

P-CLEAN RINGS

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In this paper we unify the structures of various clean rings by introducing the notion of P -clean rings. Some properties of P -clean rings are investigated, which generalize the known results on clean rings, semiclean rings, n -clean rings, and so forth. By the way, we answer a question of Xiao and Tong on n -clean rings in the negative.

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1. Introduction

Throughout this paper R denotes an associative ring with identity and all modules are unitary. We use the symbol $U(R)$ to denote the group of units of R and $\text{Id}(R)$ the set of idempotents of R , $U_n(R)$ the set of elements which are the sum of n units of R , $U_\Sigma(R)$ the set of elements each of which is the sum of finitely many units in R , $RE(R)$ ($URE(R)$) the set of regular (unit regular) elements of R , and $\text{Peri}(R)$ the set of periodic elements of R . The Jacobson radical and the prime radical of R are denoted by $J(R)$ and $\text{Nil}_*(R)$, respectively.

Following Han and Nicholson [4], an element x of a ring R is called clean if $x = e + u$ where $e \in \text{Id}(R)$ and $u \in U(R)$. A ring R is clean if every element of R is clean. This notion was first introduced by Nicholson [5] as early as 1977 in his study of lifting idempotents and exchange rings. Since then, a great deal is known about clean rings and their generalizations (cf. [1–9]).

According to Ye [9], a ring R is called semiclean if every element of R has the form $x = f + u$, where $u \in U(R)$ and f is periodic, that is, $f^p = f^q$ for two different positive integers p and q . In [8], an element x of a ring R is called n -clean if $x = e + u_1 + \cdots + u_n$ where $e \in \text{Id}(R)$, $u_i \in U(R)$, and n is a positive integer. The ring R is called n -clean if every element of R is n -clean for some fixed positive integer n . While R is called Σ -clean, if the n is a positive integer depending on x . Also Zhang and Tong in [10] defined R to be G -clean, if each $x \in R$ has the form $x = a + u$ where a is unit regular and $u \in U(R)$.

Motivated by the results of Han and Nicholson [4] on clean rings, Ye [9] on semiclean rings, Xiao and Tong [8] on n -clean rings and Σ -clean rings, and Zhang and Tong [10] on G -clean rings, in this paper we unify the structures of various clean rings by introducing

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the notion of P -clean rings and the common properties of those rings. By the way, we answer a question of Xiao and Tong [8] in the negative and extend some known results of [8, 9].

2. P -clean rings

We start this section by the following definitions.

For two subsets A and B of a ring R , the sum of A and B is defined as follows: $A + B = \{a + b \mid a \in A, b \in B\}$. The sum of more than two subsets of an R can be defined inductively.

Let P be a property which is meaningful for elements of a ring. For any ring R , let $P(R)$ be the subset $\{a \in R \mid a \text{ has property } P\}$ of R .

Definition 2.1. Property P will be called admissible if the following conditions are satisfied.

- (1) For any ring homomorphism $\sigma: R \rightarrow S$, $\sigma(P(R)) \subseteq P(S)$.
- (2) For any rings $R \subseteq S$, $P(R) \subseteq P(S)$.
- (3) For any $e \in \text{Id}(R)$, $P(eRe) + P((1 - e)R(1 - e)) \subseteq P(R)$.

For convenience, an element of $P(R)$ is called a P -element in R . In this paper P will always be an admissible property.

PROPOSITION 2.2. (1) If σ is a ring isomorphism from R onto S , then $\sigma(P(R)) = P(S)$.

- (2) If e_1, e_2, \dots, e_n are orthogonal complete idempotents, that is, $e_i e_j = 0$ whenever $i \neq j$ and $e_i^2 = e_i$, and $e_1 + e_2 + \dots + e_n = 1$, then $P(e_1 R e_1) + P(e_2 R e_2) + \dots + P(e_n R e_n) \subseteq P(R)$.

