

Partitioned States, Divided Resources: North/South Korea and Cases for Comparison

Peter Hocknell

Introduction

The delimitation of three-kilometre wide 'lines of separation' between the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Republika Srpska, within the new Bosnian state that emerged from the US-brokered accord of 14 December 1995, reminds us of the many consequences of partitioning a single state into two separate and distinct territorial entities. While a significant degree of attention will inevitably be given to the political and socio-economic ramifications of such a process, and understandably so, it is imperative that other long-term implications of partition are also recognised.

The focus of this article rests on the implications of dividing the management of integrated environmental ecosystems through partition. By examining in more detail the case of North/South Korea, it is argued that this particular feature, although not necessarily unique to partition, will often require greater and more complex treatment in subsequent years if initially left unaddressed.

The Concept of Partition

In terms of international boundaries, 'partition' is generally understood to describe a situation where a political-geographical entity is territorially divided into two or more separate parts. Partition accordingly has a strong functional character. Be it a case of nationalistic, political or ideological conflict amongst groups, the role of partition is often seen as a means of conflict management, if not of its resolution. It has generally been presented "as being a traditional and accepted method for terminating disputes outstanding amongst nations without recourse to war" (Klieman, 1980: 281), and "a very practical geographically highly relevant way to end war and to make peace" (van der Wusten and O'Loughlin, 1986: 21-22). In other words, although it may (and invariably does) result in significant population redistribution and social and economic cost to the host-state, and the international community at large, it is seen to be the

"best worst solution" (Waterman, 1984: 100), preferable to potential or actual war.

It is beyond the scope of this article to evaluate the short and long-term conditions of partition's effectiveness as a peaceful means of political and territorial management. Instead, it is the intention to discuss and illustrate partition in relation to the developing understanding of environmental security (both at the regional and local level), and the necessary management of transborder resources.

A Short History of Partition

Without wishing to dwell on the semantic questions that surround the concept of partition, for the purposes of this discussion it is useful to differentiate between what is understood by 'partition' and 'division'. Henderson and Lebow (1974) have made a distinction between two forms of partition – a partitioned state and a divided nation. Territorially, the former is "one that has disintegrated from internal strife among heterogeneous ethnic, linguistic, or religious groups that formerly coexisted as a single polity", while cases of the latter "possess high ethnic homogeneity, common historical traditions, and a previous record of successful political unity" (Walker, 1973: 263).

In most cases of partition, it is problematical to portray any one case as an example of state partition or nation division. Invariably, such a question represents the crux of the conflict, so it will depend on which group is under consideration. In the case of the Republic of Cyprus, for example, many Greek Cypriots (and Turkish Cypriots for that matter) will argue that the *de facto* partition of 1974 halted what was slow but steady progress towards a nation-state ideal. In contrast, many Turkish Cypriots and Turks saw *taksim* (partition) as the inevitable resolution of inter-communal conflict. In other words, on one hand the territory is seen as an unjustly divided nation, while on the other it is a naturally partitioned state.

Table 1: *Cases of Partition since 1900*

Territory Partitioned	Year(s) (duration)	Territories produced	Type of Partition
<i>Sweden</i>	1905	Sweden; Norway	Partitioned state
<i>French Syria</i>	1920-21	Syria; Lebanon	Partitioned state
<i>British Palestine</i>	1921	Palestine; Transjordan	Partitioned state
<i>Irish Free State</i>	1920-21	Irish Free State; Northern Ireland	Partitioned state
<i>Germany</i>	1945-1947 (until 1990)	Federal Republic of Germany; German Democratic Republic	Divided nation
<i>Palestine</i>	1947	Israel; Transjordan	Partitioned state
<i>British India</i>	1947	East and West Pakistan; India; West Bengal	Partitioned state
<i>French Indochina</i>	1949-54	Cambodia; Laos	Partitioned state
<i>Korea</i>	1953	North Korea; South Korea	Divided nation
<i>Vietnam</i>	1954 (until 1976)	North Vietnam; South Vietnam	Divided nation
<i>Ruanda-Urundi</i>	1962	Rwanda; Burundi	Partitioned state
<i>East and West Pakistan</i>	1971	Bangladesh; Pakistan	Partitioned state
<i>Republic of Cyprus</i>	1974	Republic of Cyprus; 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus'	Partitioned state
<i>Czechoslovakia</i>	1993	Czech Republic; Slovak Republic	Partitioned state
<i>Ethiopia</i>	1993	Ethiopia; Eritrea	Partitioned state
<i>Bosnia-Herzegovina</i>	1995	Muslim-Croat Federation; Republika of Srpska	Partitioned state

As can be seen, in certain cases, a nation will remain divided (e.g. Korea), while in others, various destabilising forces – such as the undermining of a particular ideological/economic regime, or less conspicuous practices of transborder socio-economic reintegration and nationalism – instigate the process of reunification (e.g. Germany).

