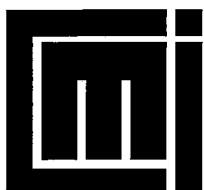


Mountain protected areas in Northern Pakistan: the case of Khunjerab National Park

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Summary:

This paper discusses recent conservation efforts in Northern Pakistan and the relevance of national parks as legal instruments in nature and wildlife conservation. Employing an extensive case study approach the paper analyses the problems afflicting the Khunjerab National Park and discusses why the World Conservation Union (IUCN) disregarded its own policy guidelines for mountain protected areas. The paper advocates a more democratic and pragmatic approach to nature conservation and argues that national parks as traditionally conceived impose heavy burdens on local people. Despite increasing criticism of national parks, they continue to be implemented often for no other reason than the high conservationist profile this alternative offers.

Indexing terms:

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Legal aspects
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Introduction¹

The involvement of local people in planning and management of natural resource is now widely recognized as critical to conservation and development.

Guidelines for Mountain Protected Areas, Duncan Poore (1992: 19)

High up in the Karakoram chain a couple of thousand Wakhi people reside among some of Pakistan's most spectacular and rugged mountain scenery. They carve out a living from combining pastoral animal husbandry with some work-migration and more recently, trekking tourism. Animals are moved over great distances utilizing near and distant pastures in a complex pastoral herding system. Women take care of yaks, sheep and goats on the summer pastures and male herders look after the animals through the winter. Whereas the resident Wakhi-population has not been the source of great interest, conservation agencies have been alerted by the biodiversity importance of this area and its exceptional range of wild animals, some of them critically endangered. The area is home to the Himalayan brown bear (*Ursos arctos*), the world's largest snow-leopard (*Panthera uncia*) population, wild ungulates such as blue sheep (*Pseudois nayaur*), Siberian ibex (*Capra ibex siberica*) and is the last refuge for the endangered Marco Polo sheep (*Ovis ammon polii*).

In 1974 the American wildlife biologist, George B. Schaller, proposed establishing a national park in the area (Schaller 1980: 98ff.). The main objective of the park was to protect the Marco Polo sheep and, possibly, a remnant population of the Tibetan wild ass (*Equus hemionus kiang*). In order to comply with the World Conservation Union's (IUCN) guidelines for national parks,² Schaller deliberately drew the borders so as to exclude permanent villages. That the proposed park covering about 2,300 sq. km included all significant pastures of local Wakhi villagers Schaller considered to be "details [which] could be resolved later" (ibid.: 98). The then Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, enthusiastically embraced Schaller's proposal and on April 29, 1975 the Kunjerab National Park (KNP) was formally gazetted (Map 1: NOT INCLUDED).

My own involvement with this case is based on two short periods of fieldwork in Shimshal, the Wakhi village which most adamantly rejected the national park

¹ Forthcoming in: *Nature Conservation and Human Rights in Asia*, edited by Arne Kalland. NIAS/Curzon Press, 1997.

² National park (IUCN Category II): "To protect outstanding natural and scenic areas of national or international significance for scientific, educational, and recreational use. These are relatively large natural areas materially unaltered by human activity, where commercially extractive uses are not permitted" (IUCN 1985).

plans (Knudsen 1992). Unannounced visits by foreign researchers aroused local suspicion and were put in connection with the park plans. Prior to my first visit in 1990, the Norwegian wildlife biologist Per Wegge had done a field survey in Shimshal (Wegge 1988). Since I was a Norwegian too, by implication, I would have to be a wildlife specialist. My research topic — herd ownership, range management and agro-pastoralism — added weight to this interpretation. None of these topics were neutral. To the contrary, they were the types of information people in Shimshal jealously guarded and did not want to fall in the hands of national park “spies”, of which many suspected, I was one.

Did the Shimshalis and the other Wakhi villagers have reason to be concerned? It is my claim that they did. Though details are lacking and the narrative is difficult to piece together, the following represents — as far as I am able to confirm it — the chain of events that hauled the Wakhi villages in the Khunjerab from relative obscurity in the 1970s to the centre of controversy in the 1990s. My argument is that national parks despite imposing heavy burdens on local people, are implemented primarily for the high conservationist profile this alternative offers. In particular, this paper is critical of IUCN’s preservationist approach to the Khunjerab National Park which studiously ignored the organization’s own guidelines for mountain protected areas.

The Khunjerab National Park³

Due to the unresolved border dispute between India and Pakistan (“Kashmir conflict”) the Northern Areas (NA) of Pakistan lack provincial status and are under federal administration from Islamabad. The region’s lifeline is the Karakoram Highway (KKH), a 1,300-km artery which begins in Islamabad and ends at the Khunjerab Pass (4,750 masl) where the KKH crosses into Kashgar in China. The Khunjerab plateau is an old grazing ground for Wakhi villagers and in Wakhi language Khunjerab means “Valley of Blood”. Tourists who travel by bus across the plateau in summer can hardly imagine the hardships of living there, nor are they likely to see the rusty signboard which informs passers-by that they are entering the Khunjerab National Park (KNP). Until the late 1980s, the park which was intended as a showcase of modern nature conservation, in reality, was little else than dotted lines on the map. There was only a rudimentary park staff and the lack of money and absence of a management plan meant that outside a small area close to the KKH, there was almost no supervision of wildlife in the park. While this had little adverse effect on most of the wildlife, the Marco Polo sheep, the park’s most threatened species, was under strong pressure and declining at an alarming rate. Poaching had reduced the number of Marco Polo sheep from an estimated 300 in 1975, to about 100 in 1980. The last reliable confirmation was

³ Parts of this chapter have been published earlier, see (Knudsen 1995).

from 1992 when fifty-two Marco Polo sheep were spotted (WWF 1996: 37).⁴ Both local villagers, poachers, game wardens, army personnel and Chinese border patrols were at one point singled out for blame, but no definite proof was ever produced.

