

Rehabilitating Borderland Destinations: A Strategic Framework Towards Cross-Border Tourism Collaboration

Deepak Raj Gupta, University of Jammu, India, deepakdma@yahoo.com
Zubair Ahmad Dada, University of Jammu, India, zubair.ixr@gmail.com

Abstract

Borderland destinations are dynamic organisms and very sensitive to diplomatic relations among territorial nation states. They mark the legal limits of national sovereignty or the lines up to which a state may operate its sovereign authority. Despite their conventional position as barriers to human contact, international boundaries are increasingly emerging as horizons of cross-cultural consumption and facilitate diffusion of transnational human experiences and their image as political demarcations have diminished in relative terms. Sovereign nations have started to realize the significance of cross-border collaborative tourism liaisons and their strategic role in conflict mitigation and promoting politico-economic rehabilitation and cultural and ecological sustainability. This paper attempts to construct a theoretical cross-border tourism engagement framework to highlight the significance of rehabilitating borderland destinations and their potential strategic role in transnational conflict prevention using two parts of divided Kashmir as a case study. It proposes that one of the most enlightened ways for building cross-border goodwill is through the utilization of borderland destinations as buffers to diffuse political tensions and facilitate the multiplier effects of international tourism. This paper also explores the possibilities of stakeholder intervention in free-tourist migration, joint tourism ventures, cross-border shopping and tourism-based community interaction.

Key words: conflict prevention, Borderland destinations, cross-border tourism, transnational collaboration.

Introduction

International tourism - by definition - concerns movements of people across international borders for a variety of purposes including leisure but also includes business tourism, VFR (visiting friends and relatives), religious pilgrimage etc. Official definitions of tourism (as used by the United Nations' World Tourism Organization, or in tourism textbooks) tend to include one or more night stays away from home, or some element of distance travelled away from home or work. However, such definitions are less helpful when considering cross border tourism. There is no agreed definition of cross-border tourism, but here, and following Timothy and Butler (1995), it is proposed that a day trip (whether leisure, business, VFR or grocery shopping) is a form of tourism if it crosses an international border. Thus, it is argued that cross-border tourism is not contingent upon an overnight stay away from neither home nor minimum time period. Cross-border tourism may also include overnight stays, like conventionally-defined international tourism. In addition, it is suggested here that any working definition of cross-border

tourism also requires an element of geographical proximity such as seen between the US and Canada, or Singapore and Malaysia.

In other words, cross-border tourism also requires a common border, unlike conventionally-defined international tourism. In addition, the ease of cross border linkages is significant. Arguably some of France's success in attracting 76 million international arrivals in 2005 (UNWTO, 2006) is the ease of border crossings with neighboring EU countries. In extreme cases, such as between North and South Korea, border crossings and consequent linkages, are difficult, slow and expensive, and preclude real growth in cross-border tourism. Interestingly, unlike the Tourist System model suggested by Leiper (1989) consisting a system of Generating, Destination and Transit Regions for cross-border regions, there is no real 'intermediate' or Transit region between the Generating and Destination regions if they are adjacent countries. For Singapore and nearby southern Malaysia, the few hundred meters Causeway between the countries cannot sensibly be seen as a Transit Region.

The India-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir is rooted in competing claims to the territory, which has been divided since 1948 by a military line of control separating India's state of Jammu and Kashmir from Pakistan-controlled Azad Kashmir. The dispute is tied to the national identities of both countries. India and Pakistan fought full-scale wars over Kashmir in 1947 and 1965. The region was also a proxy issue in the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War (Schofield, 1996).

In human terms, the Kashmir conflict to date has claimed the lives of an estimated 40,000 to 80,000 people and left another 400,000 as refugees (Medhurst, 2002). The importance of this conflict varies for the three involved players. For India and Pakistan, both nuclear nation states, the loss of Kashmir is unacceptable because of domestic political reasons. For India, Kashmir is an integral part of its secular nation state and it believes that the loss of Kashmir could result in other Muslim states demanding autonomy or independence, thus destroying a secular India (Ganguly, 1997). Pakistan views Kashmir as the most important national political issue, which evokes strong views from the military, government and the general public who are unlikely to give it up as a national agenda (Ganguly, 2001). The Kashmiris themselves are divided on their vision of self-determination. A common stance on the accession into Pakistan or independence from India is not only argued in Kashmir, but fought over between rival insurgent groups. For the rest of the world, Kashmir may represent the most dangerous existing conflict, because it is ultimately being fought and supported by two nuclear states, which have been at war four times since their creation.



Source: United States Institute of Peace

Boundaries

Political boundaries function as physical and psychological barriers for interactions between neighbouring countries. Governments delimit national territories in order to control the movement of people, goods and services between countries. In the nineteenth century the concept of territorial sovereignty began to develop as states became increasingly viewed as the ultimate source of legitimate authority and law (Gottman, 1973; Sack, 1986; Herzog, 1990, Jonston 1995). International boundaries reflect historical moments in the life of a state, when limits are determined according to its strengths and abilities at that time. Currently, boundaries are the result of the past and a basis for possible change in the future. States acquire their boundaries in a variety of ways: by marking their own territorial and political limits of expansion and occupation or by being imposed by external powers through acts of conquest or negotiation.