It is widely acknowledged that there are inherent problems in classifying any case of partition as division of a 'nation'. The (de-)legitimisation of self-identifying groups remains a fundamental challenge to the world's state system, and contentious notions of nation-building and nation-destroying litter the history of territorial management (Griggs and Hocknell, 1995). In spite of these difficulties in classification, an attempt to categorise examples of state partition and nation division is made (Table 1). For the purposes of this review, only cases of partition occurring since 1900 are considered. Partitions which accompanied the collapse of empires are not included,¹ nor are instances of simple boundary line changes, transfers of relatively small parcels of territory from one state.

Instances of partitioned states include British India, Pakistan and Palestine, while the cases of Germany and Korea can be seen to represent what is understood by a divided nation. Classification is more troublesome when considering the cases of the Irish Free State and the Republic of Cyprus.

Other Divisions

It is possible to take Henderson and Lebow's idea a stage further, for it is argued that a 'nation' is not the only divide created by partition. The present day case of the Republic of Ireland illustrates this point. On one side of the argument, there are those who believe that cross-border cooperation can and will undermine the political and cultural roots of partition, particularly with the aid of the Single European Market. What Lyne (1990) has called 'technocratic anti-partitionism' has developed from the belief that the border is merely a temporary division, and that naturally-forming economic and cultural ties legitimise eventual reunification. In contrast, the pro-partition lobby display a sense of 26-county nationalism and accept, either implicitly or explicitly, that demands for territorial autonomy and nationhood on both sides of the boundary need to be satisfied. Here, the anti-partitionists see the island as an unjustly divided economic and administrative system (while to others, it remains a naturally partitioned state).

Divided Resources

This leads onto another divisionary characteristic of partitioning a state, and the focus of this article. The

division of the management of natural resources (e.g. river basins, cultivable land, fisheries, hydrocarbons) and infrastructural resources (e.g. municipal, commercial and historico-cultural infrastructure) raises serious questions concerning sustainable development and environmental security. Although not unique to boundaries of partition, it is the process of separating what were (notionally) unitary and integrated management systems – ranging from river basin management to urban planning – that makes division through partition so significant for state planners, environmental managers, and borderland communities.

Concern over the division of unitary, integrated natural environments follows a similar logic as concern over the division of a unitary nation, and, like the principle of self-determination, justification for reconciling the principle of permanent sovereignty over natural resources with the emerging duty to cooperate for the joint management of transboundary resources is gradually being acknowledged. Analysis of this form of division must recognise the conundrum of integrating ecocentric, environmental management with socio-economic development on an *international* scale. Transborder resource management challenges the core of the international legal order, grounded as it is on the sovereign right of control of activities within state borders. to another, or partitions not involving a land border.

Even so, there are a variety of institutional and organisational regimes that have developed in recent decades in order to bridge the inevitable problems of international cooperation (e.g. joint development zones, transborder parks), and these are receiving more supportive attention. An examination of recent proposals for the partitioned Korean peninsula, however, supports the argument that the implications of partition for long-term equitable and sustainable management deserve further analysis and recognition.

