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Nonviolence and Self-Sacrifice Against the Self-Aggrandizement of an Evil Regime: The Logic of Excessive Rigidification and Self-Disintegration

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Abstract

The self-aggrandizement of an evil regime is an attempt to make it seem more powerful and important than it deserves. This phenomenon comes from ruling groups' pathological obsession with power and wealth and their lack of political legitimacy. Self-aggrandizement is powered by excessive rigidification and self-disintegration processes. Excessive rigidification involves taking a hard line, sticking to established ways, suffocating rationality in organizations, and hindering bureaucrats from solving public problems. A ruthless ruler is not willing to fairly share power and money but exploits his or her subordinates. Each ruling group desperately seeks its own interests and willingly fights against other groups to obtain ever more. In response to the self-aggrandizement of an evil regime, civic activists and civil servants must maintain their completely nonviolent struggles and then go beyond the minimum virtue and sacrifice themselves. They must endure tyranny with patience and wait until the brutal regime collapses by itself. The rational and nonviolent resistance of enlightened citizens and civil servants can change such violent regimes.

Keywords : Self-aggrandizement, excessive rigidification, self-disintegration, nonviolence, self-sacrifice, transcendence ethics.

Introduction

Self-aggrandizement is the act of aggressively and ruthlessly increasing one's power and wealth.¹⁾ Lee (1991, 1996) conceptualized self-aggrandizement as an evil ruler's insatiable greed for power and a chronic symptom of the worst state of a regime. A government, by its nature, is unable to behave nicely and voluntarily correct its mistakes when it errs (Lee, 1991, p. 29; Lee, 2008, p. 65). An illegitimate regime generally collapses by itself rather than being conquered or destroyed by its enemies (Lee, 1986, p. 289; Lee, 2008, pp. 346–347). How can ordinary citizens and civil servants effectively respond to a self-aggrandizing regime?

Mohandas K. Gandhi advocated for “satyagraha” (truth-force or devotion to truth) and “ahimsa” (nonviolence) as countermeasures against the British Raj (ruler) as well as social cleavage and discrimination in India (Bondurant, 1988; Gandhi, 1983). This strategy is also called civil disobedience and involves refusing to cooperate with injustice or obey unjust laws—all without using any violence. Gene Sharp (1973, 1993) argued that nonviolent actions (political defiance), as a set of methods and techniques used to control, combat, and destroy opponents' power, gain victory over a ruler by controlling the sources of his or her political power. Moon-Young Lee (1980, 1991) contended that transcendence ethics—nonviolence, personal ethics, social ethics, and self-sacrifice—help civic activists perform successful nonviolent struggles against a violent regime. He argued that the weak must tenaciously endure tyranny and wait to the last minute (Lee, 1986, pp. 289, 298; Lee, 2001, pp. 204, 348–349).

How can self-aggrandizement lead to the self-destruction of an evil regime? What are the implications of Lee's nonviolence and self-sacrifice for self-aggrandizement? This review examines

the excessive rigidification and self-disintegration processes to explain how a violent regime brings destruction upon itself. Then, it discusses how nonviolence and self-sacrifice can help civic activists and civil servants effectively resist and topple a dictatorial regime.

Framework of Transcendence Ethics

Lee developed his framework of transcendence ethics based on his autobiographical experiences of pro-democracy struggles during the 1970s and 1980s in the Republic of Korea. His framework comprised nonviolence, personal ethics, social ethics, and self-sacrifice in ascending order (Lee, 1980, p. 365; Lee, 1991, pp. 27, 49). Lee ultimately wanted to avoid an all-out confrontation between tyrannical rulers and rampaging subjects and thus pursued rationality in organizations and peace in society (Lee, 1980, p. vii; Lee, 1986, p. 297). Transcendence ethics are moral virtues that enable civic activists and civil servants to offer an alternative to a violent regime (Lee, 1980, p. 365; Lee, 1991, p. 27; Lee, 1996, pp. 403–405; Lee, 2001, p. 254). They are countermeasures or nonviolent alternatives that the weak use to neutralize the brutalities of the strong (Lee, 2001, p. 87; Lee, 2008, p. 268). At the same time, transcendence ethics involve four levels of human ability and maturity, ranging from minimum nonviolence to maximum self-sacrifice (Lee, 1980, p. 373; Lee, 1991, p. 32). The underlying proposition is that a government, by its nature, is unlikely to do good things voluntarily, and the government learns about citizens' good practices, while citizens learn about the bad practices of an evil regime (Lee, 1991, p. 29).

