful of reporters led by novelist and journalist Jack London managed to sneak into Korea and to accompany the Japanese military through northern Korea to Manchuria where the Japanese met the Russian army. Yet, despite this proximity, Japanese censorship made it very difficult for London and his few colleagues to get close to the action.

Kennan and Palmer did their job beautifully. They were lavish in their praise of the Japanese. They lauded the ability of Japan to modernize itself so quickly, on the honesty and efficiency of its government and military, and for the general cleanliness of Japan. They reported just the opposite about Korea, which they saw as backward and hopelessly corrupt without a functioning government and military. They frequently commented on the filth and deprivation of the cities and the degenerate nature of the Korean people. Both men sent a stream of articles back to the U.S. and Palmer, who made a brief trip back to Washington in late 1904, briefed President Roosevelt on the nature of Japan's occupation of Korea.

The result of this reporting was the formulation of American policy that strongly backed the Japanese takeover of Korea and public opinion that supported this approach. Although both Palmer and Kennan reported much the same information about Korea and Japan, due to space limitations I will focus on the work and ideas of the senior reporter, Mr. Kennan.

The Japanese Seizure of Korea

When Japan occupied Korea at the outset of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), they used Korea as a staging area for confrontation with Russia in the region of Manchuria. The Japanese then forced the Korean government to accept Japanese administrative control of their nation. The Japanese compelled the Korean Emperor and his cabinet to accept Japanese “advice” for the management of the Korean government. Western powers such as the United States and the United Kingdom later supported Japan's “reform” measures in Korea, praising the Japanese for their promise to modernize Korea thoroughly.

Although Japan did not formally annex Korea until 1910, soon after the 1876 treaty, which opened Korea to Japanese trade and commercial penetration, it commenced a practice of stationing increasingly greater numbers of troops in Korea allegedly to protect Japanese citizens living in the treaty ports and elsewhere. Japan later went to war with China in 1894-1895 and with Russia a decade later to consolidate its control of Korea, which it saw as being vital to its national security.

Japan's leading military figure throughout much of the Meiji period, Field Marshall and twice Prime Minister, Yamagata Aritomo (1838–1922), stressed that national security is the key reason why Japan went to war with Russia in February 1904. During an interview with Frederick Palmer near Tokyo the day after Japan declared war on Russia,

Yamagata declared: "If you look at the geographical position of Korea, you will see that it is like a poniard pointing at the heart of Japan. If Korea is occupied by a foreign power, the Japan Sea ceases to be Japanese and the Korean Straits are no longer in our control."³

Japan used Korea in 1904 and 1905 as a critical base for its troops on the Asian mainland and as a launching pad for their ultimately successful invasion of Manchuria, which prior to the war was becoming a Russian stronghold. With Korea militarily strongly under Japanese control from the very outset of the war in 1904, the Koreans had no choice but to accept a series of agreements in 1904 and 1905 that gave Tokyo control over all sections of Korea's government and over its economy. At the end of the Russo-Japanese War, Korea was still nominally independent, but essentially was under the full control of Japan.

Japan's next goal was to achieve international recognition of its protectorate over Korea. According to legal scholar Alexis Dudden, the practice of an advanced nation creating a protectorate over a less advanced culture was quite common and at the time was called "enlightened exploitation." The idea of a protectorate represented a particular piece of territory "governed in part by an alien regime." Dudden continues:

[R]ace-driven theories of civilization more generally shaped a Euro-American political climate that ordered a taxonomy of the peoples of the world. So-called civilized governments predicated their claims to legitimacy on conquering and ruling so-called barbaric ones; such governments also infused their claims with political and social theories derived in part from nascent evolutionary sciences. A regime was civilized only if it could claim the ability to transform an uncivilized people. The logic of the politics of enlightened exploitation can be described as the practice of legalizing the claim to protect a place inhabited by people who were defined as incapable of becoming civilized on their own. It was understood, of course, that the protecting regime had access to the material and human resources of the place it protected.

³ Quoted in Frederick Palmer, *With Kuroki in Manchuria* (New York: Charles Scribner's & Sons, 1904), 10–11.