Acknowledging the many shortcomings of the management of the KNP, especially the protection of the Marco Polo sheep, the government of Pakistan in collaboration with IUCN set out to forge and implement a new management plan. In order to assess the situation for wildlife in the park, IUCN asked Wegge to carry out a wildlife survey in the park and make suggestions for wildlife management. He conducted a range of surveys and wildlife counts at different locations within the park (Wegge 1988) and completed the first real expert wildlife evaluation since Schaller in 1974. Based on his fieldwork, Wegge argued that there was no scientific basis for the alleged competition between wildlife and domestic animals, and hence no need for a strictly defined "category II" national park. He also argued that the populations of ibex and blue sheep were large enough to sustain a commercial hunting program. The Marco Polo sheep, however, were critically endangered. In addition to immediate measures in order to save the Marco Polo sheep, Wegge proposed extending the park's borders and triple its size from the original 2,300 sq. km to a total of 6,000 sq. km. His most controversial suggestion, however, was abandoning the national park designation and turn the park into a Biosphere Reserve or Multipurpose Conservation Area (IUCN category VIII). This would make room for domestic grazing and allow the implementation of a commercial trophy hunting program with profits accruing to the Wahki villagers.⁵ In general, Wegge's proposal was both sensitive and sympathetic to preserving traditional use rights inside park.

In the summer of 1989 the newly formed governmental organization, the National Council for Conservation of Wildlife (NCCW), convened a workshop in Gilgit to draft a new management plan for the KNP (Bell 1992). The participants overlooked Wegge's proposal and instead declared that their mandate was exclusively to draft a management plan for the original "category II" national park. The delegates that were present at the workshop did not support Wegge's proposal, probably because this would strain relations with the government as well as implicitly endorse downgrading the KNP from a national park to a Biosphere Reserve. This would involve changing the current legislation,⁶ and delay the KNP-management proposal (Wegge 1990; 1992b). The Conservator for Wildlife, Abdul Latif Rao, which represented the wildlife interests strongly opposed a revision of the KNP's status:

⁴ The Marco Polo sheep's core habitat is set aside as the "Kilik-Mintaka Game Reserve" (650 sq. km) which is contiguous with the Chinese "Taxkorgan Nature Reserve". Marco Polo sheep, snow leopards and blue sheep are known to travel between the reserves (National Biological Service 1996).

⁵ Wegge (1992a: 112) estimated that annual fees from trophy hunting would amount to Rs. 300,000 (US\$ 12,500).

⁶ The Northern Areas Wildlife Preservation Act of 1975.

The plan should be strictly in accordance with the purpose statement, objectives, and recommendations of the workshop which recognize the IUCN definition of a national park. Any attempt to deviate will frustrate the purpose (Rao, in Bell 1992: 131).

While a minority among the participants asked the government to settle the compensation issue before continuing with the park planning (ibid.: 137), the majority recommended that all grazing should be stopped immediately (ibid.: 22). Only if this strategy proved unsuccessful should some grazing be allowed in selected areas until a phase out program could be instituted. As an alternative for those affected by the KNP it was suggested to promote ecotourism and rural development schemes. Apart from Wegge, only a minority of the participants had any previous knowledge of the area other than guided tours and excursions in preparation for the workshop.

The aftermath of the Gilgit Workshop

Whereas details of what had happened at the Gilgit Workshop were not known to Wakhi villagers, they quickly sensed that the workshop and the new management plans for the park did not bode well for their own future. The concern over the new park plans and anger over not being consulted quickly translated into ad hoc protests (Hussein 1994). Though the Gilgit Workshop was not intended to draft a management plan but to prepare "a framework for a management plan" (Bell 1992: 1), there was growing realization that more information was needed in order to achieve this goal. Seemingly unaware of the force of the local opposition, research teams were dispatched to Wakhi villages. In November 1989 Shimshalis twice refused to allow a wildlife survey party to conduct a reconnaissance (Ahmad 1991: 14).

The initial KNP park proposal did not utilize zoning but in a 12 sq. km core habitat for the Marco Polo sheep the ban on hunting and grazing had been in place since 1975. Though park guards occasionally patrolled the zone, the grazing ban was not strictly enforced and "illicit grazing continued in the area, with the silent consent of some of the park officials" (Ahmad 1991: 13). Despite the fact that Wakhi villagers had not been completely denied access to the Khunjerab plateau, they feared that the new management plans would make further inroads in their traditional use of the area.

In 1990 Wakhi villages filed a petition against the government to protest the new management plans (Civil Case File 1990). In this document Wakhi villagers claim ownership to the Khunjerab on the basis of customary use rights. At the same time they refer to an unwritten agreement whereby they agreed to forego their use of the Khunjerab plateau for an annual compensation of Rs. 5,000 to each household. Since the government had never kept its promise of compensation, the Wakhi villages no longer felt bound by the oral agreement, and implicitly, would again exercise their right of grazing in the area. In response to this claim, the Forest Department (which technically is in charge of the KNP's management)

claim that following the gazettment of the KNP in 1975, the area is "crown land", belonging to the state. The state through the Forest Department challenged the question of ownership and by implication, rejected the claim to monetary compensation.

Though the park's management already at this point was in disarray, there was more problems ahead. On October 15th 1990 the Gilgit District Court announced its preliminary ruling which asked both parties to keep the status quo. Until a final agreement on compensation could be found, the court allowed the Wakhi communities to continue grazing their animals in the Khunjerab, but not in the 12 sq. km zone where domestic animals had been banned since 1975. Already prior to the preliminary court ruling, in August 1990, some Wakhi herdsman had entered the 12 sq. km zone with their animals.