Proof. (1) By Definition 2.1, $\sigma(P(R)) \subseteq P(S)$, hence $\sigma^{-1}(\sigma(P(R))) \subseteq \sigma^{-1}(P(S)) \subseteq P(R)$. It follows that $P(R) \subseteq \sigma^{-1}(P(S)) \subseteq P(R)$, which gives $\sigma(P(R)) \subseteq P(S) \subseteq \sigma(P(R))$ and so $\sigma(P(R)) = P(S)$.

(2) We prove this by using induction on n . In fact, the case $n = 2$ is condition (3) of Definition 2.1. Assume (2) holds for $n - 1$. Let $e_1 + e_2 + \dots + e_{n-1} = f$. Then multiplied by e_i on the two sides of the above equation, we have $e_i f = f e_i = e_i$, which gives $e_i = f e_i f$ and so $e_i \in \text{Id}(f R f)$. Note that $f R f$ is a ring with identity f . It yields that $P(e_1 R e_1) + P(e_2 R e_2) + \dots + P(e_{n-1} R e_{n-1}) \subseteq P(f R f)$ by inductive assumption. On the other hand, $f + e_n = 1$ implies $P(f R f) + P(e_n R e_n) \subseteq P(R)$ by Definition 2.1(3). Hence $P(e_1 R e_1) + P(e_2 R e_2) + \dots + P(e_{n-1} R e_{n-1}) + P(e_n R e_n) \subseteq P(f R f) + P(e_n R e_n) \subseteq P(R)$. \square

Definition 2.3. A ring R is called P -clean if every $x \in R$ has the form $x = p + u$, where $p \in P(R)$ and $u \in U(R)$.

LEMMA 2.4. Let R be a ring and $e \in \text{Id}(R)$. Then the following hold.

- (1) If $u \in U(eRe)$ and $v \in U((1 - e)R(1 - e))$, then $u + v \in U(R)$.
- (2) If $e_1 \in \text{Id}(eRe)$ and $e_2 \in \text{Id}((1 - e)R(1 - e))$, then $e_1 + e_2 \in \text{Id}(R)$.
- (3) If $f \in \text{Peri}(eRe)$ and $g \in \text{Peri}((1 - e)R(1 - e))$, then $f + g \in \text{Peri}(R)$.
- (4) If $x \in RE(eRe)$ and $y \in RE((1 - e)R(1 - e))$, then $x + y \in RE(R)$.
- (5) If $x \in URE(eRe)$ and $y \in URE((1 - e)R(1 - e))$, then $x + y \in URE(R)$.
- (6) If $x \in U_n(eRe)$ and $y \in U_n((1 - e)R(1 - e))$, then $x + y \in U_n(R)$.

- (7) If $x \in \text{Id}(eRe) + U_n(eRe)$ and $y \in \text{Id}((1-e)R(1-e)) + U_n((1-e)R(1-e))$, then $x + y \in \text{Id}(R) + U_n(R)$.
- (8) If $x \in \text{Id}(eRe) + U_\Sigma(eRe)$ and $y \in \text{Id}((1-e)R(1-e)) + U_\Sigma((1-e)R(1-e))$, then $x + y \in \text{Id}(R) + U_\Sigma(R)$.

Proof. We only prove (3) and (8), the others are very similar.

(3) Let $f \in \text{Peri}(eRe)$ and $g \in \text{Peri}((1-e)R(1-e))$. Then there exist positive integers $m > n$ and $p > q$ such that $f^m = f^n$ and $g^p = g^q$. By Ye [9, Lemma 5.2], $f^{n(m-n)}$ and $g^{q(p-q)}$ are both idempotents. Set $t = 2n(m-n)q(p-q)$. Then $f^{2t} = f^t$ and $g^{2t} = g^t$. Since $fg = gf = 0$, $(f+g)^{2t} = f^{2t} + g^{2t} = f^t + g^t = (f+g)^t$. Hence $f+g \subseteq \text{Peri}(R)$.