Ultimately, the ability to control colonial space defined a nation as “sovereign” and “independent.” Regimes that sought to dominate others legitimated their actions in terms consistent with this intellectual order. Declaring a territory a protectorate did not merely apply a euphemism to the action of taking over; it established a legal precedent for defining certain people unfit to govern themselves.⁴

Until then, virtually all protectorates had been established by Western powers such as Britain, France and Belgium. Japan opened a well-orchestrated campaign during the Russo-Japanese War led by politician and Harvard University graduate Kaneko Kentarō to gain international support for its military efforts. Following the end of the war in 1905, Japan continued its efforts to win international recognition for its new protectorate in Korea. Prime Minister Katsura Tarō promoted the idea of the desirability of Japan’s plans for Korea in an interview with the *New York Times* on July 30, 1905:

The introduction of all the blessings of modern civilization into East Asiatic countries – that is our Far Eastern policy and behind it there is no more selfish motive than a simple desire for our own commercial and educational betterment. China and Korea are atrociously misgoverned. They are in the hands of a lot of corrupt officials whose ignorance and narrow-mindedness are a constant menace to political tranquility in the Far East. These conditions we will endeavor to correct at the earliest possible date – by persuasion and education if possible; by force, if necessary, and in this, as in all things, we expect to act in exact occurrence, with the desires of England and the United States.⁵

⁴ Alexis Dudden, *Japan’s Colonization of Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), 9.

⁵ Quoted in James Bradley, *The China Mirage: The Hidden History of American Disaster in Asia* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2015), 76.

Part of Japan's strategy was to encourage the writing of Western journalists who would support Japan's effort to create a protectorate over Korea. The notion was that since political leaders in the West had very little knowledge of the history and culture of Korea, Western journalists who would support Japan's point of view could effectively mold opinion in the West. Western journalists who demonstrated strong sympathies with Japanese views and aims and who had a broad readership in the West received gala treatment from Japanese authorities. They got lavish accommodations and traveled with Japanese officials across Korea where they could witness the terrible living conditions of the people and the good work being done by the Japanese to modernize and reform Korean society.

One such reporter was the famous American war correspondent, George Kennan. Kennan depicted Korea as a "degenerate state" and praised Japan's "unselfish desire" to both "modernize" and "civilize" Korea. Such reporting by leading writers like Kennan presented Americans with a wholly negative view of Korea and may well have helped to shape American foreign policy in support of Japan's moves in Korea and away from its recognition of Korea as an independent state.

Kennan was one of the leading writers on Japan and Korea at the dawn of the twentieth century. Kennan, elder cousin to Soviet specialist George F. Kennan (1904–2005), covered the Russo-Japanese War and the subsequent Japanese seizure of Korea for the influential American weekly news magazine *The Outlook*.⁶ He traveled to Korea twice with an official entourage of Japanese officials, at the start of the war in 1904 and again in 1905 at the end of the conflict. His writing mirrored official American policy as formulated by the government of President Theodore Roosevelt towards Korea, which regarded it as an impossibly backward nation and strongly advocated a Japanese takeover of the state.

Reading Kennan's work and Roosevelt's many statements concerning Japan's occupation of Korea reveal a virtual mirror image of

⁶ The New York City-based weekly news magazine, *The Outlook*, was an influential organ that employed many leading writers. Begun in 1870, it acquired a wide readership by the end of the nineteenth century and ceased publication in 1935. The elder Kennan was a famous explorer who traversed much of Russia for years at a time, an investigative reporter, and a founder of the National Geographic Society in 1879.

each other. While Kennan expressed his own opinions while covering the war and the Japanese penetration of Korea, his articles serve as a virtual blueprint of American policy towards Korea. The best way to understand the Roosevelt administration's views on Japan and Korea during this period is to read Kennan's work. It is clear that Roosevelt too regarded Korea as a "degenerate state."