To defuse the heightened tension created by the confrontation with Wakhi villagers, a team was formed in late 1990 to do additional surveys in the affected villages and suggest solutions acceptable to all parties. When the team was ready to start its work, they learned that the Wakhi villagers had taken the case to court and that the planning exercise had to be abandoned. Only one of the original team members, the American John Mock, was able to complete his fieldwork. Mock surveyed all the affected Wakhi villages and concluded that the "decision to ban all human activity...would seem to guarantee the failure of the park" (1990: 3). The report had been commissioned by WWF's headquarters in Geneva, but neither WWF nor IUCN took any immediate note of Mock's critical remarks, nor his suggestions to redress local grievances. On 26th May 1991 the Wakhi herdsman in the Khunjerab no-grazing zone were forcibly evicted by the para-military "Khunjerab Security Force" (KSF). A checkpoint was erected at the border to prevent animals and herdsman from drifting in again. The incident caused spontaneous demonstrations and Wakhi villagers blocked the traffic on the KKH and shouted slogans criticising the government (Slavin 1991: 51).

Prompted by the open clash with the KSF in May 1996, Wakhi villagers drafted an unsigned "position paper" which details both the injustice inflicted upon them, as well as their concrete demands for monetary compensation (Table 1). The 5,000 rupees per household laid out in the civil case against the state in 1990, had now grown to Rs. 182 million (US\$ 7.5 million), that is about Rs. 38,400 (US\$ 1,600, 1991 value) in annual losses to each of the about 300 affected households (Table 1). While this figure may seem inflated and not a realistic estimate of losses sustained by local villagers, we should remember that this is not only a compensation for lost grazing, but also illegal removal and sale of timber during the construction of the Karakoram Highway through Hunza. A noteworthy exception in this position paper is that there is no mention of the right to hunt. That the ban on hunting (except perhaps for the Marco Polo sheep) had not been strictly enforced, could be one explanation of why this is not mentioned. The position paper is, however, explicit about the need for local people to be actively involved in the park's management.

In 1991 new initiatives were taken to break the deadlock and the government asked Ashiq Ahmad, a wildlife specialist, to contact the defiant villagers. In June

the same year Ahmad met with Wakhi villagers to prepare the ground for an agreement between the government and the Wakhi villagers (Ahmad 1991: 15). Referring to the position paper mentioned above, Ahmad warned that if the demands for compensation (Table 1) were accepted by the government it would create a dangerous precedent for similar cases elsewhere. Ahmad advised the government to either support Wegge's initial plan for a zoning of the KNP which would remove the strong resentment over the ban on grazing or to allow grazing throughout the national park, thereby removing the grazing issue altogether (ibid.: 18). Regarding the question of hunting, Ahmad suggested upholding the general ban on hunting of wildlife throughout the park.

Table 1
Demands for compensation by the farmers of Gojal Tehsil, Hunza
Subdivision (Gilgit District) for governmental interference in the
Khunjerab National Park

General demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ denationalization and privatization of the Khunjerab National Park ▶ management responsibility must be handed over to the local people ▶ the previous loss sustained by local people must be compensated
Specific demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • free grazing must be allowed without disturbance from any government agency • if free grazing is not allowed, then a royalty of Rs. 10.000 annually must be paid to each affected household [approx. 306 households in Gojal/upper Hunza] * • 15 years of [economic] losses must be properly compensated. The total loss [from deprived pasture grounds, unjustified woodcutting, and expropriation of land for afforestation] is estimated at Rs. 18.27 crore [Rs. 182 million = US\$ 7.5 million] † • 50% of the National Park's annual revenues must be provided to the local people • business resources created in areas surrounding the National Park must be provided to the local people • nobody will be allowed to do any sort of business or construction work within the National Park, without permission of the local people • from those [government] institutions which have constructed buildings, payments must be made to the local people • any institution which wants to perform construction will be liable to pay for the cost of land

* The original text uses the term "individual" but the intent is likely "household".

† All currency conversion uses the 1991 value of Pakistani rupees (ca. Rs. 24 = US\$ 1).
Source: Reproduced (with some language editing) from Kreutzmann (1995: 225) and the original source document (Anonymous 1991).

Table 2
 Excerpt of agreement between graziers of Khunjerab and the
 Northern Areas Administration, 1992 (“Khunjerab Agreement”)

Range management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provided that the number of animals comply with scientific estimates of carrying capacity, traditional concessions of grazing will be allowed to continue
Wildlife protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all hunting is banned. Enforcement of the ban entrusted with Khunjerab Village Organizations
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% of employment opportunities to local communities • guiding, portering, lodging of visitors provided by local communities
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resting periods when graziers and livestock will vacate the Khunjerab pastures, compensation (minimum) Rs. 1.000 per month
Trophy hunting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70% of revenues (minus management charges) from trophy hunting to local communities
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • constitution of a Management Board (eight seats); the NA’s administration (2), the park administration (1), Inspector General of Police (1), AKRSP (1), WWF (1) and representatives of graziers in Khunjerab (1) and Shimshal (1)
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the NAs administration will suspend the agreement (in part or whole) in case of violation of grazing and wildlife prescriptions • a maximum of 100 yaks will be allowed in the “core zone”

Source: Khunjerab Agreement (1992).