The Korean Peninsula and Demilitarised Zone

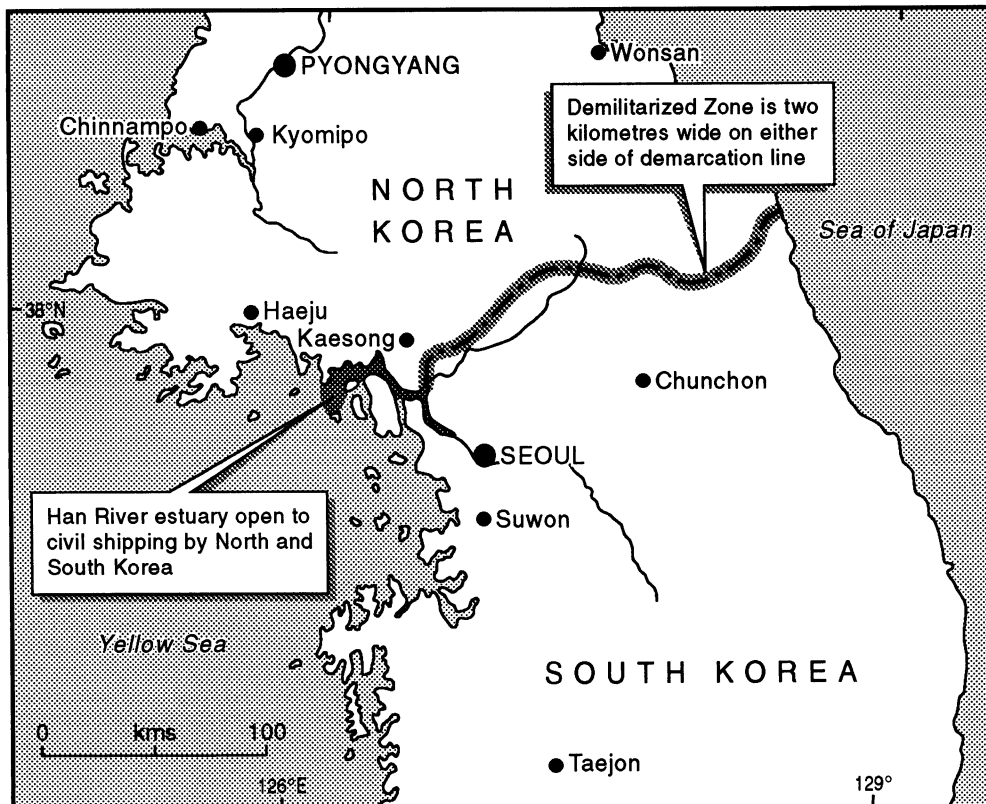
Between 1896 and 1904 the Soviet Union and Japan had used the 38th parallel as a military dividing line, but it was not until the 1945 Yalta Conference, involving the US, Great Britain and the Soviet Union, that plans for dividing the Korean peninsula along this northerly latitude were seriously considered. By the end of the Korean War (1950-

1953), and following the Korean Armistice Agreement on 27 July, 1953, the peninsula was

formally partitioned using the same criteria, with the Republic of Korea (ROK) in the south and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the north.

This demarcation line was never considered a permanent division, functioning initially as a temporary military administration boundary, and later, from 1953, as both a cease-fire line and mid-point for a Demilitarised Zone (DMZ). Although still officially following the 38th parallel, the line has since been significantly modified for various reasons of management (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The Korean peninsula and the Demilitarised Zone



The peninsula's DMZ is made up of land corridors and boundary zones on either side of the Armistice Line (the 'Military Demarcation Line') (Figure 2). With 2km (1.2 miles) of land corridor and, outside of that, 5km (3.1 miles) of boundary zone on either side, the controlled land area is 14km (8.7 miles) wide in total. It stretches for 249.4km (154.9 miles) from the Sea of Japan to the Yellow Sea. The core area, made up of the land corridors on either side, is 997.6km² while the total land area falling within the DMZ is 3,391.6km².

Originally an ideological partition, this split is now very much an economic one. Relative to North Korea, the ROK has witnessed dynamic industrial and urban development; with a population density of 1,230 people/square mile (compared with 477/square mile in the DPRK), South Korea has experienced economic and demographic growth that has further transformed the natural habitat of the peninsula.

