

03

Impact on Regional Rivalries

IB Lines of Inquiry

Inquiry Questions

Donghak Peasant Revolution

To what extent did the Donghak Peasant Revolution bring about significant change to Korea?

First Sino–Japanese War and Treaty of Shimonoseki
Triple Intervention and Russian influence

To what extent did the conflict between China and Japan during the First Sino-Japanese War affect Korean interests and the regional balance of power?

Gabo reforms (1894–1896)

To what extent were the Gabo Reforms transformative in their aims for Korea?

Introduction

This chapter considers the role of regional rivalries in Korea between 1894 and 1897. It examines the circumstances in the middle part of the 1890s where Korea experienced domestic uprisings, reform programmes and regional rivalry and conflict. This provides the context for understanding the developments which would lead to the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910. The focus of the chapter therefore is centered on the influence of **regional rivalries** and how this affected Korean politics, economy and society. However, the role of Korea itself is central to the narrative, especially in regard to how individual Koreans responded to the challenges at a time of external imperial interests in Korea and a need to modernise the structures of the Joseon Dynasty. The mid 1890s were a transformative period, and this chapter will examine the interactions between shifting societal change within Korea and external threats and influences.

Sequence of Events

- The Donghak Peasant Revolution (January 11, 1894 – December 25, 1895) was caused by renewed interest in the ideas of the movement combined with social and economic problems affecting Korea in the early 1890s.
- Unrest in Korea as a result of The Donghak Peasant Revolution created the conditions for conflict across the peninsula and sparked warfare between China and Japan in the First Sino-Japanese

War from 1894–1895. The Treaty of Shimonoseki, which formally concluded the war, ended Korea's status as a tributary power and shifted the regional balance of power in favour of Japan.

- A radical modernisation program was implemented in Korea in the mid 1890s. Known as the Gabo Reforms (1894-1896), it sought to transform the political and social relationships of Korean society.
- After 1895, Korea was subject to further regional rivalry – exemplified by Russia's role in the Triple Intervention of 1895, which took away some of Japan's gains made at the Treaty of Shimonoseki. This began a period of increasing rivalry between Japan and Russia over Korea.
- In October 1895, Queen Min was assassinated. This tragic event spurred moves for full independence and the creation of the Korean empire in 1897.
- In the years leading up to the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), Korea would continue to be affected by Russo-Japanese rivalry as well as European and American interests. This occurred alongside the considerable programs of modernisation which were taking place in Korea during the late 19th and early 20th century.

Timeline

January 1894–December 1894	The Donghak Peasant Revolution
July 1894–April 1895	The First Sino-Japanese War
April 17, 1895	The signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki
April–November 1895	The Triple Intervention by Russia, France and Germany
July 1894–November 1895	The Gabo Reforms are introduced and implemented
October 8, 1895	The assassination of Queen Min
1896	Flight of King Gojong to the Russian Legation
1897	Declaration of Korean Empire by King Gojong

Key Terms

Donghak Learning	Intellectual movement that began in 1860 under the leadership of Choe Je-u that brought together aspects of religious, philosophical and spiritual traditions including Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism.
Donghak Peasant Revolution	Large scale peasant uprising which occurred throughout 1894 and created the conditions for the First Sino-Japanese War to break out.
Yangban	Ruling class of the Joseon Dynasty.
The Battle of Uguemchi	Decisive battle of the Donghak Peasant Revolution which led to their eventual defeat.
Pyeongyang hat	Traditionally worn by the Yangban class and was a mark of their social position and privilege.
Sundry Taxes	These contributed to peasant unrest, they were small local taxes that were imposed upon people often by corrupt officials.
Cheondogyo	The successor religion from the Donghak movement, it still has a following in Korea today.
Convention of Tientsin	Following the Gapsin Coup this was an agreement between China and Japan to notify each other before any future intervention into Korea.
Ito Hirobumi	Leading Japanese statesman who signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, he was formerly Prime Minister of Japan between 1885–1888.
Gyeongbokgung	The main royal palace of the Joseon Dynasty.
Treaty of Shimonoseki	Signed in April 1895, this treaty brought the First Sino-Japanese War to an end. It ended Korea's status as a tributary toward China.
Suzerainty	Describes the relationship between China and Korea prior to 1895 – Korea and China had a suzerain-vassal relationship which involved Korea paying to tribute to China at different points in exchange for their protection in the region.
Taels	Traditional form of currency used in East Asia during the 19th century.
Open Door Policy	Passed in 1899, this was an American proposal that all nations should have equal trading rights in China and there was a commitment to protect China's territorial integrity.
Gabo Reforms	Between 1894 and 1896, these reforms were radical measures to bring about change in Korea, they included the abolition of slavery and the Confucian civil service examinations.
Russian Legation	The Russian embassy in Seoul where King Gojong took refuge shortly after the assassination of Queen Min.

Key People

Choe Je-u	Founder and influential figure of the Donghak movement, he was executed in 1864.
Cho Pyeong-gap	A corrupt magistrate in Gobu county whose actions sparked the Donghak Peasant Revolution in 1894.
Jeon Bong-jun	One of the principle leaders of the Donghak Peasant Revolution, his actions were especially important in the first phase of the revolution.
Choe Si-hyeong	After the death of Choi Je-u, he became the second leader of the movement, based in the north of the peninsula he favoured spreading the teachings of the movement but joined the Donghak Peasant Uprising in response to the presence of Japanese troops in Korea in 1894.
Ito Hirobumi	Leading Japanese statesman who signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, he was formerly Prime Minister of Japan between 1885–1888 and later assassinated by Ahn Jung-geun.
Kim Okgyun	Member of the Gaehwa party who also took part in the Gapsin Coup of 1884. His assassination by Hong Jong-woo sparked tension between Japan and China.
Li Hongzhang	Chinese statesman and moderniser who was present at the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki.
Daewongun	Father of King Gojong, often viewed as more conservative and resistant to reform movements in Korea.
Kim-Hong Jip	Reformist politician who served as prime minister during the Gabo Reforms.
Park Young-hyo	A leading Korean politician during the Gabo Reforms.
Queen Min	Wife of King Gojong and influential figure in the Joseon royal court. She was assassinated in October 1895.
Inoue Kaoru	Japanese diplomat and politician who worked in Korea during the Gabo Reforms and led the assassination of Queen Min.



Conceptual Connections

Change and Continuity

Although all of the four history concepts will be touched upon through this chapter, there is a clear focus on the role of change and continuity. How Korea changed or retained continuity as a result of far reaching upheaval is a good way to focus your thinking as you study the information in this chapter. Things to consider:

- The role of uprisings and revolution seen in the Donghak Peasant Revolution
- The role of conflict across the peninsula seen in the regional war between China and Japan
- The role of modernisation and the direction that this was heading towards

Remember to connect your understanding back to the focus of previous chapters concerning the mid century challenges to Joseon considered in Chapter 1 and the move away from isolation examined in Chapter 2.

I. The Causes of the Donghak Peasant Revolution

Inquiry Question

To what extent did the Donghak Peasant Revolution bring about significant change to Korea?

