
Managing Conflict in Divided Societies: Lessons from Tajikistan¹

Randa M. Slim and Harold H. Saunders

This article presents a new approach to managing conflict in divided societies and describes how it is being implemented in Tajikistan. This approach involves two interrelated strategies: (1) a five-stage unofficial dialogue process aimed at probing the dynamics of the conflictual relationships among the parties and designing a sequence of interactive steps to changing the relationships; and (2) a civil society strategy aimed at building institutions of civil society that transcend the traditional divisions in the society.

The persistence of protracted conflicts around the world has demonstrated the limits of traditional conflict resolution methods — important as their continued development remains. The end of the Cold War has not resulted in abating or solving these conflicts, which suggests that ideology was not the driving force for many of them. Thirty-five wars occurred between 1989 and 1992, according to Wallensteen and Axell (1993), who define war as a conflict in which at least 1,000 deaths have occurred in a given year. The end of the Cold War has also seen the emergence of numerous internal conflicts, especially in areas of the former Soviet Union such as Tajikistan, Moldova, Georgia and Azerbaijan-Armenia. In the superpower's

Randa M. Slim is a program officer in charge of the international civil society programs at the Kettering Foundation, 200 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459. **Harold H. Saunders**, former member of the National Security Council Staff and Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, is Director of International Affairs at the Kettering Foundation, 444 North Capitol Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20001. They co-direct the Tajikistani dialogue program.

sphere of influence, these conflicts were suppressed, but, freed from the yoke of the empire, age-old animosities surfaced again. Other long-simmering conflicts, such as those in the Balkans, have boiled over where artificial boundaries imposed by authoritarian regimes during the Cold War are no longer recognized.

If we map current conflicts going on around the world, we find that most of them are internal rather than international, hence the term *divided societies*. At the heart of these conflicts lie issues of identity, governance, self-determination for certain regions or groups, and nationhood. These conflicts have evolved over long periods during which disputing parties have developed deeply ingrained stereotypes of one another, misperceptions of each other's intentions, and a high degree of cognitive rigidity. Each group becomes progressively less amenable to enlarging its perspective of the conflict and to understanding the unhealthy patterns of relationships between them. Deutsch (1973) calls this phenomenon a "malignant social process" where competition breeds competition, the conflict becomes more costly as time passes, and the parties see no way of extricating themselves without unacceptable losses. Self-fulfilling prophecies further fuel the escalation process. Problems underlying these conflicts are not always ready for an integrative, "win-win" solution via two-party negotiations or third-party mediation. Hence, these new, yet so old, conflicts demand an enlargement of traditional approaches to conflict resolution to add an enduring political and institutional dimension.

This article outlines a new approach to managing conflict and describes how it is being implemented in one such divided society — Tajikistan. The method involves two interrelated strategies:

- An unofficial dialogue process which brings together individuals from conflicting groups to: (1) probe the dynamics of their conflictual relationship; (2) think together about the obstacles that stand in the way of changing that relationship; and (3) design a sequence of interactive steps that might remove those obstacles.
- A civil society strategy aimed at strengthening and/or building institutions of civil society that transcend the traditional divisions in the society — such institutions play a crucial role in alleviating the mistrust that always exists in divided societies.

A Brief Overview of the Conflict

Tajikistan, along with other former Soviet republics, declared its independence in August of 1991. With a weak state structure, independence engendered a struggle for power and national identity resulting in civil war and installation of an authoritarian regime run by former members of the Communist Party of Tajikistan. In a country of 5.5 million people, this war thus far has resulted in thousands of deaths, with estimates ranging from 25,000 to a high of 200,000 victims. In addition, thousands of refugees have fled the country to neighboring Afghanistan, Pakistan and Russia.

Tajikistan was unprepared for independence economically; perhaps just as significantly, the country had not yet forged a common sense of nationhood. Scholars agree that there is no such thing as a Tajikistani identity. With no tribally-linked connection, people of the new nation have based their identity on their geographic region, a phenomenon that Olivier Roy (1993) refers to as "localism." Prior to the creation of the Soviet Union, the geographical area now called Tajikistan did not exist as a unit. When the Soviet Union created the different republics, the republic of Uzbekistan, mainly Turkish-speaking, covered the entire Uzbekistan/Tajikistan area. An autonomous region for Tajikistan was created inside Uzbekistan. The inhabitants of that region spoke mainly Persian-based languages. In 1929, the independent republic of Tajikistan was created, leaving the Persian-speaking cities of Samarkand and Bukhara as part of Uzbekistan. The predominantly Uzbek Ferghana valley (later called Leninabad) was then included in the republic of Tajikistan. Later, Stalin's nationalities and collectivization policies led to settlement of many Russians in the Central Asian republics, including Tajikistan. All these forces contributed to the lack of development of a common Tajikistani nation and Tajikistani identity, and added to local tensions.