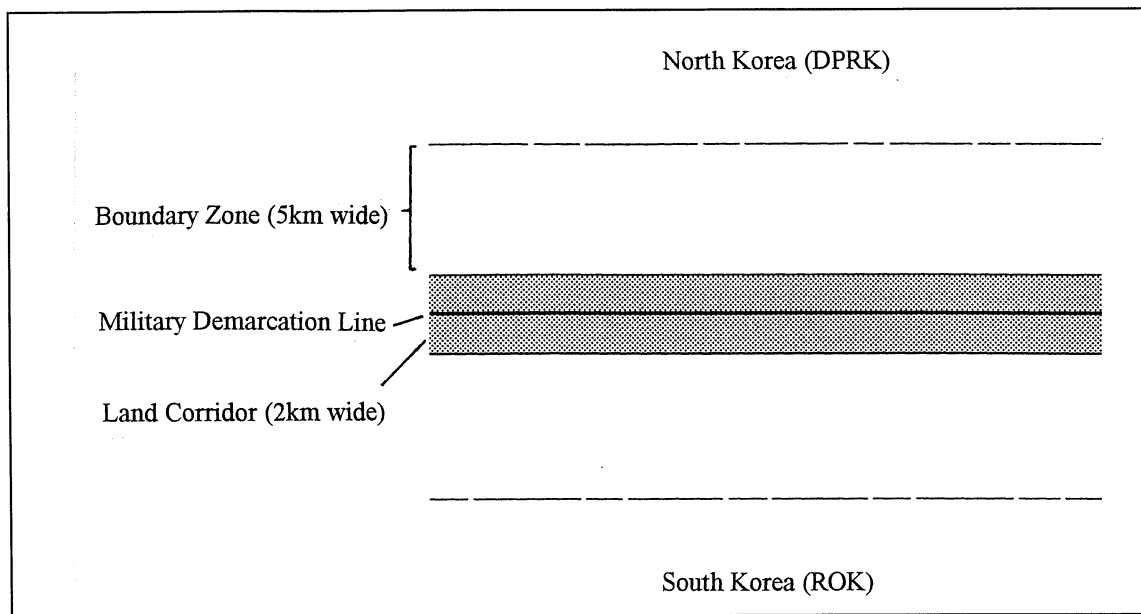
Environmentalists claim that unique landscapes and invaluable wetland habitats for fauna and flora are largely destroyed, and many biological resources (ranging from animals to microbes) are already endangered or threatened to become extinct (Kim, 1995: 4). They fear the peninsula is no longer '*Keum-Su Kang San*', translated as the 'land of embroidered rivers and mountains'.

The Korean Peace Bioreserves System Project²

Thought had been given to the management problems created by this artificial division of natural and environmental resources as early as the mid-1960s.³ However, it was not until 1991 that the DPRK and the ROK separately broached the issue by approaching UNEP in Nairobi. Both parties appeared interested in exploring the possibility of establishing a transfrontier reserve in the DMZ corridor, managed by both sides under a joint arrangement.

Since then, it appears the only significant interest has come from the ROK who raised the issue at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio. At the end of 1994, it became apparent that the ROK were keen to pursue the transfrontier reserve concept (Kim, 1995a), and that UNEP were still interested in the project. The idea of transforming what is now

Figure 2: Basic Features of the Demilitarised Zone⁴



characteristically a security landscape, back to some derivation of a natural landscape (Soffer and Minghi, 1986), now appears to be another issue on the diplomatic agenda.

This should not to be viewed as simply an environmental initiative, however; many South Koreans see the recreation of '*Keung-Su Kang San*', and the environmental security that would come with it, as an attractive confidence-building measure and one that may eventually lead to the peaceful integration of the two Koreas on the peninsula. The drive to promote the transfrontier reserve proposal is yet another form of anti-partitionism, or, adapting Lyne's concept, 'ecocentric anti-partitionism'.

The Korean Peace Bioreserves System (KPBRs) Project was initiated in 1994 and is therefore still in embryonic stage. Even so, with funding from the Asia Foundation (based in San Francisco), the initial process of promoting and coordinating international activities has begun (see, for example, Lee *et al.*, 1994) and an international Steering Committee and Advisory Board have been established. The former, charged with the crucial role of organising and managing the project activities, consists of six members representing the US, China, Japan, Russia, and most importantly, the DPRK and ROK.

There are at present proposals for the area contiguous to the DMZ to be widened from 5 to 10 km. The KPBRs would then occupy not only the corridors of the DMZ, but also the adjacent buffer

zones as a network of protected areas. The long-term goal of the proposal is to make the KPBRs the central part of a Korean Biodiversity Conservation Network (KOBCN), which itself would constitute a number of protected areas connected by 'nature corridors' and 'greenways'. It is proposed that the protected areas include: (a) nature reserves strictly for research and education, (b) national parks, (c) managed nature reserves, (d) protected landscapes or seascapes, (e) multiple-use management areas or managed resource areas, and (f) 'human ecosystem reserves' (Kim, 1995b).