The suggestions made in Ahmad’s consultancy report were used as a basis for drawing up an agreement with Wakhi villagers in January 1992 (Table 2). Ahmad — who in the meantime had become Director of Conservation for WWF-Pakistan — was able to negotiate a deal between the seven Wakhi villages along the KKH⁷ and representatives of the Northern Areas Administration. Despite the huge discrepancy between the original demands for compensation set forth in the 1991 declaration (Table 1), all but one of the affected communities signed the agreement. The community which did not sign was Shimshal. Though the specific reasons why the Shimshalis did not sign are unknown, there is reason to believe that they were sceptical of the agreement on the ground that it bans hunting, which would hinder their subsistence hunting of blue sheep and ibex and outlaw their current practice of selective culling of wild predators (in particular wolves). Despite the fact that the agreement relaxes the “no-grazing” clause and “traditional concessions of grazing” will under certain conditions be allowed to continue

⁷ Ghalapan, Morkhun, Jamalabad, Gircha, Sarthees, Nazimabad and Sust.

(Table 2), Shimshalis remained sceptical of allowing any interference with their customary herd management, and feared that this was only a first step towards phasing out grazing inside the KNP altogether. Unlike the Wakhi villages along the KKH, the Shimshalis had neither used the Khunjerab plateau, nor traded their customary grazing rights for monetary compensation. For them, compensation had never been an issue. It is, however, all the more surprising that the other Wakhi villages did sign, since the agreement does not refer to the compensation issue. One reason why the other Wakhi villagers signed could be the implied use of force. It is known that in order to make Shimshal line up with the other Wakhi villages, the government in 1991 dispatched the District Commissioner to the village. Arriving by helicopter, he threatened to imprison the chief spokesman of the Shimshal villagers, the village teacher Daulat Amin. Only through an eloquent defence, highlighting the predicament of the village, the importance of their pastoral economy and the villagers' history of loyalty to Pakistan, was the commissioner talked out of taking action against Amin.⁸

Collaborative management of the KNP

It is a common pattern that "community-based tenurial rights are not recognized by nation states" (Lynch and Alcorn 1994: 376). A common suggestion for resolving this problem is "co-management" (Berkes 1991) or "collaborative management" (Borrini-Feyerabend 1996) and is currently explored as a management tool in some national parks (Rao and Geisler 1991). While the formation of a Management Board (Table 2) might be taken as a sign that the KNP is to be co-managed by the state and local villagers, there is in reality nothing in this agreement which signals this intent on the part of the government. To the contrary, it makes the graziers forego their right to hunt, accept restrictions on grazing as well as sudden closures when that is deemed necessary. Though the agreement does specify the size of local recruitment to the park's management, there is no information of what their status might become and whether they would exercise any influence on the KNP's management. Moreover, while both the Khunjerab villages and Shimshal were promised seats in the proposed Management Board, the board would be chaired by the Administrator of the Northern Areas, the highest authority of the region. The agreement therefore suggests a definite power imbalance in favour of the government.

Shimshal is the only major village in Hunza without a link-road to the Karakoram Highway (KKH). Travel to the village entails an exhausting two-days hike through steep limestone gorges and across shifting scree slopes, rivers and glaciers. Lacking a road, the village has been left outside the many development changes seen elsewhere in Hunza; there is neither electricity nor mechanized agricultural equipment in the village. Villagers have since 1989 campaigned for a new road in order to end their isolation. After some years stand-still, road

⁸ D. Butz, Brock University, pers.comm., February 1996.

construction has been resumed and the government has contracted the work to local entrepreneurs. Shimshalis long for an end to their isolation, but there is apprehension that construction of the road will give the local administration an alibi for greater intervention in community affairs and might therefore be used to put pressure on the community to agree to the KNP-plans.⁹ For Shimshal, the KNP-plans are therefore especially threatening and as one villager explained it: "If they make it a national park, Shimshal will be a tomb" (Knudsen 1992).

No other community in Hunza engage in pastoral animal husbandry to such a degree as Shimshal, neither do they move so many animals over such large distances. Instead of acknowledging the significance of this community, enforcement of the park plans would put an end to their pastoral animal husbandry. The plan to sedentarize the Shimshalis overlook the cultural significance of their mountain pastures (*pameer*) and the bi-annual migration (*kooch*) to and from the pastures which are high points in Shimshalis' pastoral cycle (Knudsen 1992: 46). The original park plans would fragment this local management system and upset pastoral migrations which were fully compatible with the aims of conservation. Already in 1979, IUCN's guidelines for conservation in mountain environments pointed out that:

Especially in arid and semi-arid regions, nomadic grazing and transhumance often make the best sustained use of grazing lands; *these traditional practices should not be changed without very good reason* (Dasmann and Poore 1979: 27, italics added).

Shimshalis' herd management system would seem to be an archetypal example of a "traditional practice" and, as confirmed by range surveys, over-grazing was hardly evident (Wegge 1988). While Brandon and Wells (1992: 565) are correct that "there has been a tendency to 'glamorize' ...indigenous resource management practices" it is dangerous to write them off before their potential role has been established. Moreover, while it is commonly assumed that domestic animals disturb, displace or compete with wildlife, domestic animals in the KNP will help sustain a larger carnivore population and relieve some of the predator pressure on wild ungulates (Ahmad 1991: 10).¹⁰

Though the 1992 agreement was to mark the dawn of a new partnership between Wakhi villagers and the government this did not happen, probably because both sides remained unconvinced of the others' intentions. In 1992 the proceedings from the Gilgit Workshop (Bell 1992) was published, sponsored by the US National Park Service, the Government of Pakistan and IUCN. Interviews with Wakhi villagers are summarized on less than a single page and demonstrate how little time and effort were spent consulting with the affected communities. However, there has since been increasing recognition that the KNP issue cannot

⁹ D. Butz, pers.comm., February 1996.

