

Violation is Justification

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By the early 1900s, many of Korea's citizens had grown indignant about the subjugation and annexation of their crumpled country, and many rose against their oppressors. But one person in particular stood above the rest. This person was Kim Koo. He valued culture, peace, and human rights, and by wielding soft power, he actively fought for the liberation of Korea. Thus, he showed that it is justified to resist a government that violates the rights of its own people when there is forced cultural assimilation, physical oppression and abuse of power, and when the citizens of the occupied government are stripped of self-determination.

When a country undergoes a foreign annexation, cultural assimilation is never far behind. This assimilation often takes the form of the systematic erasure of tradition, obliteration of the native language, and the enforcement of complete loyalty. The erasure of tradition often strips citizen's rights to wear traditional clothing or worship their individual religions. Oftentimes, historical artifacts of the occupied country are stolen and sold, further commodifying people's culture and history as cheap souvenirs or museum exhibits. Additionally, as it was in the case of Korea, the language of the occupied country was forbidden to be used and systematically erased from the culture. If one imagines the effects of these enforcements, a historically and culturally immense event is taking place. All occupied citizens' identities are being actively erased. To give an example, language is how all people communicate with others every day. If a person's language suddenly changes, and that person is not allowed to speak their native language, it is natural that one's individual identity is ripped away. Their thinking patterns are forcefully influenced, and the linguistic roots to their own culture are all of a sudden, gone. Cultural assimilation completely shatters the delicately built heritage of a country, which is enough reason to resist a government that violates the fundamental right to express one's culture.

Another justification for resistance comes in the form of physical oppression, which includes being stripped of the right to privacy, making torture and enslavement a typical part of public order, and brutal retaliation to peaceful protest. Privacy in an annexed nation is almost impossible, as there are eyes in every corner, and the annexed must live in a way that the superiors can sense their complete loyalty. If any deviation from complete loyalty was felt, the innocent was immediately sent to prison. Of the awful events that happen in prison during occupied times, the most common was torture. There were various types of torture, from water torture to psychological torture. This caused immense harm, as it happened continuously for extended periods of time, often leading to death. Another cruel burden given to prisoners was enslavement. The imprisoned were worked tirelessly with the only reward being more work, as the sole purpose of the labor was to tire the prisoners. Those that were not imprisoned often took to the streets to protest their family and friends that were unlawfully sent to labor camps, prisons, or worse. But fear of these punishments still dominated, so most protests were

peaceful. Yet occupiers showed no mercy and retaliated brutally. This unjustified and inhumane physical oppression violates the rights of the occupied, providing reason to push back against the occupier.

The final condition where one should retaliate against the occupier is when the occupied are stripped of self-determination. When this occurs, citizens are robbed of their human dignity and their human rights, as well as the right to decide how their life and their country will go on. Like forced cultural assimilation and physical violence, annexed citizens felt that their self-determination was deprived when they were oppressed. In their limited capacity to act, citizens could only march peacefully in the streets, aware that further action would lead to their deaths. This created a systematic propaganda machine, one that was enforced not only by the oppressor, but also the oppressed. It kept annexed citizens unconfident that anything would change. This was further executed through the education system. Children were like sponges and they took up propaganda as truth. In addition to the Korean language being phased out of the education system, Japanese language and customs were emphasized as the only path to success. After years of participating in a false reality, children were fully brainwashed away from their own culture and from historical truth. The idea that when one educates the young, the old will die off, and the young will dominate the “better” world and dominate the new education system worked entirely in favor of the occupier. A just government will not strip its citizens of self-determination, and therefore, in a government that weaponizes it as a tool for further subjugation, it is justified to resist.

When there is forced cultural assimilation, physical abuse of power and oppression, and stripping of self-determination, it is justified to resist the oppressing government. Just like Kim Koo, when the subjugated country is not being treated fairly, the citizens of the occupied country have the right to push back by any means necessary. Such as in the case of Korea, where Japan plucked the human rights of Korea right out of its roots, it is perfectly valid to resist the government that is only serving itself.