

Gorno-Badakhshan, which the government side rejected. The other major outcomes of the consultative meeting were an agreement to hold the first meeting between Rakhmonov and UTO leader Said Abdullo Nuri prior to the fourth round of negotiations and an agreement to begin those negotiations in late May in the capital of Kazakhstan, Almaty.²¹⁵

On 17–19 May, *convened* and *facilitated* by Afghan President Rabbani, the Rakhmonov-Nuri summit was held in Kabul. The mere fact that the two Tajik leaders met face to face for the first time was a significant innovation, but in substance the meeting only resulted in a confirmation of each side's basic commitment to a negotiated solution to the conflict and an extension of the ceasefire for another three months until 26 August.²¹⁶

The fourth round of inter-Tajik negotiations finally took place in Almaty from 22 May to 1 June. The conflicting parties, for the first time, dealt in depth with the key issue of the future structure of government in Tajikistan, one of the three items on the agenda they had agreed upon at the first round of talks in Moscow. The opposition's delegation headed by Turajonzoda again brought up the idea of forming a transitional coalition government as it had done at the Moscow round. More specifically, the opposition called for the creation of a Council of National Accord with supreme legislative and executive powers for the transitional period of up to two years, in which the government and the opposition would be allocated 40 percent of the posts respectively and ethnic minorities the remaining 20 percent. The opposition offered to recognise the presidency of Rakhmonov on the condition that he should accept the establishment of such a body. The government, for its part, stressed the need to focus on discussion of confidence-building measures and made counterproposals such as liberalising opposition parties and the mass media and granting amnesty to opposition supporters.²¹⁷

The course of deliberations between the Tajik sides was apparently under the influence

²¹⁵ UNSG Report, S/1995/390, 12 May 1995.

²¹⁶ UNSG Report, S/1995/472, 10 June 1995.

²¹⁷ UNSG Report, S/1995/472, 10 June 1995.

of some outside actors. In particular, Tajikistan's Central Asian neighbours were active as mediators in the lead-up to and during the fourth round. Shortly before the opening of the fourth round, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Uzbek President Islam Karimov enacted the *inducer* role in a rather aggressive manner, specifically in dealing with Rakhmonov. They jointly threatened to withdraw their troops from the CIS peacekeeping forces in Tajikistan unless the conflict in the country was resolved soon. Their sudden warning apparently "surprised" the Dushanbe government and put pressure on it to pursue serious negotiation at Almaty.²¹⁸ While the fourth round of negotiations was underway, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, along with Kyrgyzstan, continued to urge the Tajik parties, especially the government side, to make compromises on the issue of power-sharing. Nazarbayev, a chief *convener* of the round, also played an *envisioner* role, proposing setting up a joint commission to work out amendments to the constitution and then convening a congress of the peoples of Tajikistan to consider those amendments.²¹⁹ The *envisioner* role was also fulfilled by Piriz-Ballon, who presented, among others, the idea of establishing a "consultative" body to develop proposals on a future political system for consideration by the government.²²⁰

In reaction to all these calls and proposals for power-sharing with the opposition, the government's delegation represented by Ubaidulaev dismissed them as "unconstitutional" and declared itself the "only legitimate power," drawing upon the results of the presidential election and referendum in November 1994 as well as of the parliamentary elections in February 1995.²²¹ Such an uncompromising stance taken by the Tajik government was in large measure dictated by Russian policy. In reaction to the Kazakh-Uzbek threat of the withdrawal of their troops from Tajikistan, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Chernishev played down its effects by describing the move as "emotional" and reaffirming the continued presence of the CIS peacekeeping forces in

²¹⁸ ITAR-TASS, 20 and 22 May 1995 (via Lexis-Nexis); and *Segodnya*, 23 May 1995 (CDPSP, vol. 47, no. 21, 21 June 1995, p. 20).

²¹⁹ *Segodnya*, 3 June 1995 (CDPSP, vol. 47, no. 22, 28 June 1995, p. 23); and Interfax, 2 June 1995 (via Lexis-Nexis).

²²⁰ Interfax, 26 May 1995 (via Lexis-Nexis); and ITAR-TASS, 26 May 1995 (via Lexis-Nexis).

²²¹ Jonson, *The Tajik War*, p. 19; and Interfax, 26 May 1995 (via Lexis-Nexis).

the country.²²² Furthermore, Turajonzoda, the chief negotiator of the opposition, blamed Moscow for the lack of progress on the issue of power-sharing at the talks. According to him, the parties had been "on the verge of signing agreements" toward the end of the round but the government side ultimately "renounced all the compromises that seemed to have been reached and returned to its old, unyielding positions." Turajonzoda attributed this change in the government's stance "at the last minute" to the arrival in Almaty of Chernishev and his meeting with Ubaidulaev.²²³ Still, the Tajik parties managed to produce a set of piecemeal agreements on lesser issues. With the help of *facilitators* such as Nazarbayev and Piriz-Ballon, the parties reached agreement on the exchange of detainees and prisoners of war, the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the suspension during the negotiation process of the death sentences on opposition members.²²⁴

On 19 July Iran *convened and facilitated the second summit between Rakhmonov and Nuri* in its capital. In addition to reconfirming their commitment to the pursuit of productive negotiations, they agreed to create a consultative forum of the peoples of Tajikistan, with a view to promoting a wider search for solutions to the country's various problems, and to let their negotiators carve out the specifics of such a forum at the subsequent round of talks.²²⁵ In passing, the Inter-Tajik Dialogue seems to have enacted the role of *envisioner* as the idea of a consultative forum apparently has its origin in or at least some connection with it.²²⁶ At the Dialogue's meeting in June, participants produced a joint memorandum that contained some proposals on possible mechanisms to achieve national reconciliation. Among them was a recommendation to establish a consultative forum of the peoples of Tajikistan that would allow Tajikistanis

²²² Interfax, 22 May 1995 (via Lexis-Nexis).