The Donghak movement, dating back to the 1860s, was an intellectual movement that brought together aspects of religious, philosophical and spiritual traditions including Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism. Traditionally standing in opposition to Seohak – ‘Western Learning’ – which had been associated with the growing influence of Catholicism in Korea, followers of the movement also saw Japanese economic interests as a major challenge facing Korea by the early 1890s. Concerns over the role of foreign merchants and the existence of the treaty ports created calls for greater resistance in the light that this furthered the pressure on the agrarian populations of Korea. These concerns had increased following the agreements and unequal treaties made with foreign powers during the 1870s and 1880s. Agrarian concerns were especially centred on the levels of export of rice to Japan leading to higher prices and food shortages as well as the control of the fishing industry by Japanese companies. By the early 1890s, therefore, the Donghak movement was increasingly centered around these concerns.

Across the preceding decade, more conservative Korean politicians working with Qing officials sought to reduce the power of reformist factions such as the Gaewha Party (Enlightenment Party). Some of them saw the success of Japan's Meiji Restoration as a possible model for Korean development. This decade saw Korean modernization efforts being sidelined in favour of Chinese economic interests; between 1884 and 1894, Korea had been subject to increasing controls and influence from the Qing Dynasty, a time known as the ‘Chinese Decade,’ discussed in the previous chapter. This increasing control can be seen in the role played by Yuan Shikai in Korea, who acted as an advisor to King Gojong at this point, as well as maintaining the suzerain-vassal relationship between China and Korea.

The socio-economic conditions in Korea therefore contributed to the resurging interest in the Donghak movement, or 'Eastern Learning' that had been prevalent in the 1860s. A range of factors contributed to a series of uprisings in 1894 including unfair trading practices by Chinese and Japanese merchants and increases in taxation. Politically, the high ranking status of the yangban elites, and the Donghak's emphasis on advocating for greater levels of equality increased the calls for more far reaching change. Further widespread accusations of corruption against local magistrates stimulated this renewed interest and demand for change.

The Yangban Elite – Within the Confucian hierarchy of the Joseon Dynasty, the Yangban were afforded elite status across Korea and experienced a range of privileges as a result. A sign of their status was seen in the wearing of the Pyeongyang hat – pictured here. The Donghak reformers wanted to see an end to those privileges and to bring about greater levels of equality to people of Korea, especially the agrarian populations who suffered under the class system. The late Joseon dynasty saw increasing calls to bring new forms of governance to Korea that would modernise the state and the provision of privileges based on class and birthright.

Photo Credit

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yangban#/media/File:Koreans_oldest_pic_3.jpg



By 1892, the movement was gathering momentum, as Donghak members had created a petition which sought the posthumous rehabilitation of Choe Je-u, the movement's founder. He was executed in 1862 due to accusations of heresy. The new leadership of the movement presented their demands to King Gojong, who was troubled by the increasing support for the movement and the growing levels of rebellion, especially in the South West of Korea.

It was the actions of a local magistrate named Jo Byeong-gap in Gobu County, however, which ignited these long standing economic and political concerns into a mass movement. A member of the Yangban class, Jo Byeong-gap had been carrying out unfair taxation practices on the local population in Gobu, as well as demanding the building of a reservoir which was then subject to a rice tax for locals to use. These actions stimulated a response from Jeon Bong-jun, who led around 1000 peasants in action. This included the destruction of the reservoir and the distribution of food to the local population.

The revolution that had begun in February 1894 spread across the South West (Jeolla Province) of Korea, and the town of Jeonju was captured. As they gained strength, the Donghak leadership, including Jeon Bong-jun and Kim Gae-nam, proposed twelve reforms which articulated their aims for the movement. At



« Major sites of the Donghak Peasant Revolution 1894.

this stage of the revolution, these reforms were chiefly concerned with changes to the social and economic structures of the Joseon dynasty, and the emphasis was on providing greater levels of equality and social justice. By May 1894, a truce was negotiated between the Donghak leaders and the Joseon government. This brought the first phase of the revolution to a temporary halt, and some promises were made to enact some of the suggested reforms.



« Donghak Army Capturing Jeonju Fortress in 1894
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Jeonju_Fortress#/media/File:Occupation_of_Jeonju.jpg.



Source Activity One

ATL: Thinking Skills

The Donghak Religion and Uprising: Twelve Reforms Proclaimed by the Donghak Overseer's Office

1. The ill will that has long persisted between Donghak believers and the government shall be eradicated. There should be cooperation in all aspects of governance.
2. Crimes committed by greedy and corrupt officials shall be investigated and severely punished.
3. The wrongdoers among the rich and powerful shall be severely punished.
4. The wicked among the Confucian literati and the yangban class shall be ordered to mend their ways.
5. Slave registry documents shall be burned.
6. There shall be improvements in the treatment of the seven classes of lowborn (ch'ilban ch'önin), and butchers shall no longer be required to wear the "**Pyeongyang hat.**"
7. A young widow shall be allowed to remarry.
8. Improper levies of **sundry taxes** shall be completely terminated.
9. In recruiting officials, regionalism shall be eliminated, and talented persons shall be appointed irrespective of their birthplace.
10. Persons who are in league with foreign enemies shall be severely punished.
11. All past debts, private or public, shall be declared null and void.
12. Farmland shall be equitably redistributed for cultivation

Tasks

Review the twelve reforms – these were made by Donghak Reformers in 1894.

1. What examples can you find to understand the aims of the members of the Donghak movement at the time of the uprising under the following categories:
 - Targeting corruption
 - The practice of slavery
 - Land ownership
 - Role of foreigners in Korea
 - The rights of women
 - Economic policies including taxation
 - Nationalism
2. Write a summary to express the key ideas of the Donghak reformers in your own words – aim to include at least three specific examples to explain what they were trying to achieve.
3. **Causation Review** – Consider all of the information in this section. What are the major causes of the Donghak Peasant Revolution? Link back to your understanding from previous chapters. Create three arguments in response to the question:
 1. Why regional rivalries contributed to the Donghak Peasant Uprising
 2. Domestic political and economic problems contributed to the Donghak Peasant Uprising
 3. Short term events and actions were critical to the outbreak of the Donghak Peasant Uprising

Extension Study the historians' viewpoints in the next activity section, and integrate any of these views into your arguments to build up a more robust case and to consider more deeply the importance of perspectives to this question.

The Nature of the Donghak Peasant Revolution

It should be noted that the Donghak Peasant Revolution of 1894 exhibited regional variations, shaped by both geography and local leadership. The southern uprising, centered in the Jeolla region and led by Jeon Bong-jun, was prominent during the first phase of the revolution in the spring of 1894. Later that year, in the autumn, a second wave of uprisings occurred in other regions, with Donghak religious leader Choe Si-hyeong playing a significant role in mobilizing followers, particularly in the central and northern provinces.

A key distinction between the southern and northern branches of the Donghak movement lies in Choe Si-hyeong's emphasis on its spiritual foundations, contrasting with the militant approach led by Jeon Bong-jun in the south. Despite these regional differences, they were united in their opposition to increasing Japanese military presence as a result of the First Sino-Japanese War, leading to renewed uprisings in late 1894. The **Battle of Ugeumchi** of November 1894, fought close to Gongju, resulted in heavy casualties for the Donghak rebels against a more well-equipped and combined force of Joseon Dynasty and Japanese troops. This marked the decisive suppression of the movement. Following this defeat, Donghak forces were unable to sustain further resistance or advance their political and economic demands.



