

The Value of Preserving the DMZ Eco-system (2003)

Dr. Edward O. Wilson, Professor Emeritus of Biology, Harvard University

Every country has three sources of wealth: economic, cultural and biological. At the present time, we are preoccupied just about everywhere with economic and cultural wealth, almost as though the natural world and the rest of life does not exist—or, if granted that it exists, it does not really matter. But the natural world is enormously important, whether we choose to think about it or not.

Have you ever wondered how we, our generation, will be remembered a thousand years from now, when we are as remote as Charlemagne and Genghis Khan? In the prevailing world view of our time, so much dominated by economics, politics and religion, what might we have overlooked about our place in history? What are we neglecting, at risk of losing forever? The answer most likely a thousand years from now, in fact, just a hundred years from now, is the following: much of the rest of life, of biological diversity, of the world's natural environment, of the Creation if you prefer a religious term, and with all that, a lot of our environmental security and, just as important, part of what it means to be human.

In a few generations, the Korean War will have largely faded from memory. Even now, in the United States, it's called the forgotten war. It will be crowded out by too many other events. The wounds will have healed, and the cease-fire line will have evolved into a historical curiosity. If, on the other hand, the DMZ is kept as a peace sanctuary, preserving a large part of Korea's rich biodiversity including endangered species, this generation will be remembered and blessed for it. If, on the other hand, the two Koreas let the opportunity slip away, it will be the folly that their people in time will least likely forgive them. To create a sanctuary will cost almost nothing. To plow the recovered land under will inflict enormous opportunity cost. What is biodiversity? It's the totality of variation in life.

Our relation to biodiversity can be put in a nutshell as follows: In the past several decades, scientists have found the biosphere to be richer in variety than ever conceived. That biodiversity is being eroded at an accelerating rate by human activity, especially to destruction of wild habitats. With the permanent loss of 90 percent of our original habitat, which is occurring on the Korean peninsula, about 50 percent of the resident wild species are doomed to early extinction. In Hawaii, to take a well-documented example, the near elimination of most of the lowland forests, followed by

the invasion of alien species, has extinguished all but 25 of the original 125 or so native Hawaiian bird species, and most of the remaining 25 are now endangered.

The loss of species is no trivial matter. The average life of a species, such as the three crane species, leopard and Asiatic black bear still hanging on in the DMZ forest, is about one million years. Before coming of humanity, new species worldwide were evolving in existence at the rate of, very roughly, one per million per year; and species were going extinct at about the same rate. Human activity has increased the extinction rate world wide by some 1,000 to 10,000 times, while reducing the birth rate, again mostly by the destruction of habitats. At the present rate of loss worldwide, the planet would—without exaggeration—see half its species of plants and animals vanish or be reduced to critically endangered status by the end of this century.

There are many reasons for each country in turn to cherish and preserve its own natural environments and native species. One is that the fauna and flora are part of deep history. The remembered heritage of a country did not start with the modern era of civilization. It did not start with agricultural and villages or even further back with the arrival of the first *homo sapiens* as hunter-gatherer tribes. It began millions of years ago with the evolution of native plants and animals that found the living environment on which our own lives depend and continues to form it to this day.

The wealth offered by biodiversity, and Korea has thousands of native species in its reserves and in the DMZ, is enormous, even in simple bottom-line terms. Let me cite just one opportunity for the DMZ sanctuary. As an international park, it has economic potential for tourism far beyond any other conceivable use, including resettlement by farms and towns. Koreans and visitors are likely to flock to it. In the United States, to use a reasonable comparison, more people visit the national parks and historical monuments than attend professional sports events. The annual yield to the Gross Domestic Product of the National Forest System was estimated for the year 2000 to be \$131 billion (with a B), of which 85 percent was expected from recreation, versus only 3 percent from logging. The same disproportion was estimated for the 3 million jobs sustained by the forest economy.

My friend John Sawhill, President of the Nature Conservancy until his death two years ago, expressed the matter exactly right. He said, a society is defined not only by what it creates but what it refuses to destroy. I am an ecologist and conservationist, and not an economist or political analyst, but it appears to me that at every level, from historical and moral and biological to social and economic policy, the establishment

of a DMZ peace sanctuary where all of life, human, animal and plant, is cherished and protected, would be a win-win decision for the Korean people and the world.

