

TRANSBOUNDARY STAKEHOLDERS: DEVELOPING CROSS-BORDER CONSERVATION LINKAGES FOR THE SNOW LEOPARD (DISCUSSION PAPER)

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Introduction

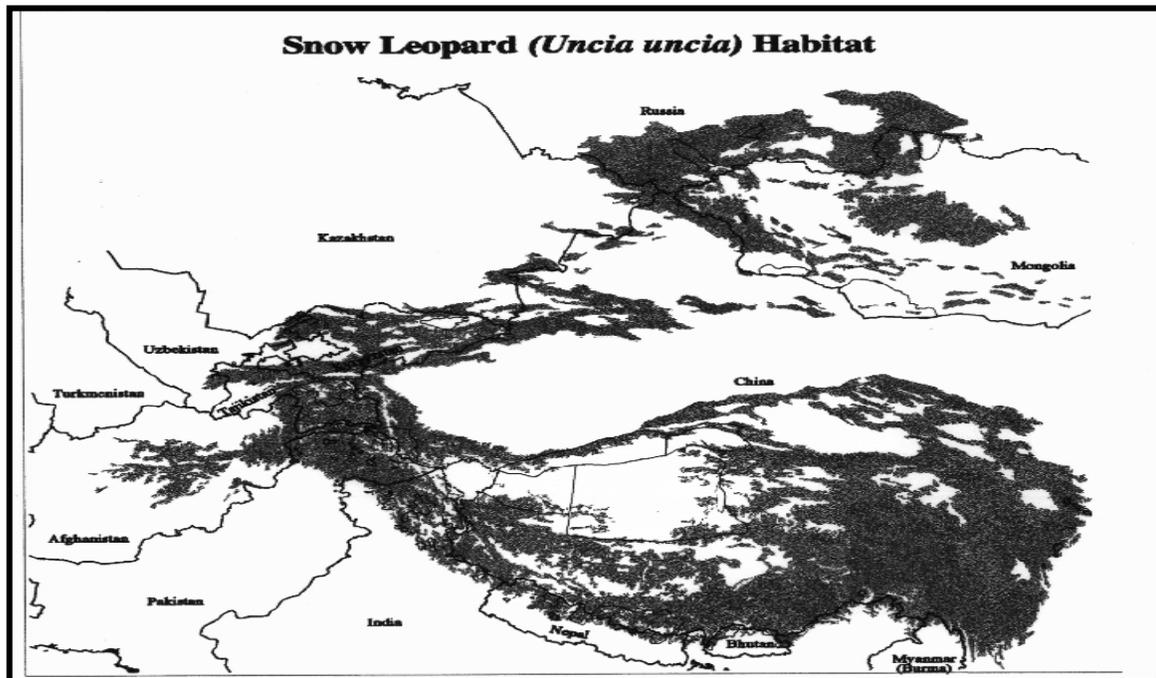
Even a cursory glance at the potential snow leopard habitat reveals an important aspect of snow leopard conservation. Much of the cat's habitat lies along international border areas most of which are either hotly contested or arenas of conflict and refugee movements. In a recent article the author argued the necessity of establishing transboundary conservation areas (TBCAs) to protect not only the snow leopard as a keystone species to maintain the region's rich biodiversity but to also defuse tensions along international borders (Singh and Jackson, 1999). Using conservation as a vehicle for resolving political conflict has gained importance over the last decade, Bolivia and Guatemala have resolved their border disputes through the negotiations surrounding the La Ruta Maya transboundary conservation initiative. Additionally, Peru and Ecuador have recently ended a 150 year-old border dispute by establishing a transboundary peace park. Although small in number, these conservation successes serve notice that transboundary conservation can assist in creating opportunities for peace. Arthur Westing (1998 and 1992) and others (Weed, 1994) in several essays and articles spanning three decades has also attested to this conservation benefit especially in areas of high military activity.