This could formalise what has indirectly, and unconsciously, been a significant function of the border zone over the past four decades. The DMZ corridors have provided a sanctuary for many plants and animals as, since its establishment, the land area has been uninhabited and rigidly protected (Kim, 1995b).⁵ The forced inaccessibility has allowed the rehabilitation of damaged forests and the revegetation of farmlands. Paradoxically, it seems the militarisation of this area has created a 'safe haven' for fauna and flora. Indeed, according to South Korean scientific reports, many species which were reported to be either destroyed or extremely rare were (re)discovered in the DMZ corridor, and unique habitats for a number of endangered species of land vertebrates and freshwater fishes are located in the area immediately south of the DMZ (Kim, 1995b).

The concern is that the obvious political ramifications of a proposal of integration will be overpowering, and that legitimate environmental

fears will be subsumed by political/ideological interests. The recommendation of 'human ecosystem reserves', for example, would necessitate the process of North and South Koreans 'experimentally' forming bi-communal villages (Kim, 1996). Furthermore, in North Korea the proposal of losing land to biodiversity corridors – when the facts of falling soil fertility and a shortage of arable land need to be faced – would be currently difficult to accommodate. Perhaps even more fundamental is a somewhat aggressive anthropocentrism in the communist's approach to environmental concerns (Atkins, 1993).⁶

However, the Project team also have plans for two more stages before a formal bilateral agreement and a regulating KPBRs Authority can be envisaged. As with so many zones of restricted access, there remains a paucity of data on the biodiversity, geology, and hydrology of the DMZ. A research program addressing this issue would also need to consider alternative physical designs of the system, and analyse the inherently conflicting socio-economic implications for the peninsula.

As a whole, the proposal raises so many practical questions over issues of sovereignty and access, never mind political will, it seems likely that the integration of environmental resources on this scale will only occur with significantly greater convergence of political policies between both sides of the partition. In other words, following reunification.

Some conclusions and considerations

Along all international boundaries the process of managing what have become divided resources in anything resembling an equitable and sustainable manner is likely to be constrained. The process of partitioning a state – be it a permanent or temporary partition – is particularly problematic in that it separates potentially unitary and integrated management systems. From a more detailed analysis of the other cases of partition from this century, it is anticipated that there would be many instances where the implications of partition on the future management of key, and often scarce, natural and environmental resources have been overlooked. Clearly, while awaiting reunification, the challenge for ecocentric anti-partitionists is one of transcending or by-passing the realities of political integrity, inviolable borders and permanent sovereignty.

On 12 May, an anxious former US Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke was reported to have suggested that if the fragile Dayton structure were to collapse, this would result in the 'partition' of Bosnia-Herzegovina (OMRI, 13/5/96). It can be reasonably argued, following the conceptual considerations touched on above, that partition has already materialised in the Balkan region. Furthermore, it could be argued that perhaps there should be a little less concern with what the local and international communities have partitioned, and more with what they have divided.

References

- Atkins, P. J. (1993) 'The Dialectics of Environment and Culture: Kimilsungism and the North Korean Landscape', in Mikherjee, A. and Agnihotri, V. K. (eds.), *Environment and Development (Views from the East and West)*, Concept, New Delhi: 309-331
- DPRK (1990) *The Concrete Wall Dividing Korea into North and South*, Korea Pictorial: Pyongyang.
- Griggs, R. A. and Hocknell, P. R. (1995) 'Fourth World Faultlines and the Re-making of 'Inter-national' Boundaries', *Boundary and Security Bulletin*, 3, 3, (Autumn): 49-58, Durham: International Boundaries Research Unit.
- Henderson, G. and Lebow, R. N. (1974) 'Conclusions', in *Divided Nations in a Divided World*, Henderson, G., Lebow, R. N., Stoessinger, J. G. (eds.), David McKay: New York.
- Kim, K. C. (1995a) *Nature Conservation for the Korean posterity: A network of protected areas and greenways*, unpublished paper presented at the 'International Symposium on National Parks and Protected Areas in Korea', 11-13 May, 1995, Seoul: Korea.
- Kim, K. C. (1995b) *Korea Peace Bioreserves System: A Process Toward A New "Keum-Su Kang San"*, unpublished paper presented at the FANDMZC Symposium, 12 August, 1995, Seoul: Korea.
- Kim, K. C. (1996) Personal communication to author, 9 February, 1996.
- Klieman, A. S. (1980) 'The Resolution of Conflicts Through Territorial Partition: The Palestine Experience', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 22: 281-300.
- Lee, I.-K. et al. (eds.) (1994) *Biodiversity Korea 2000: A Strategy to Save, Study and Sustainably Use Korea's Biotic Resources*, Minumsa, Inc.: Seoul [in Korean].
- Lyne, T. (1990) 'Ireland, Northern Ireland and 1992: The Barriers to Technocratic Anti-Partitionism', *Public Administration*, 68, (Winter): 417-433.
- Kirkbride, W. A. (1985) *Panmunjon: Facts About the Korean DMZ*, Hollmyn International Corp.: Elizabeth, New Jersey.