¹⁰ Researchers disagree over this point. Some argue that the size of wildlife populations have been exaggerated and that domestic animals do compete with wild ungulates (WWF 1996: 114, 119).

be resolved unless the government adopts a more reconciliatory stance vis-à-vis local communities. In September 1994 the WWF-Pakistan representative Chaudry Inayatullah lectured on the KNP-case,¹¹ and admitted to many of the problems in the park. He explained that in the period 1991-94 there had not been much progress in the planning process. Inayatullah stressed that the rules governing grazing in the park were too strict and should be relaxed. He was also critical of the current stationing of the Khunjerab Security Force (KSF) on the KNP border which increased local mistrust and opposition to the park. To improve relations with local people he suggested an immediate removal of KSF personnel and involving village organizations in park management. Instead of adopting Inayatullah's sound policy advice, the WWF did not officially soften its stance on the KNP-issue and the WWF-sponsored booklet *An Ecotourist's Guide to the Khunjerab National Park* (1995) neither refers to the disputed nature of the park nor the claims of Wakhi villagers.

The new KNP management plan

The revised management plan for the KNP was presented during an inauguration ceremony in Gilgit in November 1996 (WWF 1996). The plan is to be commended for trying to disentangle the complex issues at stake, but still falls short of providing new answers to how they can be resolved (Table 3). The total operating costs for activities planned under the five-year management plan amounts to a staggering Rs. 57 million (ca. US\$ 1.5 million) (WWF 1996: xvi) and underlines the problem of sustainability as "protected areas will not generate enough revenues to cover their costs" (Dixon and Sherman 1991: 69). Though park fees to be paid by visitors are sometimes a vital source of income, studies from the Northern Areas show that both the number of visitors and the ability to collect park fees are very low. Cross-checking different sources, Mock and O'Neil found that about 20-25.000 tourists per year visited the Northern Areas and Chitral (1996: 10) but only a minority of these were trekking tourists. Revenues from park fees are negligible and in 1992 amounted to only Rs. 56.600 (US\$ 1.500) (Development Research Group 1995).¹² To cover costs for compensating those giving up grazing as well as loss of domestic animals to predators, the plan suggests levying an entry

¹¹ Presented at the Skardu Workshop, 28-29 September, 1994.

¹² In comparison, peak fees paid by climbing expeditions in 1992 totalled Rs. 3.7 million (US\$ 152.700) (Development Research Group 1995: 58).

Table 3
Excerpts from the new KNP management plan, 1996

Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80 % local employment in park (contingent on giving up grazing concessions)
Income-generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • levy entry fee on vehicles (to cover loss of grazing concessions and domestic animals killed by predators) • promote ecotourism
Boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • park borders extended to comply with Wegge's original proposal • no land-use zonation
Wildlife protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shimshal to remain in KNP and rules of wildlife protection to remain in full • enforcement of hunting ban entrusted with village organizations in Khunjerab and Shimshal • carrying weapons banned throughout the park (does not apply to KSF)
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Committee (distribution of seats not specified)
Park authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KSF and KNP-administration

Source: WWF (1996)

fee on all vehicles crossing the Khunjerab plateau (WWF 1996: 64). This is a potentially promising source of income, but depends on factors such as the number of vehicles, the willingness-to-pay and a transparent and accountable system for dividing funds between park bodies and local communities.

In accordance with Wegge's earlier suggestion the new management plan suggests enlarging the KNP to a total of 6.150 sq. km but does not, as suggested by Wegge, include land-use zoning as a management tool (Table 3). The reason given for not dividing the park into land-use zones (core-, protected- and hunting zones) is that not enough is known about wildlife habitats and would require closure of areas now used for domestic grazing (WWF 1996: 38). Since hunting zones have not been identified, this also meant that plans for implementing a commercial trophy hunting programme as planned under the "Khunjerab Agreement" also were put on hold (Table 2). Instead, the plan suggests immediate measures to protect wild ungulates (in particular Marco Polo sheep and Tibetan wild ass) and large predators. The plan promotes ecotourism as a new source of income, but neither mentions the compensation issue nor easing the ban on hunting. It also upholds the general hunting ban throughout the park and despite vesting enforcement of the ban with village organizations, this is unacceptable to Shimshalis who see culling of predators as essential to the viability of their

pastoral animal husbandry.¹³ While the new park plan promises 80 per cent of KNP job opportunities to local communities (WWF 1996: 47), this offer is made contingent upon surrendering grazing concessions and therefore not applicable to Shimshal. What remains is the possibility of promoting ecotourism, of which Shimshal already is the prime beneficiary (Knudsen 1992: 69ff.).

In some respects the new management plan is "too little too late" and elements of the plan have already been pre-empted by grassroots initiatives of Wakhi villagers. Aided by funding from senior Pakistan People's Party politicians – most prominently President Farooq Leghari – the "Khunjerab Villagers Organization" (KVO) consisting of the villages along the KKH has initiated its own conservation programme in a 30 km buffer-zone outside the KNP's border (Khan 1996). Similarly, Shimshal villagers have formed their own "Shimshal Nature Preservation Trust" which aims to protect the environment and preserve biodiversity.¹⁴ Neither of these initiatives have been welcomed by the authorities and there is local resentment that "the big environment NGOs which were on the scene when..[we]..were against conservation have jilted us after we took matters in our own hands" (ibid.: 142). Villagers believe they should have a say in the management of the KNP, and suspect that the plans will enrich the government at their expense. In the words of Qurban Mohammed, spokesman for the KVO, Wakhi villagers are:

interested in developing the Khunjerab National Park, but the management of the park should be in local hands. The government will take the profit without involving the people. They just want to take all this beautiful land away and leave us empty-handed (Mohammed in, Slavin 1991: 49).