²²³ Quoted in Islamic Republic News Agency (Iran) news agency, 11 June 1995 (BBC SWB, 13 June 1995), *Iran News*, 11 June 1995; and *Segodnya*, 3 June 1995 (CDPSP, vol. 47, no. 22, 28 June 1995, p. 23).

²²⁴ UNSG Report, S/1995/472, 10 June 1995.

²²⁵ UNSG Report, S/1995/799, 16 September 1995.

²²⁶ Uzbekistan also claimed credit for that idea. The Uzbek Foreign Ministry stated that President Karimov had first proposed the formation of such a body in his April 1995 meeting with Turajonzoda and then the proposal had been delivered to Piriz-Ballon and supported by him. See Uzbek Television First Channel, Tashkent, 21 July 1995 (BBC SWB, 25 July 1995).

from all factions to gather to discuss the political future of the country.²²⁷ According to Saunders, that memorandum, as was the case with other memoranda developed by the Dialogue, was brought to the attention of the negotiating parties and the UN mediators.²²⁸ Indeed, as Saunders put it, the Rakhmonov-Nuri agreement on the consultative forum was prepared—handwritten—in advance by one of the Dialogue members who was a participant in the official negotiations.²²⁹

On 2–17 August Piriz-Ballon flew several times between Rakhmonov in Dushanbe and Nuri in Kabul. Utilising “shuttle diplomacy” to serve as a *neutral messenger* between the two leaders, the UN envoy helped them sign the Protocol on the Fundamental Principles for Establishing Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan (signed by Rakhmonov and Nuri separately at their respective locations). *Envisioned* by the UN mediation team, this agreement marked a significant step in the negotiation process, providing guidelines for future talks and delineating the overall shape of a final settlement. The parties also agreed to extend the ceasefire for another six months until 26 February 1996 and to change the modality of inter-Tajik negotiations to that of a continuous round, which was scheduled to start in mid-September.²³⁰

However, the opening of that continuous round was delayed by recurrent disagreements over the venue. Although the government (supported by Moscow) suggested Ashgabat, the opposition rejected it on the grounds that Turkmenistan had not been an observer in the inter-Tajik negotiations and that its leaders had declined to meet with them. In this situation, Piriz-Ballon again acted in the role of *envisioner* by proposing Vienna as a venue. The opposition accepted Vienna and indicated Tehran or Almaty as other

²²⁷ “Memorandum of the Inter-Tajik Dialogue Within the Framework of the Dartmouth Conference on National Reconciliation in Tajikistan, 22 June 1995,” in Gennady I. Chufrin, Ashurboi Imomov, and Harold H. Saunders, eds., *Memoranda and Appeals of the Inter-Tajik Dialogue Within the Framework of the Dartmouth Conference (1993-1997)* (Moscow: Russian Centre for Strategic Research and International Studies, 1997), pp. 86–88.

²²⁸ Saunders, *A Public Peace Process*, p. 164.

²²⁹ Saunders, *A Public Peace Process*, p. 164; and Saunders, “The Multilevel Peace Process,” p. 170.

²³⁰ UNSG Report, S/1995/799, 16 September 1995; and Hay, “Methodology,” pp. 38–39, 41. The text of the protocol is found in Abdullaev and Barnes, eds., *Politics of Compromise*, p. 67.

possible locations but the government insisted on Ashgabat.²³¹ Other senior UN officials also intervened as a *neutral messenger* to solve the impasse.²³² These efforts led the Turkmen government to receive Tajik opposition leaders in its capital from 30 October to 2 November. At their direct talks, Turkmen leaders described the opposition's stance on how to settle the conflict as "logical and positive" and demonstrated sufficient friendliness toward them. Thus the opposition dropped its objection to Ashgabat as a venue, removing the major obstacle to the initiation of the next round. It was also decided that Turkmenistan would join the inter-Tajik negotiations as an observer country.²³³

The continuous (fifth) round in Ashgabat, which was composed of three phases, finally got started on 30 November. Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov and Foreign Minister Shikhmuradov enacted the roles of *convener* and *facilitator* throughout the three phases of the round.²³⁴ As the parties were about to initiate the substantive process of finding a formula for agreement on a new political dispensation, thus entering into the crucial stage of the negotiations, the situation on the ground became increasingly tense and violent. In the *guarantor* role, Piriz-Ballon led the parties to issue a joint declaration aimed at restoring the ceasefire, but the fighting persisted, not least in the Tavildara area.²³⁵ He also sought to engage Russia in order to pressure the parties to focus their attention on the negotiating table, not on the battlefield. In mid-December Piriz-Ballon visited Moscow to meet with Ryurikov, foreign policy adviser to President Yeltsin, and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Chernishev. Moscow apparently moved into the *enforcer* role to re-establish the ceasefire, and the fighting de-escalated and a political dialogue became possible.²³⁶

²³¹ UNSG Report, S/1995/799, 16 September 1995; and Voice of Free Tajikistan, 9 September 1995 (BBC SWB, 11 September 1995).

