Introduction

History of Region, Actors, and Geography

Korea is a small peninsula located between China and Japan, with the Yellow Sea located to the west, the South Sea to the south and the Sea of Japan to the east (see Appendix A). Most of the peninsula is covered by mountains and hills that get larger and steeper to the northeast. For the most part, the Korean peninsula experiences a temperate monsoonal climate, but the T’aebaesan Mountain Range protects the east coast from the winter monsoons while the west coast is pounded by torrential winter rains. Historically, the peninsula was dotted with small fishing communities along the coasts, and had a very poor rural economy until the 1960’s (Kraig 2003). South Korea is now considered to be a fast developing country (with an export-based economy), while North Korea continues to lag behind it’s southern counterpart in terms of economic development (de Mesquita and Mo 1997).

The Korean peninsula existed as a unified region under the rule of the Silla Kingdom, sharing the same language and culture until the end of the 19th century (see Appendix B). In 1910 Korea was annexed to Japan, but not without resistance from the Korean people. When the Japanese surrendered in World War 2, the major world leaders at that time (United States, Great Britain and China), declared Korea to be an independent nation. Two years later the Soviet Union declared war with Japan, and in a secret agreement between the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union, the Korean
peninsula was divided along the 38th parallel in an effort to disarm all Japanese troops. The Soviet Union gained control of the North and established the Korean Communist Regime. The U.S. gained control of the South and eventually established the Government of the Republic of Korea.

Attempts were made to create a unified Korean government, but unreasonable demands from the Soviets (e.g., refusal to consult with non-communist ideologies) made it impossible (Vatcher 1958). The United Nations (UN) set up a temporary commission to supervise a general election, but the North refused to grant the UN permission to enter. By 1948, only 3 years after the country was divided, North Korea had developed a full army and wanted to spread their regime to the South. South Korea, under the influence of the United States (US), felt that division was a better option than communism and therefore kept their democratic government. In 1950 the North launched an attack on South Korea, which started the Korean War that continued until 1953 when the Korean Armistice Agreement put an end to the fighting (Bailey 1992). At the signing of the Armistice, South Korea sought a peaceful resolution to the conflict, and accepted help from the UN, while North Korea felt that Koreans should be left to deal with their problems independently.

The situation today is not much different; South Korea is still seeking a peaceful resolution, but North Korea has been developing nuclear power, which most world leaders see as a problem that requires resolution before unification can occur. South Korea has made several attempts to develop a “peaceful unification”, all of which have been rejected by North Korea. During the 1970’s, North Korea started digging infiltration tunnels under the demilitarized zone that divides the two countries (DMZ) and
tried to gather support from other communist nations to use force against South Korea (Korean Overseas Information Service Ministry of Cultural Information 1979). The US has tried to play a supportive role throughout this conflict, but currently the majority of disputes and hostilities that hinder a “peaceful unification” are driven by differences between North Korea and the United States, rather than differences between North and South Korea.

Problem Statement

The idea of developing a peace park around the DMZ is considered to be a viable policy option to bring peace and unification to the Korean Peninsula, and has gained momentum in recent years (Hayes and Zarsky 1994, Kim 1997, Westing 1998). The DMZ is an area that is approximately 4 km wide and 241 km across (see Appendix A), and has been relatively undisturbed by humans since it was created over 50 years ago. There are several species of rare plants and animals that are found there, making the establishment of a transboundary biological reserve a potential solution that would generate income for the region along with building a foundation for trust and cooperation between North and South Korea.

Theoretical Context

While this is inherently an applied project, it is important to understand two constructs that provide the theoretical context of this project. The following section briefly discusses the notions of “Parks for Peace” and “Low Politics and Issues of National Security”.

Parks for Peace
The World Conservation Union (IUCN) notes that much confusion surrounds terms like Protected Area, Transboundary Protected Area (TBPA), and Parks for Peace (i.e., Peace Parks). For clarification, IUCN defines Parks for Peace as:

“TBPA’s that are formally dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and to the promotion of peace and cooperation”.