Discussing TBCAs at this workshop is timely and extremely important. Border disputes in Central Asia are expected to rise, raising fears for greater losses of human life and wildlife. According to a recent study by the International Crisis Group, Central Asia could potentially result in increased armed confrontations (ICG, 2002). There are several reasons for this:

1. The recent Afghan crisis has resulted in millions of refugees and militants who not only threaten the ecological health of the borders between Afghanistan, Pakistan and India but also the political climate of the area. (*For more information please see ISLT's proceedings on the workshop on War and the Environment held last November, 2001*)
2. The current border problems of recently independent states such as the Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan can be traced to the Soviet planners who deliberately traced borders to divide ethnic areas while creating isolated enclaves in other republics. These have fueled ethnic tensions and disrupted flows of goods, services and people causing stress along international borders.
3. India and Pakistan continue to have heavy skirmishes along their border increasing the loss of biodiversity and ecological processes.
4. All of the Central Asian countries "are in an economic crisis and have a wide array of social problems. Political opposition has become radicalized in some areas. In these

circumstances, tension over borders is only one further destabilizing issue in a difficult political and security environment.” (ICG, 2002)

Given the socio-economic and political complexities associated with border regions, the fate of the snow leopard and other endangered wildlife will be decided by a volatile political process. Thus TBCAs offer an innovative method to not only mitigate these political problems but also help protect and maintain the biological health of a fragile environment.



Goals and Objectives

The benefits of establishing TBCAs has been discussed in great detail elsewhere (Singh, 1999, Hamilton, et al, 1996, Thorsell, 1990). This paper will instead focus on some of the practicalities of establishing TBCAs in Central Asia by:

1. Identifying the various stakeholders and their interests;
2. Discussing ways to build transboundary links informally and formally;
3. Examining the semantics of transboundary nomenclature, and;
4. Presenting opportunities for further research.

1. Identifying the Various Stakeholders and Their Interests in TBCAs

Table 1.1 offers an overview of the various stakeholders along with their often-competing interests and agendas. Academic training, personal ambitions, and bureaucratic objectives form these competing agendas. Figure 1.1 illustrates this graphically. In addition, the abilities of these stakeholders to cooperate are influenced by:

1. Differing power and resource capacities at various levels: including research capabilities and information generation and access.
2. Competing interests based on:
 - a. Differing ideologies among stakeholders (e.g. deep ecology to sustainable utilization)
 - b. Strategic Interests: security and sovereignty, bureaucratic inertia, resource control and access
3. Financial interests: revenue captures and control, etc.

Figure 1.1: Agenda/Reality Creation (from Singh and Wolmer, 1999)