Borderlines function as barriers to social and economic processes, which would otherwise cross the lines without interference, and thus also control economic developments through taxes and limitations on the transfer of goods (Biger, 1995). According to Jones (1943), the ideal of establishing international boundaries should be advanced in four steps: definition, delimitation, demarcation and maintenance (or administration). This ideal pattern has been implemented in only a few boundaries around the world and the meaning of 'normal' conditions is a matter of debate, because most boundaries are created by aggression by one of the parties or reflect property lines dating back to bygone eras. While Prescott (1987) maintained that boundaries have only one real function, to mark the limits of sovereignty, other researchers ascribe additional core functions to political boundaries: legal limits that define the territory of a state, economic roles, monitoring and controlling the flow of people, ideological barriers for preventing the infiltration of ideas and information, and lines of military defense (Percy, 1965; Prescott, 1987). Some early researchers (e.g. Holdich, 1916; Jones, 1943) opined that the best political boundaries are those that follow natural geographical features, such as rivers or mountain ranges. Glassner (1996) disagreed, maintaining that better boundaries develop between good neighbors irrespective of the type of border. Leimgruber (1991) contended that all

boundaries, even physiographic ones, are human creations, as nature does not engage in drawing clear border lines.

Borders and Tourism

Tourism is influenced by political boundaries and by government policies related to borders, administrative management on both sides of the border and the physical barriers that borders create. Borders influence tourism in many dynamic ways, too, by creating barriers against tourism attractions and modifications of the tourism landscape. Timothy (2001) wrote about borderlines themselves as objects of tourist attention and described borderlines (2001) as a fabrication of human reflections of sociopolitical values. He was of the opinion that many people, especially tourists, have a fascination with borders. When lines are marked on the ground by tangible objects, they have the potential to become tourist attractions. Tourism development in border regions can be very attractive, and many of the world's most popular attractions are located on or around them. Some researchers have described the development of tourism in peripheral areas (e.g. Krakover, 1985; Butler, 1996; Timothy, 2000).

Other studies have pointed to the dependency or neocolonial relationships that exist in many parts of the world as peripheral regions that develop tourism rely on support from the core to survive (Keller, 1984; Turner & Ash, 1975). Timothy (2001) suggested viewing tourism in borderlands from two main perspectives: the borderlines themselves as objects of tourist attention and tourism that does not focus directly on the border itself but whose existence can be ascribed to the site's relative proximity to the border. The same border that might deter some travelers could also attract others interested in comparing differences in languages, cultures and politics. An example of this would be the pre-1991 Finland– USSR border, which attracted tourists interested in seeing and taking pictures of the forbidden land beyond.

The motivation for crossing borders can be created by the romantic nostalgia among some travelers for border formalities and differences in landscape (Medvedev, 1999). The way that borders are marked is an unusual and interesting issue that attracts tourists. Ryden (1993) described the mystique and fascination of borders resulting from the differences of lifestyle in two adjacent places. Two examples can illustrate the tourist attractiveness of borders that were previously closed to tourism passage: the Berlin Wall and the border between South and North Korea. The Berlin Wall, which served as a magnet for Westerners wishing to observe the other side when the barrier to travel and tourism was existent (Koenig, 1981), became a unique tourist attraction symbolizing the Cold War after the demise of the East–West divide in 1989–1990 (Light, 2000). In South-east Asia, tourism-related projects have been proposed in the past to improve relations between North and South Korea, for example, goodwill visits by sports teams, and the construction of sports facilities and parklands within the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) (Kim and Crompton, 1990).

Overview of Literature

The notion that one can gain knowledge and understanding of other peoples and cultures through international travel to other lands is not simply a slogan educators in the field of international studies invoke to encourage students to take advantage of study abroad programs. It is an idea at the core of anthropological fieldwork and celebrated in the accounts of explorers and travelers. Although tourism planning and community participation has been discussed in the

literature (including Timothy, 1999; Hampton, 2005), research concerning the host community's own views on the local socio-political and economic effects of cross-border tourism remains a gap in our understanding. Arguably much of Singapore's cross-border tourism investment into neighboring Indonesia has been directly related to meeting the needs of Singaporean tourists, and in particular infrastructural development in Batam and Bintan islands is geared to the expectations of Singaporean and international tourists (Timothy, 2001). However, although cross-border tourism is often proposed as a form of economic development, the local economic impacts on the host community are poorly researched.

Cross-border tourism has a small but growing literature (Timothy, 2001; Sofield, 2006). Some researchers have argued that cross-border tourism promotes cross-border trade and socio-economic cooperation. For example, in the US-Mexico borderlands, business visits have significantly increased through tourism, and there is a growing borderland regional economy in Texas, Arizona and Mexico (Aradhyula & Tronstad, 2003). However, it is not clear if this is mainly due to tourism or the growing level of wider economic activity in the borderlands. One sub-set of the tourism literature that could be further developed concerns cross-border shopping for instance between the UK and France, the US and Canada or Hong Kong and Shenzhen (Follo, 2003; Lau *et. al.* 2005; Timothy & Butler, 1995; Timothy & Tosun, 2003; Lew & McKercher, 2002) and whether these models of collaboration could be developed as buffers for the betterment of India-Pakistan relations and conflict mitigation in the Kashmir region emerges as a scholastic investigation.

Modeling cross-border tourism collaboration using Kashmir as a case study

The framework for cross-border tourism collaboration between Indian Kashmir and Sino-Pak Kashmir is impacted by a range of stakeholders and the potential collaboration through tourism among them can be very instrumental in rehabilitating these regions and can be a significant international relations arrangement for mitigating conflicts and political tensions as illustrated in the model. The model is supported by the cooperation (Axelrod, 1984) and the inter-group contact (Coakley, 1994) theories, which underscore the significance of growing contact between groups with frictional interests for augmenting transnational cooperation and understanding.