Jeon Bong-jun

Jeon Bong-jun was a key figure in the Donghak Peasant Revolution. Sometimes referred to affectionately as General Mung Bean, he was born in 1855 in

Gobu in Jeolla Province in the South West of Korea. He was a follower of the intellectual and spiritual traditions of the Donghak movement that had emerged during the 1860s. Jeon Bong jun was instrumental in leading the revolution against a local magistrate in January 1894. He secured early victories, including the Battle of Hwangryong River, and established localised governments called Jibgangs in areas across Southern

Korea. These provide clues about the early roots of Korean democracy, as they were new forms of political organisation when contrasted with the ruling system of the Joseon dynasty. After the intervention of China and Japan, the Donghak movement was suppressed by late 1894, notably at the Battle of Ugeumchi. Jeong Bong-jun was later captured and executed in April 1895. His statue can be seen in Seoul today and he is celebrated by many as a hero of resistance. The ideas of the Donghak movement can be connected to the far-reaching modernisation efforts that took place during the Gabo reforms as well as contributing along the path to modernisation and democratisation in the 20th century. The religious ideas of the Donghak can also be seen in Cheondoism, which has a number of followers across Korea today.

The Consequences of the Donghak Movement

By the end of 1894, even though the Donghak movement had largely been suppressed, its role during this time period provides a lens for understanding the intellectual movements that were influential at the time. These movements would continue to influence Korean identity into the 20th century and beyond. Many Donghak leaders were arrested and executed in the months following their defeat, including Jeon Bong-jun, who was arrested and later executed on April 24, 1895. A statue of him stands in Seoul today, and the influence of the Donghak movement has been discussed, examined and debated by scholars throughout the subsequent decades. These debates center around the interpretations of what the movement stood for, the short term and long term impact, their importance in subsequent modernisation efforts, future uprisings, how they reflect Korean national identity and how they should be remembered. Below are three historians' viewpoints on both the consequences and significance of the Donghak Peasant Uprising.



Source Activity Two

ATL: Thinking Skills

Historians' Viewpoints on the Significance of the Donghak Peasant Uprising

Perspective 1

"Although the 1894 rebellion was ultimately unsuccessful, it helped spark developments that helped reform much of the corruption in government. It also provoked events that led to the introduction of those institutions and ideas that led to profound changes to the structure of the state and started a debate concerning the direction of the nation in an increasingly unstable East Asia. Ironically, these changes were initiated by a government that was supported by the Japanese, the exact opposite of what the Donghak rebels wanted. In spite of this, immense changes resulted from the rebellion and Korea would never be the same again. As a result, the 1894 rebellion proved a watershed which helped to open up a new era in Korean history."

Seth, M. et al. (2016) Routledge Handbook of Modern Korean History. 1st ed. Routledge

Perspective 2

One of the political effects of the Donghak rebellion was the implementation of the Gabo reforms in 1894, which were considered an attempt at modern reforms, and which led to the "dismantling of the Confucian order", and eventually Korea's historically close, but subservient relationship with China (Park 2015: 42). This also opened up a space for new modes of spirituality, including the further development of Cheondoism itself, as well as the other religions... The threat to Korean identity was taken very seriously, especially with the Sino-Japanese War bringing disaster to the Korean peninsula, as well as a deepening sense of doom, menacing Korean sovereignty. New religions emerging in this context of antagonism and antipathy would draw upon the nationalistic currents of the time, that sought to continue the work of overturning feudal Korea and its corrupt government, prompting many millenarian aspects, hoping to usher in a new world order.

Cawley, Kevin. (2019) 2019. Religious and Philosophical Traditions of Korea. 1st ed. Routledge.
<https://www.perlego.com/book/1569896>.

Perspective 3

But more than the high death toll, the most consequential outcome of the Sino-Japanese War was its impact on the future stability of the Korean Peninsula. Lots of blood had been spilled, and divisions between groups had hardened. The fault line appeared not only between the Donghak rebels and the Korean government officials and yangbans who had fought with the Japanese; deep fissures were also present within the Donghak movement itself. Jeon Bong-jun and other advocates of violent revolutionary tactics had split the movement by launching the Second Donghak Uprising. Sickened and disappointed, Choe Si-hyeong, and his protege, Son Pyong-hui, pledged that the Donghak movement would return to its original non-violent ways. The Sino-Japanese war had thus pulled Korean society even further apart, opening up wider rifts that other Great Powers – namely Russia – would use to their own advantage. The stage was set for increased turmoil in East Asia.

Sheila Miyoshi Jager 'The Other Great Game – The Opening of Korea and the Birth of Modern East Asia'

Questions:

1. What is meant by the expression '1894 proved a watershed' in Viewpoint 1? What reasons are given for this position?
2. How does Viewpoint 2 explain the spiritual and intellectual consequences of the Donghak Peasant Uprising?
3. In Viewpoint 3, what regional consequences for Korea are explained as a result of the upheaval of the Donghak Uprisings? Why could the actions of the Donghak leaders be viewed more negatively according to this perspective?

Paper 3 Practice

Choose one question to respond to:

1. To what extent do you agree with the claim that the Donghak Peasant Revolution brought about significant change to Korea?
2. To what extent do you agree with the claim that the Donghak Peasant Uprising of 1894 provided a basis for modernisation and reform across Korea?

Construct an essay plan for a question which considers the consequences of the Donghak Peasant Uprising. You will need to consult information from this section and also the sections on the Gabo Reforms as well as the subsequent chapter.



Skills & Competencies of a Historian

As you have encountered in the reading above, there were multiple consequences of the Donghak Peasant Revolution.

Evaluating Arguments

Historians write accounts which take account of these varieties of interpretations whilst also building their own arguments. When considering diverse perspectives it can help to consider the types of perspectives which are present within your area of focus. These might include:

1. National perspectives
2. Perspectives from people at the time of the event – how people responded to the events across different sections of society
3. Perspectives across time – how views of an event may shift according to new developments in the history of a country or a region
4. Thematic perspectives which may focus on social, economic, political or environmental factors
5. Perspectives of experts, most notably historians and historiographical discourse

From your study of the Donghak Peasant Revolution – what types of perspectives have you encountered so far? How have they helped you to build your understanding of the topic? What further perspectives would help to build your understanding?

II. First Sino–Japanese War and Treaty of Shimonoseki

Inquiry Question

To what extent did conflict between China and Japan during the First Sino-Japanese War affect Korea and the regional balance of power?

Although the Donghak resurgence was the spark that brought troops from China and Japan to Korea in 1894, tension had been increasing between the two countries in the years running up to the First Sino-Japanese War. Since the Gapsin Coup (see Chapter 2) of 1884, the Qing dynasty had exerted more direct rule over Korea and the spark for increased tension came about in March 1894 with Hong Jong-woo's assassination of Kim Okgyun. A Korean moderniser who had taken part in the Gapsin coup, he was killed enroute to Shanghai because he was viewed as a traitor to his country for ushering in Japanese troops and later seeking refuge there. His death stirred up anger in Japan; the Qing authorities had allowed both the assassin and the remains of Kim's body to be transported to Korea, where the body was mutilated and put on display. Anger towards China from the Japanese standpoint increased as a result of this incident with calls for a program of reform to be brought to Korea and with some calls to remove the Qing dynasty and thus upend the regional balance of power.

Because of the widespread scale and challenge of the Donghak uprising, on June 3, 1894, King Gojong called for Chinese military assistance to suppress the movement. Under the Convention of Tientsin, signed in April 1885, China was obliged to notify Japan about military action in Korea. Subsequently, by the summer of 1895, an increased number of troops from both China and Japan had moved to Korea. Despite initially calling for assistance, Korean authorities had managed to take control of the uprising and then asked both sides to withdraw their troops, including a request for mediation from European powers.