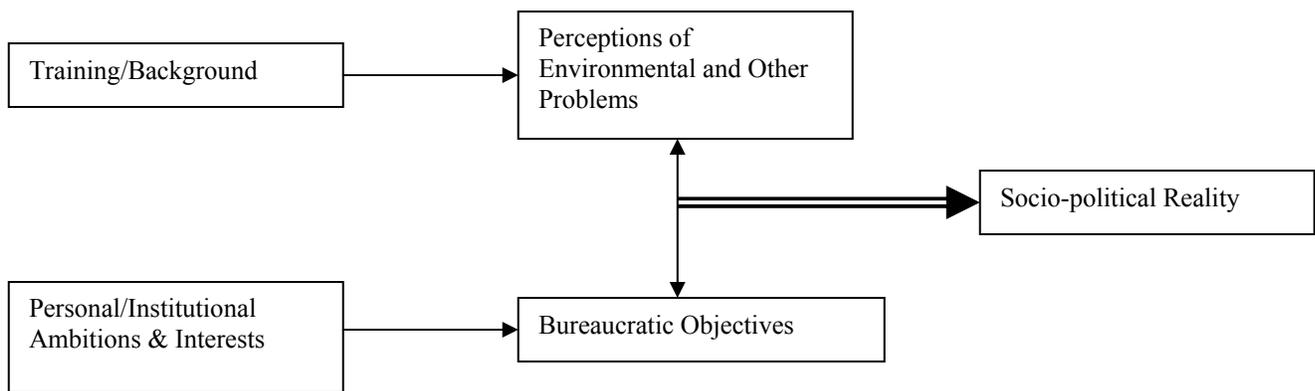


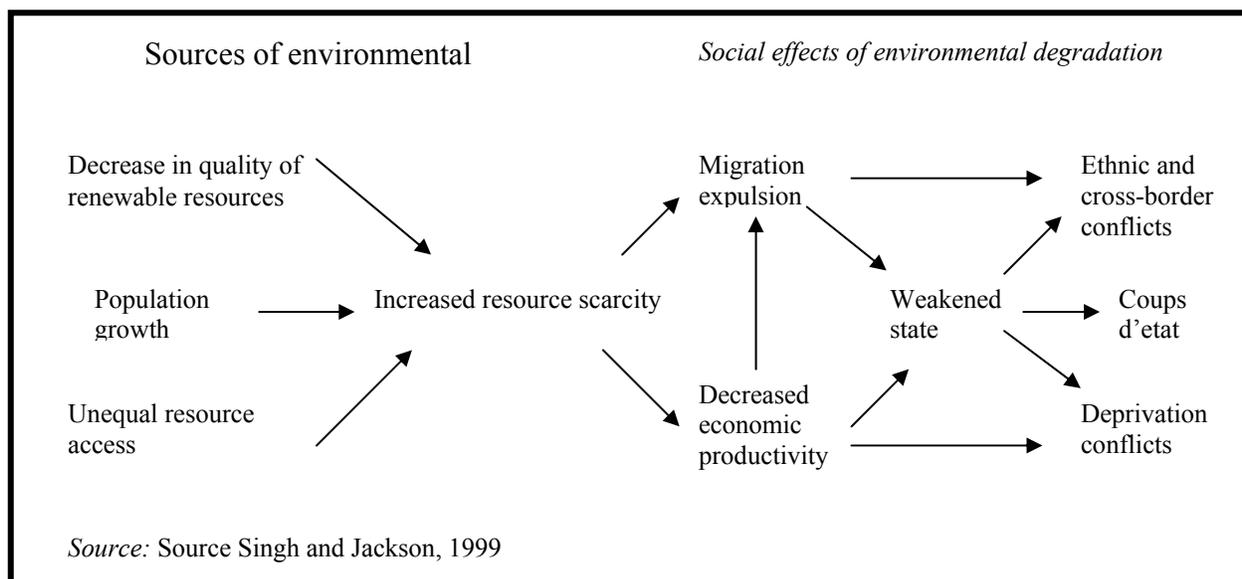
Table 1.1 Diversity of Stakeholders

<i>Level</i>	<i>Primary Interests</i>	<i>Training/Worldview</i>
International Level		
Multilateral and bilateral donors	Diverse including conservation, peace, economic development and human rights.	Diverse (ecology and social sciences) and often competing.
International NGOs	Diverse including conservation, peace, economic development and human rights.	Diverse (ecology and social sciences) and often competing.
State Level		
Various Central Government Ministries	Security; economic development, land and natural resource management. Political control.	Depending on the ministry usually social sciences. However resource ministries are usually ecological. Interests often competing with some ministries out-ranking others. Resource protection ministries such as parks are often out-ranked.
Military	Security	Military.
Provincial government	Economic development and security and political control	Usually social sciences – however make-up is similar to the central government.

<i>Level</i>	<i>Primary Interests</i>	<i>Training/Worldview</i>
Regional trade associations	Economic and resource development	Economics and business.
Local Level		
Local government	Economic development and political control	Usually social sciences – however make-up is similar to the central and provincial government.
Traditional/local leaders	Economic development and political control	Diverse. Worldview dominated by traditional authority and control.
Community-based Organizations and local NGOs	Economic and gender empowerment, human rights, conservation	Diverse although less competing than at higher levels.

Table 1.1 highlights the wide number and variety of stakeholders involved in TBCAs all of whom have competing interests. It is important to note that especially in the context of the Central Asian region, the military and security interest outweighs concerns for biodiversity and conservation. As the recent ISLT workshop on war and the environment demonstrated very few recognize the link between national security and biodiversity conservation. It is imperative that all stakeholders realize the linkages between resource degradation and political unrest. Several (Homer-Dixon, 1994; Mathews, 1989; and Kaplan, 1994) have empirically demonstrated that environmental degradation can lead to political unrest to armed conflict. Figure 1.2 highlights this linkage.