According to Sonmez & Apostolopoulos (2000), for promoting sustainable cooperation among stakeholders, the cooperation theory advises the gradual elimination of obstacles to cooperation by transforming strategic settings. Therefore, the proposed engagement in the figures 1 and 2 are an attempt to develop a cross-border tourism engagement framework, adapted from the model originally developed by Sonmez & Apostolopoulos (2000).

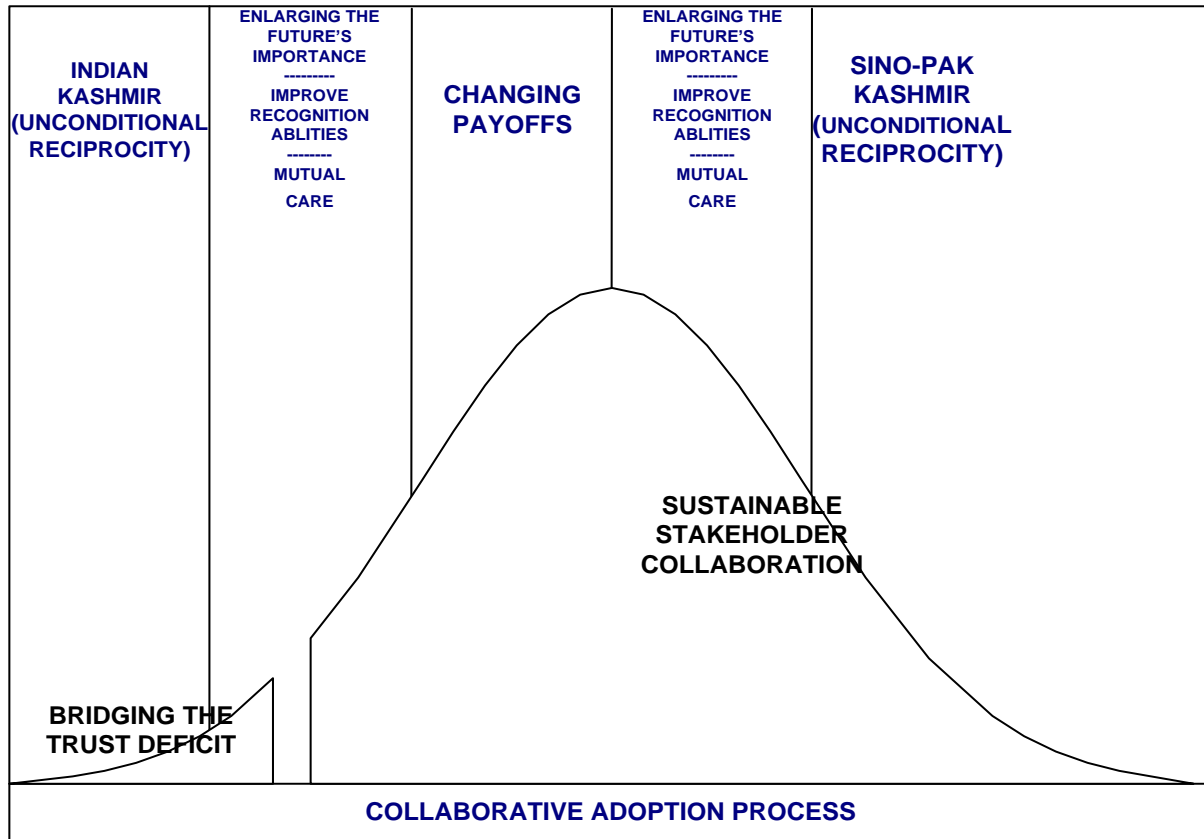


Figure 1: Collaborative Adoption Process

Collaborative adoption process includes:

- **Unconditional Reciprocity:** Requiring unconditional reciprocity by making non-cooperation unprofitable and therefore unattractive.
 - **Enlarging the Future's Importance:** Clearly communicating—to all stakeholders—the greater future benefits of cooperation as opposed to lack of cooperation.
 - **Focusing on Positive Results:** Repeated interaction to build trust and strengthen dedication to cooperation.
 - **Mutual Care:** Educating people to care about the welfare of others and stressing that individual benefits are positively affected by others' welfare.
 - **Changing Payoffs:** Emphasizing the difference between cooperation and competition.
- The cooperation, input, and support of each group of stakeholders are imperative to enable both sides to unite in a cooperative effort that will ultimately move the entire region towards probable mutual benefits and visible enhanced payoffs.

According to the inter-group contact theory, contact between people from different ethnic groups can lead to a favorable change when members of each group have equal status, pursue the same goals, depend on one another's cooperation to achieve their goals, and receive positive encouragement for interacting with one another without discrimination (Sonmez & Apostolopoulos, 2000). Therefore, both Indian Kashmir and Sino-Pak Kashmir stand to gain from tourism cooperation and they depend on the mutual cooperation for peace building in the entire region.