Transcendence ethics originated from the Four Gospels of the Holiness Church (Lee, 1991, p. 33; Lee, 2001, p. 254; Lee, 2008, p. 269) and correspond to the five Confucian virtues (Lee, 1996, pp. 302–303). Lee noted,

“The nonviolence of my four virtues turns into healing in the church. Most of all, one should enjoy good health, and to not injure one's body with violence is the beginning to staying healthy. Then, to prevent believers

1) Self-enlargement often refers to enlargement of the self, intellectual self-transgression, the transgression of one's limits, and the like, which are conceptually different from Lee's self-aggrandizement.

from drinking alcohol and smoking means not to do violence to the body. Personal ethics are transferred to holy and pure private life within the church. A holy and pure person has self-respect, uses words not violence, and keeps promises to others. A person who waits for Jesus' resurrection does something for the least of us, as it is shown in chapter 25 of Matthew. Therefore, social ethics that help the weak change into resurrection in the church. Finally, a person who sacrifices himself for the people is reborn in the view of church" (Lee, 2015, p. 185).

Lee's nonviolence means not using any violence, including verbal or emotional violence; expressing oneself only in words; demanding right things that even the ruler will not dare rebuff; minimally telling the truth; and being grounded in objective principles and standards, such as laws, procedures, agreements, and common sense (Park, 2015, 2020). This is because the weak, due to the lack of their power, are supposed to tell the truth to a brutal regime that would eagerly wield weapons and violence (Lee, 2001, p. 88). Nonviolence is the prior condition of other transcendence ethics (Lee, 1996, pp. 403, 419). This minimal level of transcendence ethics corresponds to healing (神癒) in the Four Gospels in that one should not injure one's body with violence (e.g., drinking alcohol or smoking) (Lee, 2001, p. 254). It also corresponds to trust (信) in Confucian virtues, which is manifested by the feeling of giving trust by being located in the "great mean" and thus glowing brightly (光名之心). If civic activists do not use violence but minimally request the right things, civil servants will learn about this nonviolent practice from the civic activism and thus abstain from abusing their power (Lee, 1991, pp. 27-28).

The second virtue is personal ethics, which is associated with holiness (聖潔) in the Four Gospels. A holy person has self-respect, uses words instead of violence, and keeps his or her promises to other people (Lee, 2001, 254). Having a personal ethics requires obtaining specialized knowledge and skills and respecting agreements among individuals (Lee, 1991, p. 49; Lee, 1996, p. 404). This virtue involves complying with the rules of the game, pursuing

harmony so that each person can do his or her best, being soft on comrades and hard on oneself, taking responsibility for failures and letting others take credit for successes, and prioritizing solidarity between superiors and subordinates (Lee, 1996, pp. 428-429). Personal ethics corresponds to the principle of knowledge (智) and the principle of propriety (禮) that are respectively manifested by the feeling of approval and disapproval (是非之心) and the feeling of modesty and complaisance (辭讓之心) in Confucian virtues. When civic activists obtain knowledge and skills and follow rules and agreements, civil servants will learn about this personal ethics and comply with rules and procedures in a government bureaucracy.

Table 1. Transcendence ethics, the Four Gospels, and the five Confucian virtues.

Transcendence Ethics	Nonviolence	Personal ethics	Social ethics	Self-sacrifice
Four Gospels	Healing (神癒)	Holiness (聖潔)	Second Coming (再臨)	Rebirth (重生)
Confucian Virtues	Trust (信)	Knowledge and propriety (智禮)	Benevolence (仁)	Righteousness (義)
Civic Activists	Use only words and minimally request right things	Obtain knowledge and skills; comply with rules and agreements	Side with the weak; improve human rights and social values	Sacrifice oneself voluntarily to save others
Civil Servants	Abstain from power abuse	Comply with rules and procedures	Take care of those penalized by the ruler; accept citizens' demands	Respect citizens' requests despite the negative consequences

Adapted from Lee (1991, p. 29), Lee (1996, pp. 302-303), and Lee (2001, p. 254).

Having a social ethics means caring about minority or socially deprived groups (Lee, 1996, p. 434; Lee, 2001, pp. 149, 164; Lee, 2008, p. 269). Civic activists should side with the weak against a ruthless ruler (Lee, 1980, p. 365; Lee, 1991, p. 119), and civil servants should take care of those who have been penalized by the ruler (p. 363). They are supposed to improve basic human rights and social values, such as freedom, welfare, and justice. This virtue is the moral foundation on which a government works for what citizens—the true owners of a country—demand (Lee, 1991, p. 136; Lee, 2001, p. 267). Government bureaucracy devoid of a social ethics

will merely collaborate with the ruler to slake his or her greed by implementing showcase projects, which are expected to culminate in tangible and quantifiable results and thus enhance economic growth and military power (Lee, 1996, p. 436). In this regard, a social ethics matches the Second Coming (再臨) in the Four Gospels. This virtue is the modern conception of benevolence (仁), which is manifested by the feeling of commiseration (惻隱之心). Benevolence is the basic principle of what the government is supposed to do (Lee, 1996, p. 405). When civic activists equip themselves with a social ethics, civil servants will eagerly accept citizens' demands.