President Theodore Roosevelt and his administration exhibited a very pro-Japanese stance during the Russo-Japanese War and supported the Japanese takeover of Korea for the same reasons echoed in Kennan's writing. Roosevelt believed that strong modern states had a right and an obligation to take over and modernize the more regressive nations. Four years before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, the inimitable Roosevelt had written to a friend, "I should like to see Japan have Korea. She will be a check on Russia and deserves it for what she has done."⁷ Roosevelt sent a cable to Tokyo in July 1905 where he stated his approval of the Japanese annexation of Korea, thus negating the 1882 Treaty where the United States and Korea along with Great Britain and Germany established diplomatic relations. The 1882 treaties were classic unequal treaties where the Western nations got extraterritorial rights for their citizens, fixed tariffs and the like. Korea also got the standard "use of good offices" clause that Koreans since that time mistakenly thought meant that the United States would or should protect Korea from Japan.⁸

Roosevelt in the cable also agreed to an "understanding or alliance" among Japan, the United States and Britain "as if the United States were under treaty obligations."⁹ This "as if" clause is critical because Congress was much less interested in affairs in Northeast Asia than the President. Roosevelt thus made an unofficial and unwritten (though in his mind perhaps a binding) treaty with Japan. Diplomatic notes exchanged between the United States and Japan (the Taft-Katsura agreement) in 1907 acknowledged a trade-off between both nations where the United States

⁷ Roosevelt to Hermann Speck von Sternberg, 8 August 1900: "The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt," in E. E. Morison, ed., *The Years of Preparation, 1898-1900* II (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 1394.

⁸ Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977), 107.

⁹ James Bradley, "Diplomacy That Will Live in Infamy," *New York Times*, December 5, 2009.

would not oppose the Japanese absorption of Korea and Japan would recognize the American takeover of both the Philippines and Hawaii.¹⁰ Roosevelt followed up by cutting off relations with Korea, closing the American legation in Seoul, and seeing to it that the State Department's Record of Foreign Relations no longer had a separate heading for Korea. Instead, Korea was placed under the new heading of "Japan."¹¹

George Kennan and Korea in 1905: How to Save a Degenerate State

George Kennan wrote over twenty lengthy feature articles for *The Outlook* covering Japan's war effort against the Russians as well as on conditions in both Korea and China. A great admirer of Japan, he believed at the time that Japan had a strong obligation to help the Korean people modernize their nation and that a Japanese takeover of Korea was fully justified to achieve this goal. He lauded Japan for its successful modernization during the Meiji era and castigated Korea for its apparent poverty, filth, decay, and corruption.

The first thing that strikes a traveler in going from Japan to Korea is the extraordinary contrast between the cleanliness, good order, industry, and general prosperity of one country, and the filthiness, demoralization, laziness, and general rack and ruin of the other...The Japanese are clean, enterprising, intelligent, brave, well-educated and strenuously industrious, while the Koreans strike a newcomer as dirty in person and habits, apathetic, slow-witted, lacking in spirit, densely ignorant, and constitutionally lazy...Korea is an organism that has become so diseased as to lose its power of growth; and it can be restored to a normal condition only by a long course of remedial treatment.¹²

Kennan looked at his sick patient, Korea, and found three groups of people responsible for Korea's malaise: The Emperor, The Government and The People. The Emperor of Korea, he noted, was a gentle little man with the

¹⁰ Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 142.

¹¹ Bradley, "Diplomacy That Will Live in Infamy," op. cit.

¹² George Kennan, "Korea: A Degenerate State," *The Outlook*, October 7, 1905, 307.

personality of a child – stubborn, ignorant and superstitious, so much so that he devotes much of his time with sorcerers and witches who inhabited the palace and advised their monarch on state affairs: “He is indeed a spoiled child, who regards his country as something created for his special delectation, and all of the people as flocks and herds for his slaughter.”¹³ He is “absolutely incapable of forming a correct judgment with regard to men and vents, and in consequence of this mental disability, he is deceived by his courtiers and robbed and cheated by all who have business dealings with him.”¹⁴

If the Emperor was bad, the rest of the government was in even worse shape: “Thieves, extortioners, counterfeiters, torturers and assassins have again and again held positions in the Emperor’s Cabinet.”¹⁵ Provincial governors pay out a lot of money for their positions, but they get a far greater profit because of their schemes to rob the common people of Korea. These schemes include excessive taxation, bribery, and illegal seizure of property on a mere whim. There was nobody to stop these selfish practices. Every position in government was for sale and there is corruption everywhere.

Kennan stressed that the ultimate victims of this corruption were the Korean people. No matter how hard they worked, whatever profits they made were seized by the thieves who also were their governors, policemen, and local guardians. The result was that the people were impoverished, depressed with no hope for advancement in life and no education or anybody to look after them in times of adversity. They lacked the incentive to work hard because their labor would get them nowhere. Consequently, they starved in the streets and lacked the energy or desire to seek a productive and prosperous life. Street scene photographs from the period show many gaunt Koreans sitting idly about with little or nothing to occupy them. Their faces lack any smiles or other signs of joy. Their homes are of simple design and their personal possessions are few. Moreover, Kennan notes that the common man in Korea had come to accept their dismal situation with stalwart resignation and had even given up on life:

¹³ *Ibid.*, 308–310

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 308.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 310.