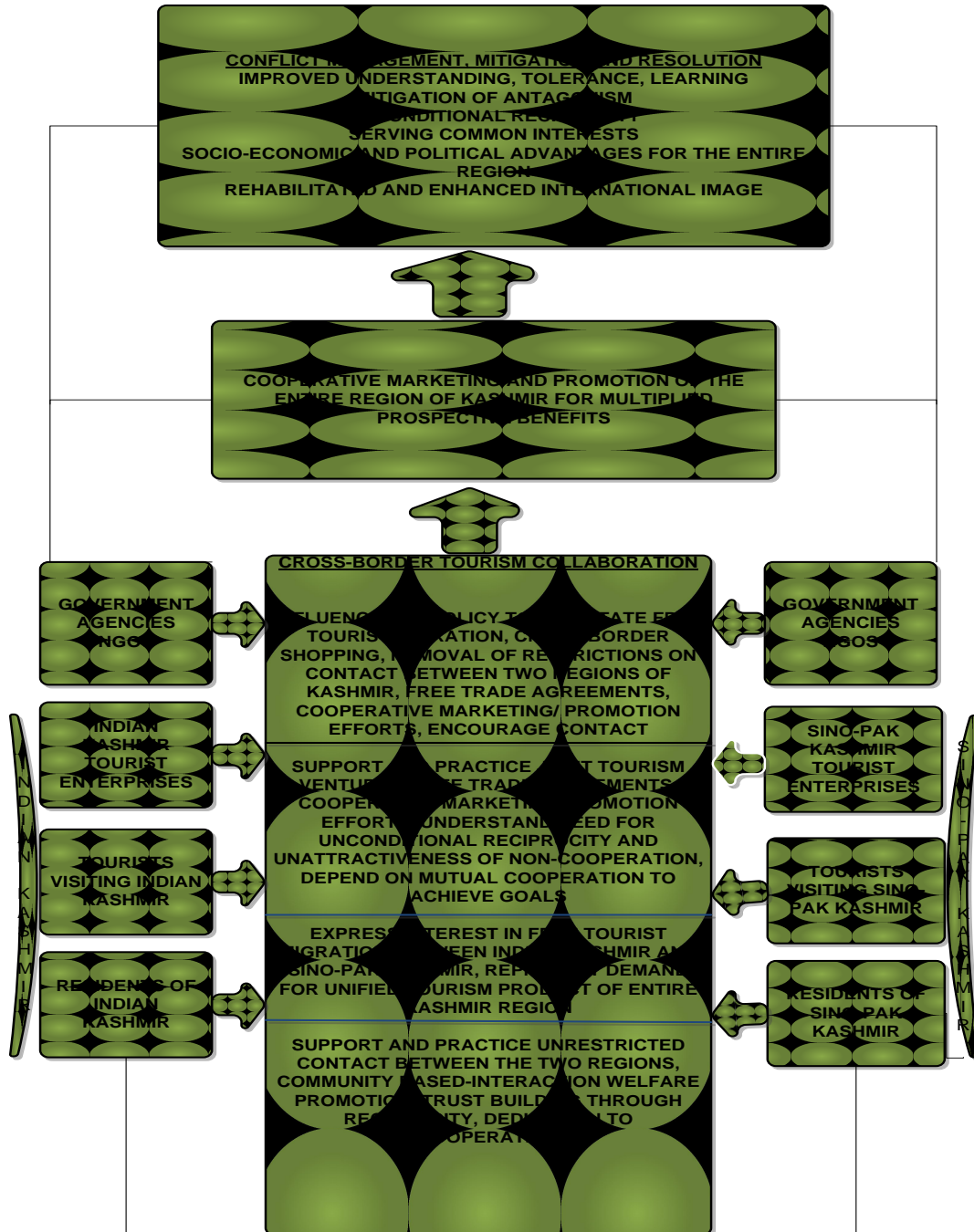


Figure 2: Cross-Border Tourism Collaboration Model. Source: Sonmez & Apostolopoulos (2000)

As suggested by the cooperation theory, it is imperative to communicate to all stakeholders that the long-term benefits to be accrued to both Indian Kashmir and Sino-Pak Kashmir—by pooling efforts to market the entire Kashmir region as a single destination and cooperating in all facets of their tourism industries—are clearly greater than those resulting from their hostility

against each other. As a starting point, it is imperative to make interactions between parties more durable and frequent. Prolonged interaction facilitates the establishment of patterns of cooperation based on reciprocity, whereas, more frequent interaction increases the importance of each imminent action to be taken by the parties (Axelrod, 1984).

The primary stakeholders that have the power to influence cross-border tourism cooperation and that need to be aware of the benefits of cooperation and importance of reciprocity include government agencies, tourists, enterprises, residents, and NGOs. As implied by the two theories, for successful and sustainable cooperation, active participation of all stakeholders is necessary. Educating people about others' welfare, requiring reciprocity, and increasing contact between groups (i.e., business owners, residents) that depend upon one another's cooperation are essential.

The cooperation, input, and support of each group of stakeholders are imperative to enable both sides to unite in a cooperative effort that will ultimately move the entire region towards probable mutual benefits, which may ultimately lead to the resolution of the long-standing conflict. Although each group of stakeholders has its specific area of influence, the support of each and all of the groups—can significantly contribute to the success of the model. For example, although local and central government agencies (i.e., governors'/mayors' offices, chambers of commerce, airport authority, tourism boards, police/health departments, regional planning offices), as well as NGOs are in the position to institute or influence policies regarding free tourist migration, cross-border shopping, community-based cross cultural consumption, removal of restrictions on the contact between the two regions, trade agreements, and cooperative marketing efforts between the two regions—they are very much affected by public support and the willingness of the residents to accept such policies. Therefore, the attitudes of residents towards the other group or other government, towards peace and conflict, towards tourism development in the region, as well as their confidence in the outcomes of such cooperation are important to assess.