At this point, Japanese actions became more aggressive. War against China was now seen as their objective as well as creating the conditions for a program of reform across Korea. A key step in escalating tension came on July 19 when Japanese troops seized control of the Gyeongbokgung, the royal palace. This move was shortly followed by a naval battle on July 25th which led to the sinking of the chartered British ship, the *Kowshing* and the beginning of warfare between China and Japan. The nature of the war meant that there were both engagements at sea and at land, and in fact some of the key battles involved both forms of fighting.

Japanese victory over China in the war was decisive, and there were a number of pivotal battles which brought this about. The first two led to Japanese control over the Korean peninsula while the second two led to incursions into Chinese territory. This gave Japan a strong position in the negotiations which would eventually bring the war to an end.

Major Battles of the First Sino-Japanese War

It is useful to be aware of the chronology and course of the First Sino-Japanese War, as this can help with other regional studies for IB Paper 3. As you examine the battles below, reflect on how they would have affected the Korean peninsula and the changing balance of power in the region.

The Japanese military strategy throughout the First Sino-Japanese War followed a calculated progression that began with the Battle of Pyongyang on September 15, 1894. Although not the first engagement, victory here brought important consequences as Japanese troops launched a successful surprise offensive from the north to overcome approximately 13,000 Qing Dynasty troops. This led to the surrender of the city and paved the way for complete Japanese control of the Korean peninsula.

Two days later, on September 17, a significant naval engagement occurred in the border areas of the Yalu River. Naval historians regard this Battle of the Yalu River with attention due to the effectiveness of the modernized Imperial Japanese Navy in the Yellow Sea. This decisive victory saw the Chinese fleet retreat to Port Arthur and cleared the way for a Japanese advance into the Chinese mainland of Manchuria.

The campaign then shifted to Chinese territory with the Battle of Port Arthur on November 21, 1894. Port Arthur held strategic importance for the entire region, and the Japanese were able to occupy it in a single day through a combined land assault and naval encirclement. However, this victory was followed by a massacre of residents witnessed by Western observers, including the mutilation of bodies and casualties ranging from hundreds to thousands. Despite these horrors, the victory gave Japan a very strong bargaining position in upcoming negotiations.

The conflict reached its final stage between January 18 and February 10, 1895, at the Battle of Weihaiwei. Across the water from Port Arthur, the Japanese took control of this safe haven for the remaining ships of the Beiyang fleet despite difficult winter weather. By the end of the battle, the Chinese Admiral Ting Ruchang scuttled his ship and committed suicide in an act of defiance. With the defeat of the Beiyang fleet at Weihaiwei, the stage was finally set for the peace negotiations.

THE KOREAN PENINSULA



Major Battles of the First Sino-Japanese War.



TOK Connection

The Battle of Pyeongyang in Korean Literature

Although the Battle of Pyeongyang formed part of the war between China and Japan, it has been reflected on by Korean writers in different ways. Most famously, it is featured in the early 20th century novel 'Tears of Blood' by Yi Injik, part of a literary movement known as the New Fiction genre in Korea. The book focuses on the lives of a family directly affected by the Battle

of Pyongyang, and reflects upon how this battle revealed the fragility of Korean society in the context of the destructive force of newly modernised militaries, calling attention for the need for national strengthening. Therefore, this battle can be viewed as a rallying call for the efforts of reformers in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Theory of Knowledge Connection – Literary and artistic movements can reveal contemporary thoughts and concerns in different societal settings. When we study history there are many opportunities to look at how contemporary writers and artists comment on the time and place in which they are living. In this way, literary and artistic movements can provide a window into the thought and culture of a time period.

From your studies of history – what examples of literature and art can you see as responding to challenges facing different societies. For example, *1984* by George Orwell is clearly a response to the rise of totalitarianism in the world in which he was living and experiencing at the time of writing. In this way, the creative work of writers and artists can be viewed as responsive to contemporary challenges.

What are the implications of this? Can the arts ever be disconnected from the time and location in which they were created?

To what extent can art and literature convey historical knowledge?

Concluding the War

The war ended with the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki on April 17, 1895. Signed by Li Hongzhang of China and Ito Hirobumi of Japan, it was an unequal treaty that provided punitive terms towards China for the conclusion of the war. Unfortunately, no Koreans were present at the signing of the treaty, despite the consequences that it would bring about.

The terms of the treaty can be outlined as follows:

- Recognition of the independence of Korea by China, ending the tributary system and Chinese suzerainty
- Japan to be given control of the Pescadores Islands, Taiwan, and the Liaodong Peninsula
- China to pay indemnities to Japan in the form of 200 million taels
- Japan to receive improved trading rights across multiple cities in China

The Consequences of the Treaty of Shimonoseki

The Treaty of Shimonoseki significantly changed the regional balance of power which affected all of the powers involved. The traditional hierarchical suzerain-vassal relationship between China and Korea, which had been in place for centuries, came to an end. Korea's position as a nominally independent state by this point would lead to nation building efforts, which are discussed in the next chapter. China's loss

in the war was seen as humiliating, and it has been acknowledged as a turning point in the regional balance of power which China traditionally dominated. The loss of war would encourage further territorial acquisitions in China by different European powers in an event known as ‘the scramble for concessions’ during the late 1890s, a move that would bring about an increased role of the USA in the pursuit of an ‘Open Door Policy’ regarding China. China’s decline can be viewed in parallel with Japan’s ascendancy, increasing prestige and laying the foundations for the country’s transition into a colonial power. Japan’s territorial acquisition of Taiwan would last until 1945. This elevated position after the Treaty of Shimonoseki in terms of territorial influence and regional power would contribute to the later annexation of Korea in 1910.

The Triple Intervention

After the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki in April 1895, the territorial acquisitions of Japan were challenged by Russia, France, and Germany in a move known as the Triple Intervention. This was primarily to do with the concerns that Japan had acquired the Liaodong Peninsula as a result of the treaty. It was thought that this would give Japan too much economic and strategic interest in the region. Russia sought to expand their regional interests into Manchuria and saw this as an opportunity to initially support China against Japan’s demands. This would create the conditions to expand the use of railways into the region, part of the expanding Trans-Siberian railway at the time. The initial demand for Japan to renounce claims to the Liaodong Peninsula came on April 23, but it was not until November 8 that this revision was accepted by the Japanese government. The revision stipulated the return of the Liaodong peninsula to China but an additional 30 million taels was also to be added to the indemnities bill. Russia and France loaned the funds for this to China. France’s support for the Triple Intervention can be connected to the alliance system in place in Europe at the time; France and Russia had agreed to an alliance in 1892 and were diplomatically tied. Germany had her own colonial interests at the time and perhaps saw this as an opportunity to be more engaged in the region. By 1898, Germany had gained colonial control of Shandong Province. The Triple Intervention provides a reminder of the European colonial interests in the region, which had been growing throughout the 19th century, but especially the increasing rivalry between Russia and Japan. From the Korean perspective, the weakening of Japan’s presence through the loss of the Liaodong peninsula would have been welcomed by many and there was an increased interest in Russia at this point.

Review Activity – To what extent did conflict between China and Japan during the First Sino-Japanese War affect Korea and the regional balance of power?

When considering the consequences of the First Sino-Japanese War, we can consider its effects both on Korea and the region. Therefore this question would invite a discussion of all of the sections provided in this chapter:

- The second phase of the Donghak Peasant Uprising
- The Gabo Reforms
- The Treaty of Shimonoseki
- The Triple Intervention and increased Russian influence

Remember to focus your arguments on how the war affected Korea.