Finally, self-sacrifice refers to sacrificing oneself voluntarily to save others (Lee, 2001, p. 254). This virtue, the most active one, requires making a hard decision that incurs a risk of loss (Lee, 1980, p. 363). Self-sacrifice corresponds to Rebirth (重生) in the Four Gospels and to the principle of righteousness (義) manifested by the feeling of shame and dislike (羞惡之心) in Confucian virtues. When civic activists sacrifice themselves to save people without pursuing any political hegemony, civil servants will, despite expected penalties (e.g., low assessment marks and expulsion from office), act according to their own convictions and respect citizens' requests rather than the orders of their supervisors (Lee, 1991, pp. 27, 29). Table 1 summarizes the above discussion.

Transcendence ethics play a role of alternative strategies (antitheses) that the weak employ when confronting the strong (Park, 2015); for example, nonviolence is a relevant strategy to use against a ruler's violence. Each virtue is not individual but accumulative; for example, self-sacrifice is based on nonviolence, personal ethics, and social ethics (Lee, 2001, p. 88). Conversely, a civic activist is unlikely to sacrifice him or herself for the public interest if he or she uses any violence. As a regime becomes worse, a higher level of transcendence ethics is necessary to end the brutalities. How, then, do we recognize the worst state of a regime?

Self-Aggrandizement of a Regime

Lee did not clearly define self-aggrandizement of a regime in his works but implicitly denoted

the concept as an attempt to make the regime seem more powerful and important and thus slake its incessant desire for power and wealth.²⁾ This phenomenon is a typical pattern of a regime when checks and balances (separation of powers) do not work properly. It is frequently mentioned as a chronic symptom of the worst regimes. Lee (1991, 1996, 2001) illustrated how a regime goes wrong using an analogy of the five punishments in Genesis: (1) a regime suppresses the press (the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden); (2) it eliminates political rivals and opponents (the story of Cain and Abel); (3) individuals lose the desire to stand by what is right and ethics and morality degenerate (the Deluge); (4) the regime implements showcase projects that have little to do with social welfare (the collapse of the Tower of Babel); and (5) neighboring countries intervene in the regime's affairs (the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah).

An evil regime will go from bad to worse and walk further down the path of self-aggrandizement if no neighboring country is eager to stop it or correct its wrongdoing (Lee, 1996, p. 401). If worse comes to worst, neighboring countries may conquer the regime by force or dominate its market through economic warfare (Lee, 1996, pp. 383–384). “An illegitimate regime is engrossed in selling eye-catching policies and embellishing its administrative achievements to make up for its dearth of legitimacy. In this circumstance, what should be done is not self-aggrandizement, but self-sacrifice” (Lee, 1991, p. 119). Accordingly, “the opposite concept to self-aggrandizement is self-sacrifice” (Lee, 1996, p. 405).

Lee (1996) argued that the old vested interests in Korea, which comprised pro-Japanese traitors, military dictators, and their opportunistic followers (successors), upheld excessive rigidification of their regime (pp. 390–391). Unlike the Master, who “had no foregone conclusions, no arbitrary predeterminations, no obstinacy, and no egoism”

2) In a government-led political system, the government treats citizens as just a means of governance and portrays itself as extremely large (Lee, 2001, p. 109).

(James Legge's translation of “子絕四毋意毋必毋固毋我” in 子罕第九, 「論語集註」), they were motivated by selfishness, strove to achieve their ends through any means, stubbornly refused to reflect upon their wrongdoing and change their actions, and eventually achieved personal gains from their efforts (Lee, 1996, p. 391). The vested interests (1) pretended to listen to admonitions but were not willing to correct their mistakes; (2) worked with henchmen rather than experts because they did not respect subordinates with relevant experiences and moral standards (or were not able to recognize professional workers); (3) had a group egoism that forced them to hide their wrongdoing from each other; (4) continued to occupy paid positions even after they had left government jobs; and (5) did not distribute benefits fairly among ruling groups but rather exploited subordinates (pp. 391–397).

Lee's self-aggrandizement offers an analytic framework to explain what the old vested interests in Korea did, especially at the apex of their power from the 1970s through the 1980s. They were not humble but overconfident in their naked power (no error correction); did not hire able workers but gave government jobs away to incompetent sycophants (poor problem-solving abilities); wielded power unfairly and arbitrarily in favor of their own groups (no rule of law); continued to pursue their own power and money greedily (not the public interest but only private interests); and were even willing to kill comrades to satisfy their own voracious appetites (law of the jungle). Not only do ruthless rulers distrust their political rivals, but they may also be wary even of their comrades, who they believe are as much interested in personal gain as they are.