²³² Involved in these efforts were Darko Silovic, the head of UNMOT and Deputy Special Envoy for Tajikistan, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Iqbal Riza, and Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali. See UNSG Report, S/1995/1024, 8 December 1995.

²³³ Voice of Free Tajikistan, 1 November 1995 (BBC SWB, 2 November 1995); and UNSG Report, S/1995/1024, 8 December 1995.

²³⁴ Hay, "Methodology," p. 40.

²³⁵ The text of the joint declaration is found in Annex I to UNSG Report, S/1996/212, 22 March 1996.

²³⁶ UNSG Report, S/1996/212, 22 March 1996.

The discussion on the issue of power-sharing then began but only revealed wide differences between the two sides. The government's core proposal was to create a consultative forum of the peoples of Tajikistan as the parties had agreed in Tehran in July. But it met with rejection from the opposition. Given the fact that the forum would have mere consultative powers and its recommendations would be adopted by consensus, the opposition viewed such a body as powerless and thus useless. Indeed, as Lena Jonson has observed, the Dushanbe regime and its primary patron, Russia were "not yet ready for an accommodation" and their concept of the consultative forum was a "tactical move rather than a serious proposal for a political accommodation."²³⁷ On the other hand, the opposition's main proposal was to establish a council of national reconciliation with real (if only transitional) powers in legislative and executive realms, generally in line with its earlier proposal tabled at the Almaty talks. But the government rejected the idea once again, maintaining that the formation of the proposed council would be unconstitutional and likely to destabilise the country.²³⁸

On 22 December, the last day of the first phase of the Ashgabat round, which had come to naught, Turajonzoda, the chief opposition negotiator, threatened not to return to the negotiating table on 15 January 1996, the scheduled date for the resumption of the second phase of the continuous round. He demanded that CIS leaders clearly define their position on a political settlement in Tajikistan at their upcoming summit in mid-January and that they support that position with concrete measures. Turajonzoda also requested that the CIS peacekeeping forces confirm their neutrality and that the Tajik government recognise that there was no alternative to political settlement. Ubaidulaev, the head of the government delegation, responded by declaring that the opposition's demands were unacceptable and a cover for the reluctance to engage in political dialogue.²³⁹

²³⁷ Jonson, *The Tajik War*, p. 20.

²³⁸ UNSG Report, S/1996/212, 22 March 1996; and Jonson, *The Tajik War*, p. 20.

²³⁹ UNSG Report, S/1996/212, 22 March 1996; Interfax, 22 December 1995 (via Lexis-Nexis); and Jonson, *The Tajik War*, p. 11.

Section 2

From January 1996 to June 1997

At the beginning of 1996 Russia's policy toward Tajikistan was starting to change. In December 1995 Russia, like the Tajik government, responded negatively to the Tajik opposition's demand for the handling of the Tajik problem at the scheduled CIS summit. But when the summit meeting actually took place in Moscow on 19 January 1996, the conflict in Tajikistan was high on the agenda and Russia took a tougher stance than ever toward the Rakhmonov government. Annoyed with the sluggish pace of inter-Tajik negotiations, Russia, in conjunction with Central Asian states, moved into the role of inducer. They put strong pressure on Rakhmonov to negotiate seriously with the opposition and settle the conflict. Immediately after the meeting, where the mandate of the CIS peacekeeping forces was extended until June 1996, President Yeltsin stressed such commitment would not be unending, declaring that "we cannot endlessly carry Tajikistan, when our own people are dying." According to Lena Jonson, the reaction at this summit was a "first public indication" of the Russian policy change in Tajikistan.²⁴⁰

The CIS's joint action at the Moscow summit largely satisfied the Tajik opposition's condition for continuing negotiations, and thus the second phase of the continuous round began on 26 January. Yet almost at the same time that a political dialogue resumed in Ashgabat, a military confrontation intensified in Tajikistan. The Rakhmonov regime was challenged by rebellions from within its own camp that broke out simultaneously in two large cities. Ibodullo Boimatov instigated a hostage crisis in Tursunzade where he had previously served as a mayor, while Mahmud Khudoiberdyev, commander of the First Brigade of the Tajik army, took control of Kurgan-Tyube. Boimatov and Khudoiberdyev had both been field commanders of the now-disbanded Popular Front. (They were also both ethnic Uzbeks). Rakhmonov barely managed to end the rebellions by meeting some of the insurgents' demands, such as a reshuffling in

²⁴⁰ Jonson, *The Tajik War*, p. 11; *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 27 January 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 5, 28 February 1996, p. 15); Interfax, 19 January 1996 (via Lexis-Nexis); and Russia TV channel, Moscow, 19 January 1996 (BBC SWB, 22 January 1996).

