

# The coin has two sides

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**By Spencer H. Kim**

Just as we often need Ministers of Bad News, we also need Ministers of Good News.

As anyone who knows me knows, I love the book by former U.S. Senator J. William Fulbright, "The Arrogance of Power." The title grabs you, and my favorite quote from the book hits you between the eyes: "... an excess of pride born of power has a way of undermining judgment, of planting delusions of grandeur in the minds of otherwise sensible people and otherwise sensible nations."

My good friend, former U.S. Ambassador to Korea Donald Gregg, during the time he was CIA station chief in Seoul, told President Park Chung Hee that he needed a "Minister of Bad News" who would tell him truths he didn't want to, but needed to, hear.

All over the world we see the signs: smug elites, grown rich and powerful from technology, economic development, globalization, and the Pax Americana, have become arrogant, have looked down on those who have not prospered as much as they have, and are busy "getting theirs."

Of course, we see this arrogance play out in the Korean press every day with President Park Geun-hye and Choi Soon-sil. This President Park, like her father, didn't have a Minister of Bad News telling her what really awful ideas Choi was pedaling.

But it is not just Korea. The Ministers of Bad News are everywhere these days, yelling at the globalized elite to wake up to the cries of their fellow humans being left behind. But we also need to realize the good news: that despite all the turmoil, it is being played out in relative peace. It was not always so in history.

Pope Francis compares the excesses of global capitalism to the "dung of the devil ... a subtle dictatorship that condemns and enslaves men and women." Brexit, the election of Donald Trump by those who felt marginalized, Thomas Piketty's book on wealth and income inequality, even Xi Jinping, in

his attempt to reign in corruption and get back to some of the redistributive principles of communism, are all Ministers of Bad News trying to break through to the well-off and self-satisfied who are expressing that pride born of power, those delusions of grandeur ... and that poor judgment undermined by too much power.

Just as we need Ministers of Bad News, however, we also need Ministers of Good News so we don't sink into depression and a sense of helplessness. In Korea the free media uncovered the Choi-gate scandal and demonstrations have remained peaceful. The political system is transparently, if fitfully, looking for a resolution of the crisis. That is good news, very good news. The Korean polity is demonstrating great maturity. I pray this weekend's demonstration will be a sterling example of this good news.

In Great Britain a wrenching decision to leave the European Union is being debated in the courts and Parliament, not with violence. In the U.S., Hillary Clinton made a graceful concession speech in which she said it was her and her fellow Americans' duty to approach Donald Trump's presidency with an open mind. A peaceful grievance played out at the ballot box, a peaceful transition will play out in Washington.

In China, whatever you may think of Xi, he made the point that, "The whole Party should remember — what we are building is socialism with Chinese characteristics, not some other -ism." We all hear of the demonstrations against greed that take place in China even though they are not in the official news. It is good news that there is a response.

As an international businessman, I understand the temptation to fixate on profit and, like everyone else with power, I need my own Minister of Bad News to tell me things that I do not want to hear. But it is equally important to understand that if you have heard bad news, there is now generally a way to fix what is wrong without violent consequence.

It is my great pleasure to see how maturely Koreans have responded to the bad news of a really ugly scandal and the resulting crisis. And that is good news.

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