Motives for Self-Aggrandizement

What drives a regime to be self-aggrandizing? Lee's answer is a lack of political legitimacy. An illegitimate regime desperately looks for ways to remedy its Achilles heel and maintain its power.

Yet, the more fundamental reason is that evil ruling groups have a pathological obsession with or insatiable avarice for power and wealth but do not have the requisite quality or ability. If qualified, they will be able to take legitimate power and are willing

to provide good public services, enhance human rights and welfare, and thus contribute to society. Unfortunately, they are cunning in wielding their power for their own interests but are ignorant of the consequences of their behaviors. Ruling groups rarely stop abusing their power but keep doing wrong because the benefits to be gained appear to outweigh the risks of self-aggrandizement. If they were sufficiently rational and sympathetic, they would not aggrandize themselves and push others into a corner. If they were smart enough, they would not strategically keep ignoring criticism and squashing democratic opponents with brutal violence. Given their selfishness, lack of ability, ignorance, and stupidity, the old vested interests never sacrificed themselves. They repeatedly did bad things just to seize power (Lee, 2008, p. 347). Lee (1996) diagnosed these behaviors as an incurable disease (p. 390).

Excessive Rigidification and Self-Disintegration

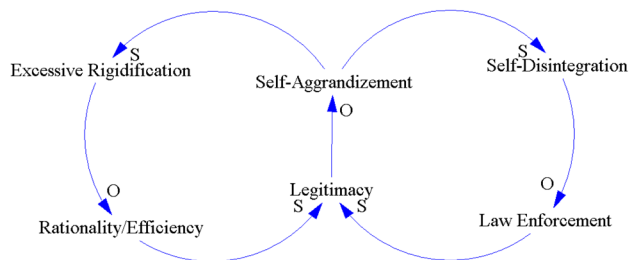
Self-aggrandizement involves two paradoxical processes: excessive rigidification and self-disintegration (Figure 1). They are two sides of the same coin that lead an evil regime to collapse by itself.

Excessive Rigidification

Excessive rigidification refers to the tendency of a ruthless regime to be unresponsive to its opponents and civil society but to instead stick to its own ways. An evil ruler often takes a hard line without leaving room for negotiation largely due to his or her own inferiority complex about his or her illegitimacy and inability to logically persuade opponents. A violent government is not strong but indeed weak due to its lack of political legitimacy (Lee, 1986, p. 297). If a ruler cannot punish his or her opponents pursuant to current laws, then he or she will enact new arbitrary laws, and if such harsh laws do not work, he or she will ignore the laws anyway (Lee, 1984, pp. 144–145). When the ruler denies his or her own laws, no one will believe in the rules of the game (Lee, 1986, p. 289), and people will lose their standards of action and doubt the ruler's legitimacy even further (Lee, 2008, p. 347). This chaotic social phenomenon

signals that the regime has entered the worst phase (Lee, 1986, p. 289).

Figure 1. Excessive rigidification and self-disintegration



A dictatorial ruler often defines what the right answer is and strictly enforces his or her own truth, as if he or she can fully understand and completely control the task at hand. He or she tends to be overconfident of his or her own power and often confuses his or her power (position) and intelligence (knowledge). This is self-deception by the ignorant ruler. The brutal ruler gives detailed—although actually incomplete or incorrect—instructions and monitors compliance by individual subordinates. If the result is not what he or she wants, the ruler imposes stricter instructions and sanctions on his or her subordinates. The dictatorial ruler initiates the orders and controls whole work processes but never takes responsibility for poor performance. This is the fallacy of micromanagement.

Excessive rigidification ignores the division of labor and the hierarchy of authority in bureaucracy. Here, we recall the first four characteristics of the old vested interests that Lee (1996, pp. 392–397) summarized. When an evil ruler believes that he or she knows the truth, bureaucrats' specialization is meaningless. Bureaucrats are not allowed to use managerial discretion based on their expertise but are forced to follow orders from the seemingly omnipotent ruler. Lee (1980) argues that the only reason for the lack or discontinuity of rationality in public administration is the invasion of legal rights, such as the spoils system and power abuse (p. 6). Rational decision-making in bureaucracy is unlikely under an excessively rigid regime. Government employees often become disengaged and demotivated and just try to find ways to evade their

responsibility rather than to solve public problems. Hence, government bureaucracy does not work properly.