During the Soviet era, political power in Tajikistan was in the hands of the elite from the Khojand region. The Khojandi elite also figured prominently in the Communist party structure. This area was more industrialized and Russianized from the rest of Tajikistan. Starting in the 1970s, the party leadership began to include members from the southern region of Kulyab in the governing structure. At the time, the intelligentsia were mostly from Gharm and Pamir regions in the southern areas of Tajikistan. This group thought that power should be shared among the different regions, thus setting the stage for the formation of opposition movements. The advent of *perestroika* in the Soviet Union paved the way for the forming of *Rastokhez*, a movement that campaigned mostly for religious freedom, and the return to traditional Tajiki language in the schools without much stress on political reform.

In early 1990, the government blamed *Rastokhez* for inducing violent riots in the capital two weeks prior to Tajikistan's first parliamentary elections. The government then banned opposition parties from participating in the elections. The 1990 elections produced a largely old-communist parliament. After these elections, new political parties and movements were established, including the Democratic Party of Tajikistan and the Islamic Renaissance Party. During the November 1991 elections, the opposition parties united and presented an opposition candidate, who was defeated in elections that most observers believe were obviously "rigged." The new regime, heavily populated by former communists from the Khojand and Kulyab regions, passed a series of repressive measures to prevent the opposition movement from assuming any role in the governing structure. In May 1992, violent clashes occurred between the opposition and government forces, with the Russian military, still present in the country, supplying arms to the government. In an attempt to prevent further escalation of the con-

flict, then president Rahmon Nabiyev put together a coalition government involving the opposition parties. This drew major opposition from the extremist elements in the governing structure, mostly hard-liners in Kulyab and Khojand who declared the new government to be invalid, since the parliament, which failed to reach a quorum, did not approve it.

Following violent clashes between the two parties, the president was forced to resign at gunpoint in September 1992. With support from the Democratic and Islamic parties, Akbarsho Iskandoarov was made acting president on 7 September 1992, in a government of "national reconciliation." The new president announced that Tajikistan's foreign policy priorities would be oriented toward Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkey, thus incurring the wrath of neighboring Uzbekistan and Russia. The latter two governments decided that their national interests were being jeopardized by the chaotic situation in Tajikistan, and agreed, along with the governments of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, to send peace-keeping forces from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to Tajikistan.

In December 1992, Iskandoarov resigned and the parliament elected a new government populated mainly by Kulyabis and Khojandis. In order to consolidate their political power, pro-government forces, with support from the Russian and Uzbek guards, conducted a campaign of executions, looting and terror against anybody affiliated with the opposition parties. This resulted in mass displacement of refugees into Afghanistan. The opposition leadership fled to Moscow. The government further imposed a ban on the opposition parties, as well on their media. Since 1993, sporadic fighting continues in the border area between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, at times involving the Russian border guards.

The Tajikistani Dialogue

With this bloody, bitter history as backdrop, the Tajikistani Dialogue held its first meeting in Moscow in March of 1993. The dialogue is conducted under the auspices of the Dartmouth Conference Regional Conflicts Task Force² by a subgroup organized by the Kettering Foundation and the Russian Center for Strategic Research and International Studies of the Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow. The dialogue is facilitated by a third-party team that includes three Americans and three Russians. The Russian and American co-chairs alternate in chairing the meeting sessions. The co-chairs and the rest of the team members facilitate the discussions by setting the agenda at the beginning of every meeting, raising questions at critical times during the discussions, asking for clarifications about certain ideas or proposals when needed, helping to put down on paper the ideas articulated during the meeting, and (when emotions flare up) trying to help the participants deal constructively with their anger. At the end of every meeting, the American team drafts a report and shares it with the U.N. negotiators and other interested official bodies.

According to Lederach (1994: 41), "relationship is the basis of both the conflict and the long-term solution" in divided societies. The dialogue process is designed to change conflictual relationships over time. This kind of dialogue is more than just good conversation and less than a structured negotiation. It is sustained in the sense that participants, in a series of continuing conversations, probe the dynamics of even the most destructive relationships and gradually develop together a capacity to change the political environment to make it amenable to a negotiated settlement.

The dialogue process used in Tajikistan includes five stages (Saunders and Slim 1994a and 1994b; Chufirin and Saunders 1993). These stages are not rigid. Participants may jump ahead momentarily to a later stage or revisit an earlier stage; participants who have reached an advanced stage of dialogue on one complex set of issues may need to circle back to an earlier stage when they move to a new set of problems. It is a systematic process that moves to progressively deeper levels in order to identify steps and design a scenario that will change relationships between groups in conflict. By the end of the dialogue, participants move from mistrust of one another to the ability to work together and develop ideas for sharing their experience more widely.