Figure 1.2: Environmental Degradation: Sources and Social Effects



These linkages are explored in the study of environmental security. Environmental security of a nation or groups of nations that shares common natural resources or is within the same eco-region or biome refers to the stability of ecological processes on which people's well-being

depends (Singh and Jackson, 1999). Any threat of damage from violence to and conflict over these natural resources has serious ramifications on the national and regional political security environment as well as public health and well-being. By establishing TBCAs as an important vehicle for environmental security could bring most if not all the stakeholders to the table. In addition to the benefits of providing environmental security, TBCAs have known to also enhance sovereignty in areas where borders have been contested or ill-defined. For instance, in southern Africa, the author empirically demonstrated that establishing TBCAs would increase control over border areas through the establishment of joint border patrols, stricter monitoring of human movements and collaborating on controlling illegal activities leading to higher political cooperation (Singh, 2000).

Despite these empirically demonstrated benefits, information regarding the opportunities provided by TBCAs is not well communicated. It is imperative that all stakeholders are educated and informed and a dialogue started on political cooperation through conservation. The following section discusses methods to do this informally and formally.

2. Building Transboundary Links

Before establishing formal links, it is often necessary to establish excellent informal links between the corresponding stakeholders at all levels. Through an empirical survey of more than 136 transboundary protected area complexes, Zbicz (1999) demonstrated the effectiveness of simple, cost-effective measures to enhance transboundary conservation while putting forth six levels of cooperation ranging from no contact to joint management (Table 2.1). A summary of her results related to factors contributing to enhanced cooperation is presented below as an indicator of ways to build strong informal ties that will lead to formal cooperation.

1. *The “idea” of transfrontier cooperation* and the degree to which it is valued by the adjoining protected areas. This “idea” incorporates various components of modern conservation biology, such as importance attached to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem-based management, as well as philosophical concepts of environmental law and sustainable development such as inclusion of all stakeholders and conservation of resources for future generations.
2. *The availability of modern communication technology.* The availability of fax machines and telephones best define this factor, with input from availability of mail service, although not radio or email...Availability of phone and fax also appear to have its greatest impact between cooperation Levels 2 and 3 (see Table 2.1).
3. *Leadership*, as provided by individuals and non-governmental organizations, but not necessarily transnational networks of intergovernmental organizations or transboundary indigenous populations. This factor also involves equipping protected area staff with experience in ecosystem-based management, demonstrating that leadership includes not only vision and technical expertise, but also skill and endurance to overcome political and administrative hurdles to transboundary cooperation.
4. *Personal contact*, involving the ability to meet face-to-face and whether or not the protected areas are managed from on-site headquarters. Surprisingly though, these two variables are not strongly correlated, as protected area staff find ways to meet even when both are not managed on-site. Neither do other access variables, such as lack of a road between the protected areas, no common language, or the need for agency permission to

