

Protecting Military Land When the Army Leaves (1999)

Dr. Joshua Ginsberg, Director of Asia Program, Wildlife Conservation Society

The DMZ, while unique in the Korean Peninsula, represents a common manifestation of the way in which politically and militarily sensitive lands become, almost *de facto*, valuable areas for wildlife conservation. Across Asia, and around the world, military lands, border regions, war zones, and other sensitive areas frequently harbor extensive wildlife populations. The reasons for this are simple: human population densities in these areas are usually low and/or enforcement of law is usually strict. While limited consumption of wildlife can be a tool for conservation, strict limitation of access, and little or no use of the land is clearly a better prescription for saving wildlife in the short and often in the long term.

In the long term, however, wars end, border regions are stabilized, and military lands are returned to civilian use. When this happens, increased demands are put on the former military lands, leading to potential degradation and loss of the unique fauna and flora which have formerly been directly, or more often indirectly, protected. This phenomenon is common around the world. In the Philippines, the forests surrounding Subic Bay Naval Base were well protected for half a century. While these forests were not extensive, they did harbor rare and important fauna, including the largest populations of the endemic Philippine Giant Fruit Bat, and the endangered Golden-Crowned Flying Fox. With rapid economic development, these populations have significantly declined. Closer to home, decommissioning of the Stewart Airforce Base led to a push for development of a new airport, and of the 8,000 acre forest area bordering the base. Only by timely intervention was this area designated a State Forest.

Clearly, when land use changes it often changes quickly. Hence, forward thinking, and planning are critical to ensuring that important wildlife areas now protected by military designations remain protected for the long-term. The Korean DMZ, while well protected now, is certain to be less well protected in the future. The linear configuration of the DMZ will make conservation planning all that more important – in biological terms it is more “corridor” than “protected area,” more “edge” than “center.” As such, conservation plans for the DMZ must proceed swiftly, and we must develop conservation and land use management plans which put the protection of the DMZ’s fauna and flora at their center.

World Bank Project Assistance to Transboundary Reserves (1999)

Dr. Kathy MacKinnon, Senior Biodiversity Specialist, World Bank

The World Bank is supporting several transboundary protected area projects and international cooperation to support regional conservation efforts, both under its regular lending program and its Global Environmental Fund portfolio. Such projects in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe illustrate some of the particular challenges, opportunities and benefits of transnational cooperation for conservation. Many of the cooperation mechanisms tested and lessons learned for transboundary cooperation are relevant to conservation endeavors in the DMZ in Korea.

Korean Security Issues – Domestic and International Perspectives (1999)
Dr. Robert A. Scalapino, Professor Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley

The political-security issues involving the two Koreas constitute the most immediate and most complex problem confronting Asia-Pacific. The Korean peninsula is one of the most highly militarized regions of the world, with heavy concentrations near the DMZ. Military modernization plans on both sides, moreover, must be of concern.

The prospects for tension reduction are currently uncertain. North Korean politics have been heavily militarized, with Kim Jong-Il's power resting upon a military base despite recent moves toward greater institutionalization. The economy is still failing, but signs of cautious movement toward economic change can be seen, with the pace quickening.

The contrast with the ROK is striking. In recent decades, the South has moved from an authoritarian-pluralist system to a democratic order despite traditionalist elements in personal politics. And notwithstanding the economic crisis of recent vintage, the ROK enjoys productivity and living standards vastly superior to those of North Korea

North-South relations have a history of sporadic advances followed by retreats and an absence of contacts. The greatest advances in North-South relations up to date have been on the economic front. In this setting, the policies of the major powers are crucial. The on-going Six Party Talks testify to an element of common interest in seeing peace and stability maintained on the Korean peninsula. The period immediately ahead will be very important in determining the broad direction of U.S.-North Korean relations.

China comes closest at present to having a genuine two-Koreas policy, but beneath the surface, there are doubts both in China and in North Korea about each other. However, China strongly favors a continuance of the status-quo rather than reunification by whatever means. Thus, it wants neither a collapsed Korea nor a nuclear Korea. Hence, it will cooperate in projecting an evolutionary approach.

Japan's policies toward the two Koreas are complicated because of a negative historical background. Further, divisions within the Korean community living in Japan add problems. Thus far, moreover, Japan and North Korea have not been able to resolve a number of issues. Hence, Japan tilts toward South Korea, especially because of important economic ties. However, Tokyo has not ruled out improvement of relations with the North.

For the present, the Russian Federation is not a major player with respect to Korea due to its serious domestic problems. However, it is attempting to rebuild its relations with the North, shattered in the early 1990s. Relations with the South Korea are reasonably good, but presently minimal.

Two scenarios for Korea can be envisaged for the future. The negative scenario is one leading to conflict. The positive scenario involves an evolutionary path for North Korea leading to greater contact with its neighbors. While realization of the latter will not be

easy, and will depend heavily upon the policies of North Korea , it is the only scenario that can solicit international cooperation.