Paper 1 Practice

Inquiry Question: To what extent do you agree that the consequences of the First Sino-Japanese War would bring about tremendous change for Korea?

Source A – Extracts from the Treaty of Shimonoseki

Context – The First Sino-Japanese War brought important consequences for the region, especially in regard to the position of Korea. The war alongside the Donghak Peasant Revolution and Gabo Reforms occurred at a time of tremendous change in Korea. The treaty of Shimonseki was signed in Japan on April 17, 1895 – no Koreans were present at the signing of the treaty. It was overseen by Ito Hirobumi of Japan and Li Hongzhang of China.

ARTICLE I.

China recognizes definitively the full and complete independence and autonomy of Corea, and in consequence, the payment of tribute and the performance of ceremonies and formalities by Corea to China in derogation of such independence and autonomy, shall wholly cease for the future.

ARTICLE II.

China cedes to Japan in perpetuity and full sovereignty the following territories, together with all fortifications, arsenals, and public property thereon:

- A. The island of Formosa, together with all islands appertaining or belonging to the said island of Formosa.
- B. The Pescadores Group, that is to say, all islands lying between the 119th and 120th degrees of longitude east of Greenwich and the 23rd and 24th degrees of north latitude.

ARTICLE IV

China agrees to pay to Japan as a war indemnity the sum of 200,000,000 Kuping taels; the said sum to be paid in eight installments.

ARTICLE X

All offensive military operations shall cease upon the exchange of the ratifications of this Act.

Source B — Extract from 'Korea's Place in the Sun' by Bruce Cumings

Context – Bruce Cumings is an American historian who specialises in the history of East Asia and has published a number of texts on Korean history.

The rebellion was over, and soon, so was the Sino-Japanese War. Japan was completely victorious, China's age-old relationship with Korea was severed for the next fifty years, Japan now occupied Taiwan and made the island its first colony, and China ceded rights to Port

Arthur and the strategic Liaot'ung peninsula, in Manchuria. This was too big a bite by pilot fish Japan in the eyes of the other imperialist sharks, so the Tripartite Intervention (Russia, France, Germany) forced it to give up Liaot'ung. The Tonghak lived on in the Ch'ondogyo (Heavenly Way) religious movement, which influenced Korean peasants for decades thereafter and was an early stimulant of Korean nationalism. This massive rebellion also cleared the way for Korea's first truly modern reforms, as commercial and industrial efforts began and semifeudal restrictions on Korea's multitude were lifted. Although the reforms came under Japanese auspices, it is from 1894 on that we can speak of Korea's modern period. It came a couple of decades after Japan got off the mark, however, a dangerous and ultimately fatal lead time.

Cumings, Bruce. *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History*. Updated edition ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2005.

Source C — Extract from 'The Making of Modern Korea' by Adrian Buzo

Context — Dr Adrian Buzo was a scholar, diplomat and ground breaking pioneer in the field of Korean studies, who passed away in 2025. He worked as a diplomat which included a posting to Pyongyang in North Korea during the 1970s. He founded and worked alongside the National Korean Studies Centre in Australia and held a number of academic positions at universities including Monash and Macquarie. His book, 'The Making of Modern Korea' is a one volume history of Korea.

'Pressing home their advantage, Japan enforced a harsh settlement on China through the Treaty of Shimonoseki in April 1895. While their annexation of the strategic Liaodong Peninsula met with a veto from Russia, France and Germany, who pronounced this as inimical to their interests in a move known as the Triple Intervention, a move which was to be remembered bitterly and vengefully in Japan, the major outcome stood: Choson was fully independent. Less apparent to most people at the time was that along with this victory came a growing note of Japanese aggression and triumphalism, perhaps best captured by the leading Japanese thinker (and mentor to many of the 1884 Choson progressive coup makers) Fukuzawa Yukichi, who in 1894 provided the following rationale for the war: 'We only intend to develop world civilisation and only intend to defeat the people who disturb it.'

Buzo, Adrian. (2022) 2022. *The Making of Modern Korea*. 4th ed. Routledge.

Question 1: Explain how the content of both Source A and Source B can be relevant to addressing the inquiry question. (6 marks)

Question 2: Analyze how context influences how Source C can be used to address the inquiry question. (6 marks)

Question 3: Examine how the perspectives presented in all the sources can be used to address the inquiry question. (12 marks)

III. Gabo Reforms (1894–1896)

Inquiry Question

To what extent were the Gabo Reforms transformative in their aims for Korea?

Whilst the war was carried out between Japan and China and internal conflict caused by the Donghak uprising lingered, the mid 1890s also saw an attempt by reformers to introduce a wide variety of policies that aimed to modernise Korea. The Gabo reforms were introduced shortly after the palace coup by the Japanese military, which brought changes to the Korean court. The palace coup returned the Daewongun into power, sidelining the Queen Min clan. The Gabo Reforms (named after the calendar year Gabo of 1894) were a comprehensive series of legislative changes that contained both influences from the reforms of the Meiji era in Japan and specific Korean concerns for modernization. A major focus of the reforms was changing the traditional forms of government organization including the abolition of the Confucian civil service examinations as well as remnants of the feudal hierarchy held by the Yangban class. Therefore it is fair to claim that the Gabo reformers brought across some of the ideas presented by the Donghak rebels as well. The new system was intended to move towards meritocracy with a focus on legal equality, ending social hierarchies and privileges. New systems of governance were introduced, including a prime minister and cabinet government. In total, over 200 reforms were passed, covering multiple areas of economic, political and social life. A selection of these are outlined below:

- Removal of Confucian civil service examinations
- Formal ending of slavery
- New taxation laws not based on class distinction or privilege
- Currency reform
- Promotion of Korean written language, Hangeul
- Creation of a judicial system influenced by Western models
- Fairer systems of law and order including the abolition of corporal punishment
- Removal of yangban privileges
- Efforts to modernise the military
- Promotion of education initiatives

The Gabo Reforms were influenced by the social, political and economic changes that had occurred within Korea and in the region. For example, the demands for reform made during the Donghak Peasant Revolution can be linked to some of the changes that were brought about. The Gabo Reforms should also be seen in the context of the changing balance of power in the region as a result of the First Sino-Japanese War. Of particular note is the weakening influence of the Qing Dynasty and subsequent ending of the Suzerain – Tributary relationship after the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Influences from Japan can be seen when making comparisons with the Meiji era since 1868 which had brought a number of economic and political changes to Japan. The Korean reformers at this time wanted to establish the legitimacy of Korea as a newly independent state. In this way the Gabo Reforms, as expressed by historian Kyung Moon Hwang, could be viewed as a “blueprint” for a modern state.



Source Activity Three

The Gabo Reforms

ATL: Thinking Skills

When we examine the Gabo Reforms, it is important to see them as overlapping with both the Donghak Peasant Revolution and the First Sino-Japanese War. This informs us that this was a chaotic time across Korea due to the impact of rebellion, civil conflict and regional war.

Historian's Perspectives

VIEWPOINT 1

"Only very few in Korea questioned the spirit of these reforms, but many wondered about the way the Japanese interfered in the reform process. Fearing a conservative backlash against the reforms, the Japanese first appeased conservatives and then the Donghaks by installing the aging King Daewongun as the nominal head of the new government...The government enacted laws that established a separate hierarchy of courts, issued decrees outlawing the torture of suspects and proposed punishment of the criminals. The new administration formally ended social distinctions. Yangban were stripped of their legal status, outcast distinctions were also abolished and equality before the law enacted. Under these reforms all positions were thrown open to the public regardless of social class. The most important reform from the council was the abolition of the civil service exam that was at the core of Yangban elitism. The Deliberative Council issued over 200 reform measures."