Excessive rigidification incurs unnecessary governance costs and decreases social efficiency. Government regulations and violent enforcement aimed at shielding the regime from angry citizens necessarily result in the sacrifice of rationality and efficiency. Excessive rigidification induces economic intervention from neighboring countries. As a dictatorial regime fails to reduce production costs and loses global price competitions, foreign products pour into and dominate the domestic market (Lee, 1996, pp. 383, 389). This is indirect intervention by neighboring countries when a regime reaches the worst stage. Deteriorating efficiency and competency produce poor performance, which will exacerbate the illegitimacy of an extremely rigid regime (Sharp, 1993, pp. 39–40). Nevertheless, the old vested interests are not willing to reform themselves or reduce costs due to the attractive benefits of maintaining this rigid system (Lee, 1996, p. 389). Their goal is to keep holding onto their power rather than to serve citizens. The lower their efficiency is, the lower their legitimacy and the greater their self-aggrandizement (the left feedback loop in Figure 1); it is a reinforcing feedback loop that forms a vicious circle.

Self-Disintegration

The second process is the self-disintegration of an evil regime (the right feedback loop in Figure 1). Self-disintegration here refers to a malevolent confrontation among ruling groups, ranging from a minor conflict to bloody warfare. Since the groups' goal is to gain power and wealth for themselves, they repeatedly unite and scatter based on their interests at the time. A ruthless ruler is not willing to fairly share power and money but tries to exploit his or her subordinates (Lee, 1996, p. 397). Ruling groups who have insatiable appetites for power and wealth do not always band together tightly (p. 398) but desperately compete with each other to obtain ever more.

When their competition becomes intense, and cleavages become deep, ruling groups are not willing to yield but instead eagerly attack other groups. In

the case of a direct collision between their interests, ruling groups rarely talk but instead fight each other (Lee, 1996, p. 389). Given their intense rivalries and hostilities, they all try to protect themselves and survive the chaotic situation. There is no group egoism in the self-disintegration process. No law can deal with their dogfights. No one believes that laws are applied normally. Self-disintegration is another reinforcing feedback loop.

Belligerent conflicts and fights among ruling groups continue until the regime crumbles. In 1979, Park Chung Hee was killed by his faithful comrade Kim Jae Gyu, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, as a consequence of bloodthirsty power struggles among ruling groups. Park's military dictatorship in South Korea (1962-1979) was not destroyed directly by pro-democracy fighters but rather by itself (Lee, 1996, p. 389). Ruling groups rapidly disintegrate by themselves, and dictatorial regimes collapse in on themselves. In this regard, self-disintegration is another word for self-destruction.

Nonviolence Against Self-Aggrandizement

Lee argues that a regime led by a ferocious ruler will collapse by itself (Lee, 1986, p. 289; Lee, 2008, p. 347). An evil government based on violence will be destroyed by nonviolent struggles such as a civil disobedience movement (Lee, 1986, p. 297). If the ruler does not follow even the laws that he or she made, no one will believe that the rules of the game actually exist (Lee, 1986, p. 289; Lee, 1984, pp. 144-145). Under this worst circumstance of lawlessness, citizens must not resort to any violence but must maintain their nonviolent resistance even when they are provoked or baited by the wicked regime (Lee, 1986, p. 289; Sharp, 1993, pp. 49, 90-91). If an evil regime is challenged by a frenzy of citizens' violent struggles, ruling groups will stop their self-disintegration, unite again, become even more fascist, and then crack down on violent opponents (Lee, 1986, pp. 297-298). Violent civic activists are not able to offer an alternative governance model after the downfall of an evil regime (p. 298). Citizens' rational resistance in a peaceful and celebratory mood can transform the attitudes of the ruler and public servants (Lee, 1991, p. 30).

Lee's concept of nonviolence involves avoiding not only physical violence but also verbal, emotional, gestural, and psychological violence (Park, 2020). Civic activists must express themselves only in words that even an evil ruler would dare not rebuff (Lee, 2008, pp. 66, 80, 491, 497, 615). Their words should be reasonable, factual, and logical enough that they cannot be objectively refuted. Lee's nonviolence requires the weak to keep telling the truth even when they are beaten by the ruler (Lee, 1991, p. 118). The imperative minimal action is to devote oneself to civil resistance when the day comes, although one might instinctively shrink for fear of being hurt by the brutal ruler (Lee, 1991, p. 25). Such an action should concentrate only on the most fundamental agenda at that time (i.e., democracy) and avoid making excessive demands on the brutal regime (pp. 26, 330).

Civil servants' nonviolence means abstaining from power abuse, and their personal ethics requires them to comply with laws and procedures (Lee, 1991, pp. 28-29). Lee places special emphasis on objective criteria and agreements, such as laws and common sense (Park, 2015, p. 291). Lee's transcendence ethics require all people to adhere to the law, including evil laws (Lee, 1984, pp. 145-146; Lee, 2008, pp. 346-347), while Gandhi's version of civil disobedience urges people to not follow unjust laws or orders. It is notable that civil resistance and independence movements against invaders are not considered instances of citizen rampage (violent struggles) (Lee, 1986, p. 297).