(8) Assume $x \in \text{Id}(eRe) + U_\Sigma(eRe)$ and $y \in \text{Id}((1-e)R(1-e)) + U_\Sigma((1-e)R(1-e))$. Then $x = f + u_1 + \cdots + u_n$ and $y = g + v_1 + \cdots + v_m$ where $f \in \text{Id}(eRe)$, $g \in \text{Id}((1-e)R(1-e))$, $u_i \in U(eRe)$, and $v_j \in U((1-e)R(1-e))$. It is easy to show that an n -clean element is m -clean whenever $n \leq m$, since for any $e \in \text{Id}(R)$, $e = (1-e) + (2e-1)$ where $1-e \in \text{Id}(R)$ and $(2e-1)^2 = 1$. So without loss of generality, we can assume $n = m$. Using (1), $f+g \in \text{Id}(R)$. And from (6), $u_i + v_i \in U(R)$, hence $x + y = (f+g) + (u_1 + v_1) + \cdots + (u_n + v_n) \in \text{Id}(R) + U_\Sigma(R)$.

Using Lemma 2.4, it is easy to check that for any ring R , $0, R, \text{Id}(R), \text{Peri}(R), U(R), RE(R), URE(R), U_n(R), \text{Id}(R) + U_{n-1}(R)$ for $n \geq 2$, $\text{Id}(R) + U_\Sigma(R)$ are all subsets of R defined by a suitable admissible property P . \square

From the above arguments, the following proposition is immediate.

PROPOSITION 2.5. *Let R be a ring. Then the following conclusions hold.*

- (1) $\text{Id}(R)$ -clean rings are precisely clean rings.
- (2) $\text{Pri}(R)$ -clean rings are precisely semiclean rings.
- (3) $U(R)$ -clean rings are precisely $(S, 2)$ -rings.
- (4) $Ure(R)$ -clean rings are precisely G -clean rings.
- (5) $\text{Id}(R) + U_{n-1}(R)$ -clean rings are precisely n -clean rings when $n \geq 2$.
- (6) $\text{Id}(R) + U_\Sigma(R)$ -clean rings are precisely Σ -clean rings.

Note that here an $(S, 2)$ -ring is a ring in which every element can be expressed as a sum of two units of R . While in some literature it referred to a ring in which every element can be written as a sum of no more than two units.

PROPOSITION 2.6. *Any homomorphic image of a P -clean ring is P -clean.*

Proof. Let R be a P -clean ring and let $f : R \rightarrow S$ be a ring surjective homomorphism. Then for any $y \in S$, there exists $x \in R$ such that $f(x) = y$. Since R is P -clean, $x = p + u$ with $p \in P(R)$ and $u \in U(R)$. Hence $f(x) = f(p) + f(u)$. Obviously $f(u) \in U(S)$ and $f(p) \in f(P) \subseteq P(S)$ by Definition 2.1, the proof is complete. \square

PROPOSITION 2.7. *A finite direct product $R = \prod_{i=1}^n R_i$ of rings R_i is P -clean if and only if each R_i is P -clean.*

Proof. If R is P -clean, then each R_i is P -clean by Proposition 2.6. Conversely, assume each R_i is P -clean, and $x = (x_i) \in R$. Then $x_i = p_i + u_i$ with $p_i \in P(R_i)$ and $u_i \in U(R_i)$

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for each i . By Proposition 2.2, we can identify R_i with $(\dots, 0, R_i, 0, \dots)$ canonically. Let $e_i = (\dots, 0, 1, 0, \dots)$. Then $(p_i) = (p_1, 0, \dots, 0) + (0, p_2, \dots, 0) + \dots + (0, 0, \dots, p_n) \in P(e_1 R e_1) + P(e_2 R e_2) + \dots + P(e_n R e_n) \subseteq P(R)$. Now $x = (x_i) = (p_i + u_i) = (p_i) + (u_i)$ with $(p_i) \in P(R)$ and $(u_i) \in U(R)$, so we are done. \square

It should be noted that Proposition 2.7 is not true for an infinite direct product of rings R_i . For example, the ring \mathbb{Z} of integers is a Σ -clean ring, but $R = \prod_{i=1}^{\infty} \mathbb{Z}$ is not Σ -clean since $(1, 2, \dots, n, \dots)$ is obviously not Σ -clean.

