

TAJIKISTAN DIALOGUE
Report for January-March, 1994
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The Tajikistan Dialogue began in March, 1993 under the auspices of the Dartmouth Conference Regional Conflicts Task Force. Four meetings (March, May, August, and October) were held in 1993. We have produced an analytical memo after each meeting and will continue to do so. These will continue to be vehicles for building the agenda of the next meeting from the last and maintaining an ongoing analysis of where we stand in our five-stage Dialogue process. After each meeting, a detailed set of notes on the exchanges is also prepared. However, the rapidly expanding network surrounding Tajikistan suggests that we also produce a wrap-up report every three-four months, both to keep colleagues informed and to take advantage of that slightly longer perspective to keep alive a sense of overall strategy and direction.

The Dialogue Process Reviewed

This Dialogue process continues to be guided by an analytical framework outlining a process that proceeds through five phases:

- In the first phase—accomplished basically by our Russian colleagues in the months before the first meeting—potential participants are selected and reach sometimes difficult personal decisions to engage in the Dialogue. The task of bringing new participants into the Dialogue continues throughout as the group comes to feel that some voices are missing that need to be heard.
- Phase 2 begins with the first face-to-face meeting of the group. In this phase, the group talks about the problems that must be dealt with to end their conflict and at the same time begins to reveal and identify the underlying relationships between groups that would have to be changed if these problems were to be dealt with constructively. They are “mapping” the relationships involved. This stage can last over several meetings, but eventually, a moderator comes to feel that enough has been said about the elements of the relationships involved to create an emerging picture of the totality of the problems and relationships to permit the group to select two-four problems they feel must be given priority.
- The group moves into Phase 3 when these problems have been selected. In this phase, instead of “mapping” the relationship involved, the group disciplines itself to focus on one problem at a time. As it does, the moderators press participants to talk about the underlying interests and relationships in order to probe the dynamics of these relationships. At some point in Phase 3

when participants have talked about these problems in depth, the moderator asks them to depict where they think the situation is leading and whether they like that picture. Will it harm their interests? If they conclude that they do not want to live with that likely situation and that they need to think together about how to change the course of events, then they move to Phase 4.

- In Phase 4, the moderator gives them a project that causes them to think together (a) about the obstacles to moving toward a more constructive situation, (b) actions for removing those obstacles, and (c) a sequencing of those actions in the political arena that could provide a plan of action to change relationships and the course of events.
- Phase 5 is a period when they may choose to take steps to implement a course of action they have laid out.

Dialogues #5 and #6

Dialogue #5 in early January 1994 produced a clear statement of a changed position by members closely related to the newly-created coordinating center of Tajikistani opposition forces headquartered in Moscow. That center had been created the previous month with a joint statement signed by members of the opposition, both in Moscow and in Afghanistan. In Dialogue #4 last October, pro-government participants had repeatedly expressed frustration at not being able to figure out how to come to grips with a dispersed opposition. The new center was, in effect, a response to the need for an identifiable group to negotiate.

Opposition members in the Dialogue explained two significant changes in the opposition position: (1) the opposition is prepared to negotiate with the government, and (2) it is prepared to do so without seeking any position in a coalition government before negotiation. The Dialogue provided an opportunity for opposition members to explain their position in detail under prolonged and probing questioning by pro-government participants. The Dialogue ended with members closer to the government position saying they felt this new position should provide a basis for negotiation.

By the time Dialogue #6 took place at the beginning of March, the new envoy of the U.N. Secretary General (Ramiro Piriz-Ballon) seemed well down the road toward producing agreement on the beginning of negotiations. That situation allowed us to build the meeting around a common task. We suggested that the group produce a memorandum for both the government and the opposition negotiating teams on the purposes of negotiation and the substantive organization of the work of the negotiating teams. Over the next two and a half days, the group

turned out its first joint project—a memo entitled, “Framework for a Negotiation on Tajikistan.”

The method for producing this memo was much the same as the method used at Camp David. Participants talked through the elements of such a memo one major area at a time; the moderators wrote down in one draft memo what they heard the Tajikistanis saying; that draft was translated into both Russian and Tajiki; participants talked both in the group and in their own caucus in a nearby lounge to produce two successive sets of revisions; those revisions were captured in the final memo.

After their agreement on the final version of the memo at the end of the meeting, members of the Dialogue carried the document to the Foreign Minister of Tajikistan and to the head of the opposition coordination center. American and Russian moderators passed it on to the Foreign Minister of Russia, high officials in the U.S. State Department, and officials of the Conference on Security and Coordination in Europe in both Vienna and Warsaw. It was handed to the UN envoy when he visited Washington.

In terms of our five-stage Dialogue process, the group moved at least momentarily into Phase 4 during Dialogue #6. Their judgment since October had been that steps needed to be taken to begin negotiations (1) to create physical and security conditions for the return of the refugees and (2) to design a constitution and political framework for a new and peaceful political system for Tajikistan. When negotiations became a real possibility on the eve of Dialogue #6, that set the stage for the common work of producing a joint memo for designing not only a negotiation with its working groups but also the outlines of the political process that should grow out of the negotiations so that steps for creating conditions for the return of the refugees and developing a new constitution and political practice could be used as vehicles for building a democratic political life in Tajikistan.

It may even be said that in a tentative way, the group has reached into Phase 5. Participants have taken this memorandum to officials of the government of Tajikistan and to leading members of the opposition, who will themselves participate in the negotiations. (One participant in the Dialogue has been named to the opposition negotiating team and another to the government team.)