the government's leadership and the amnesty to those insurgents. Furthermore, fighting with the opposition flared up again in Tavildara.²⁴¹ In the midst of this crisis, Yevgeny Primakov, in his new capacity as Russian foreign minister, came to Dushanbe along with other senior Russian officials. In view of the disintegrating power of the Rakhmonov regime, Primakov's visit was intended in part to demonstrate Moscow's "special confidence" in Rakhmonov, who was then rumoured to be considering resigning. And concurrently, Primakov declared that Russia had an "utmost interest" in stabilising the situation in Tajikistan, playing the *inducer* role rather softly.²⁴²

Prompted by external pressure and concern as well as by internal instability, the Tajik government moved to take a conciliatory stance at the negotiating table. Foreign Minister Talbak Nazarov, who replaced Ubaidulaev as the chief government negotiator,²⁴³ proposed the holding of a special session of the Parliament with the participation of the opposition leaders to discuss the integration of the opposition and its armed forces into the government's administrative and military structures. Although the opposition agreed to this proposal, it hardened its positions on other issues, encouraged by favourable changes in the military equation on the ground. With regard to the issue of the consultative forum of the peoples of Tajikistan, the parties came close to reaching agreement. But the opposition insisted that the formation of a council of national reconciliation was the "only viable option to resolve the crisis" and that it should precede the convening of the consultative forum. In the event, the differences over when the forum should convene prevented actual agreement. In the face of the continued difficulty in bridging the sides' divergent positions on the central problem of power-sharing, Piriz-Ballon played the role of *envisioner* by suggesting possible compromises on the political and military components of the August 1995 Protocol on

²⁴¹ *Kommersant-Daily*, 6 February 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 5, 28 February 1996, p. 17); *Segodnya*, 30 January 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 5, 28 February 1996, p. 15); and UNSG Report, S/1996/212, 22 March 1996.

²⁴² *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 30 January 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 5, 28 February 1996, p. 16); *Izvestiya*, 1 February 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 5, 28 February 1996, p. 16); *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 30 January 1996 (BBC SWB, 1 February 1996).

²⁴³ Ubaidulaev was among those dismissed by Rakhmonov in compliance with the rebels' demands in the Tursunzade and Kurgan-Tyube incidents. See *Kommersant-Daily*, 6 February 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 5, 28 February 1996, p. 17).

the Fundamental Principles.²⁴⁴

The conclusion of the second phase of the Ashgabat round on 18 February without agreement on an extension of the ceasefire, which was about to expire shortly, left the warring parties and mediators with the task of renewing it. While the Rakhmonov government had agreed to a six-month extension in accordance with Piriz-Ballon's proposal, the opposition had been only willing to accept a three-month extension and even set conditions for it.²⁴⁵ The opposition's stance became more uncompromising after the kidnapping of its representative on the UN-sponsored joint commission monitoring the ceasefire. The Tajik government blamed the opposition for "aggressiveness" and expressed the hope that Iran, with the "influence that it has on the belligerent parties," would bring pressure to bear on them.²⁴⁶ Indeed, Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati and Deputy Foreign Minister Vaezi, together with the former UN Special Envoy Ismat Kittani, assumed the role of *inducer* in relation with the Tajik opposition. As a result of their efforts, Nuri eventually agreed to extend the ceasefire agreement for another three months until 26 May 1996. Instead, the opposition side retracted its earlier agreement to attend a special session of the Parliament. Thus the session convened on 11 March without the participation of the opposition leaders, which might have become a major step forward in the Tajik peace process, ended up as a mere political ceremony.²⁴⁷

Throughout the spring of 1996 the parties continued to intensify their military struggle, particularly in Tavildara. In May mass demonstrations took place at Khodjent and Ura-Tyube in the Leninabad region, further adding to the deterioration of the situation. In addition to calling for improved socio-economic conditions and greater autonomy for the region, the demonstrators demanded the dismissal of the Kulyabis from local

²⁴⁴ UNSG Report, S/1996/212, 22 March 1996.

²⁴⁵ UNSG Report, S/1996/212, 22 March 1996.

²⁴⁶ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 29 February 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 9, 27 March 1996, p. 21); and Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran Network 1, 29 February 1996 (BBC SWB, 5 March 1996).

²⁴⁷ UNSG Report, S/1996/212, 22 March 1996; and ITAR-TASS, 10 and 11 March 1996 (via Lexis-Nexis).

administrative and power structures. The demonstrations subsided after the Dushanbe government replaced senior officials of Kulyabi origin with those from Leninabad and Tursunzade.²⁴⁸ In the meantime, the new UN Special Representative Gerd Merrem acted in the role of *neutral messenger* among Rakhmonov in Dushanbe, Nuri in Tehran, and foreign ministers of the observer countries, producing the parties' agreement on another three-month extension of the ceasefire until 26 August.²⁴⁹

