

The Economy of Life: Investigating the Symbiotic Relationship between the South Korean government and Far-right Young Men and its role in assigning values to lives

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The conception of my self-defined project

- I knew going into my research I wanted to cover two events in South Korean history – The Sewol Ferry sinking and the Itaewon Crowd Crush.
- When the tragic crush occurred, the news articles and police investigations felt very reminiscent of the Sewol Ferry sinking, 8 years prior.
- Corruption in governments an area of great interest to me
- East Asian government corruption is an area of my personal interest

- Originally, I wanted to investigate the relationship between the **youth** and the **South Korean government**
- However, it became evident this was too large a scope to cover in 6 weeks' worth of research

Finding a new, more specific group, came easily as Ilbe Storehouse was featured in multiple articles and reports.

What is the **relationship** between the **South Korean government** (especially conservative governments) and **Ilbe Storehouse**?

Why have no changes been made to ensure **safety** towards **unprotected groups**?



The Sewol Ferry Sinking (2014)
Took the lives of 306 passengers, including 250 Danwon High School students. Sinking labelled 'accident' despite it being a direct result of government's lenient policy towards Chaebols. Far-right young men saw the victims and their families as claiming too much compensation and trying to replace to government with Communists.

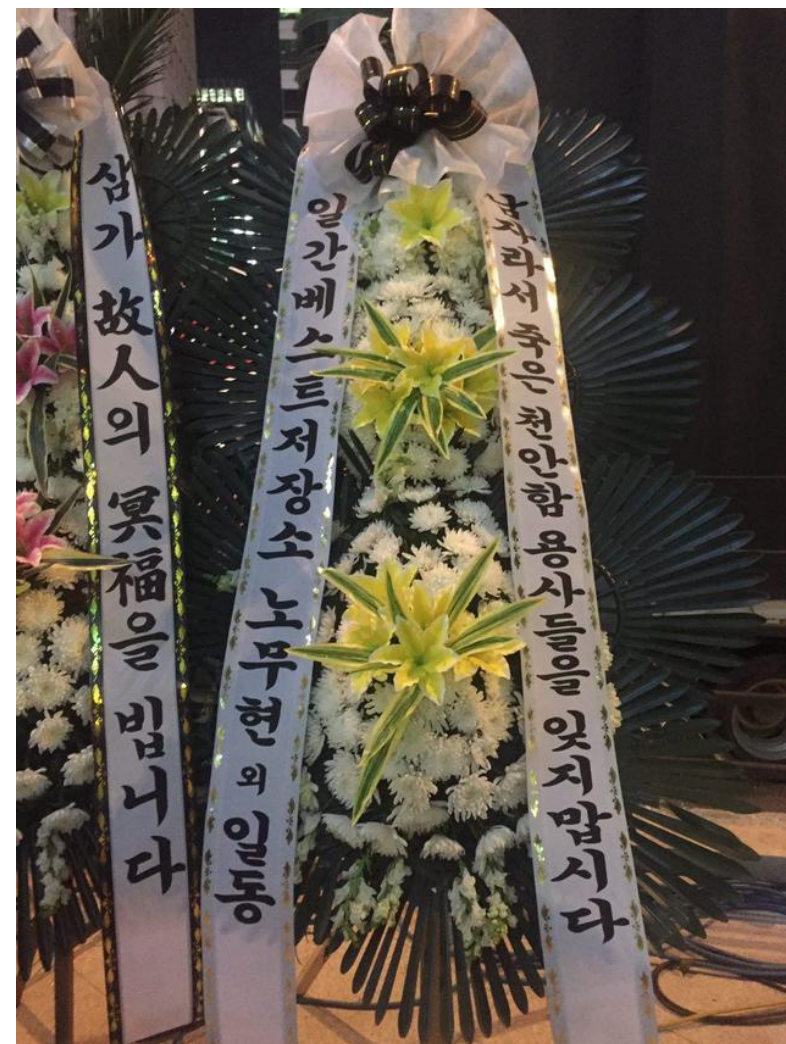


The Public Toilet Stabbing (2016)
A woman unknown to the attacker was murdered in a public toilet. The police would blame the murder on the man's mental state despite him stating he killed her due to women always ignoring him. This lack of addressing misogyny in society allows it to prevail.



The Itaewon Crowd Crush (2022)
159 people died in a crowd crush that was directly caused by government negligence. The victims are yet to receive true justice and the far-right young men mock these victims for dying whilst going out to party in Itaewon specifically. An area known as a hub for LGBTQ+ people and foreigners.

A garland left by an **Ilbe** user at the memorial to the public toilet stabbing victim. It states not to forget the soldiers that died onboard the Cheonan navy corvette in 2012. These soldiers were men and received more monetary compensation than any of the three tragedies. However, it is used as a symbol of men suffering '**reverse discrimination**'.



Methodology:

- Heavily relied on articles to conduct my research
- Utilised South Korean government issued statements to understand what the government wanted the public to think
 - EG in the case of the Itaewon Crowd Crush, using words such as 'stampede' to imply the crowd were to blame
- Ilbe Storehouse
 - Presented its own set of challenges
 - Translations not always accurate
 - Site itself was down for three weeks

Findings:

The relationship between the government and the far-right young men can be described as symbiotic. It is mutually beneficial in maintaining the differing values of lives in South Korea.

This almost economy of life is a consequence of the neo-liberal environment of South Korea. The government's policies and discourses have created a system in which individuals view other individuals as their direct competition due to the cut-throat nature of South Korea's education system and job market.

This competitive nature may have helped fuel South Korea's economic growth initially, but it has led to multitude of social and economic problems. Jobs are becoming increasingly difficult for the youth to find, due to chaebols dominating the economy and the flawed education system. Scapegoats found in under-protected groups in society.

The government has welcomed this, as it allows for them to maintain power, instead of admitting fault and reforming. This leads no protection of these groups, meaning their safety is not guaranteed. Thus creating an economy of life.