- OMRI [Open Media Research Institute], No. 85, Part II, 13/5/96.
- Pounds, N. J. G. (1964) 'History and Geography: A Perspective on Partition' *Journal of International Affairs*, 18: 161-172.
- Soffer, A. and Minghi, J. V. (1986) 'Israel's security landscapes: The impact of military considerations on land uses', *Professional Geographer*, 38, 1: 28-41.
- Unwin, P. T. H. (1992) *The Place of Geography*, Harlow: Longman.
- van der Wusten, H. and O'Loughlin, J. (1986) 'Claiming New Territory for a Stable Peace: How Geography Can Contribute', *Professional Geographer*, 38 (1), February 1986: 18-28.
- Walker, S. G. (1973) 'Case Studies and Cumulation: The Study of Divided Nations', *Journal of International Affairs*, 27: 261-267.
- Waterman, S. (1984) 'Partition – A Problem in Political Geography', in Taylor, P. J. and House, J. W. (eds.), *Political Geography: Recent Advances and Future Directions*, Croom Helm: Beckenham: 98-116
- Waterman, S. (1987) 'Partitioned states', *Political Geography Quarterly*, 6: 2, (April): 151-170.
- correspond. Even animals are not allowed to travel freely" (DPRK, 1990).
- ⁵ The DMZ has not in fact been completely uninhabited. Along with the members of a Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission living within the zone, there are two villages adjacent to the Military Demarcation Line. In the village of Taesong-dong (or 'Freedom Village'), to the south of the line, residents decided to stay rather than relocate. What is known by the South Koreans as the 'Propaganda Village', but by North Koreans as Kijong -dong, lies just to the north. It is a caretaker settlement in that it is claimed between 15 to 20 workers simply visit the village each day to "raise and lower the flag and maintain the facilities" (Kirkbride, 1985: 49). While villagers on both sides cultivate the land, and have built significant infrastructural resources, the effect of these developments on the wider zonal environment is negligible.
- ⁶ Atkins noted that North Korea "has developed what Unwin (1992:191) calls a 'human meaning of landscape'". North Koreans see nature as a challenge to be mastered, adopting what is known as the *juche* philosophy: "*Juche Korea has boundless optimism about its powers of intervention and control and relatively less concern about the negative environmental consequences of its actions, unless production is thereby curtailed, for instance where excessive tree clearance has caused soil erosion*" (Atkins, 1993: 310-328).

Notes

- ¹ For an understanding of the geographical history of these forms of partition, see Pounds (1964: 66-67). Both Pounds (1964) and Waterman (1984, 1987) see the use of the term partition in these contexts as not entirely relevant to our understanding of partition as "a modern twentieth century political-geographical process" (Waterman, 1984: 100). The terms 'break-up' or 'collapse' are seen as more appropriate for such cases as the Russian, Austro-Hungarian or Ottoman Empires.
- ³ The author would particularly like to thank Professor Ke Chung Kim for his introduction to the 'Korea Peace Bioreserves Project', and for his informative comments. Professor Kim is based at the Center for Biodiversity Research, The Pennsylvania State University, US.
- ⁴ Prof Ke Chung Kim and Dr Helmut K Buechner claim to have discussed the idea of a transfrontier reserve while developing the project of Ecological Research in the DMZ, between 1964-65, with the Smithsonian Institute.
- ⁴ North Koreans are also keen to point out the presence of a concrete wall lying just to the south of the MDL, 5-8m high, 10-19m wide at the bottom and 3-7m wide in the upper section. According to DPRK information, "the concrete wall is built on mountains and...where the flows of the Rimjin and Han rivers converge, dividing mountains and rivers in two. It makes it impossible for people to travel and

Peter Hocknell is a Research Officer at the International Boundaries Research Unit, Durham.