PROPOSITION 2.8. *The ring R is P -clean if and only if the ring $R[[x]]$ of formal power series over R is P -clean.*

Proof. If $R[[x]]$ is P -clean, then R is P -clean by Proposition 2.6. Now if R is P -clean, then for any $f(x) \in R[[x]]$, $f(x) = a_0 + a_1x + \dots + a_nx^n + \dots$. By assumption, $a_0 = p + u$ with $p \in P(R)$ and $u \in U(R)$. Hence $f(x) = p + u + a_1x + \dots + a_nx^n + \dots$ with $p \in P(R) \subseteq P(R[[x]])$ and $u + a_1x + \dots + a_nx^n + \dots \in U(R[[x]])$, as desired. \square

The following corollary extends [8, Proposition 2.5] which states that for a commutative ring R , R is n -clean if and only if $R[[x]]$ is n -clean.

COROLLARY 2.9. *R is n -clean (Σ -clean) if and only if $R[[x]]$ is n -clean (Σ -clean).*

It has been proved by Han and Nicholson in [4] that if e is an idempotent in a ring R such that eRe and $(1 - e)R(1 - e)$ are both clean rings, then R is clean. Hence the ring of $n \times n$ matrices over R is clean. Similar results hold for semiclean rings, n -clean rings, and Σ -clean rings. We now extend these results to P -clean rings.

LEMMA 2.10. *Let $e \in \text{Id}(R)$ be such that eRe and $(1 - e)R(1 - e)$ are both P -clean rings. Then R is a P -clean ring.*

Proof. For convenience, write $\bar{r} = 1 - r$ for each $r \in R$. We use the Pierce decomposition of the ring R :

$$R = eRe + eR\bar{e} + \bar{e}Re + \bar{e}R\bar{e}. \quad (2.1)$$

Let $x = a + b + c + d$ where $a \in eRe$, $b \in eR\bar{e}$, $c \in \bar{e}Re$, and $d \in \bar{e}R\bar{e}$. By hypothesis, write $a = p + u$ where $p \in P(eRe)$ and $u \in U(eRe)$ with inverse u_1 . Then $d - cu_1b \in \bar{e}R\bar{e}$, so write $d - cu_1b = q + v$ where $q \in P(\bar{e}R\bar{e})$ and $v \in U(\bar{e}R\bar{e})$ with inverse v_1 . Hence $x = (p + q) + u + b + c + v + cu_1b$ and it suffices to show that $u + b + c + v + cu_1b$ is a unit in R . To this end compute

$$\begin{aligned} & (u + b + c + v + cu_1b)(u_1 + u_1bv_1cu_1 - u_1bv_1 - v_1cu_1 + v_1) \\ &= (e + bv_1cu_1 - bv_1) + (-bv_1cu_1 + bv_1) + (cu_1 + cu_1bv_1cu_1 - cu_1bv_1) \\ & \quad + (-cu_1 + 1 - e) + (-cu_1bv_1cu_1 + cu_1bv_1) = 1. \end{aligned} \quad (2.2)$$

Similarly, $(u_1 + u_1bv_1cu_1 - u_1bv_1 - v_1cu_1 + v_1)(u + b + c + v + cu_1b) = 1$.

Note that $p + q \in P(eRe) + P(\bar{e}R\bar{e}) \subseteq P(R)$ by Definition 2.1, the proof is complete. \square

Using Lemma 2.10, an inductive argument gives immediately.