Jitendra Uttam, *The Political Economy of Korea: Transition, Transformation and Turnaround* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) p68

VIEWPOINT 2

"With the various Western and Japanese imperialist powers lying in wait, as well as the recent events surrounding the Donghak peasant uprising, it was clear the government needed to implement measures that would resolve the underlying social problems, and also garner popular support for the government. Since it was apparent that the commoners were less than satisfied with the performance of the government and its officials, it was necessary to legitimise the current governmental system, and to cultivate a sense of pride and patriotism in the people."

In Defense of the State: The Gabo Reforms, Education, and Legitimacy – by Leighanne Yuh

VIEWPOINT 3

"By the time the Deliberative Assembly gave way to a cabinet-based government at the end of 1894, it had passed over 200 such bills, systematically overhauling patterns of Korean government, society, and economy that had been in place for centuries. With the exception of those concerning the governing structure, most of these resolutions were not immediately implemented into practice, but they provided a blueprint and impetus for reform that would continue for decades."

Kyung Moon Hwang, *A History of Korea: an Episodic Narrative*
(Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)

Discuss the following questions to consider the significance of the Gabo Reforms. Remember to use the historian's viewpoints to support your thinking.

1. What influences do you consider to have shaped the Gabo Reforms? Consider the role of the following: the Donghak movement, Japan, Korean reformers, and modernisers.
2. The nature of the Gabo Reforms were far reaching, and over 200 measures were passed by the Deliberative Council. Examine some of these measures. What do they suggest about the aims and intentions of the reformers?
3. What do the historian's viewpoints suggest were the consequences of the reforms?

Japan's influence can be seen through the arrival of Inoue Kaoru, who brought further reforms, including the creation of a constitution. Concerns over the growing influence of Japan, seen in their victory over China and a suspicion that they were looking to eventually take over Korea, prompted opposition to the Gabo Reforms as being closely aligned to the interests of Japan.

The Assassination of Queen Min

The Joseon court, ruled by King Gojong, had initially supported the reforms, but as they shared these concerns, Japan's role in the reforms was increasingly questioned. Queen Min was especially opposed to what was occurring across Korea as a result of the Gabo Reforms. She had been shifting politically towards Russia in a way to counterbalance this increased Japanese presence across Korea.

Seeing her as an obstacle for their aims in Korea, a group of Japanese criminals and Korean collaborators attacked the Gyeongbok palace. She was brutally stabbed multiple times and her body was set aflame; this atrocity was shocking and occurred on October 8th 1895. This created instability, considerable grieving, and increased resistance to Japan across Korea. This development is known as the Eulmi Incident. Reluctance to accept the increased influence of Japan through the Gabo Reforms as well as views of reform and modernization that led to the Eulmi Incident can be seen in Source Activity Five.



Source Activity Four

ATL: Thinking Skills



Key Profile – Queen Min

“On each occasion I was impressed with the grace and charming manner of the Queen, her thoughtful kindness, her singular intelligence and force, and her remarkable conversational power even through the medium of an interpreter. I was not surprised at her singular political influence, or her sway over the King and many others.”

Isabella L. Bird, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, 255

1. What does this source suggest about the character of Queen Min?
2. How might the perspectives of Victorian travel writers be of use to historians studying Korea at this point?

The words of Isabella Bird provide a window into the powerful personality of Queen Min, whose death in 1895 can be seen to be instrumental in bringing changes to Korea and the eventual declaration of the Korean empire in 1897.

You will have encountered the life and actions of Queen Min in both Chapters 1 and 2 of this book. She played a pivotal role in Korea during this period.

Tasks

1. Conduct a biographical research project into the life and work of Queen Min.
2. Why can she be viewed as such a significant individual from this period of study?

Queen Min's brutal assassination would lead to the repeal of the Gabo Reforms and in the wake of increased threats to the monarchy, her husband moved to the Russian legation. Interest in Russia across Korea had increased after the Triple Intervention and their increasing involvement in the region. The move by King Gojong to seek refuge in the Russian legation in February 1896 created the conditions for the temporary withdrawal of Japan from Korea and brought an end to the Gabo Reforms. From this point, increased moves to establish the independence of Korea and to bring about further modernisation would be carried out, which is discussed in Chapter Four.



Source Activity Five

ATL: Thinking Skills

Viewpoints on Gojong and Reform

Perspective 1: Letter to the British Foreign Office, March 1895

"The King of Korea has reluctantly agreed to accept that Japanese reforms forced upon him, and has sworn at the tombs of his ancestors to renounce all allegiance to or dependence on China... the persistent and often unnecessary interference of the Japanese with Korean customs cannot fail to keep alive the hatred of the Koreans for their traditional enemies and all the changes, improvements and reforms introduced will have to be forced on a reluctant people."

*A Letter to Under Secretary of State, Foreign Office. Various. Volume 2. Diplomatic. March-May 7, 1895.
MS FO 17 Foreign Office: Political and Other Departments: General Correspondence, China FO 17/1252.
The National Archives (Kew, United Kingdom). China and the Modern World.*

Perspective 2: Homer Hulbert was an American missionary to Korea where he also served as a close personal advisor to King Gojong. This excerpt comes from "His Majesty, the King of Korea," an article in *The Korean Repository* published in November 1896.

"His Majesty is progressive and is evidently not imbued with the ideas – may we say prejudices – which are prevalent in most parts of the East, against western people, institutions and customs. He is much interested in educational matters, and material advances have been made in this direction within the last few years. There is a Minister of Education as well as a Vice-Minister and these are influential members of the Cabinet. Public schools where reading and writing, in both Chinese characters and native Unmun, as well as geography, arithmetic, history and so forth are taught... There is also a school of Law connected with the Law Department and Normal school where teachers are fitted for their work. The establishment and maintenance for the last ten years of the Royal Government Hospital in the Capital under the sole supervision of foreign physicians and to which people resort from all parts of country..."

Hulbert, Homer. His Majesty, the King of Korea. Published in
The Korean Repository, 1896.

Questions

1. What might explain the reluctance of the King and the people as stated in the letter to the British Foreign Office?
2. To what extent do the two perspectives on King Gojong and reform agree with each other?



Kim Hong-jip

Kim Hong-jip served in the newly created position of Prime Minister during the Gabo Reforms. During the 1880s, he had studied the consequences of many of the reforms carried out in

Japan during the Meiji era. He was involved in many of the diplomatic agreements of the 1880s created with Japan, Britain and the United States and can be seen as a figure who was looking outwards for different models of development for Korea. During 1894, he collaborated with Japan in the request to suppress the Donghak Uprising and he was appointed Prime Minister shortly after the seizure of the Gyeongbokgung by

the Japanese military. As Prime Minister he pushed through many of the Gabo Reforms alongside other Korean modernisers, including Park Young-hyo. The wide ranging reforms have been debated in terms of whether they set the foundation for future modernisation and nation building efforts or whether they reflected increasing Japanese influence and control across the peninsula. Kim Hong-jip was opposed by Queen Min, who was concerned about the increased influence of Japan and sought to collaborate more closely with Russia. After Queen Min was killed by pro-Japanese agents, Kim Hong-jip's position became increasingly exposed and vulnerable. In 1896, when King Gojong sought refuge in the Russian legation, an arrest warrant went out to pro-Japanese officials and Kim Hong-jip was killed by members of the public.