In other words, TBPA’s are special types of protected areas, and Parks for Peace are a special type of TBPA. In this project we use the term Parks for Peace in reference to the IUCN definition (See Sandwith et al. 2001). In addition, IUCN has developed management objectives for Parks for Peace. These include:

i) Supporting long-term co-operative conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem services, and natural and cultural values across boundaries;

ii) Promoting landscape-level ecosystem management through integrated bio-regional land-use planning and management;

iii) Building trust;

iv) Preventing and/or resolving tension;

v) Promoting the resolution of armed conflict;

vi) Sharing biodiversity and cultural resource management skills;

vii) Promoting more efficient and effective cooperative management programs;

viii) Promoting access to, and equitable and sustainable use of natural resources;

ix) Enhancing the benefits of conservation.

As discussed previously, North and South Korea continue to be adversaries. In addition, the DMZ contains rare flora and fauna, and is therefore valued for its potential
as an ecological reserve. The Parks for Peace strategy appears to be the most logical tool to encourage dialogue in an effort to preserve the ecological integrity of the DMZ, and reduce tension between North and South Korea. From this starting point, it is hoped that cooperative establishment and management of a Parks for Peace will ultimately lead to the resolution of the armed conflict as well as long-term conservation of the DMZ’s ecological resources.

Low Politics and Issues of National Security

While there are examples of Parks for Peace (e.g., Peru/Ecuador), it remains unclear whether this strategy will be successful in resolving tensions between North and South Korea. In some instances, collaborative environmental initiatives have not been successfully linked with broader security issues such as the development of nuclear weapons and the resolution of armed conflict. India and Pakistan, for instance, have been cooperating on water issues since the 1960’s. Despite this cooperation, the Kashmir border conflict remains unresolved and both countries have developed nuclear weapons. In addition, Lowi (1993) argues that cooperation on water issues is not a viable strategy to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict because linking water cooperation with security concerns is unlikely to occur. While use of Parks for Peace have helped resolve conflicts and conserve natural resources in some cases, it is important to understand that it may not be a panacea for the Korean conflict.

Current Status and Obstacles

Current Geo-political Context

North and South Korea are still technically at war. While several attempts have been made to resolve this conflict, there is a long way to go before peace can officially be
declared. For example, despite their shared cultural history, the politics of the two
countries continue to separate them. In addition, North Korea has become more
politically and (ideologically) isolated since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end
of the Cold War (Henrikesen and Mo 1997, Hayes and Zarsky 1994). Finally, while both
North and South Korea prominently speak of re-unification, it is clear that each nation
prefers a unified Korea to have their respective form of government as the official one.

*Axis of Evil, Nuclear Weapons Development, War on Terror*

North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il has recently been branded by the current US
government as part of the “Axis of Evil” (Bush, State of the Union Address 2002). In
the West, he is mostly known for his eccentricities and policy failures leading to
disastrous social conditions such as starvation, however, his covert pursuit of nuclear
weapons capabilities have been cause for serious concern from leaders throughout the
world. While detailed information is held tightly by the Communist government, recent
admissions by North Korea have confirmed the existence of these programs, thereby
increasing tensions and creating regional policy crises.

Feeding the political situation in the North is the current ideology of Kim Jong
Il’s regime which can be described by the term, “juche”. The term is loosely translated as
“self-reliance” and was an idea developed by Kim Il Sung, the father of the present
leader. Nationalism is strongly emphasized and reliance on outside support is
discouraged. With support from Kim Jong-Il, the idea has developed into a religious
doctrine, which permeates all aspects of North Korean life and the thought processes and
belief systems of its people. (see Park 1996)
This belief in “juche” has led the North Korean government policy to clearly advocate reunification on the grounds that the Korean people are culturally and historically linked and remain artificially divided. In fact, a reunification march in 2004 is used by the propaganda-driven North Korean website to illustrate the point that South Korea is in desperate need of liberation from the Americans by the North, and in desperate need of a grand regime such as the one in the North (Government of North Korea 2003).