So far as my limited observation qualifies me to judge, the average town Korean spends more than half his time in idleness, and instead of cleaning up his premises in his long intervals of leisure, he sits contentedly on his threshold and smokes, or lies on the ground and sleeps, with his nose over an open drain from which a turkey-buzzard would fly and a decent pig would turn away in disgust.¹⁶

They were thoroughly used to the robbery of their hard-earned gains by government officials and other members of the ruling *yangban* class; Commoners in Korea would only protest if the demands made on them were too great. Kennan writes:

It must be remembered, moreover, that the Korean people have been accustomed to “squeezes” and illegal exactions for centuries, and that they protest or resist only when robbery passes the extreme limit of endurance. If a governor or prefect “squeezes” moderately and with discretion, he may do so with impunity – the people will not “kick” – but if he resorts to general violence, or attempts to “squeeze” for his own use ten or twenty times as much as he collects in legal taxes, there is apt to be trouble. You may rob some of the Koreans all of the time; but if you rob all of them all of the time and without limit, you are finally dragged out of your house and beaten or kicked to death in the streets.¹⁷

Subsequently, Kennan provides statistics that demonstrate government graft and misuse of public funds. There is huge emphasis on spending for the Emperor and his court, but there is absolutely no concern for the safety, education and welfare of the Korean people. While the Emperor and other high officials lived in clear luxury, the ten to twelve million ordinary Koreans paid dearly to support their rulers, and received next to nothing in

¹⁶ George Kennan, “The Korean People: The Product of a Decayed Civilization,” *The Outlook*, October 21, 1905, 310.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 311.

return. Kennan includes the following figures derived from the most recent Korean government budget to emphasize his point:

<i>Monies spent for the benefit of the government:</i> ¹⁸	
Imperial Privy Purse	\$1,103,359
Imperial “sacrifices”	\$186,041
Palace construction	\$300,000
Palace Guard	\$170,256
Special palace guard	\$81,978
Total	\$1,841,634

<i>Monies spent for the benefit of the Korean people:</i>	
All public schools ¹⁹	\$27,718
Public works	\$424
“Suppressing robbers”	\$500
Total	\$28,642

Kennan reports that by far the largest single appropriation was \$5,180,614 spent on the army, which he considers mostly to be wasted. The army as an institution that drew an enormous amount of money was poorly armed and equipped. Desertion was rampant. There was little order in the ranks and proceeds were drained. The army was hardly fit for anything. The navy was even worse – spending \$450,000 – but all that the navy had to show for itself was an old rather dilapidated gunboat. Hereafter, Kennan concludes his article on the “degenerate” and hopelessly corrupt condition of Korea by noting:

The activities and operations of the existing Korean Government may briefly be summed up as follows: It takes from the people, directly and indirectly, everything that they earn over and above a bare subsistence, and gives them in return practically nothing. It affords no

¹⁸ Ibid., 313. Figures are in “Korean dollars” and no exchange rate is offered. The point here is not necessarily the total amount spent on each item, but rather the proportions of money spent in each category.

¹⁹ Ibid. This indicates, “All public schools outside of the capital – schools for the education of ten or twelve millions of people.”

adequate protection to life or property; it provides no educational facilities that deserve notice; it builds no roads; it does not improve its harbors; it does not light its coasts; it pays no attention whatever to street-cleaning or sanitation; it takes no measures to prevent or check epidemics; it does not attempt to foster national trade or industry; it encourages the lowest forms of primitive superstition; and it corrupts and demoralizes its subjects by setting them examples of untruthfulness, dishonesty, treachery, cruelty, and a cynical brutality in dealing with human rights that is almost without parallel in modern times.²⁰

Kennan's Praise for Japan's Promise to Guide Korea into the Modern World

While historical hindsight tells us that Japan's rule in Korea (1905-1945) was brutal and was designed to serve Japanese interests at the expense of Koreans, many in the West at that time accepted Japan's announced goal of entering Korea to improve the welfare of Koreans and their nation. George Kennan, like Theodore Roosevelt in 1905, strongly applauded the Japanese for their seemingly unselfish pledge to modernize Korea for the benefit of its people.

