



Hillary, Go Home! Leave the Koreas to the Koreans!

by **Joshua Snyder**

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Speaking in Seoul yesterday, "U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says the world has a duty to respond to sinking of a South Korean warship that has been blamed on North Korea" – [Clinton: World must act on SKorean ship sinking.](#)

"After talks with South Korean leaders Wednesday, Clinton told reporters the attack, which

killed 46 sailors, was an 'unacceptable provocation' by the North and the 'international community has a responsibility and a duty to respond.'"



Madam Secretary is right that it was indeed an "unacceptable provocation," but wrong that the "international community has a responsibility and a duty to respond." The "unacceptable provocation" was against South Korea, which reserves the right to respond. Seoul's hands are tied by all this talk about some abstraction called "the international community," the same phantom which only emboldened Pyongyang, knowing it to be a myth, to provoke in the first place.

This kind of boilerplate just plays into Kim Jong-il's hands. With it, he has

scored a propaganda victory, which he will use to bolster his domestic support. Nothing can be used to unite a people to its government like threats from the outside, as Americans learned in 2001.

There will be no resumption of the Korean War, which has not yet ended, as it would spell the end of the Kimist *régime* and Kim Jong-il knows it. The South has two-and-a-half times the people and forty times the economic output as the North, not to mention a couple of inches in average height and a much stronger military, even without the U.S. presence.

What's more, the South has political and, more importantly, economic freedom, one glimpse of which, which an open conflict would surely allow, would consign the Kimist *régime* to the trash bin of Korean history. This is not 1950, when both parts of the peninsula were equally poor and backward. (The North was actually better off back then.)

Kim Jong-il knows this and will push only so far as to get what he wants and needs for his own personal survival. I don't know whether to declare him a genius, or to declare the Clinton, Bush, and Obama *régimes* (not to mention South Korea's Kim and Roh *régimes*) morons for cutting deal after deal with this thug for the past decade-and-a-half, during which time North Korea became the largest recipient of U.S. aid in Asia. Had we pursued a policy of benign neglect, the North Korean state might by now have withered away.

[Doug Bandow](#) recently argued that "the ROK's military alliance with America makes it more difficult for both nations to act in their respective interests" – [Avoiding Pyongyang](#). Noting that "there is little the DPRK can do to harm the United States," Mr. Bandow reminded us that "Washington is stuck in the center of Korean affairs today only because of the U.S.-ROK alliance, which provides a security guarantee to South Korea with no corresponding benefit to America."

"The sinking of the *Cheonan* was an outrage, but it was an outrage against the ROK," he said, suggesting that the incident "should not be an issue of great concern to America, which normally would offer diplomatic backing but not military support to a democratic friend." On the Korean side, he noted that "the South finds its decision-making, even on the question of its national survival, affected and directed by American policy makers half a world away." Restated, "Seoul finds its future being decided at least in part in Washington, where America's, not South Korea's, interests understandably are treated as paramount."

Mr. Bandow concluded by suggesting that "both sides should use this crisis to rethink an alliance that has outgrown its original security justification," and saying, "Neither the ROK nor the United States is well-served by a relationship where South Korea's fate is decided in



Washington."

South Korea was attacked, not America, much less the world. We heard this same kind of internationalist blathering sixty years ago, shortly before another Democrat president got America involved in its first undeclared, United Nations-sponsored war on this very peninsula.



Fabiano Choi Hong-jun, chairperson of the Catholic Lay Apostolate Council of Korea, has the right approach: "With Christian faith, we view this as another ordeal on the way toward national reconciliation and we must keep hope" – [Church leaders pray to ease Korean tension](#). He continued, "We need to pray for peace and reconciliation."

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An American Catholic son-in-law of Korea, Joshua Snyder [[send him mail](#)] lives with his wife and two children in Pohang, where he lectures English at a science and technology university. He blogs at [The Western Confucian](#).

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