Failure of Sunshine Policy

South Korea has developed very differently from North Korea. The American occupation has lasted since the armistice of 1953 and a capitalist, democratic government has made South Korea prosper economically, financially, and technologically in comparison to North Korea. South Korea is actively seeking reunification for the same reasons as North Korea, however, South Korea has a drastically different vision of the end-product. According to a Korea Times special report in 2002 on foreign policy, President Kim Dae-jung's "Sunshine Policy" emphasizes the peaceful management of the Korean divide through engagement. Previous governments sought mainly to contain North Korea. The Sunshine Policy envisions greater interaction and the funneling of economic assistance and diplomatic favors from the South to the North, hoping to eventually soften North Korea's stances in the course of promoting peace and cooperation on the Korean peninsula. The Sunshine Policy offers the following three guiding principles: First, the country will not tolerate any armed provocation from the North. Second, the country will not absorb North Korea. Third, the country will actively seek reconciliation and cooperation (Korea Times 2002).
The foreign policy approach adopted by George W. Bush has effectively killed the Sunshine Policy. For example, when asked his opinion of Kim Jong-II, Bush remarked that he “loathed” his North Korean counterpart (LaFranchi and Bowers 2003). Moreover, the Bush Administration has refused to negotiate directly with North Korea as long as the Kim Jong-II continues to pursue his nuclear program, thus making direct dialogue virtually impossible. As the War on Terror replaces the Cold War cognitive lens, it remains unclear what US foreign policy approach will be adopted with respect to North Korea.

**Strategies for the Future**

Despite the obstacles, we identified two steps that may facilitate the development of a Park for Peace, while providing a policy strategy that may serve to reduce tensions. These steps are 1) renew dialogue with scenario planning, and 2) link a Park for Peace initiative with development of alternative (non-nuclear) energy sources. The following section briefly describes these strategies.

*Scenario Planning*

IUCN has recently undertaken scenario planning in an effort to think broadly about the future of protected areas (McNeely 2003). This technique has been applied in military and industrial contexts, and is useful for engaging traditionally opposing stakeholders. IUCN used scenario planning on a global scale, however, the tool can be applied at the site level. Through a written survey, this technique asks participants to construct “stories” that describe different, possible futures. Scenarios are neither predictions nor forecasts, rather, they are internally consistent stories grounded in the logic of current trends.
Scenario planning may be an effective catalyst for this Parks for Peace initiative because it leverages the power of the future (i.e., the potential for nuclear war) to discuss potentially sensitive and threatening issues. Through this process, actors have the opportunity to think more freely about the possible futures that their current actions are helping to create. In addition, individual participants involved in scenario planning exercises (who were previous adversaries) may emerge on friendlier terms (McNeely 2003). This increases the likelihood that these actors will work together in the future, while suggesting that scenario planning may be a useful tool with which to renew dialogue about a Park for Peace initiative.

*Linking Parks for Peace Initiative with Development of Alternative (non-nuclear) Energy Sources*

One of the justifications used by North Korea in defense of its nuclear program was the need for increased energy production. In addition, preventing the spread of nuclear weapons material and technology has long been a global, strategic interest of the United States. Therefore, creatively linking the proposed Park for Peace with the issue of alternative (non-nuclear) energy development may provide additional long-term traction for resolving this conflict. By doing so, North Korea would receive additional energy (through non-nuclear development), a cooperative mechanism for protecting the DMZ’s ecological resources would be established (i.e., Park for Peace), and the United States would realize its strategic interest in further preventing the spread of nuclear weapons technology and material.
Appendix B

Timeline: Until the end of the 19th century – Unified under Silla Kingdom, had the same language and culture.