For the first time in the annals of the East, one Asiatic nation is making a serious and determined effort to transform and civilize another. Asiatic peoples, in centuries past, have exchanged ideas, arts, or products, and the higher has sometimes handed down its knowledge and such civilization as it had to the lower; but no Oriental nationality ever made a conscious and intelligent attempt to uplift and regenerate a neighbor until Japan, a few months ago, took hold of Korea.

The interest and importance of this experiment are not wholly due to its unique and unprecedented character. An experiment may be new and yet have little or no bearing on human progress and welfare. The Korean

²⁰ Kennan, "Korea, A Degenerate State," 314–315.

experiment, however, is not one of this kind, inasmuch as its results are likely to affect vitally the interests and happiness of millions of people, and may completely transform social and political conditions not only in Korea, but throughout the vast empire of China. The present war has made Japan the predominant Power in eastern Asia, and there can be little doubt, I think, that she is about to assume the leadership of the so-called Yellow Race.

In the Korean experiment we may see what capacity for leadership she has, and what are likely to be the results of the exercise of her newly acquired influence and strength in the wide field thrown open to her by her recent victories. She has successfully transformed and regenerated herself, but has she the disposition and the ability to uplift and civilize the degenerate nation on the other side of the Tsushima Strait, or to guide wisely and unselfishly the greater and more promising people on the other side of the Yellow Sea.²¹

Kennan's Criticism of Japanese Actions in Korea

While Kennan has always supported the Japanese assertion of control in Korea, he strongly criticized the manner in which they attempted to accomplish this. When the Japanese forced the Koreans to accept the placement of their troops on the peninsula in preparation for their planned invasion of Manchuria to counter the Russians, they asserted that Korea was, and would always continue to be, an independent country. The Japanese were to play an advisory role with the Korean government and the Koreans agreed to accept Japanese advisers and advice.

The reality, however, was that the Japanese began to assert control over the Korean government in 1904 and 1905. They began instituting fiscal and governmental reforms and took over the Korean post office. Several ranking Koreans infuriated that the Japanese were in fact gradually asserting their sovereignty over more and more of the Korean government, protested that the Japanese were going against their pledge to respect Korean independence. A number of ranking Koreans including the Emperor

²¹ Kennan, "The Korean People," 410.

strongly protested these intrusions on their sovereignty and sought outside intervention on their behalf from the United States and other nations. American support, of course, was not forthcoming because the United States was firmly on the side of Japan. Kennan suggests a more direct approach:

The Japanese Government may have thought it necessary, or expedient, at that time, to treat Korea as a sovereign and independent State which needed only benevolent advice; but it would have saved itself much trouble if it had openly assumed control of Korean administration, had made its advisors directors, and had guaranteed only the ultimate independence of a reformed and regenerated Empire.²²

This direct approach might have distressed Koreans, but it would have clarified Japanese aims and also might have given some Koreans something more concrete to work. Kennan felt that the Japanese also erred with regard to the programs that they initiated in 1904-1905. The Japanese worked to restore financial order in the country by restructuring the currency and restructuring Korea's postal system. Kennan suggests that the greatest concern of all Koreans was the "cruelty and corruption of Korean [government] administration... The people everywhere were being oppressed, robbed and impoverished by dishonest Korean officials, and they wanted, first of all, adequate protection for their personal and property rights."²³

Kennan's approval of Japan's seizure of Korea was conditional. Japan's mandate was to reform and restructure Korean government and society for the express benefit of the Korean people. Japan had proven its claim to be a fully modern civilized nation and the leading country of East Asia, but this maturity came with responsibilities to assist its less fortunate neighbors. Failure to unselfishly act on behalf of the Koreans in Kennan's opinion might well terminate Japan's mandate to occupy Korea.

²² George Kennan, "The Japanese in Korea" *The Outlook*, November 11, 1905, 609.

