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## RIP, KIC: Koreans shouldn't miss you

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On the day after Seoul announced its plans to suspend operations at the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) – in response to the North's fourth nuclear test on January 6 and latest long-range rocket launch on February 7, the North Korean government ordered all South Korean nationals to leave the complex.

If that's not a petulant cry of "You can't dump me, I'm dumping you," I don't know what is!

It has since been reported that all South Koreans who had worked in the KIC have safely returned and that the South Korean government has also cut off electric power transmission to the complex.

When President Park Geun-hye's administration negotiated with the North Koreans to reopen the KIC after a five-month hiatus in 2013, I was livid. I thought that it was a golden opportunity for South Korea to finally wash its hands off the ugly mess that was the Sunshine Policy and walk away from that cursed thing. Considering how the ROKS *Cheonan* and Yeonpyeongdo were still fresh in everyone's memory at the time and the North Koreans had recently conducted a third nuclear test, it made no sense to me that Park would want to reopen the KIC.

I remember saying that day "With hawks like these, who needs doves?"

Naturally, when Park spoke of the need for the free world to punish North Korea with "bone-numbing" sanctions recently, I had a hard time taking her seriously. In fact, I thought it was nothing more than a cynical ploy to appear to be doing something while actually doing nothing. So recent events have certainly taken me by surprise. It has been a pleasant surprise, but a surprise nonetheless. Although the KIC ought to have been shut down years ago (and preferably never allowed to see the light of day), I suppose better late than never.

There is no doubt that the approximately \$100 million per year that Seoul has funneled into North Korea through Kaesong pales in comparison to the billions that North Korea earns from its exports to China. However, it makes no sense to use that to claim that shutting down the KIC is a mistake.

To use an analogy, if I told a morbidly obese man that it wouldn't make sense for him *not* to eat a slice of chocolate cake for dessert because refraining from doing so would make little difference to his already clogged arteries – seeing how he had eaten a grotesque amount of food for dinner just moments ago – wouldn't anyone rightfully accuse me of enabling a horrid lifestyle?

## NO GOOD REASON

China is the second-largest economy in the world, a military powerhouse, and also one of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. As such, South Korea's options are limited when it comes to preventing Beijing from propping up the Kim regime. However, as late as it may be, by finally deciding that it cannot simply allow South Korean taxpayers' money to be used in any way to help build up the North's arsenal or prop up Kim Jong Un's lackies, the South Korean government has finally taken a principled stand.

How many times has the North Korean government threatened to turn South Korea into "a sea of fire?" How many South Korean soldiers, sailors, marines, and civilians have been maimed and killed by the North Korean government's "continuation of politics by other means?" Also, why must South Koreans live and work to pay for North Korean elites? Why is that the good?

And how much more South Korean blood must be spilled before people realize that it is a gross perversion of justice and morals to insist that South Koreans continue to fork over their hard-earned money to a gangster government that intends to do them harm?

It also makes little sense to mourn the closure of the KIC because it somehow acted as a window to the outside world for the 55,000 North Koreans who worked there. At one time, it might have been the only significant window to the outside world that some North Koreans had. However, that is no longer the case.

It is widely known now that the North Korean people have more access to information from the outside world than ever before, as more North Koreans are secretly watching foreign movies and the black markets are shaking up the country more than South Korea's National Intelligence Service ever dared to hope. Furthermore, the increased use of cellphones among the North Korean people, both registered and unregistered, means that as far as being a source of information to the outside world goes, the KIC with all of its bureaucratic controls and limits has been made obsolete.

There is also another reason why the KIC's closure is a blessing. To put it bluntly, when you stare long into the abyss, the abyss stares back into you.

To explain, as Casey Lartigue wrote in an op-ed in the *Korea Times* in 2013: "Stephen Linton of the Eugene Bell Foundation pointed out at a Cato Institute event in 2010 that countries tend to adopt North Korea's tactics. 'South Korea tries to approach North Korea the way North Korea approaches South Korea, by funneling everything through government ministries, by strangling in a sense or denying its private sector full participation,' Linton said. The result is too much government, not enough private sector activity in dealing with North Korea."

The obvious end result is that the KIC was always nothing more than a chess piece that was being used by both governments to influence each other. Is it then any wonder why after nearly 14 years, the KIC has failed to convince the North Korean regime to abandon *Juche* and adopt the market economy? The KIC merely cemented the Kim regime's hold on power. It did nothing to bring about any meaningful change whatsoever.

In other words, there was far too much government involvement, which necessarily came at the expense of genuine cross-border private-sector activity – actual free trade relatively unmolested by either governments – and it failed to achieve any of its political goals.

The KIC was the final remnant of that snake oil people called the Sunshine Policy. Now that the KIC has been shut down and the buildings are about to become a North Korean military installation – only time will tell what kind of military installation and how the U.S.-ROK alliance ought to deal with it – the Sunshine Policy is finally dead and buried. Good riddance to bad rubbish.

RIP, Sunshine Policy, in hell.