In the present climate of mutual mistrust between Wakhi villagers and the government, collaborative management of the KNP is impossible. In order to protest the police checkpoint put up by the para-military Khunjerab Security Force (KSF) in 1991, the KVO has recently erected its own *awami* ("people's") checkpost just north of the one maintained by KSF.¹⁵ The stationing of the KSF in the park increases Wakhi villagers feeling of being under siege. Though the KSF's principal mission is to guard national security interests at the Chinese border, it is also the *de facto* authority of the KNP. While park regulations ban carrying weapons inside the KNP, this does not apply to the KSF.¹⁶ Being both better organized and armed enables the KSF to "exercise more control over park

¹³ Some have speculated that Shimshalis hunt large predators to extinction in order to erode the foundation of the park (WWF 1996: 116). No evidence has been produced to confirm this charge.

¹⁴ J. Mock, pers.comm., April 1997.

¹⁵ H. Kreutzmann, University of Bonn, pers.comm., September 1996.

¹⁶ The KSF has been accused of hunting "the endangered species [in the KNP] with the very weapons with which they are supposed to protect them" (Development Research Group 1995: 81).

resources than KNP staff ... Consequently, park rules and administration are relegated to a secondary position” (WWF 1996: 44-45). Though the plan suggests vesting formal park authority with the KNP-administration, there is in reality no short-term administrative solution to the problem.

Changing perceptions of national parks

There is growing realization that national parks, as traditionally conceived, are ill-fitted to the reality in developing countries (Ghimire and Pimbert 1997; King and Stewart 1996: 297). This, in particular, concerns the question of residence in national parks. Here, the views are sharply divided, varying from those who advocate peoples’ rights, to those who are critical of allowing blanket residence in national parks. The latter “conservationist approach” is linked to what is termed the “Yellowstone model” which emphasized that national parks should preserve the pristine beauty of the wilderness, hence, resident people were perceived as an obstacle to the aims of conservation (Kemf 1993: 6). Despite recent attempts to reconcile the needs of conservation with basic human rights through more selective approaches (Dearden et al. 1996), the denial of customary use rights of native populations remains the single most problematic issue in national parks in the developing world (Colchester 1994). A survey of national parks found that almost “two-thirds of the parks reported illegal removal of wildlife, and half reported removal of vegetation, poor relations with local people, and conflicting demands for park resources” (McNeely 1990: 18).

Criticism of national parks has been made on more pragmatic grounds, arguing that most are too small to have tangible effects on conservation or foster an insular mentality where the park itself is carefully managed, while surrounding areas are left open for exploitation (McNeely 1990: 20). The critique of national parks has also focused on social injustice (Orlove and Brush 1996: 333) and the costs inflicted on resident populations. While the direct costs of establishing and running a national park is borne by the state (or foreign donors) the indirect costs from, for example, increased predator pressure are borne by the local communities. Another cost to local people is the opportunity costs, that is the costs incurred through lack of access to grazing, hunting, forest products etc. as a result of the park (Wells 1992). In general, the direct costs are rather small since governments typically allocate only the bare minimum of funds for running parks. The main costs are therefore those which are inflicted on local people through the creation of the parks. This problem is especially acute in those cases where establishing national parks results in eviction or displacement of the original inhabitants (cf. Rao and Geisler 1991). An alternative to national parks are participatory approaches such as “Integrated Conservation-Development Projects” (ICDPs) (Brandon and Wells 1992). ICDPs’ seek to promote conservation by providing alternative income for the inhabitants but are not, as sometimes claimed, a development panacea (Wells 1992: 240). A central feature of ICDPs is land-use zoning and the creation of buffer zones. While land-use zoning was previously

seen as a way to accommodate the need of different user-groups with wildlife protection, recent studies are less optimistic of the zoning principle in order to achieve multiple-use in national parks (Colchester 1994: 31). Especially, "it may be difficult to convince local people that restricted buffer-zone access is a valuable benefit if (a) they had unrestricted use of the area before establishment of the protected area; or (b) many of the resources of the proposed buffer-zone area had already been degraded or depleted -- both common situations on park boundaries" (Wells 1992: 240).

In order for people to value conservation they must be secured income from resources which have supported them in the past *and* be allowed to earn supplemental income. Currently, ecotourism is advocated as the most promising avenue for creating alternative employment for rural populations. A general problem with ecotourism is that most of the profits are not realized locally, but pocketed by national and international tour operators (Brandon and Wells 1992: 36; Colchester 1994: 33). The amount of money earned locally needs therefore not be large, and locals are often left with the negative impacts of modern ecotourism which, despite its appealing name, often is anything but "ecological". A major problem in the high mountains of Northern Pakistan is the firewood requirements of foreign expeditions and trekking tourists which put heavy pressure on the sparse forest cover. Another problem is campsite-specific impacts such as garbage dumps and human waste (Rashid 1994).