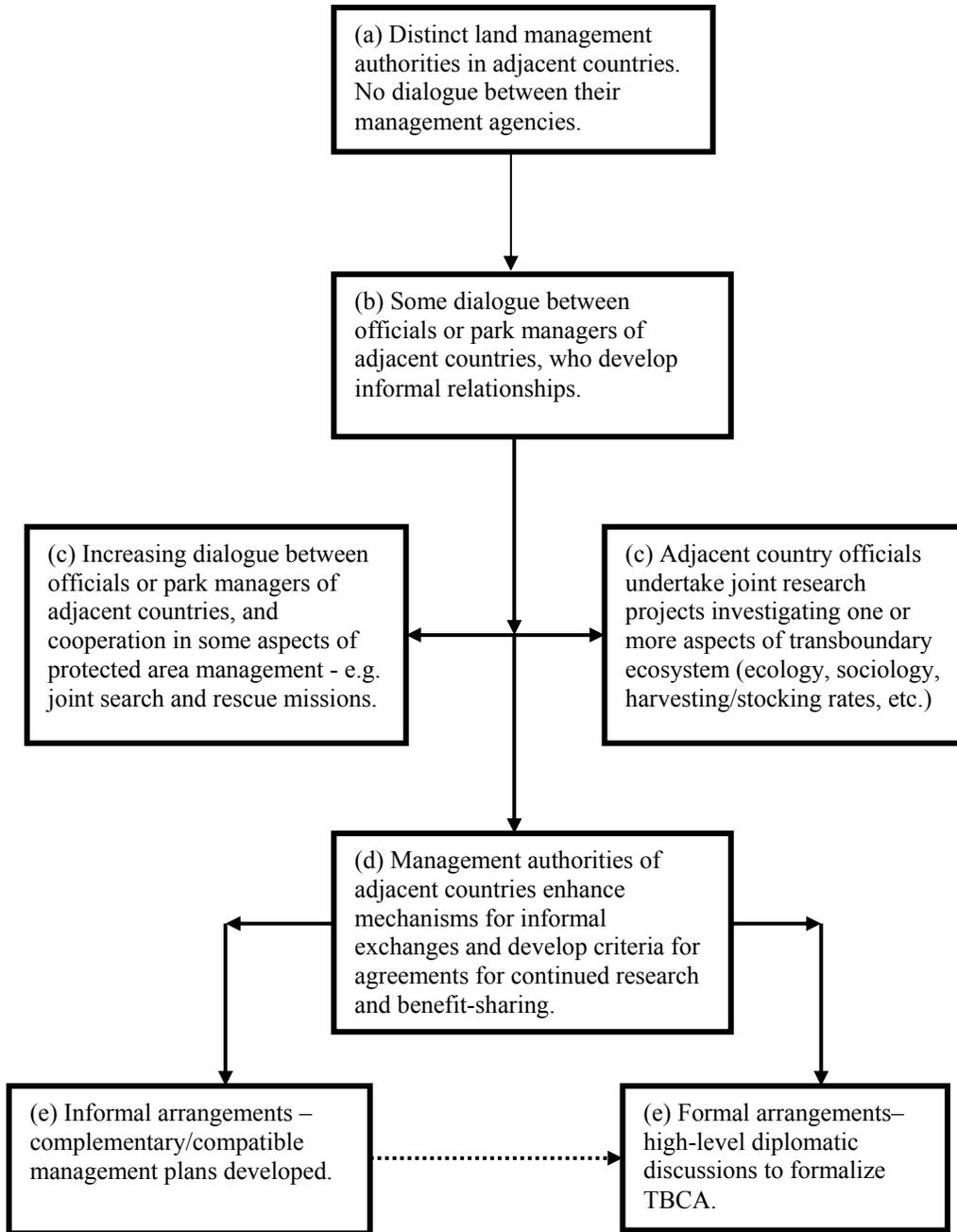
meet or communicate significantly impede cooperation... **Personal contact appears to be most important at the lowest levels of cooperation, when staff from adjoining protected areas are taking the early hesitant steps to build mutual trust and relationships. These face-to-face meetings appear to be one of the factors most instrumental to early stages of cooperation.** (Zbicz, 1999; emphasis added).

Table 2.1: The Six Levels of Cooperation (adapted from Zbicz, 1999)

<i>Levels of Cooperation between adjoining protected areas</i>	<i>Characteristics of cooperation</i>
0. No Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Areas of hostility and armed conflict. ➤ No communication between staff of adjoining PAs.
1. Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Information sharing. ➤ Staffs communicate. ➤ Low-level meetings. ➤ Possibly the duty to notify about actions that may have transboundary impacts.
2. Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Both sides agree to consult on specific items of common interest. ➤ Duty to notify about actions that may have transboundary impacts.
3. Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Regular meetings. ➤ Programmatic cooperation such as joint research, search and rescue, signage and tourist facilities, etc.
4. Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Both acknowledge ecosystem as a single unit. ➤ Equal levels of protection on both sides. ➤ Joint advisory committees and coordination of planning.
5. Full cooperation (International Ecosystem-based Management)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Coordinated management. ➤ Joint PA protection. ➤ Joint long-range planning for 2 PAs/ecosystem as a unit.