Similarly, enterprises providing tourism services (e.g., accommodations, airlines, tour operators, automobile rental companies) must be willing to participate in joint tourist ventures involving citizens, governments, and businesses from the two regions. This can be possible only if they see that such ventures can satisfy common needs, interests, and reciprocal relations, assure sustainable cooperation, and lead ultimately to conflict management and resolution. The role of tourists in this model should not be underestimated. A clear profile of tourists visiting the two regions is necessary in order to understand their travel motives, level of interest in visiting the other side of the region, level of awareness of the conflict in the region, and perceptions of travel risks. Travelers will define demand for Kashmir as an integrated tourism product and in turn encourage tourist enterprises to support joint tourism ventures.

As the model illustrates, residents and tourists can influence tourist enterprises and ultimately NGOs and government agencies into developing and implementing policies to support a cooperative rather than a competitive tourism effort. As suggested by both the cooperation theory and the inter-group contact theory, increasing encounters between frictional groups and representatives of tourist enterprises will help the two sides overcome some of the tension and move toward greater understanding and trust. The combination of free tourist migration, removal of restrictions on contact between groups, free trade agreements, and joint tourism ventures can lead to cooperative marketing. In the case of Kashmir region, cooperative marketing can involve the development of an integrated tourism marketing plan, cooperative promotion of the entire region as one destination (made possible by free tourist movement between the two regions),

and a clear positioning strategy to provide the destination with a competitive advantage over other neighboring destinations.

The tourism industries of both the sides will benefit from cooperative marketing efforts, especially because they are at different stages of the tourist destination life cycle. Visitation will be distributed throughout the region, alleviating the more developed locations from the high concentration of tourists and allowing the less developed areas to enjoy the trickle down benefits. By integrating the unspoiled natural environment of the entire region, Kashmir will be more competitive with other destinations in offering a more diversified tourism product to its visitors. A potential result from this tourism cooperation will be an additional and very important benefit for the region—the development of a more positive international image as an open and cooperative society. It is not unrealistic to believe that this cooperative effort has the potential to benefit both sides of Kashmir economically, socially, and politically, to serve common needs, to facilitate reciprocity, to increase understanding, tolerance, and learning, and ultimately to manage, reduce, and resolve the conflict.

Analysis and Suggestions

Most advocates of peace through cross-border tourism, however, view travel as a means to erase or transcend the projections of otherness shaped by the enmities of conflict by diminishing or obscuring territorial differences. In liberal versions of peace through tourism--such as those that animated the New Middle East--travel leads people to view the globe as a cultural mosaic. In this model different territories are associated with different cultures but as political subjects all peoples have common human interests. At the same time, increased flows create concrete interdependence between societies with both expected to benefit from increased economic, social, and political interaction. More cosmopolitan versions of peace through tourism emphasize how travel helps diverse people recognize that they share a common humanity and heritage as represented in world heritage sites (D'Amore, 1988). Travel has more recently been viewed as an aspect of alternative globalization or what might be defined as “deterritorialization,” going beyond interdependence.

According to Ashraf (2010), until sometime ago, the most hyped phrase in the Indian sub-continent was cross-border terrorism. However, things appear to have moved in a positive direction with the focus now having shifted to cross-border tourism. The state of Jammu and Kashmir with its varied topography, climate, landscape, and rich cultural mosaic is indubitably the most ideal tourist destination in the world, with the valley of Kashmir often described as the Eden of the East and Paradise on Earth. Ladakh, on both sides, represents the stark beauty of the challenging mountain destinations – the Himalayas and the Karakoram. Jammu, in the foothills of the Himalayas, is a repository of the composite culture of the state and houses the world-famous school of miniature paintings. In addition to some of the highest mountain peaks in world, the area is also home to the multiple cultures of the hardy mountain people.

Unfortunately, uncertain conditions in the past have prevented a full exploration of the tourism potential of different regions across the Line of Actual Control (LOC). Gilgit-Baltistan (formerly the Northern Areas) and Ladakh are perhaps the most promising regions for the promotion of cross-border tourism. The main Kashmir Valley with dozens of side valleys, are perfect resorts for leisure tourism. The shrines in Kashmir, temples in Jammu, and monasteries in Ladakh are major attractions in the area of pilgrimage tourism. Therefore, the entire region holds tremendous, albeit unexplored potential for the development of tourism.

J&K has been the prime destination for Indian tourists for at least half a century. However, they have not been allowed a chance to visit the other side of the border into the Sino-pak administered Kashmir. Measures can be adopted at a policy level to enhance cross-border interaction and tourism. Cross-border tourism across the two countries through Kashmir will be successful and will contribute substantially to Kashmir's economy on either side. It would be a major breakthrough if foreign tourists could be allowed to cross the Line of Control (LOC) from the two sides of the border to complete an open circuit tour especially in the greater Ladakh region. Every year an estimated 150 or more foreign climbing expeditions are undertaken to different peaks in the Karakoram Range on the Pakistani side. Moreover, there are hundreds of trekking groups in these mountains.

The Neelam Valley in Pakistani Kashmir and the entire stretch of the Northern areas in the country are prime tourist attractions. Northern areas are home to the Karakoram Range which includes K-2, the world's second highest peak as well as some of the longest glaciers outside the Polar Regions.