The question here is whether the nonviolence of civic activists and government employees can be a good strategy against the self-aggrandizement of an evil regime. It seems that nonviolence is not a sufficient answer to the worst circumstances but provides the minimum and necessary condition for peaceful government reform. Lee (1980) argues that only those who endure hardship nonviolently under a dictatorship are eligible to offer alternatives and bring peace (p. 365). The weak must patiently endure violence and travel the long road from nonviolence to self-sacrifice (Lee, 2001, 348-349). The worst state of a regime necessitates the highest level of transcendence ethics, self-sacrifice.

Self-Sacrifice Against Self-Aggrandizement

Lee (1996) conceptually distinguishes nonviolence from self-sacrifice. Nonviolence requires that the individual refrains from doing what he or she as an individual ought not to do, while self-sacrifice concerns what individuals believe that the government ought not to do (p. 437). The perception of what a government ought not to do may vary from person to person. Nonviolence is an individual matter, while self-sacrifice is an organizational matter. The former is a rather passive action to defend oneself, whereas the latter is an active action to give oneself up to save others. The nonviolence of the ruled helps them stop a ruler's tyranny and protects them from brutal regimes (Lee, 1991, p. 28).

The greatest difference between nonviolence and self-sacrifice lies in the expected costs (Table 2). Nonviolence does not incur high costs, but self-sacrifice requires enormous costs, potentially including exile or death. Violent struggles against a ruthless regime will be heavily revenged, while the abandonment of self-sacrifice (collaboration with an evil regime) will be highly rewarded by the ruler. Hence, self-sacrifice is costlier, riskier, and more difficult than nonviolence. Lee (2008) states that a real pro-democracy movement makes essential requests that even an evil regime dares not refuse and then eagerly pays a high price for telling the truth (pp. 615–616). A pro-democracy fighter tells the truth to the dictatorial regime and then returns to his or her normal life without seeking political gain for him or herself (Lee, 1996, p. 56). In this respect, Lee's self-sacrifice corresponds to Gandhi's civil disobedience.

Table 2. Comparison of nonviolence and self-sacrifice

	Nonviolence	Self-Sacrifice
What is not to be done	What an individual ought not to do	What a government ought not to do
Level	Individual	Organizational
Attitude	Passive/defensive	Active
Requirement	Abstinence and patience	Faithfulness and altruism
Purpose	To defend himself/herself	To protect the truth and others
Expected Cost	Low	High (sacrifice)
What would happen otherwise?	Would be punished (high cost)	Would be rewarded by the ruler

If a ruthless regime lacks even minimal rationality and common humanity but relies entirely on its naked power and own beliefs, nonviolence alone will rarely work. If a ruler is biased toward, for instance, a certain ideology, religion, and/or belief and has limited knowledge, perception, or reasoning ability, a constructive discussion and negotiation are unlikely. This regime, regardless of the type of official political system, is close to being a despotic monarchy or totalitarian regime. A democratic election system alone cannot rule out all worst candidates and may even be used to provide an evil regime with political legitimacy. Even if the ruled clearly say the right thing, an incompetent and negligent ruler may be unable or unwilling to understand them; reasonable requests will be completely ignored or arbitrarily dismissed. What is important is not whether requests are right or wrong but whether they benefit or threaten the ruler. Such a regime is too obsessive to listen attentively to citizen requests. Hence, nonviolence is not sufficient in self-aggrandizement. Instead, more active self-sacrifice is necessary. Only a self-sacrificing culture can control tyranny based on egoism (Lee, 1986, p. 327).

Nevertheless, self-sacrifice is not easy because it requires greater virtue and incurs high cost and risk. It must be prepared thoroughly, based strictly on laws and facts, and put into practice nonviolently and cautiously; otherwise, civic activists and civil servants will face immediate retaliation. Lee states that self-sacrifice, or giving oneself up of one's own free will, is the best decision that a person can make (Lee, 1991, pp. 49, 338; Lee, 2008, p. 131). A person can be most proactive by making difficult decisions despite the accompanying cost; for example, public servants should adhere to what they believe is right even if they are dismissed from their position (Lee, 1980, p. 363). Korean civic activists during the 1970s and 1980s issued a series of public statements pushing for democracy and were then arrested and imprisoned for signing the statements. A common type of self-sacrifice for civil servants is whistleblowing, in which someone bravely reports the hidden wrongdoing of a regime for the sake of

the public interest.³⁾

Self-sacrifice follows several steps. (1) A person recognizes what the government ought not to do; (2) he or she refuses to receive any undue benefit from the government, which stubbornly persists in doing what it ought not to do; (3) the person is scarified (alienated, dismissed, or even killed) due to declining an improper offer from the ruler; (4) he or she is happy to be scarified nevertheless; and finally, (5) the rules to which he or she strived to adhere at his or her own expense are widely perceived as principles for saving the wicked world (Lee 1996, pp. 437–438). This virtue requires nonviolence, personal ethics, and social ethics (Lee, 2001, p. 88); personal ethics begets social ethics, which engenders self-sacrifice (Lee, 1991, pp. 116–117). It is unlikely that a person without personal and social ethics would perceive what the government ought not to do and decline such an offer from an evil ruler.