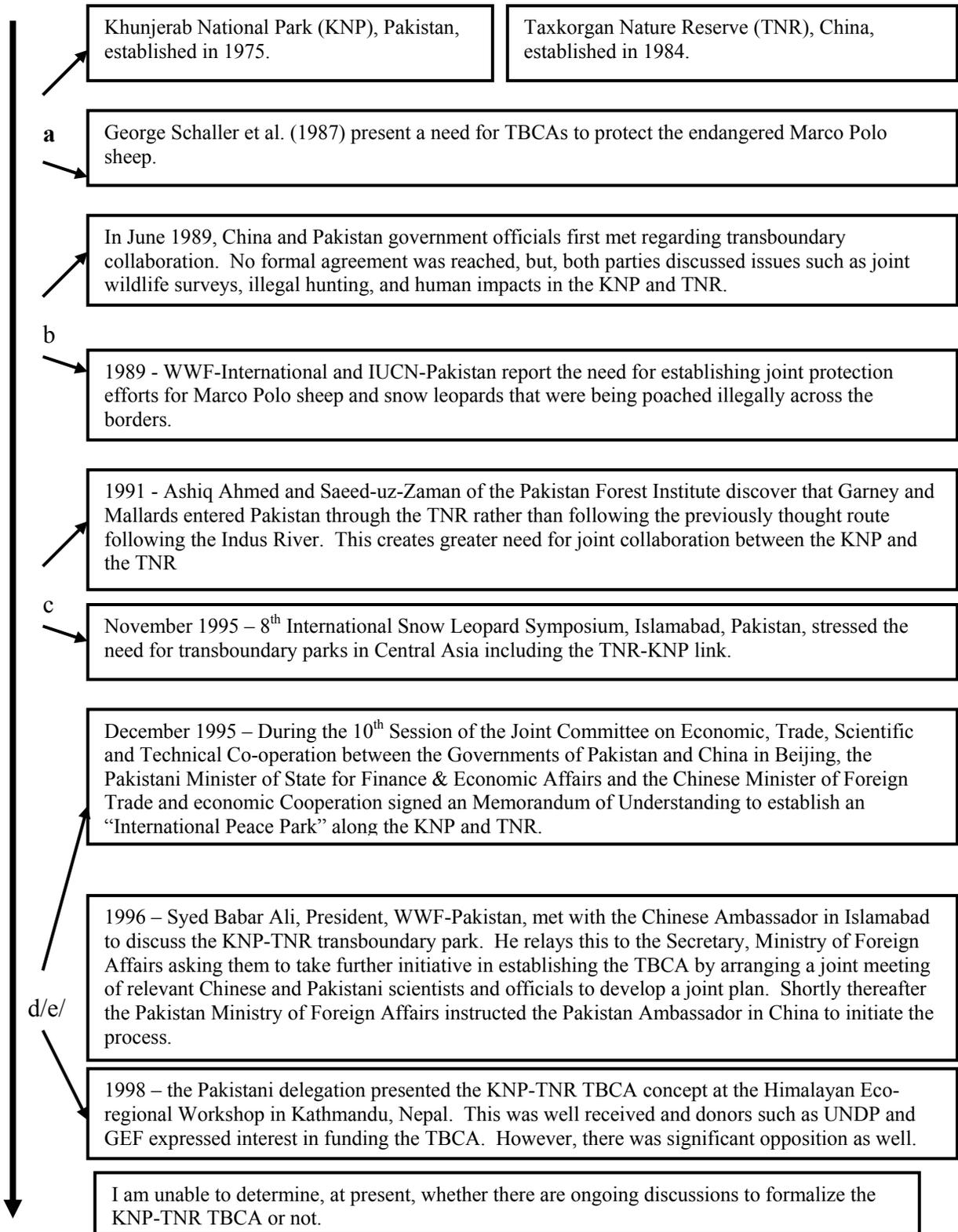
In light of the political realities in Central Asia focusing on creating opportunities for fostering the spread of the “transboundary concept”, providing PA staff access to phones and faxes, instilling leadership or fostering a few committed individuals along with occasions for both sides to communicate and interact would enhance the environmental security of the region through informal TBCAs (Levels 1-3). Building formal links in the region is difficult due to political volatility but not impossible, especially if sincere efforts are made to establish strong informal ties. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 illustrate the process of creating transboundary cooperation using the example of the proposed Khunjerab/Taxkorgan Peace Park.