THEOREM 2.11. *If $1 = e_1 + e_2 + \cdots + e_n$ in a ring R where e_i are orthogonal idempotents and each $e_i R e_i$ is P -clean, then R is P -clean.*

The following two results are direct consequences of Theorem 2.11

COROLLARY 2.12. *If R is a P -clean ring, so also is the matrix ring $M_n(R)$.*

COROLLARY 2.13. *If $M = M_1 \oplus M_2 \oplus \cdots \oplus M_n$ are modules and $\text{end}(M_i)$ is P -clean for each i , then $\text{end}(M)$ is P -clean.*

Since any homomorphic image of a P -clean ring is again P -clean, with Theorem 2.11, this gives the following.

COROLLARY 2.14. *If A and B are rings and $V = {}_A V_B$ is a bimodule, the split-null extension R is P -clean if and only if both A and B are P -clean, where*

$$R = \begin{pmatrix} A & V \\ 0 & B \end{pmatrix}. \quad (2.3)$$

In particular, induction shows that for each $n \geq 1$, a ring R is P -clean if and only if the ring of all $n \times n$ upper triangular matrices over R is P -clean.

Let R be a ring and let I be an ideal of R . We say P -elements in R/I lift modulo I , if for any $p \in P(R/I)$ there exists $a \in P(R)$ such that $\pi(a) = p$ where π is the canonical ring homomorphism from R onto R/I .

We close this section with the following proposition whose proof is very easy.

PROPOSITION 2.15. *Let R be a ring and let I be an ideal contained in $J(R)$. If R/I is a P -clean ring and P -elements lift modulo I , then R is a P -clean ring.*

3. Some remarks

It is known by [4, Proposition 6] that a ring R is clean if and only if R/I is clean for any ideal $I \subseteq J(R)$ and idempotents lift modulo I . Xiao and Tong [8] naturally claimed that they do not know whether for any n -clean ring R , idempotents of R/I lift modulo I where I is any ideal of R contained in $J(R)$. The following counterexample shows that the answer is negative.

Example 3.1. There is a 4-clean ring R in which idempotents of $R/J(R)$ cannot be lifted to R .

Proof. Let R be the subring of rational numbers Q given by $R = \{m/n \in Q \mid (m, n) = (n, 6) = 1\}$. Then R has only two maximal ideals: $2R$ and $3R$, so $J(R) = 6R$. Denote the ring of integers modulo n by \mathbb{Z}_n , then $R/J(R) \cong \mathbb{Z}_2 \times \mathbb{Z}_3$, which has four idempotents. But R has only two idempotents. This shows that idempotents of $R/J(R)$ cannot be lifted to R modulo $J(R)$. But it can be shown that R is a 4-clean ring.

Clearly, $x = m/n \in U(R)$ if and only if $(m, 6) = (n, 6) = 1$. Now for any $x \in R$, x has the form $x = 3^p 2^q m/n$ where $(m, 6) = (n, 6) = 1$. If $p, q \geq 1$, then $3^p 2^q m = (3^p 2^q - 1 + 1)m = (3^p 2^q - 1)m + m \in U_2(R)$, so $x \in U_2(R)$. If $x = 3^p m/n$ with $p \geq 1$ and $(m, 6) = (n, 6) = 1$, then $3^p m = (3^p - 2 + 2)m = (3^p - 2)m + m + m$, which implies $x \in U_3(R)$. Similarly, in

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the case of $x = 2^q m/n$ where $(m, 6) = (n, 6) = 1$ and $q \geq 1$, then $2^q = 2^q - 3 + 3 = 2^q - 3 + 1 + 1 + 1$. It follows that $x \in U_4(R)$. Since any n -clean element must be m -clean for any $n \leq m$ (cf. the proof of Lemma 2.4(8)), R is a 4-clean ring from the above arguments. This ring R is clearly a k -clean for any $k \geq 4$ as the proof shows. \square

The following two results are obtained by Xiao and Tong [8] for commutative rings, now we extend them to 2-primal rings (rings whose prime radical coincides with the set of nilpotent elements).