The Expansion of Russian Interests in Korea and the Region

The flight of King Gojong to the Russian legation in February 1896 is indicative of the growing influence of Russia in the region as a counterbalance to Japan. Following the Triple Intervention and the assassination of Queen Min in the previous year, Japan's position in Korea had diminished, which created the conditions for the independence of Korea in October 1897. Russia's role, however, continued to expand in the region. Sergei Witte, the Russian finance minister at this time, played an important role in advancing Russian interests in the region. In 1896, Russia signed a treaty with China which allowed for the building of railways in Manchuria that could be connected to the existing Trans-Siberian railways. China agreed to provide protection to these railways lines from robbery.

A number of Korean officials had viewed Russia as a counterbalance to Japanese influence in Korea during the 1890s. During the time when King Gojong was based in the Russian legation, there were a number of changes which were indicative of this increased Russian influence. These included:

- The presence of Russian advisors in the Korean court
- Russian acquisition of economic concessions into Korea
- Russian influence into the organisation of the police and military

The International Context

Russian influence in the region expanded further in 1898 with the lease of Port Arthur, which effectively gave them control of the Liaodong peninsula. It is important to note that at this point China was experiencing an increased European colonial interest and that a 'scramble for concessions' had occurred,

which expanded British control over the New Territories in Hong Kong and German control of Shandong Province. China's position was subject to European 'spheres of influence' while Russia's position was becoming more and more firmly established in Manchuria. Competing interests over Korea with Japan were therefore a consistent presence.

At this point, the role of the United States should be considered. By the late 19th century, and in response to increased European colonial expansion in the region, the USA embarked on the 'Open Door Policy.' The policy came from the work of US Secretary of State John Hay, and it sought to establish equal trading rights to China and to maintain their territorial integrity. This came as a response to European colonialism but it was also aligned to US economic interests at the time in gaining access to China's markets. Thus by the end of the 19th century, the regional picture did show increasing influence of Russia into Manchuria, and continued interest in Korea from Japan. However, there was some mediation of this process through the existence of the Open Door policy, which sought to discourage 'spheres of influence' and support the sovereignty of different countries.



TOK Connection

History as an Area of Knowledge – Methods and Tools of the Historian



➤ **US cartoon from 1899:** Uncle Sam (center, representing the United States) demanding Open Door access to trade with China while European powers plan to cut it up for themselves. From left to right: Kaiser Wilhelm II (Germany), King Umberto I (Italy), John Bull (Britain), Tsar Nicholas II (Russia) and President Emile Loubet (France). Emperor Franz Joseph I (Austria) is in the back.

This cartoon above is indicative of the types of stereotypes and representations which occurred in the late 19th century. Often the cartoons exaggerate existing stereotypes through the use of national characters (for example Uncle Sam for the USA or John Bull for the United Kingdom), animals and symbols. There is typically a satirical message based on current events from the time. Often the cartoons produced at this time were produced in publications from the UK, France and the USA and can be critiqued in their representations of events. Historians therefore need to exercise caution when using these sources both in terms of the potential simplification of the issues at hand and also in the nature of representation. It should also be noted though that there is clear value in the use of these sources for a number of reasons. Firstly, they present contemporary opinions and political views from the time, often presented in popular magazines or journals. Secondly, the types of images present in the work can provide a window into the nature of representation despite issues with colonial attitudes and at times racist imagery.

Consider the following questions in response to this cartoon

1. How is the role of the USA in East Asia represented in this cartoon? How does this connect to the 'Open Door Policy'?
2. What do you see as the ethical implications of using political cartoons for historians working on this area of history?
3. Is it possible that political cartoons may reinforce dominant narratives and simplify the complexity of historical events?
4. What consideration should be given to using sources published in countries that were colonial powers at the time? What are the implications of this?

TOK Question: When historians study political cartoons produced by colonial powers, how should they balance the value of these sources with the risk of producing a one-sided representation?

The Russo-Japanese War 1904-05

The Russo Japanese War began after a surprise attack by the Japanese on Port Arthur in February 1904. Russia's refusal to recognise Japanese interests in Korea and with the confidence of the agreement made in the Anglo-Japanese alliance gave Japan the confidence to launch this attack. Russia had held control of Port Arthur since 1898, which was strategically important as a warm water port, and the choice to attack could be viewed as revenge for Russia's actions in the Triple Intervention. The Russo-Japanese War held the hallmarks of the modern war with its use of new forms of military technology, to the extent that it has been discussed in terms of it being 'World War Zero', a precursor to the new forms of warfare that would shape the 20th century. However this claim has been disputed by those who see the war primarily as a regional conflict.

The Korean peninsula was used by Japanese troops to ferry troops into Manchuria where much of the fighting took place. Occurring from February 20 to March 10, 1905, the battle of Mukden was an important land battle in Manchuria, incurring high casualties on both sides. Both Russia and Japan lost approximately

30% of their troop size in this battle, but overall it was the Japanese who were victorious and this marked a turning point in the war. The higher profile military victory came in May 1905 with the defeat of Russia's Baltic fleet. In the earlier stages of the war, Japan had blockaded Port Arthur and sank ships from Russia's Pacific fleet. After they took Port Arthur, it became very difficult for Russia to utilize the remaining ships. Subsequently the Baltic Fleet was deployed, and after a seven month voyage to reach East Asia, they were comprehensively defeated in the Straits of Tsushima between Korea and Japan. Russia experienced heavy casualties, including the loss of around 4800 sailors and the destruction of much of their fleet. Defeat at Mukden and Tsushima provided the conditions for peace negotiations to begin. This was mediated by US president Theodore Roosevelt and was signed on September 5, 1905. It brought the war to an end and brought about Russian recognition of Japan's political, economic, and military interest in Korea. Japan also gained the lease to the Liaodong peninsula as a result of the war. The treaty led to multiple consequences for the region, but when focused on Korea it should be seen that this was a critical step in what would lead to full annexation in 1910. US President Roosevelt would later gain a Nobel Peace Prize for his work in mediating this peace deal but neither Russia nor Japan were satisfied with the outcome. Britain essentially recognised Japan's interests in Korea as a result of this alliance, this was agreed in 1902.

Conclusion

During the mid 1890s, Korea's domestic and international position changed tremendously as a result of the Donghak Peasant Revolution, the Gabo Reforms, and the First Sino-Japanese War. These events created the conditions to declare the Korean Empire in 1897. Koreans were shaping their own responses to these changes whilst also recognizing the external challenge of regional rivalries as a continued threat to their sovereignty.

Paper 3 Practice

Essay Skills Builder

ATL – Critical thinking skills – developing and evaluating arguments

'The Gabo Reforms brought about the most far reaching change to Korea during the 1890s.'
To what extent do you agree with this argument?

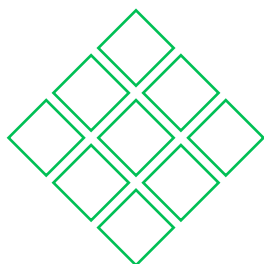
Considering the importance of different factors

The argument that you are looking to unpack consider the importance of the Gabo Reforms. Therefore you will need to consider a number of reasons for why these held importance. Alongside the Gabo Reforms, it is also feasible to consider the relative importance of the First Sino-Japanese War and the Donghak Peasant Revolution.

Consider the following nine factors that could be brought into a discussion of this question.