Against the backdrop of continued fierce fighting in Tavildara despite the ceasefire, the third phase of the Ashgabat talks was held on 8–21 July. The parties had to devote much of their attention to finding ways to stop the fighting and restore an effective ceasefire, with the result that they were able to extend the ceasefire again, this time until the end of 1996. The UN stepped up its efforts at *monitoring* the implementation of the ceasefire agreement in Tavildara but the intensity of hostilities between the sides never decreased. Apart from the issue of the ceasefire, the parties reached an agreement on the exchange of prisoners of war and detainees.²⁵⁰ With regard to fundamental political issues, the government delegation led by Nazarov tabled the idea of a Commission of Reconciliation that would prepare amendments to the Tajik constitution and electoral law. In developing this proposal, Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov apparently carried out the *envisioner* role. The Tajik government also proposed the participation of the opposition in government structures and the legalisation of all political parties and movements. But the opposition delegation headed by Turajonzoda rejected the concept of the Commission of Reconciliation, which would be consultative in nature and thus, in their view, lack substantive power.²⁵¹ As for the future talks, Primakov suggested the convening of a meeting between Rakhmonov and Nuri in Moscow, which was agreed upon by the two sides.²⁵²

²⁴⁸ *Segodnya*, 16 May 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 20, 12 June 1996, p. 20); *Segodnya*, 24 May 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 21, 19 June 1996, p. 23); and UNSG Report, S/1996/412, 7 June 1996.

²⁴⁹ UNSG Report, S/1996/412, 7 June 1996.

²⁵⁰ UNSG Report, S/1996/754, 13 September 1996.

²⁵¹ Jonson, *The Tajik War*, pp. 20–21; *Segodnya*, 12 July 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 28, 7 August 1996, p. 20); Interfax, 10 July 1996 (via Lexis-Nexis).

²⁵² Interfax, 21 July and 1 August 1996 (via Lexis-Nexis).

Meanwhile, a new political movement emerged in Tajik politics. Following the Leninabad demonstrations in May, Abdullajanov, a contestant in the November 1994 presidential election, and two other former Leninabadi prime ministers moved to establish the National Revival Bloc. Frustrated by the government's inability to restore stability and tackle economic problems as well as by its stalemated negotiations with the opposition, they called for their inclusion in the ongoing inter-Tajik negotiations. The appearance of this "third force" was to pose a difficult problem to the two negotiating (and warring) sides and mediators.²⁵³

In September, a great change in Afghanistan gave a strong impetus to jump-start the stalled peace process, generating a sense of urgency, not only on the part of the Tajik parties themselves, but also mediators. "The current crisis in neighbouring Afghanistan ... called for bringing forward the next round of negotiations between Tajikistan's government and opposition." Merrem stated upon the Taliban's capture of Kabul at the end of September. "The sooner a comprehensive solution is found to the Tajik problem, the better the chance that Tajikistan will avoid dramatic and tragic events such as those taking place in Afghanistan today."²⁵⁴ Assuming the role of *convener*, the UN mediator led Rakhmonov and Nuri into agreement on the timetable for their proposed summit, in which they would meet in mid-October in Moscow, following a preparatory working meeting of experts in Tehran.²⁵⁵ Significantly, Russia and Central Asian countries were strongly alarmed by the Taliban's seizure of Kabul. The leaders of these countries held an emergency meeting in Almaty on 4–5 October and agreed to tighten border controls in view of the Taliban's possible advance further north. They recognised the urgent need to bring peace to Tajikistan, through which they feared a wave of destabilisation should spread to the territory of the CIS.²⁵⁶

²⁵³ *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 8 August 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 32, 4 September 1996, p. 24); and Interfax, 30 July 1996 (via Lexis-Nexis). On the "third force" or "internal opposition," see Shahram Akbarzadeh, "Abdullajanov and the 'third force'," in Abdullaev and Barnes, eds., *Politics of Compromise*, pp. 30–31.

²⁵⁴ Interfax, 28 September 1996 (via Lexis-Nexis); *Kommersant-Daily*, 1 October 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 40, 30 October 1996, p. 9).

²⁵⁵ UNSG Report, S/1996/1010, 5 December 1996.

²⁵⁶ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 3 October 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 40, 30 October 1996, p. 10); *Izvestiya*, 5 October 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 40, 30 October 1996, p. 11); and *Segodnya*, 8

Another significant development took place at this juncture. As the military confrontation continued in the Karategin Valley in central Tajikistan, the government pursued direct negotiations with the field commanders of opposition forces operating there. On 16 September, with the help of *facilitation* by the Joint Commission and the UNMOT, the parties reached agreement on confidence-building measures to defuse the tension in the area. The agreement had a certain stabilising effect on the situation but never ended the fighting and ultimately collapsed toward the end of the year.²⁵⁷

On 9–17 October the conflicting parties held the working meeting of experts in the Iranian capital. *Convened and facilitated* by Iranian officials and Merrem, the parties tried to prepare a draft agreement for signature by Rakhmonov and Nuri at their scheduled meeting in Moscow. Concerned over the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban, the parties demonstrated their renewed commitment to accommodation, making remarkable progress in agreeing on the main principles of the formula for settlement. Among others, they agreed to establish a Commission on National Reconciliation (CNR) as an "authoritative body with defined responsibilities and powers."²⁵⁸ However, the parties failed to complete the draft agreement due to their differences over the exact nature of CNR.²⁵⁹ Thus the preparatory meeting at the working level ended inconclusively and the Rakhmonov-Nuri summit did not take place as scheduled. As the momentum was about to die out, Merrem again enacted the *convener* role and

October 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 40, 30 October 1996, p. 11).