McNeely (1988; 1989) has pointed out the need for nature conservation to become more profitable (as well as how the loss of biodiversity should be better accounted for). This "pragmatic" approach to nature conservation has led to the foundation of community-based trophy hunting programmes with economic benefits going to local communities. Despite increasing criticism of such programmes in East and South Africa (Gibson and Marks 1995), trophy hunting has been promoted as the only viable strategy for wildlife management in Pakistan because "a complete ban on hunting, which in theory sounds fantastic, is severely counter-productive in reality. It is logistically impossible for the government to enforce it" (Durrani in, Mallick 1994). This approach has gradually gained acceptance and both IUCN and WWF now run participatory conservation projects in the Northern Areas (Nasar 1995; Khan 1996).¹⁷

The willingness of IUCN and WWF to initiate participatory conservation projects is in stark opposition to the confrontational strategy adopted in the case of the KNP. A possible reason for the strict preservationist approach to the KNP was institutional inertia on the part of IUCN. At the time of the Gilgit Workshop in 1989 the active use of zoning in national parks was already common and utilized with good effect in Nepal (Wegge 1992b: 59). Moreover, what we could call the "research wing" of IUCN under the leadership of McNeely (Chief Conservator Officer) had already begun advocating more pragmatic conservation

¹⁷ The first project phase is scheduled for three years (1996-1998) and funding for the "Biodiversity Project" comes from UNDP under its Global Environmental Fund (Nasar 1995).

measures. In 1988, a year prior to the Gilgit Workshop, McNeely published his *Economics and Biological Diversity* (1988). In this book and subsequent articles McNeely (1989; 1990) developed IUCN's new approach to nature conservation and wildlife management. Central themes were the active use of economic incentives (and disincentives) in order to conserve biological resources. In the years to come, IUCN placed greater importance on preserving natural *and* cultural diversity (McNeely 1992a) and acknowledged that "relationships between people and land have too often been ignored or even destroyed by well-intentioned but insensitive resource conservation and management initiatives" (McNeely 1992b: 140). Against this background, it is puzzling that IUCN so strongly endorsed the category II model for the Khunjerab National Park. During the Gilgit Workshop in 1989 Dr. John B. Sale (sitting in for Dr. Martin Holdgate, Director General of IUCN) declared that:

IUCN and similar international conservation organizations stand ready to assist in the development and implementation of the management program [in the KNP], *assuming that it continues to follow the internationally recognized norms for a national park*. It is clear from this workshop that the Government of Pakistan has this firm intention. Nothing should be allowed to deflect from this admirable resolve (Sale in, Bell 1992: 133, italics added).

Despite the changes which had taken place in IUCN's conservation policy, the organization endorsed the strict category II national park model and, seemingly, made this mandatory for continued support of the park planning process. Moreover, IUCN ignored advice from Wegge, IUCN's own consultant and the most knowledgeable person on the situation of wildlife in the KNP. The problems in the KNP has become an embarrassment to the government and to IUCN which in the years since the Gilgit workshop has distanced itself from the KNP-problem. The government had hoped that the KNP would become Pakistan's first "World Heritage Site", a prestigious list of the world's outstanding natural and cultural sites under UNESCO's World Heritage Convention. The unresolved problems in the KNP made the authorities realize that they would need to look elsewhere to fulfil this ambition.

The Central Karakoram National Park

While both India and Nepal each has one park listed as a World Heritage Site,¹⁸ Pakistan so far has none. Pakistani authorities have been eager to end this regional imbalance and in 1992 IUCN in collaboration with the government initiated the groundwork for a new national park in the surroundings of K2, the world's second highest mountain (8611 masl). In the mid-1970s, Schaller had deemed a national park in the vicinity of K2 as unnecessary and had instead suggested that the

¹⁸ Nanda Devi National Park (India) and Sagarmatha National Park (Nepal).

government should pursue what later became the Khunjerab National Park. However, a pre-preparatory mission in 1992 by IUCN's Senior advisor Jim Thorsell (1992: 4) concluded that the natural values of the Central Karakoram area "are clearly exceptional on a world scale" and would meet the criteria of a World Heritage Site. However, Thorsell pointed out that it was the natural beauty of the area rather than its abundant wildlife which was the main reason for establishing a park. The initial park proposal for the "Central Karakoram National Park" (CKNP) covered about 3,000 sq. km and included the major mountain massifs, valley-systems and glaciers of the central Karakoram region (Map 1).¹⁹

In late September 1994 Pakistan authorities were ready to follow up on Thorsell's recommendations and for that purpose, organized a workshop in Skardu, the main town in Baltistan. Unlike the Gilgit Workshop in 1989, affected communities were invited to participate and had also been consulted during field-visits prior to the workshop. In addition to the presence of local village representatives from Baltistan, a spokesman for the Khunjerab Village Organization was also invited to the workshop. The token inclusion of local villagers generally, and a representative of the defiant Wakhi villagers especially, signalled a new attitude on the part of the government and re-directing IUCN-Pakistan's conservation strategy for mountain protected areas (Fuller 1994).

The initial park proposal from the Ministry (1994) planned to include three villages (Hushe, Khaplu and Askole) comprising about 1,200 persons within the park's boundaries while the remaining 29 villages comprising about 13,300 persons would be included in the buffer zone. During the workshop a more detailed map of the park was prepared, and following the wish of local representatives from Hushe and Askole, the park's southern border was moved slightly northwards thereby shifting them into the planned buffer zone. Otherwise, zoning as a management tool was neither discussed at the workshop, nor was it later included in the formal park proposal from Pakistan authorities.

The representatives from Hushe and Askole were concerned with the importance of proper consultation and engaging in a dialogue with local communities (Mallick 1994). They were concerned about proper compensation for losses of domestic animals to wild predators and respect for existing land-use patterns. Another concern was the pressure tourism and trekking put on scarce forest vegetation. The Hushe delegates asked that visitors should not be allowed to use local firewood but should be issued kerosene instead. In the Hushe valley the number of trekkers had doubled during the period 1989-92, to an estimated 16,000 man-days per season (Thorsell 1992: 6). In addition, firewood was carried out of Hushe to cater for trekking parties along the Baltoro glacier. For the people of Hushe it was also important that the park could help them raise living standards and improve health conditions, especially reducing the high infant mortality. None of these issues were tackled during the workshop apart from the intent to preserve

¹⁹ However, the largest glacier (Siachen Gl.) was excluded by the Ministry of Defence due to the continued engagement by Pakistani and Indian forces in the region.

the forest cover through the establishment of kerosene depots in the vicinity of the park.