Additionally, there are regular bus tours which start from Samarqand, go through Gilgit-Baltistan and terminate in Islamabad. These groups arrive in Samarqand from the US and various other European countries; take a luxury coach tour to various Central Asian destinations and finally cross over to Gilgit-Baltistan on the famous Karakoram Highway going right up to Islamabad. From here, these people fly back to their home countries. Another tour route goes via Yaqand. The Canadian travel agency, Bestway Tours and Safaris, for instance, organizes a 24-day safari from Yaqand to Hunza, which has become very popular with foreign tourists from different parts of the world. It is a cultural tour of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, China, and Pakistan. The 24-day safari traverses the most important parts of the ancient Silk Road, considered the most significant in Central Asia, Chinese Turkistan (Sinkiang) and Northern Pakistan (India of pre-partition days). The journey has been tailored to bring back the memories of the bygone era of the bazaars, camel routes, sand dunes, majestic mountains, unique culture, and ancient peoples. It is a fascinating and unforgettable tour which begins at Tashkent where the tourists arrive by flight from their home countries and ends in Islamabad wherefrom they take off back home.

After exploring the cities of Samarqand, Bukhara, and Khiva, the tourists reach the great game centre of Kashgar. From here they drive to Tashkurgan, Hunza and Gilgit. Kashmir's great King Zain-ul-Abidin (Budshah), spent seven years in the court of Tamerlane at Samarqand; Tamerlane is regarded the founder of Uzbekistan. While in ancient times, the journey from Samarqand would take months on the backs of Bactrian camels and horses, the journey in present times, can be concluded in a matter of days in luxury cars or coaches. The journey from Kashgar to Gilgit can now be completed in only 16 hours by luxury coaches, which operate thrice a week. Kashgar, locally called Kashgi, is a city where time seems to have stood still; a walk through the narrow lanes of this old town, reminds one of scenes from the Arabian Nights. Miles from nowhere, mid-way between Rome and Beijing, and this exotic oasis used to be the last outfitting station along the centuries-old Silk Road. Trade continues as in the past and on Sundays, the entire community gathers at the world's liveliest market known as the Pearl on the Ancient Silk Road. The bazaars had stalls selling everything, including specialized local produce, arts and crafts, garments, knives, timber, and coal. The two most important landmarks of Kashgar are the Id Kah Mosque, the largest in China and the Abakh Khoja's Tomb, the most revered monument, which is an architectural marvel.

The journey from Kashgar along Karakuli Lake and Muztag-Ata Mountain is breathtaking. Tashkurgan, the border town of Turkmenistan, inhabited by Tajiks, is the next stop before entering Pakistan through the Khunjerab Pass. The road to Hunza is a beautiful drive, with majestic views of the high mountains of the Karakoram and the distant Pamir Mountain Ranges. Hunza is well-known for the longevity of its people, due to their simple lifestyle and diet, combined with the unpolluted mountain air. Tibetan traders often referred to the beauty of this humble paradise as "Shangri-La". James Hilton was probably inspired by Hunza when he penned his famous novel, the *Lost Horizon of Shangri La*. A while ago, a team of German scientists had declared it to be the only cancer-free place in the world.

En route to Gilgit, one can witness what is surely the most spectacular view of the majestic Rakaposhi peak; one feels so close to the peak, yet it takes days of trekking before one can reach its base. The glacier of the peak almost touches the road and there are a number of tall pines on the mountain. The Pak-China memorial, built to honor the memories of those workers who sacrificed their lives during the construction of the Karkoram Highway is located just before entering Gilgit. There is also a historical rock carving of the Buddha at Kargah.

From Gilgit the tour goes through Chilas, Abbotabad, and Taxila to reach Islamabad where it finally ends. It would take only eight hours from Gilgit to reach Kargil if the road had been open to use. The travel from Gilgit to Skardu is four hours and from there one can reach Kargil in another four hours. Instead of terminating in Islamabad, the tour could be re-worked to end in Leh or Srinagar. A motorable road already exists between the LOC and Kargil. A longer variation of the tour (stretching over one week to ten days) could be considered from Skardu to Khaplu, Turtuk, Deskit (Nubra Valley) across Khardungla (the highest motorable road in the world) to Leh, Kargil and finally, Srinagar. Such a tour would provide tourists a peek into the rich and varied history and culture while also providing them the thrill of adventure along this route. The travel from Kashgar to Kargil would only take two to three days with a night halt at Gilgit. In the ancient times, there had been regular traffic between Kashmir and Yaqand. Leh was an important hub along this route with the Leh-Yaqnd route remaining open throughout the year. From Leh, the caravans would go through the Nubra Valley across Saser La and the Karakoram Pass in summer and during winter; they would reach the base of the pass near Daulat Beg Oldi over the frozen Shyok River (Ashraf, 2010).

A host of confidence building measures has been propounded to facilitate exchanges across the LOC and make possible for the two parts of Kashmir to evolve a versatile relationship. Some of these measures are already being implemented. Others are at various levels of negotiation or implementation. Still others remain just wish lists for now, being seen as unfeasible or too far-reaching by one or both governments. In fundamental nature, they all underscore a people-oriented thinking while underlining the need for liberated movement of people and trade (Chari & Rizvi, 2008).

According to Chari and Rizvi (2008), measures with the prospect to make borders porous in the Kashmir region can be identified under four broad categories:

- Promoting people-to-people contact through cross-border tourism
- Increasing trade and commerce across the LOC
- Encouraging humanitarian aid and development
- Improving governance, including security administration.

However the present study specifically focuses on the first measure and takes an exhaustive look at one particular measure, liberalization of the travel regime and attempts to understand the

operational, bureaucratic, and political amendments that are required to be incorporated to allow liberalization to proceed.