1895 – Sino-Japanese War

1905 – Russ-Japanese War

1910 – Korea annexed to Japan as a result of the war.

1919 – Independence Movement to resist Japanese Imperialism

1943 – Cairo Conference – agreed after the surrender of Japan in WW2, Korea would become independent (US, Great Britain and Chinese leaders).

1945 – Potsdam Declaration – Soviet declared war with Japan. A secret agreement was made by US, Britain and Soviet Union to divide Korea on the 38th Parallel to disarm all Japanese troops. The Soviet Union got the north, and the US got the south. The Soviet Union established the Korean Communist Regime.

1946 – Meetings were held to create a unified Korean government, but high demands form the Soviets lead to no outcome.

1947 – The US brought the situation to the UN and a general election under the supervision of the UN was called for.

1948 – A UN temp. Commission was set up in Korea, but was refused entry into the north. The first election took place in the south and the Government of the Republic of Korea was inaugurated and Syngman Rhee was elected president. The north had developed a full army and was ready to spread the regime to the south. The south felt that staying divided was better than communism. Kim Il-sung was put into power.

1949 – The Republic applied for admission to the UN and was denied by a Soviet veto.

1950 – The north launched a full-scale invasion on the south.

1953 – The Korean Armistice Agreement ended the war.

1954 – The Geneva Conference was held; the south wanted the help of the UN to resolve the conflict and supported troops until everything was settled and the north wanted the UN out of it and felt that the Koreans could deal with it own their own. There was no resolution.

1960 – After being in power for 12 years, President Rhee resigned.
1961 – A group lead by Park Chung Hee overthrew the government, and then Park became president in the south.

1970 – President Park Chung Hee proposed a “peaceful unification” which the north (under the leadership of Kim Il-sung) rejected. The north still wanted to spread communism to the south.

1971 – The north starts digging infiltration tunnels under the DMZ.

1973 – The north boycotted all talks about coming to a peaceful resolution.


1975 – Kim Il-sung tries to gather support from other communist nations to use force against the south.

1976 – Two US Army officials were murdered, and 9 UN command personal were wounded when they assaulted North Korean guards. Some blamed Pres. Nixon’s trip to China in 1972, the fall of Vietnam, and Watergate because these 3 events changed things in Asia so much that there was fear the US had less strength in the Korea situation.

1979 – Ten percent of US troops had been removed from South Korea. Pres. Park was assassinated and Choi Kyu Hah was elected.

1981 – President Reagan stopped removing troops until relationships improved between the north and south.

1987 – Roh Tae Woo elected president in the south.

1991 – Talks between the north and the south were held, and it was agreed that they would not use force against each other and they would increase trade and communication.

1992 – Kim Young Sam was elected president (south).

1994 – Kim Il-sung died (had been the dictator since 1948). The north signed an agreement with the US to stop making nuclear arms.

1998 – While Clinton is in office, he adopts the Sunshine Policy to deal with North Korea and the threat of nuclear arms. He encourages talks between North and South Korea in an attempt to end the missile program in the North.

2000 – A Summit Meeting is held between the two Koreas, helping to improve relations. Kim Dea-Jung (President of South Korea) receives the Noble Peace Prize for his attempts to make peace with North Korea.
President Bush becomes less involved than Clinton, and does not trust North Korea to live up to any agreements that are made.

2001 – 37,000 U.S. Troops still in South Korea.

2002 – Bush states that North Korea is part of an “axis of evil” along with Iran and Iraq, for developing weapons of mass destruction, and relations between the two Koreas is made worse.
Bush attempts to have talks with North Korea, but they reject the offer.

November 17, 2003 – U.S. is to move troops back from the DMZ in an effort to reorganize U.S. troops throughout Asia, and encourages South Korea to send troops into Iraq because the threat of nuclear arms in North Korea and Iraq is continuing to be a problem.
Literature Cited