Related Work

Between Dialogues #5 and #6, two Russian members of our team had visited Tajikistan. Part of their purpose was to reassess the situation there. Another task was to begin recruiting candidates to be the two Tajikistani Fellows at Kettering next year. As negotiations begin, the purpose is to begin working with other Tajikistanis

who will have some capability to introduce concepts of building civil society and democratic practice into the new political life of Tajikistan.

At about the same time, a small team from the Soros Humanitarian Fund for Tajikistan visited Tajikistan to determine, in part, how their humanitarian assistance might play a role in helping to rebuild the community fabric for a peaceful Tajikistan. Hal Saunders has been in regular touch with Soros and with the Tajikistan Open Forum—a periodic gathering in Washington of NGOs and government officials working on Tajikistan. In that context, he drafted a “Framework for an NGO Strategy for Tajikistan.” The purpose of that memorandum is to encourage maximum coherence and mutual reinforcement among programs so that even humanitarian assistance can have a social purpose of helping to strengthen the fabric of community life and politics.

During these months, official bodies have shown new interest in Tajikistan. As mentioned, a new U.N. envoy has begun negotiations between the government and opposition forces. At the end of February, the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe sent a four-person diplomatic mission to Tajikistan to be in permanent residence with three aims—to support negotiations, to encourage building democratic institutions, and to observe respect for human rights. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees—according to the Soros team—is doing a first-rate job in helping the first refugee returnees to resettle. Finally, we have stayed in close touch both with the State Department and with the Russian Foreign Ministry.

In January, opposition participants in the Dialogue asked whether we could do anything to help them prepare for negotiations. We felt that directing the efforts of Dialogue #6 to preparing a “staff” memo on negotiation would give all participants the beginnings of a sense of the kind of staff work that needs to be done in preparation for negotiation. In addition, we have been asked to arrange a small workshop after Dialogue #7 for members of the opposition team on the subject of negotiation itself. We are organizing that now. We have offered to do the same thing for government negotiators if we can visit Tajikistan in late May. Our purpose both in the Dialogue and in the workshop will be to emphasize that there is a way to conduct negotiations as part of a larger political process of reconciliation rather than simply as the traditional adversarial proceeding.

One purpose of the memo produced in Dialogue #6 was to enable participants to see that it is possible to cast the purposes of negotiation in terms of “common tasks” that both government and opposition negotiating teams have an interest in performing. That memo also introduces the idea of using the process for “ratifying” the constitution as a way of stimulating nationwide deliberation on what kind of Tajikistan people are interested in developing.

One final development that needs to be noted is the following: During Dialogue #4 last October, the third member of the U.S. team—Dr. Thomas Gouttierre, Dean of International Studies at the University of Nebraska at Omaha—worked out with Tajikistani participants a grant proposal for bringing fifteen Tajikistani officials to a course in public administration at the University to be taught in Tajiki. During Dialogue #6, Tom learned that USIA had approved this grant to enable that Tajikistani group to come to the University this summer. He has established a nominating committee including three participants in the Dialogue to produce a pool of candidates from which the University can then draw. When the group comes in July and August, it will also spend time at the Kettering Foundation talking about the public dimension of public administration.

Setting Future Agendas

We have decided to accelerate activity over the next several months because of the critical moment as negotiations begin.

We will meet again in early May and then also in June. It seems wise to direct the agenda of these two meetings to continuing the exercise of using the Dialogues as a context for designing a larger political context for the negotiations, which began April 11, or discussing in depth approaches to problems on the agenda.

The July visit of fifteen public administrators, including members of the Dialogue, will give us an outstanding opportunity to present in their professional context some of the philosophy behind the political processes we would like to see them develop out of the negotiations. The Dialogue itself will then pick up again in September and continue on its present more-or-less bimonthly basis.

We will also remain close to the Soros program and the other NGOs in the Tajikistan Open Forum.

In May and June we hope to visit Tajikistan and to get to know more of the government officials face-to-face. Whenever that visit is feasible, it could help lay the foundations for developing a wider range of dialogues within Tajikistan itself. Our aim during the next phase of the Dialogue is to concentrate on encouraging and helping Tajikistani participants begin separate dialogues within their own communities. That could provide spaces for deliberation within Tajikistan on questions that must be dealt with in building a unified Tajikistani state.

Finally, in the last quarter of the year, we would hope to have two Tajikistani fellows at the Kettering Foundation for essentially nine months of

study and observation of community politics and the philosophy behind it. The purpose would be to begin developing a group of people in Tajikistan who have thought about the process of building and strengthening civil society.

Conceptual and Academic Development

A final commitment of this project is to use our reporting on it to add to case experience and to broaden conceptual work by reporting to significant academic audiences. To date, this has been done with audiences at the National Defense University, the Harvard Program on Negotiation, and the Harvard Program in Conflict Analysis and Resolution. Plans for the second quarter include presentations at the U.S. Institute of Peace and the International Society of Political Psychology. A derivative paper, "Dialogue To Change Conflictual Relationships," is included in an anthology being published by the Kettering Foundation.

The total effort in Tajikistan could well become in this decade a revealing case study of how building from efforts to change conflictual relationships can merge with work to develop citizen-based political processes. It can also become a demonstration of a creative new partnership between official and non-official organizations in a comprehensive approach by the international community to states where the breakdown of authority threatens international peace and security.