PROPOSITION 3.2. *For any 2-primal ring R , the polynomial ring $R[x]$ is not Σ -clean.*

Proof. Assume the contrary, then $x = e(x) + u_1(x) + u_2(x) + \cdots + u_n(x)$ where $e(x) \in \text{Id}(R[x])$, $u_i(x) \in U(R[x])$ for each i , and n is a positive integer. Let

$$\begin{aligned} e(x) &= e_0 + a_1x + \cdots + a_mx^m, \\ u_1(x) &= u_{10} + u_{11}x + \cdots + u_{1m}x^m, \\ &\vdots \\ u_n(x) &= u_{n0} + u_{n1}x + \cdots + u_{nm}x^m. \end{aligned} \tag{3.1}$$

Since R is 2-primal, a polynomial over R is invertible if and only if its constant term is in $U(R)$ and the other coefficients are in $\text{Nil}_*(R)$ by [3, Theorem 2.4], so $u_{ij} \in \text{Nil}_*(R)$ for each $j \geq 1$. Hence $x = e(x) + u_1(x) + \cdots + u_n(x)$ gives $a_1 + u_{11} + \cdots + u_{n1} = 1$, so a_1 is a unit in R , and $a_2 + u_{12} + \cdots + u_{n2} = 0$ implies $a_2 \in \text{Nil}_*(R)$. On the other hand, $e(x)^2 = e(x)$ implies $e_0^2 = e_0$, and $e(x)^2 = e_0 + (e_0a_1 + a_1e_0)x + (e_0a_2 + a_1^2 + a_2e_0)x^2 + \cdots + a_m^2x^{2m}$. So $a_2 = e_0a_2 + a_1^2 + a_2e_0$ by comparing the coefficient of x^2 in $e(x)^2 = e(x)$. Note that the sum of a unit and a nilpotent element must be a unit and $e_0a_2 + a_2e_0 \in \text{Nil}_*(R)$. It follows that $a_2 \in U(R)$. This is a contradiction, and the proof is complete. \square

From Proposition 3.2, the following corollary is immediate.

COROLLARY 3.3. *For any 2-primal ring R , the polynomial ring $R[x]$ is not n -clean.*

We conclude this paper with the following proposition.

PROPOSITION 3.4. *For any 2-primal ring R , the polynomial ring $R[x]$ is not semiclean.*

Proof. Assume the contrary, then $x = p(x) + u(x)$ where $p(x)$ is a periodic element and $u(x)$ is a unit. Let $p(x) = p_0 + p_1x + \cdots + p_nx^n$ and $u(x) = u_0 + u_1x + \cdots + u_nx^n$. Since R is 2-primal, $u_i \in \text{Nil}_*(R)$ for each $i \geq 1$ by [3, Theorem 2.4]. By comparing the coefficient of $x = p(x) + u(x)$, we have $p_1 + u_1 = 1$, which implies p_1 is a unit in R , and $p_i + u_i = 0$ gives $p_i \in \text{Nil}_*(R)$ for each $i \geq 2$. Clearly we can assume that $p(x)^s = p(x)^t$ for positive integers $s > t \geq 2$. Then a routine calculation shows that the coefficient of x^s in $p(x)^s$ is

$$\sum_{i_1+i_2+\cdots+i_s=s} p_{i_1}p_{i_2}\cdots p_{i_s} = p_1^s + a \quad \text{for some } a \in \text{Nil}_*(R). \tag{3.2}$$

While the coefficient of x^s in $p(x)^t$ is

$$\sum_{j_1+j_2+\dots+j_t=s} p_{j_1} p_{j_2} \dots p_{j_t} = b \quad \text{for some } b \in \text{Nil}_*(R). \quad (3.3)$$

Comparing the coefficients of x^s on two sides of $p(x)^s = p(x)^t$, we have $p_1 \in \text{Nil}_*(R)$, which is a contradiction. \square

The above result is obtained by Ye [9] only for a commutative ring.

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