Self-sacrifice highlights the illegitimacy of an evil regime and facilitates civil resistance (e.g., candle demonstrations) and even civil revolutions. It reinforces excessive rigidification and self-disintegration within a regime, eventually bringing the ruthless regime down.

Self-Aggrandizement in Yoon's Regime

Yoon's regime in South Korea has shown much of the same characteristics as those of the old vested interests. For instance, the regime, despite harsh criticism, has not willingly admitted to and corrected its mistakes; major government positions are filled with Yoon's friends and acquaintances (e.g.,

prosecutors, judges, and neighbors)⁴⁾; and some positions have been given to those who served under the previous authoritarian regime approximately 10 years ago. Personal ties and ideological orientation (anticommunism) appear to count for more than expertise and experience when filling open positions. Senior executives and commissioners in public organizations who were appointed by the previous regime could barely complete their terms of guarantee; some unwillingly resigned or were fired, while others were prosecuted and tried in court. These dismissals and appointments indicate the presence of a spoils system rather than a merit system.

Yoon's regime, according to Lee's diagnosis criteria for the worst state of a regime, went wrong. The following is a list of some revealing symptoms of this regime.

1) Oppression of the press: Executives, board members, and commissioners of broadcasting services and the Korea Communications Commission, who were nominated by the previous regime, were abnormally dismissed and replaced with those who were supportive of the incumbent regime. The president's office, despite evidence from an audio clip, denied insulting U.S. President Biden and Congress in September 2022 and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sued only one of the broadcasting services that reported on the same audio clip. The office criticized it as fake news but never confirmed what Yoon actually said.⁵⁾ The country's press freedom index declined from 43rd to 47th one year after Yoon

3) Lee (2001) suggested codes of conduct for civil servants. Public servants must respect their superiors within an organization and serve citizens by improving their specialized knowledge and skills every day; work for democracy, social welfare, and justice rather than pursue private gain in return for bribery from superiors; and become noble beings who stand on the merit of their specialized knowledge, not on the power of their superiors and organizations (p. 277).

4) Former prosecutors and judges dominate the incumbent regime. One person who agreed to the abolishment of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family was, absurdly, appointed as its minister.

5) An evil regime suppresses free speech, seeks to form (manipulate) public opinion by itself, and cracks down on citizens who do not believe in the regime-produced truths (Lee, 1986, p. 316).

came into power.

2) Elimination of opponents: Many political rivals and opponents have been dismissed, prosecuted, or incarcerated. The leader of the dominant opposition party has been under investigation over various corruption allegations for more than two years, but the prosecutors in charge have yet to present any hard evidence or prosecute him. Yoon has continuously refused to meet the opposition leader, calling him a felon.

3) Moral degradation: There is one law for the rich and the old vested interests and another for everyone else. The law is harshly implemented with the weak but generous toward those in power (e.g., Yoon's family and the prosecutors). Very few believe that law enforcement is fair and impartial. Unprovoked and senseless crimes are gradually increasing across the country, reflecting the populace's frustration with this lawlessness.

4) Showcase projects: Government policies are rarely aimed at the social welfare of ordinary citizens. Yoon's regime has relaxed taxes (i.e., comprehensive real estate holding tax, transfer income tax, and corporate tax) largely for the rich and the old vested interests and now suffers from a large revenue reduction and deficit. The president's office was suddenly moved from the Blue House to Yongsan (Ministry of Defense) in 2022 without public discussion or consensus. This surprising change not only incurred tremendous moving expenses, cascading moves of military units, and heated controversy but also caused new national security problems.

5) Intervention of neighboring countries: Yoon's regime has tried to keep pace with U.S. policies (e.g., the Indo-Pacific strategy) and strengthen the country's alliance with the U.S., but the Inflation Reduction Act excludes Korean electric vehicles from U.S. tax credits (subsidies), and semiconductor export controls prevent Korea from exporting semiconductor-related products to China. The regime has also tried to "normalize" bilateral ties with Japan and decided, going against a Supreme

Court ruling, to compensate Korean victims of wartime forced labor without a sincere apology from Japan. Against the objections of the public, the regime touted the safety of Japan's release of treated radioactive water stored in Fukushima and obscurely tolerated its discharge into the Pacific Ocean. This ideology-led diplomacy has escalated military tensions in the Korean Peninsula and shrunk export markets in China and Russia. Neighboring countries appear to be exploiting the incumbent regime that has a lopsided and obsessive view.