²⁵⁷ UNSG Report, S/1996/1010, 5 December 1996; and ITAR-TASS, 13 and 17 September 1996 (via Lexis-Nexis). The text of the Karategin agreement, or the Garm protocol is found in Abdullaev and Barnes, eds., *Politics of Compromise*, pp. 67–68. As the Joint Commission included a member of the Inter-Tajik Dialogue, the effort at mediating this regional ceasefire was reflected upon at the Dialogue's meeting and led to the development of its key concept of "a multilevel peace process that connects the local and the official levels." See Saunders, *A Public Peace Process*, p. 165; Saunders, "The Multilevel Peace Process," p. 171; and Slim and Saunders, "The Inter-Tajik Dialogue," p. 47.

²⁵⁸ UNSG Report, S/1996/1010, 5 December 1996. At this working meeting in Tehran, the government delegation was headed by Ibrahim Usmonov, the chairman of the parliamentary committee on international affairs, interethnic relations, and culture, while the opposition delegation was led by Turajonzoda as before. See Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mashhad, 18 October 1996 (BBC SWB, 23 October 1996).

²⁵⁹ Ali Ashraf Shabestari, Iranian ambassador to Tajikistan, author interview, Geneva, 6 April 2004.

rescheduled the future talks so that the two leaders themselves would meet in early December in northern Afghanistan to continue preparations for their ultimate meeting in Moscow, which was now slated for late December.²⁶⁰

At their meeting on 10–11 December in Khusdeh, northern Afghanistan, Rakhmonov and Nuri managed to seize an opportunity to take a major step forward in the negotiation process. They pledged to stop ongoing fighting, especially in the Karategin Valley and Tavildara, and initialled the text of a draft agreement that their delegates had left unfinished in Tehran two months earlier.²⁶¹ Afghan President Rabbani and his military commander Ahmed Shah Massoud served as a *facilitator and inducer* in bringing about these agreements.²⁶² After the summit, Nuri praised his opponent's newly demonstrated "flexibility," saying that Rakhmonov was "ready to settle the problems of Tajikistan through talks and concessions" and that he was "flexible regarding the greater part of our demands which were previously not accepted" and "gave positive responses to them."²⁶³ Then Russia sought to keep the momentum and enacted the *convener* role. President Boris Yeltsin dispatched Defence Council Secretary Yury Baturin to Dushanbe with the aim of paving the way for another summit meeting between the two Tajik leaders to be held in the Russian capital.²⁶⁴

At first it was expected that the Moscow summit would be a relatively easy process, as the two leaders were to meet on 19 December just in order to sign the document that they had already initialled in Afghanistan.²⁶⁵ The agreement stipulated a timetable for the peace process (calling for conclusion of a final agreement by 1 July 1997 and its implementation within the transition period of 12 to 18 months) and provided for the establishment of the CNR to function during the transition period and to be chaired by a

²⁶⁰ UNSG Report, S/1996/1010, 5 December 1996.

²⁶¹ UNSG Report, S/1997/56, 21 January 1997.

²⁶² Maksim Peshkov and Achakhmat Chekunov, "Moscow's Role in Tajikistan," *International Affairs* (Moscow), vol. 43, no. 2 (1997), pp. 82–83.

²⁶³ Voice of Free Tajikistan, 12 December 1996 (BBC SWB, 13 December 1996).

²⁶⁴ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 15 December 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 50, 8 January 1997, p. 23); ITAR-TASS, 12 December 1996 (via Lexis-Nexis).

²⁶⁵ *Segodnya*, 24 December 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 51, 15 January 1997, p. 20); and Peshkov and Chekunov, "Moscow's Role," p. 82.

UTO representative. It also extended the ceasefire for the entire duration of inter-Tajik negotiations and prescribed a universal amnesty and a full exchange of prisoners of war and detainees.²⁶⁶

But the negotiations in Moscow turned out to be much more complex. The opposition unexpectedly declared its intention to seek changes to the initialled text of the Khusdeh agreement. Although it had been agreed in Afghanistan that the CNR's composition, functions, and powers would be discussed at the subsequent round of negotiations in Tehran, the opposition insisted that these issues be decided in Moscow and incorporated into the agreement. This demand made by the opposition posed a major obstacle to ultimate signing of the agreement by Rakhmonov and Nuri, and it actually put the negotiations on the verge of breakdown. Eventually, however, it was accommodated by drafting a separate protocol outlining the primary functions and powers of the CNR (leaving its composition untouched), keeping the Khusdeh agreement itself intact. Thus on 23 December Rakhmonov and Nuri managed to sign the two agreements:²⁶⁷ the Khusdeh agreement, which provided the overall framework for a final agreement, and the protocol on the CNR, which established its key component.