Liberalization of the Travel Regime

An in-depth understanding of one specific element for making the LOC permeable and ready for human exchanges---liberalizing the travel regime---brings out the nature of prospects that subsist for sensible and realistic reforms as pointed out by Chari and Rizvi (2008). Most of these reforms would be modest and a gradual process but their aggregate impact could be very instrumental in establishing peace in the region. The Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, resumed in April 2005, has continued to ply between the two regions notwithstanding the aggressive posturing taken by the militants. There is an across the board support for the bus service. In a research report, respondents to a survey, especially local journalists who also work for foreign agencies such as Voice of America and the BBC, remarked that the bus service between Muzaffarabad and Srinagar has done more than any other measure to change the attitude of people in Pakistani side of Kashmir. The opening of additional cross over points has evolved upon this optimistic thinking. According to a local resident, the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service which used to ply taking a cyclic schedule, told the interviewer that the opening of the Tertiary Note crossing point had abridged his journey from Muzaffarabad to his village in J&K from about nine hundred miles to just over one hundred. There is a robust sentiment among the local populace for the opening of more cross over points. However, several problems need to be addressed if the bus service is to be made really effectual and meaningful. After the earthquake in October 2005, the two governments had decided to open five more cross over points, but only three were inaugurated and, as of August 2008, only two are operational. For example, the crossing point at Tata Pani (in the Poonch-Kotli sector) is officially open, but no visitor has used this crossing point during the last seven months. The limited number of crossing points is not the only obstruction to cross-border travel, or indeed the fundamental one. Instead, the administrative and security protocols governing travel across the LOC are largely responsible for restricting the movement. The number of passengers traveling on buses remains minimal because of the stringent conditions imposed by Pakistan and India on visitors wishing to obtain travel documents. The precincts on travel and the cumbersome and slow-moving application process overburdened with red tapism have eroded Kashmiris' gusto for traveling. If that fervor is to be revamped, then according to Chari and Rizvi (2008), the following pragmatic steps need to be taken:

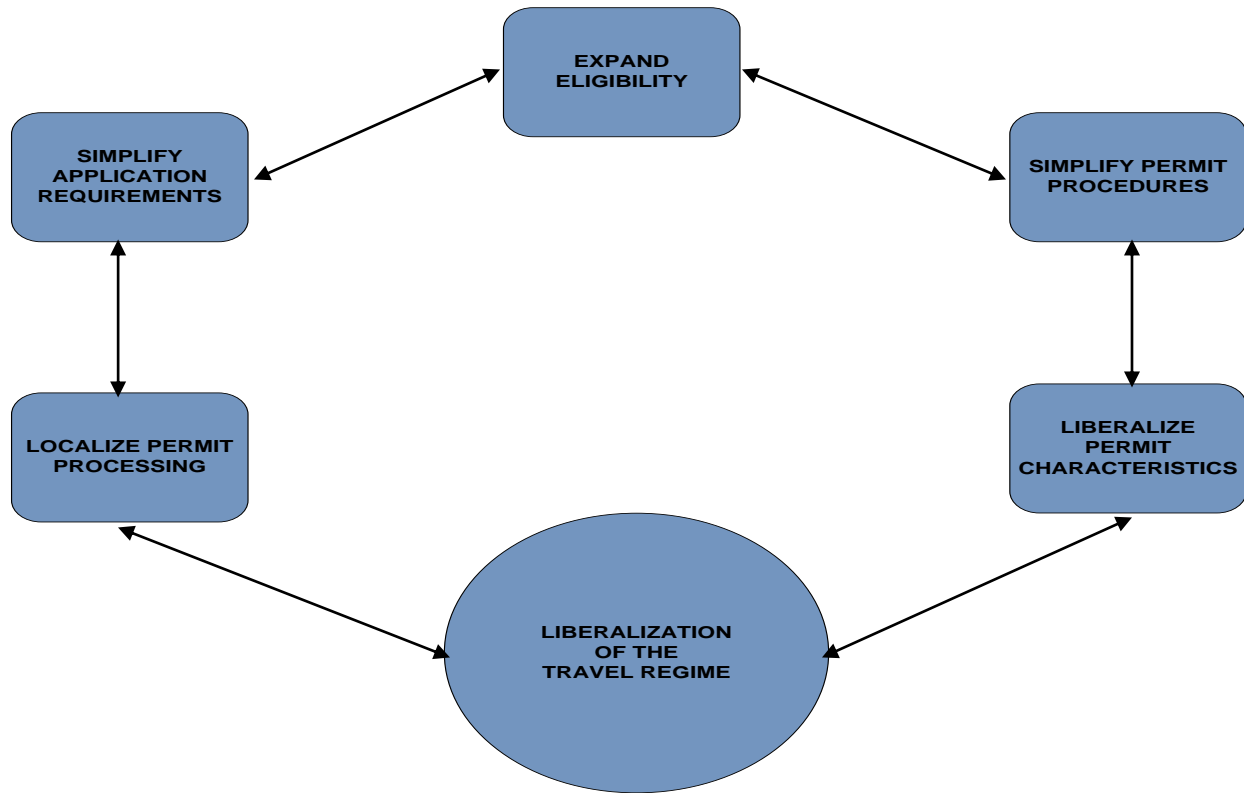


Figure 3: Travel Regime Liberalization Model. Source: Chari & Rizvi (2008)

Expand Eligibility: The eligibility spectrum needs immediate expansion and other classes of travelers such as tourists, persons requiring medical treatment, traders, and even nonconformist political leaders should be brought within the eligibility ambit of cross LOC travel. Pakistani bureaucrats are totally forbidden from traveling across the LOC, which conveys an extremely demotivating message to the local residents. Members of Kashmiri families who crossed the LOC from Indian side of Kashmir to Pakistani side of Kashmir after the militancy accelerated in the 1990s should—after due scanning—also be permitted to visit their relations or move back to India.