1. Abolition of the class system and slavery
2. Modernization of government structure
3. Introduction of a modern legal and taxation system
4. Women's rights and education reforms
5. End of the tributary relationship with China
6. Increasing influence of Japan
7. Donghak Peasant Revolution
8. Assassination of Queen Min
9. Increasing influence of Russia following the Triple Intervention

Making a wide-ranging list of points in your planning allows you to build complexity into your thinking. You also begin to identify some of the different perspectives which could be addressed in your response.



To Do – Using the above nine factors – complete a Diamond Nine Activity in a small group where you sort and arrange the factors to consider their relative importance to each other.

Once you have done this, begin to consider the way that analytical and evaluative language can be used to acknowledge the relative importance of the factors. Consider using connectives and analytical / evaluative phrasing to help develop your writing style. Some ideas are placed in the table below.

Alternatively, a view which should also be considered...

This was of critical importance due to...

Far reaching change was brought about by these developments...

An often overlooked view on this though can be seen in the role of...

There are a variety of ways that the xxx can be seen as important

This highlights how...

This demonstrates a shift from...

The immediate effect of this can be seen

Making a judgement

At the end of a written essay for Paper 3 you will need to make a judgement. This can also be called a conclusion. This shorter section of writing should bring your overall response to a close by making an overall judgement on the question. Therefore you should look to identify what you consider to be the strongest argument, a judgement that you have come to through the process of writing the essay. Here are some Dos and Do Nots of writing a judgement in a history essay.

Do

- Make a decision, be clear on what your overall position is. What argument (or combination of arguments) do you consider to be the most convincing?
- Explain your thinking – justify the overall argument that you are advancing – why have you reached this position?

Do Not

- Sit on the fence – it is better to reach an overall judgement, this shows more independent thinking.
- Just summarise the information – you should be reaching a judgement which is different to a summary.
- Suggest it is impossible to answer the question – this is too defeatist and does not communicate well in an academic response.
- Introduce new examples and evidence into the response at this stage.

Working on this Chapter – Paper 3 Skills

It is likely that the Paper 3 focus on this chapter will invite discussion of regional rivalries in the context of the events of the 1890s. Consider creating essay plans for the following prompts which are written in the style of Paper 3 questions.

1. 'Rivalry between China and Japan was the most significant factor in bringing about the Donghak Peasant Revolution.' To what extent do you agree with this perspective?
2. 'The First Sino Japanese War fundamentally changed Korea's position in East Asia.' To what extent do you agree with this claim?
3. 'The Gabo Reforms were too ambitious to succeed.' To what extent do you agree with this argument?
4. 'To what extent do you agree with the claim that the assassination of Queen Min brought about increased Korean interest in Russia during the late 19th century?'

Korean War: Connections to the Cold War in Asia (Regional Study 11)

The events of the mid 1890s are critical when examining the long term conditions which led to the Korean War between 1950–1953. It could be said that the year 1894 especially was a turning point in Korean history due to the events that occurred and their lasting consequences.

Competing Visions and Ideas

The mid 1890s saw the resurgence of the Donghak movement into a type of revolution which was the largest of its kind in the history of Korea. These spearheaded efforts at reform and modernisation later but also provided the future seeds for different visions of the state. Alongside the Gabo Reforms, new ideas for the future of Korea were prevalent in the 1890s and thus would have likely impacted the thoughts and ideas of Koreans living under Japanese rule in the years leading up to the end of the Second World War and the Korean War from 1950–1953.

Loss of Sovereignty

More pressingly, the loss of sovereignty of the Korean state by 1910 has clear connections to the Korean War later on. The factors that led to this loss of sovereignty are seen at this time through the regional rivalry and competition over Korea and the actions of these actors in both conflict and diplomacy. Perhaps the turning point was Japan's victory over China in 1895, as this changed what essentially had been an established system of governance and rule for centuries – the tributary system. With this upended, it created the conditions for new approaches to reform and modernisation within Korea but also created the conditions for colonization.

Paper 2 Practice

Authoritarian Rule

See below for ideas of ways you might use the material in this chapter to address questions for the Paper 2 **Thematic study 3: Authoritarian rule (from 1750 CE onwards)**.

How do wars create the conditions for the emergence of authoritarian rule?

In 1910, Japan formally annexed Korea, and this became the official date that colonial rule began over Korea until 1945. The years prior to 1910 therefore can be studied to examine the causation behind how this authoritarian rule was implemented. You should consider how the information across Chapters 1–4 can be used together to consider the factors that allowed this process to occur.

In this chapter, there are a number of examples which place emphasis on the role of **conflict** for the emergence of authoritarian rule. Conflict occurred both domestically and internationally across the 1890s and 1900s and can be examined in their importance to the onset of colonial rule. The key conflicts therefore that can be considered as follows:

- The Donghak Peasant Revolution
- The First Sino-Japanese War
- The assassination of Queen Min - The Eulmi Incident
- The Russo-Japanese War (see information box at the end of this chapter)

All of these conflicts created the conditions which would eventually lead to Japan taking over Korea in 1910. The details and importance of these conflicts vary though. Consider this practice question:

‘To what extent did conflict lead to the emergence of authoritarian rule?’
Use examples from at least two regions to support your response? (15 marks)

This question explicitly requires a consideration of the role that **conflict played in the emergence of authoritarian states**. When examining the emergence of Japanese colonial rule therefore the case studies of conflict can be discussed and causally connected to highlight the importance of conflict. Consider the questions in the table below – either write up responses to these questions or discuss them with a study partner.

The Donghak Peasant Revolution 1894	• What aspects of Joseon Dynasty were the Donghak rebels challenging? • How did the Donghak Peasant Revolution create the conditions for increased regional rivalry over Korea? • In what ways did the continued influence of the Donghak movement shape intellectual movements and reform movements?
The First Sino-Japanese War 1894–1895	• How did the status of Korea change as a result of the First Sino-Japanese War? • In what ways did the ‘balance of power’ change as a result of the First Sino-Japanese War – why is this important? • What other powers increased their presence in Korea as a result of the war?
The Assassination of Queen Min 1896	• In what ways can this brutal assassination by the Japanese be viewed as a turning point in Korean history? • How did the assassination lead to a diminished role for Japan over Korea at the end of the 19th century?
The Russo-Japanese War 1904–05	• Why was this conflict connected to the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910? What were the results of the war?

Subsequently there are a number of conflicts in Korean history that can be used for consideration on this question. Further to this, examples from Chapter 2 can also be used in response to this question – though more focused as long term causes of the eventual annexation. This includes the Gapsin Coup and the Imo Incident.

In a response to the above essay question, you are also able to bring in a comparative discussion point – this could include a discussion of one of the following: the role of ideas, social factors, economic factors. Other chapters in this coursebook can be used alongside this one to build a bigger picture for the emergence of authoritarian rule.

Questions to consider as you think about this theme

1. In what way does a conflict increase the power of one group to exert authoritarian rule?
2. How might conflict create a power vacuum which can be exploited by authoritarian rulers?
3. How might a conflict create regional instability and change the political standings of different states?
4. How might authoritarian rule come across as appealing to those seeking stability in the aftermath of a conflict?

Making Comparisons

Alongside Korea you should also discuss at least one other case study for the emergence of authoritarian rule which demonstrates the importance of conflict. There are many examples of other historical case studies which could work well here. A few suggested examples are named below:

- The emergence of Francisco Franco's authoritarian rule after the Spanish Civil War
- The establishment of authoritarian states in Eastern Europe as a result of the Second World War

Remember that your other case study should be drawn from a different region. You are encouraged to make points of comparison so creating planning diagrams, mindmaps and tables is a useful approach here for developing revision resources.

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