²³ *Ibid.*

Unfortunately, for the futures of both Korea and Japan, Japan's motives were highly mercenary, promises as dishonorable as British and French pledges during World War I to help Arabs build their own independent nation after the war. They had no intention of furthering Korean modernization and independence. Rather, they were determined to hold Korea as their stepping-stone leading to a sphere of influence in northeast Asia extending into Manchuria. Instead of lending a helping hand even at the start of their occupation of the peninsula in 1904–1905, they used force to coerce the Korean emperor and his cabinet members to accept Japanese “reforms” and to suppress Korean protests.

While Kennan was a keen observer and a quick learner, he was always working under the auspices of the Japanese. He began his work in Japan, traveled on Japanese ships, and always had Japanese-government sponsored guides with him and his party. He made use of his many opportunities to walk through Chemulpo (Inchon) and Seoul and to meet many Korean officials, but always under the watchful eye of the Japanese administration. Although Kennan was in East Asia for much of 1904, 1905, and 1906, he spent most of his time in Japan, on Japanese ships, or staying in Japanese compounds in Korea and China. He listened acutely to Japanese propaganda, which he accepted at face value.

Not all Western reporters served as propagandists for the Japanese. Canadian Frederick Arthur McKenzie (1869–1931), who worked for British newspapers, covered the Russo-Japanese War in Korea and spent a lot of time with his American colleague, novelist Jack London (1876–1916), who worked for the Hearst newspaper chain in the US. McKenzie worked independently of the Japanese and spent several years in Korea. He understood Japanese intentions very clearly and presented his readers with a far less flattering view of their occupation.

Frederick Arthur McKenzie's Reporting on the Japanese in Korea

George Kennan's pro-Japanese writing about Japanese intentions in Korea were sharply contradicted by journalists like McKenzie and London.²⁴ Writing for a largely British audience, McKenzie paints a very

²⁴ Frederick Arthur McKenzie's books: *From Tokyo to Tiflis: Uncensored Letters from the War* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1905); *The Unveiled East* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1907); *The Tragedy of Korea* (London:

convincing story to counter Kennan's view of Japanese conduct. He demonstrates that the Japanese never had any intention from the start of their modernization in the 1870s not to exert their authority over Korea. They used gunboats to open Korea in 1876 to penetration by Japanese business and investment. Hundreds and then thousands of Japanese moved to Korea in the latter part of the nineteenth century, so much so that by the early 1900s there were just under a hundred thousand Japanese in Korea.

Japan's goal by the 1890s, according to McKenzie, was to become the "leader of a revived Asia. She is advancing to-day along three lines – territorial expansion, increased fighting power, and an aggressive commercial campaign."²⁵ Korea was to be the heart, the nerve center of its growing empire in northeast Asia. The Japanese told the world that their goal was the benevolent modernization of Korea – which Japan would invest its people and resources in the creation of a strong independent state and that Korea would be a showplace of Japan's modernization program. The reality, according to McKenzie, was very different. Japan was prepared to use crude aggressive force to seize full control over Korea and to employ whatever brutality was necessary to subdue the Koreans.

In short, the Japanese military and police sought to bulldoze Korea into total submission by means of "sheer terrorism" which included beating and killing innocent civilians, torturing many others, and physically harming, violating and humiliating women. In other words, McKenzie feels, the Japanese had ventured to the lower depths of barbarism to get their way. He wonders why the British entered into an alliance with such people, an alliance that the Japanese would inevitably break.²⁶ The Japanese were furious with McKenzie's reporting and vigorously protested to British authorities in Korea and Japan, flatly demanding his expulsion from both countries. Unfortunately for Korea, much of McKenzie's reporting came very late – well after the end of the war and after both the United States and Great Britain had recognized the Japanese takeover of Korea and had withdrawn their embassies from Seoul.

The value of Kennan's reporting lies in his excellent coverage of Japanese operations in its war against Russia, his time on a Japanese

Hodder and Stoughton, 1908); and *Korea's Fight for Freedom* (London: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1920).

²⁵ McKenzie, *The Unveiled East*, 19.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

battleship during the siege of Port Arthur in 1904, his presentation of Japanese views of Korea, and his portrayal of the desperate state of Korean society at the dawn of the twentieth century. His writing is also a clear portrayal of official American policy towards Japan and Korea today. Regrettably, he did not spend enough independent time on the ground in Korea to gain the same understanding of the situation, the way McKenzie did. In the end, he nevertheless became, perhaps unwittingly, an invaluable propaganda tool for the Japanese government.