Most importantly, the protocol on the CNR defined the role of this new joint body in the country's existing political system, which had been the biggest sticking point between the conflicting sides. Together with the President, the CNR would work to implement the agreements reached during the course of inter-Tajik talks. More specifically, it would develop proposals for changes to the constitution to be submitted to a national referendum, and would draft a new electoral law to be approved by Parliament. It would also facilitate the integration of the opposition and its military units into governmental executive and power structures. The CNR's other functions would include suggesting the timing of parliamentary elections to be held under international supervision. (The

²⁶⁶ UNSG Report, S/1997/56, 21 January 1997. The text of the Khusdeh agreement is found in Abdullaev and Barnes, eds., *Politics of Compromise*, p. 69.

²⁶⁷ Peshkov and Chekunov, "Moscow's Role," pp. 83-84; *Segodnya*, 24 December 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 51, 15 January 1997, p. 20); and ITAR-TASS, 22 December 1996 (via Lexis-Nexis).

CNR would then dissolve after the convening of a new Parliament.)²⁶⁸

As Turajonzoda put it, the protocol was the outcome of "significant concessions" by the two sides.²⁶⁹ The Tajik government finally had to consent to give substantial powers to the CNR, although it had wanted to confine that body to consultative status. In point of fact, some senior government officials voiced objections to the signed protocol, saying that it would allow the CNR to become too powerful, almost the equal of the President during the transition period, and Rakhmonov was eager to contain such negative responses.²⁷⁰ In the opposition's view, the CNR would be granted "certain governmental powers, but fewer than the opposition had sought."²⁷¹ The opposition had wanted the CNR to be a transitional coalition government with supreme legislative and executive powers. But the protocol stipulated that the current government would continue to exist, although it would include opposition representatives to some extent. Furthermore, the Parliament would continue to function, despite the fact that it would share some of its legislative powers with the CNR. Thus the CNR itself would not be a genuine coalition government. As a result of these mutual compromises, the Moscow summit turned out to be a "critical breakthrough in the negotiation process."²⁷²

Several external actors made a significant contribution to realising the signing by the Tajik parties of the Khusdeh agreement and the protocol on the CNR, which formed an integral part of the agreement. Russian diplomats, especially First Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Pastukhov, together with Merrem, played the *envisioner* role in producing a "compromise version" of the CNR protocol. In addition, these and other mediators assumed the role of *inducer* to prompt the two sides to mutual compromises. It was Pastukhov that put pressure on Rakhmonov to reach agreement. Praising Pastukhov's mediating role, Turajonzoda said that "we are pleased to note that Russia's

²⁶⁸ The text of the protocol is found in Abdullaev and Barnes, eds., *Politics of Compromise*, pp. 69–70.

²⁶⁹ Interfax, 22 December 1996 (via Lexis-Nexis).

²⁷⁰ Interfax, 25 December 1996 (via Lexis-Nexis); RIA, 24 December 1996 (BBC SWB, 31 December 1996); and Voice of Free Tajikistan, 26 December 1996 (BBC SWB, 31 December 1996).

²⁷¹ *Segodnya*, 24 December 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 51, 15 January 1997, p. 20).

²⁷² Bushkov and Mikul'skii, *Anatomiia grazhdanskoi voiny v Tadzhikistane*, p. 95.

approach to the Tajik conflict has changed.... The fact that Rakhmonov agreed to sign the agreement is in large part thanks to Russian diplomacy.” On the other hand, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Vaezi and Afghan mediators were instrumental in convincing Nuri of the need for compromise.²⁷³

In particular, the mediators faced a great difficulty in leading Nuri into agreement. Undoubtedly, Iranian pressure was a major factor for overcoming Nuri’s resistance to coming to Moscow via Khusdeh after the Tehran working meeting as well as to making compromises at the Moscow summit.²⁷⁴ Nuri’s attitude was also affected by a letter he received from the UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Marrack Goulding. This letter made an urgent appeal on behalf of Boutros-Ghali and his successor Kofi Annan for the signing of the Khusdeh agreement already initialled by the two Tajik leaders. The letter stressed that Rakhmonov was “ready to sign” the initialled agreement, and that the fate of the Tajik peace process depended on Nuri’s willingness to “to demonstrate the statesman’s approach and bravery.”²⁷⁵ Merrem added to the effect of this letter by asserting that refusal to sign the initialled document would run counter to international legal norms.²⁷⁶ With his choices thus narrowed, Nuri ultimately agreed to keep the commitment he made in Khusdeh. Thus in generating pressure strong enough to keep the parties moving toward reconciliation at the critical juncture in Moscow, the UN’s influence arising from its legitimacy and moral authority served as a complement to the leverage applied by Russia, Iran, and Afghanistan.

Moreover, the Inter-Tajik Dialogue seems to have contributed to the agreements signed at the Moscow summit in the *envisioner* role, as some elements of the CNR stipulated in them might have originated in the discussions in the dialogue. First, the idea of the CNR as a power-sharing implementation mechanism premised on the continuation of the

²⁷³ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 25 December 1996 (CDPSP, vol. 48, no. 52, 22 January 1997, p. 15). See also Rakhmatullaev, *Mirotvorchestvo OON v Tadzhikistane*, p. 106; Interfax, 22 December 1996 (via Lexis-Nexis); Peshkov and Chekunov, “Moscow’s Role,” pp. 83–84; and UNSG Report, S/1997/56, 21 January 1997.