U.S. Relations with North and South Korea (2003)

Dean Stephen Bosworth, former U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea

I am delighted with my connection to the DMZ Forum. There are new realities in U.S.-South Korean relations—a growing strain between the countries. There is a rise of anti-Americanism in Korea and contempt in the U.S. for South Korea. Americans did not appreciate the vigils in Korea in December 2002 despite the death of two school children. The U.S. has shifted its attention since 9/11 to Southeast Asia from Northeast Asia, to Northeast's disadvantage. That is because of the perceived threat of Islamic terrorism in the Southeast. We are more preoccupied with the possibility that we can be the victims; unfreezing nuclear weapons gets our attention.

From South Korea's perspective, 2003 is much different from 1973, 1983, 1993. Korea is more self-confident; it's an economic and political success. In one generation, South Korea has gone from a military dictatorship to becoming the 12th largest economy in the world with a per capita income above \$10,000 a year.

Korea has endured over 100 years of foreign troop occupation. The U.S. presence since World War II has been beneficial, to fight and to deter aggression—but now South Korea sees a lowered threat from North Korea—so young people question the need of U.S. military there. The government, older people and the elites don't agree with the young, but South Koreans feel less threatened because they have seen more of the North Koreans through government and public contacts. They believe that North Korea is so weak that they present no threat. They're wrong! Nuclear is now a concern of the U.S. and neighboring countries. We are concerned they will sell their nuclear capacity to terrorists. But South Korea is more worried about American behavior—that we might choose a military solution. South Korea would be very vulnerable. So South Korea is urging the U.S. to engage in diplomacy. The Chinese may have a formula for allowing that—bilateralism within a multilateral context. Only within this week, I have become somewhat sanguine about a solution because of the Chinese proposal.

I had assumed that the U.S. military would remain even with a North-South agreement. Once the North Korean threat evaporates, that might not happen. The U.S. might remove all ground forces and possibly even air. The U.S. army is repositioning its forces from the DMZ—the Defense Department argues that it is for military efficiency. But South Korean troops are left in harm's way. In fact, there are 50,000 U.S. citizens in Seoul who are in danger from the north.

In the US., we have to accept more than before that South Korea is a partner different from South Korea of years ago. U.S.-Korean relations are closer than to other Asian countries. Some 40,000 Koreans are studying here. There are many Korean-Americans.

I am no longer confident about U.S. - North Korean relations. North Korea may have taken a lesson from Iraq—assuming that had Saddam had nuclear weapons, the U.S. may not have invaded. In fact, nuclear weapons are not an effective deterrent for North Korea. They are not needed—Seoul can be hit by artillery and missiles can hit Japan. Becoming a nuclear power isolates North Korea more, so it hurts its security.

Within the U.S. government, there is a disagreement on strategy. William Perry says we should negotiate to get rid of the nuclear weapons. The other side says we should cordon off North Korea, intercepting their ships. I agree with Perry, though the policies are not exclusive. But a *cordon sanitaire* would not be practical. We can't seal off North Korea unless we show the world we are making a good faith effort for a peaceful approach. Sealing is nonsensical in any case; we know the border between North Korea and China and Russia is economic not political. But the Administration can't agree within itself. With 50,000 U.S. hostages in Seoul, there is no practical military solution. Also, we would need South Korean, and Japanese approval to act militarily.

The DMZ Veterans Association (2003) **David Benbow, President and Founder**

The DMZ Veterans Association maintains a website through which American service people who served in Korea can keep in touch with each other and exercise political influence where they have a common problem, e.g., gaining an admission from the Department of Defense that Agent Orange was sprayed in and around the Korean DMZ in 1968 and 1969 and getting the VA to change its policies, allow testing of Korean vets of that time period and provide treatment if needed.

In a survey of members the idea of a peace park and environmental sanctuary in the DMZ was favored by 93%, and a substantial number said they would visit the DMZ peace park.

It's Up To The NGOs (2003)

John Klotz, representative of the Sierra Club to the UN

I believe there is a new era of citizen activism in the world. Due to the internet, the power of nations is fading compared to the civil society. Non-governmental organizations are more credible in the public arena now than governments or corporations. We can make things happen. The DMZ as an environmental peace park is an idea whose time has come; it combines peace and the environment, the two great activist movements today. While the U.S. government acts unilaterally, people are looking to the U.S. environmental and peace movements to ameliorate the harsh Administration stance. It is a great vision: peace and environmental protection on what was a horrible battleground.