Taken together the KNP, CKNP and the Deosai Plateau (proposed as a national park) would form a contiguous conservation area — what is known as a “bio-region” (McNeely 1992b: 141) — covering about 50 per cent of the central Karakoram ecosystem. Whereas local people were consulted, there were neither concrete discussions of how the CKNP should be managed, nor was co-management discussed as a management option. As such the main achievement of the Skardu Workshop was preparing the ground for a management plan by enlisting local support for the park by crudely fitting its border to existing settlement and land-use patterns. Though the park plans involved imposing a hunting ban throughout the park, the implications for animal husbandry in the park were not discussed. The workshop was not short of expert advice on the people and the region but only a minority of them had been asked for advice. The majority of the lectures and papers which had been prepared neither raised key management issues, nor how the park would balance conflicting demands between the revenue accruing from trekking and climbing expeditions, both locally (through portering and guiding) and nationally (peak fees as government revenue) and the interest of conservation. However, in order to gain a better basis for evaluating the range and potential for trekking tourism, IUCN later commissioned a study of ecotourism in the Northern Areas under its Biodiversity Project (Mock and O’Neil 1996).

Pakistan is currently seeking a “World Heritage Site” nomination for the CKNP. There are a obstacles to this nomination, especially the extensive armed forces deployment in the area and the dispute over jurisdiction between Pakistan and India (the “Kashmir issue”). Nonetheless, the planning process which was chosen for the CKNP shows that Pakistani authorities now favour a more democratic planning process by involving local people at an early stage in the planning exercise. Though the Skardu Workshop was not perfect, it signalled a willingness to learn from past mistakes and to acknowledge that local people have an important role to play in the park planning processes.

Conclusion

An integral part of Pakistan’s nature conservation strategy has been the creation of national parks.²⁰ There has neither been an exhaustive evaluation of this conservation strategy, nor in-depth studies of the current status of wildlife in Pakistan’s national parks, game reserves and game sanctuaries. However, available material suggests that national parks in Pakistan neither attract foreign tourists nor give adequate protection to local wildlife. The failure to protect the critically

²⁰ According to a country report prepared for FAO (Anwar 1996) the government of Pakistan in collaboration with IUCN plan to increase the number of national parks from the present 14 to a total of 35 national parks.

endangered Marco Polo sheep in the KNP is a case in point. National parks also suffer from unresolved ownership claims from affected local populations or feudal lords (Mock, in press). Conservation efforts have also failed due to inadequate research, faulty advice and lingering stereotypes, especially the belief that mountain farmers are purposely destroying their environment. This does not mean that local people are motivated by an "environmental ethic", it does mean, however, that they will protect their environment if they are assured that they will enjoy the future benefits.

The KNP was planned as "a showcase of effective conservation in developing countries" (Bell 1992: 135) but instead became a depressing failure. In particular, the planning exercise was a lesson in how not to gain popular support of a park. The park became a battle-ground between conservationist objectives and an unrelenting local opposition. The original park plans violated basic human rights of the resident Wakhi villagers, and for Shimshal especially, undermined their livelihood and threatened their future. The Pakistan authorities have put a lot of energy into addressing the problems in the KNP, but has still not resolved the issues which are most troublesome, in particular the restrictions on hunting and grazing.

It is important to note that Wakhi villagers — despite their small number and limited means — have staged a successful grassroots campaign and frustrated all attempts to have them comply with the strict rules governing the park. We do not know, however, what these acts of civil disobedience have cost Wakhi communities in terms of lost income, distress and internal disruption. The government of Pakistan implemented the outdated "Yellowstone model" despite the fact that it been replaced by more sensitive conservation measures. Moreover, IUCN actively encouraged this strategy long after it was clear that it was doomed to failure. This criticism equally applies to the government and its implementing agency, the NCCW, which were adamant that the only management option for the KNP was the IUCN category II national park.

While this paper is critical of Pakistan's conservation efforts, it does not negate the efforts Pakistani authorities have made towards protecting the environment despite a very tight federal budget. Where conservation efforts have been least effective is in gaining approval from those who are affected. There has been a definite arrogance vis-à-vis local people and an unwillingness to involve them in planning matters (MacDonald 1995). This is not the government's fault alone, but can be blamed on the parent organizations of WWF and IUCN, whose global mission for protecting wildlife has failed to address the needs of people who, mostly against their will, become involved in wildlife conservation. Moreover, economic considerations compel Third World governments to follow IUCN's preservationist standard for national parks. The strict application of the "exclusionary principle" is neither IUCN's invention nor a novelty on the South Asian continent: already in 1910 the Maharajah of Kashmir expelled residents from his private deer reserve (Tucker 1991: 44).

The planning process for the CKNP shows that the authorities are eager not to repeat past mistakes. Whereas local villagers under certain pre-conditions were

supportive of the park plans, no formal agreements have been signed. Neither has Pakistani authorities decided how they will tackle demands for economic compensation nor how to accommodate existing land-use practices with the goals of a category II national park.

The Khunjerab National Park will not outlast the persistent opposition of an antagonistic population. The Pakistani authorities therefore must — sooner rather than later — strike a deal with Wakhi villagers. The token inclusion of a member of the Khunjerab Villagers Organization at the Skardu Workshop is an important symbolic gesture towards the defiant Wakhi villagers. If the government and its supporting agencies and NGO's are able to capitalize on this thaw in their relationship with Wakhi villagers, the government may be able to realize its goal of a bio-region of world-scale importance and with the potential to preserve Northern Pakistan's natural *and* cultural heritage.

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