²⁷⁴ Author interview, negotiation participant A, Dushanbe, 29 March 2001.

²⁷⁵ Peshkov and Chekunov, “Moscow’s Role,” p. 84.

²⁷⁶ Author interview, negotiation participant A, Dushanbe, 29 March 2001.

existing government (with some degree of UTO representation) was in line with the kind of arrangement proposed by the Dialogue. In its joint memorandum issued in June 1995, the Dialogue recommended the formation of such a body (named the Coordinating Council for National Reconciliation) under the authority of the negotiating teams.²⁷⁷ According to Saunders and Slim, this proposal was intended to alleviate the government's fear of being supplanted by the supra-governmental power-sharing body that the opposition had called for.²⁷⁸ Second, the notion of a "transitional period" during which the CNR was to function had also been discussed within the Dialogue since March 1995. As Saunders and Slim noted, such a process of transition was characteristic of the Dialogue's gradualist approach to changes in the country's political system.²⁷⁹

On 6 January 1997 the following (sixth) round of inter-Tajik talks convened in Tehran, while a major crisis involving Khudoiberdyev's forces was unfolding in Tursunzade where the country's key aluminium plant is located.²⁸⁰ In an atmosphere of heightened instability at home, the parties met in the Iranian capital to refine the formula on the CNR by adding details and specifics. Negotiations centred around the sticky issue of how many seats the CNR was to have in total as well as the percentage split of them between the two sides. The opposition suggested that the new body should consist of 40 members, who were to be drawn 40 percent each from the negotiating parties and the remaining 20 percent from Abdullajanov's National Revival Bloc. Rejecting the parties' equal share outright, the government's negotiating team made a counteroffer of 17 seats with an 80-20 split weighted in its favour. Moreover, the Tajik government flatly turned down the inclusion of the National Revival Bloc on the CNR, denying the very

²⁷⁷ "Memorandum of the Inter-Tajik Dialogue Within the Framework of the Dartmouth Conference on National Reconciliation in Tajikistan, 22 June 1995," in Chufrin et al., eds., *Memoranda and Appeals*, pp. 86-88.

²⁷⁸ Saunders, "The Multilevel Peace Process," p. 170; Saunders, *A Public Peace Process*, p. 163; and Slim and Saunders, "The Inter-Tajik Dialogue," p. 46.

²⁷⁹ Saunders, "The Multilevel Peace Process," p. 169; Saunders, *A Public Peace Process*, pp. 162-163; and Slim and Saunders, "The Inter-Tajik Dialogue," p. 46.

²⁸⁰ For details on the Tursunzade crisis, see UNSG Report, S/1997/56, 21 January 1997; ITAR-TASS, 8 January 1997 (via Lexis-Nexis); and Interfax, 16 January 1997 (via Lexis-Nexis).

existence of a "third force."²⁸¹ The opposition was in favour of the National Revival Bloc because it was seeking an ally in opposing the Rakhmonov regime. Rakhmonov, for his part, rejected the idea of the National Revival Bloc being included in power-sharing arrangements for fear that it should not only weaken his negotiating position toward the UTO but also clear the way for a political comeback by Abdullajanov. This situation represented an "ironic reversal" of political alignment of 1992, where opposition forces rebelled against the Leninabadi leadership, which was then supported by the Kulyabis.²⁸²

Russia took a guarded approach to the National Revival Bloc. Maksim Peshkov, the head of Russian's mission in charge of the Tajik settlement, acknowledged the existence of a third force in the Tajik politics but at the same time cast serious doubt on the inclusion of the National Revival Bloc. Peshkov stated that the ongoing inter-Tajik negotiations were intended to mediate between the two warring sides and also that Abdullajanov's group was not the only third force.²⁸³ Despite its obvious leaning toward Dushanbe's position, Russia apparently tried to strike a delicate balance between the two sides in order not to let this issue threaten to collapse the entire process.

In the circumstances, the UN mediation team made an attempt at fulfilling the role of *envisioner* and *facilitator*. According to the UN compromise formula, the CNR was to have the same number of seats as in government's proposal but the distribution of them would be different; 47 percent would go to the government, 29 percent to the opposition, and 24 percent to "neutral representatives appointed to the commission by agreement between the two parties."²⁸⁴ Both sides objected to the UN proposal, alleging that the figure was too low for them. In addition, the UN terminology of "neutral

²⁸¹ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 14 January 1997 (CDPSP, vol. 49, no. 2, 12 February 1997, p. 20); and Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mashhad, 8 January 1997 (BBC SWB, 10 January 1997). On the alliance between the National Revival Bloc and the UTO, see Voice of Free Tajikistan, 1 November/31 October and 20 November 1996 (BBC SWB, 5 and 23 November 1996).

²⁸² Akbarzadeh, "Abdullajanov," p. 31. See also Akiner, *Tajikistan*, pp. 70–71.

²⁸³ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 14 January 1997 (CDPSP, vol. 49, no. 2, 12 February 1997, p. 20); and Zviagelskaya, "The Tajik Conflict: Problems," p. 177.

²⁸⁴ *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 14 January 1997 (CDPSP, vol. 49, no. 2, 12 February 1997, p. 20).