Yoon's regime has shown excessive rigidification, incompetence, and irresponsibility. The regime takes an extremely hard line against opposition parties, labor unions, and its opponents, so there have been few discussions and negotiations with them thus far. The regime completely failed to manage the 10.29 disaster, in which a total of 159 people were crushed to death during a Halloween festival in Itaewon, Seoul, in 2022. The 25th World Scout Jamboree in Saemangeum, Jeonbuk Province, was heavily criticized for its poor preparation and mismanagement, leading to, for example, bad sanitation, flooded campsites, rotten food, and a lack of water and shelter.

Yoon's regime recorded a trade deficit for 12 consecutive months (May 2022–April 2023) of its first year and USD 66 billion of accumulated deficit, which are sharply contrasted with the corresponding trade surplus for 12 consecutive months (May 2017–April 2018) and USD 85 billion of accumulated surplus during the first year of the previous regime. Nevertheless, the culpable public servants were not willing to take responsibility for these outcomes. The progress of the regime's self-disintegration has been spurred by the extreme ideological stance and disappointing performance of Yoon's regime, although it is not yet apparent on the surface.

Nonviolence and Self-Sacrifice in Yoon's Regime

The nonviolence of civic activists and civil servants is necessary but alone insufficient to confront

a self-aggrandized regime. Considering Yoon's limited knowledge and reasoning ability, it is quite unlikely that he will have constructive conversations with opposition parties and ordinary citizens. This regime will keep moving forward with its arbitrary plans regardless of criticism and street protests. Nevertheless, it is important to maintain nonviolent resistance, as shown in the failed strike of the Transport Workers' Union in 2023; some members' deviant behaviors provided the regime with an excuse to engage in violent suppression.

Jeon Hyun-Hee, the former chairperson of the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission, shows an ideal type of nonviolent struggle. She was appointed by the previous regime and, accordingly, was under strong pressure to resign and underwent a comprehensive ten-month audit from the Board of Audit and Inspection. She endured vicious attacks from the regime. She neither used any type of violence against collaborators nor gave up her position in despair or fear for her life. Instead, she did not stop telling the truth in official meetings and press interviews. She abstained from power abuse and stuck to the proper rules and procedures. Almost all of the charges against her turned out to be groundless and false accusations. Accordingly, she successfully finished her term of guarantee in 2023. Recently, she launched a counterattack against the board and reported this case of power abuse to the Corruption Investigation Office.

The current self-aggrandizement of the regime in South Korea necessitates self-sacrifice. A recent exemplary case is Colonel Park Jung-Hun, the former chief of the Marine Corps investigation unit. Pursuant to the Military Court Act, he handed over an internal probe report on the tragic death of one Corporal Chae to the police in September 2023. Although the defense minister officially approved the report, he indirectly ordered that it be further reviewed the next day. Colonel Park claimed that there had been persistent illegal intervention from the ministry and the president's office (National Security Office). He was dismissed from his position, as his refusal to postpone the report was considered insubordination. If his claim is true, Colonel Park sacrificed himself to comply with the law and common sense; he declined an offer of undue benefit and willingly risked his job

and honor as a marine officer. Such nonviolence and self-sacrifice can facilitate self-aggrandizement and will bring down the dictatorial regime.

Conclusion

An evil regime fatefully aggrandizes itself through excessive rigidification and self-disintegration processes. Excessive rigidification is rooted in overconfidence in naked power, limits rationality in organizations, and thus hinders bureaucracy from solving problems and correcting errors. Each ruling group has an insatiable desire to increase its own power and wealth, but the ruler is not willing to fairly share the spoils with his or her greedy followers. As a violent regime approaches its worst state, ruling groups ignore group egoism, willfully fight against each other, and try to save their own skin. Both excessive rigidification and self-disintegration escalate self-aggrandizement.

Nonviolence and self-sacrifice are answers to the self-aggrandizement of an evil regime. A violent rampage cannot be an alternative to the violence of such a regime. Civic activists and civil servants must endure tyranny with patience and stay nonviolent in their struggles. When a regime reaches its worst state, their nonviolence alone is insufficient, although it effectively protects them from oppression by the regime. These activists and civil servants need to go above the minimum virtue and sacrifice themselves to save ordinary citizens. Lee (1991) argued that the minimal action in the worst political situation is characterized by discreet democratic movements, such as reliance on nonviolence, decision-making based on agreements among comrades, and the pursuit of solidarity with ordinary citizens, without seeking to benefit one's own interests (pp. 25-26). The quality of a government depends on the quality of its enlightened citizens or the demands of mature citizens who transcend nonviolence through self-sacrifice (Lee, 2008, p. 66).

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