Simplify Permit Procedures: One way towards unfreezing and simplifying the process of getting travel documentation would be to introduce a visa system, where in each traveller should be issued a visa instantaneously at the border upon clearing the identification process. Another substitute would be to incorporate a system in which any application not processed within a certain amount of time would be deemed to be approved. However, this concept would be considered unfeasible till political thinking between India and Pakistan recover to the extent that some degree of mutual trust and sense of interdependence prevails.

Simplify Application Requirements: The current system in which applicants asking for a travel permit are required to submit multiple copies of several documents is very demotivating in nature. This process is so complicated and time consuming that most travellers have this perception that it is easier to travel on passports, deepening the perceptual sense of regional divide.

Liberalize Permit Characteristics: Incorporating a permit system where in longer-term, multiple-entry permits to traders and businessmen should be issued, while exempting them from the requirement to report to the police after entering India or Pakistan, would significantly motivate tourism, trade and commerce across the LOC. Issuing group visas to traders, tourists, and cultural delegations would alleviate the burden on both sides' bureaucracies. A format for issuing travel documents on a priority basis in critical situations (e.g., for medical reasons or in case of family emergencies) should be incorporated on humanitarian grounds and would have much deeper impact on confidence building.

Localize Permit Processing: Permit processing usually takes three to four months because each case gets thoroughly scanned by the intelligence and security agencies of the two countries. In some cases, the process can get protracted beyond a year. Such delays and the prospect of intrusive investigations by the intelligence agencies discourage many eligible people from applying and derail the peace building process.

For over half a century, peoples living on the two sides of the divided Kashmir have not communicated and are unaware of the tangible ground situation on each others' sides. The right to travel if granted to all sections of society would be a significant step towards mitigating tensions in the region as has been clearly brought out by Chari and Rizvi (2008), in their special report. It will also give an insight into understanding cross-cultural behavior and help build a harmonious inter-state relationship. If the state governments take charge, they would be able to work directly with one another, which would promote greater understanding and trust between the two parts of Kashmir. These working relationships between the administrations in the two parts of Kashmir could become the basis for cooperation in tourism, trade and commerce, and could evolve further into joint efforts to maintain security and combat sabotage and political violence (Chari & Rizvi, 2008).

Conclusion

The successful rehabilitation of borderland destinations in the Kashmir region through cross-border tourism engagement and the management of conflict constitute a fundamental step in the process of establishing interregional goodwill, political stability and peace. Generating trust and understanding between the two regions which may facilitate the development of cooperative partnerships such as joint commerce and tourism ventures, trade, as well as other economic and social activities can lay the foundation for inter-territorial cooperation. The divided region needs both groups in a peaceful symbiotic relationship and collaboration in order to be able to compete in the regional and international tourism market. Consequently, a stable sociopolitical culture will pull overseas investment and subsequent employment opportunities, which would augment the probability for further fiscal development, growth, and prosperity for the indigenous communities. In turn, this will contribute positively to regional and global security in the geopolitically sensitive region of South-Asia. Therefore to generate the peace dividends of cross-border tourism engagement in the Kashmir region, the primary initiative would be the liberalization of the travel regime and make travelling across and around the LOC absolutely free of any national or international restrictions. International travelers should be permitted to tour the entire region and the travel documentation process required by them should be made a single window operation preferably applicable in both the countries.

Cross-border tourism engagement could become a significant international relations exercise for inducting sense and faith into the common concerns that the entire region faces and

at least reach to the common minimum understanding which can help to diffuse the negative energy around the region. The detailed procedures can be worked out jointly by the authorities on the two sides once it is agreed upon in principle.

Future Implications

This study has presented a cross-border tourism engagement framework to highlight the significance of rehabilitating borderland destinations and their potential strategic role in transnational conflict prevention using two parts of divided Kashmir as a case study. It strongly proposes that one of the most enlightened ways for building cross-border goodwill is through the utilization of borderland destinations as buffers to diffuse political tensions and facilitate the multiplier effects of international tourism. A host of recommendations have been put forth and analyzed for softening the LOC that presently divides Kashmir. It is important, however, to prioritize these recommendations and to first pursue those short-term measures that have a prospect of immediate success, such as a relaxation in travel arrangements. An incremental approach must be adopted, one that dovetails the introduction of individual measures into the larger process of confidence building between the two countries. A series of initial successes would give impetus to the peace process and set the stage for longer-term measures, such as cross-border development projects. The emphasis has to be on implementing decisions taken, rather than on adding to these decisions.

The suggested model has the potential to prove a new—and urgently needed—approach to conflict management efforts between different frictional groups. As most regional conflicts proceed to a gradual resolution (i.e., former Yugoslavia, Northern Ireland, Middle East), policy makers might be able to consider using the potential of tourism in their efforts to restore peace to the region. Finally, testing this model empirically—within the framework of the cooperation and inter-group contact theories—may also lead to research efforts moving beyond observations of diverse tourist group interaction to direct investigation of the attitudes of all involved parties towards tourism-based cooperation and its capacity to promote peace, which may affect policy making.

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