FIGURE 2.1: STAGES OF TBCA ESTABLISHMENT (SINGH, 1999)



These stages can be compared to the process of establishing a TBCA between Pakistan and China in Figure 2.2.

FIGURE 2.2: THE FORMATION OF A CENTRAL ASIAN TBCA- LINKING OF THE KHUNJERAB NATIONAL PARK, PAKISTAN WITH THE TAXKORGAN NATURE RESERVE, CHINA (SINGH, 1999)¹.



¹ The letters correspond to the stages of TBCA establishment in Figure 1.

3. The Semantics of Transboundary Cooperation

Words and ideas are never innocent. The use of controversial terms can often derail a conservation project. Transboundary conservation is no different. During discussions in developing TBCAs in southern Africa (and elsewhere), participants from the region agreed that the use of transboundary, transfrontier or Peace Park had serious political ramifications. An instance where a specific transboundary term caused tension was during the recent negotiations on establishing the proposed Khunjerab/Taxkorgan Peace Park. The use of the term Peace Park in this case was a strategic move by governments of China and Pakistan to demonstrate control over an area disputed by India. In addition, under the peace parks moniker the negotiations occurred at the foreign ministry level and not through the parks agencies or conservation groups. Depending on the countries involved, the appropriate term should be agreed upon and used. Table 3.1 describes the connotations of each term.

TABLE 3.1: THREE TYPES OF TRANSBORDER AREAS (FROM SINGH, 1999)

<i>Transboundary Conservation Areas</i>	Areas that span well-defined borders. TBCA boundaries in this context are linked to a precise and linear concept of the international borders (Krukoski, 1998). TBCAs are created to achieve conservation of biodiversity, cultural heritage, and economic benefits.
<i>Transfrontier Conservation Areas</i>	Areas that span regions where the boundaries have not been agreed. These are often larger linear regions than borders (Krukoski, 1998). In addition to conservation, TFCAs often are created to ameliorate tensions related to disputed borderlands.
<i>International Peace Parks</i>	<p>These areas have definite political objectives and are largely symbolic in nature. Clare Shine (1997) points out that no legal definition of peace parks exists, but, they are created with the following three objectives in mind:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The term is generally applied to transboundary cooperation where the primary aim is to confirm, strengthen or re-establish good relations with a neighboring state(s); ◆ They may be able to prevent escalation of border disputes such as Demilitarized Zones (DMZ); ◆ International peace parks may be able to safeguard important areas of biodiversity, which are or were in military zones.

4. Conclusion: Problem-Solving Through Research

TBCAs in Central Asia should be approached on a case-by-case basis by examining issues related to the following five broad themes of analysis in order to achieve an equitable power distribution between stakeholders and an adaptive/flexible management structure.

Five Broad Research Questions:

1. Besides the ecological reasons identify the social, economic, and political reasons for establishing specific TFCAs;
2. Analyze the role of ideas, perceptions and discourses in the development and implementation of the proposed TBCAs and other regional natural resource initiatives;
3. Examine links between political and ecological problems at a regional level;
4. Examine how community's perceptions of TBCAs and environmental management strategies are differentiated by wealth, gender and ethnicity; and,
5. Develop an understanding of the ways in which the interactions between and among social actors, such as resource users, the state, NGOs and donors, affect resource management and conflict.

These research themes will facilitate efforts to establish TBCAs by presenting an analytical framework, clarifying the roles of and interactions between border communities, states and international agencies in transboundary natural resource management; and, providing an analysis of the practical issues related to donor and other external agencies in establishing equitable natural resource management regimes between neighboring states.

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