The Tajikistani dialogue participants have met at eight or ten-week intervals since March of 1993. The group's fourteenth meeting was held in St. Petersburg, Russia, in December 1995. The dialogue involves a core of eight to ten citizens of Tajikistan divided between the two opposing camps, pro-government and pro-opposition; some of the latter are in exile in Moscow. Two members of the dialogue group are formal delegates to ongoing U.N.-sponsored official negotiations which are taking place concurrent with the dialogue.

Stage 1: Deciding to Engage

The purposes at this initial stage are to: (1) identify the dialogue participants from the confronting camps; (2) reach agreement that they will meet; and (3) reach understanding on the nature, purpose, and ground rules of the dialogue. When we started this initiative, two of our Russian colleagues undertook a number of fact-finding trips to Tajikistan to talk with people and determine who might be likely participants in the dialogue.

Participants are not the top leaders of their parties, nor are they official representatives of the government. Characteristically, they are individuals who are respected in their communities and are listened to by top leaders and decision makers. They have access both to the leadership and to public opinion in their communities. Lederach (1994) refers to them as "middle-range leaders." They are also individuals who have concluded on their own that the present situation hurts their interests, and that something should be done to promote a solution. One of our research challenges is to identify the intrapersonal processes that bring people to this conclusion in situations of civil strife such as the one in Tajikistan. Participants must have some kind of "political permission" to engage. Our Russian colleagues informed a few gov-

ernment officials in Tajikistan of the purposes of the dialogue, and obtained from them “unspoken acceptance.” Of the original group of seven Tajikistanis, five continue to participate in the dialogue. Three joined the core group in mid-course.

Our experience shows that this first stage of the dialogue process is never really completed. Due to changes in the political situation, we have felt the need at different times during the past two years to recruit more participants to represent new movements as they surface in the country. For example, a new kind of opposition has been emerging inside Tajikistan, the so-called “internal opposition,” as distinguished from the well-organized and vocal opposition in exile in Moscow. Hence, our Russian friends recently undertook another fact-finding trip to identify a representative of this movement to the dialogue. We also found it essential recently to draw in one or two additional participants from the opposition, since two core group members who represent the opposition are now formal delegates to the official negotiations. In case these long-standing members are unable to attend the dialogue meetings, it is important to have their voices represented.

Early in the dialogue process, all participants reach an understanding regarding the ground rules to govern all the meetings. Some of these rules are:

- Participants represent themselves and reflect their views in their communities; they do not formally represent their organizations.
- Participants will interact civilly, listen actively to one another, and allow each to present his/her views fully. One can set aside a time at the beginning of every meeting during which participants air grievances. It is a period of “psychological dumping.” After that, the talk is as analytical as possible.
- Participants observe time limits on statements to allow genuine dialogue.
- Nothing said in the dialogue is repeated outside the room.

Stage 2: Mapping the Relationship

The purpose at this stage is twofold: (1) identification of the main problems that affect relationships among the participants; and (2) mapping all significant relationships that are responsible for creating these problems. This stage lasted for about six months in the Tajikistani Dialogue, during which three meetings were held, each lasting two and one-half days. At the first meeting of the dialogue, the moderators raised two questions:

- What do you see as the causes of the civil war?
- What do you see as possible ways out?

During the second meeting, the moderators asked further questions:

- What are the interests of the groups with which you identify?
- In identifying your interests, can you take account of others’ interests?
- What kind of Tajikistan would you like to develop?

By the end of the third meeting, there seemed to be general agreement on the principle that Tajikistan should be a unified, secular, multinational country with the rights of individuals and minorities guaranteed. The main problems that had been identified revolved around the questions of violence and how to stop it; security guarantees for the return of refugees; how to define and protect the rights of different regions, ethnic groups, and political movements in a nationwide political system; and how to organize a new political and economic system.

The group even concluded that they needed to focus on "starting negotiations on creating conditions for the return of the refugees." But at this point, they could not bring themselves to reach out to the other side in a way that would enable negotiations to begin. They still distrusted each other so sharply that they could not give each other confidence that negotiations could take place in good faith.

Stage 3: Probing the Dynamics of the Relationship

The purpose at this stage is to generate the will within the parties to change the conflictual relationships so as to deal with the problems that face them. The dialogue participants identify the problems they will probe in depth, as the moderators remind and encourage them to probe the relationships that caused each problem. During this stage, the mode of discourse shifts from explanation of each side's position to a genuine dialogue, where parties talk with each other, respond to each other, and ask each other clarifying questions.

By the end of the third meeting, the Tajikistani group decided that, in the coming rounds of the dialogue, they would focus on the need to start negotiations regarding the creation of conditions for the return of refugees. Between the third and fourth meeting, one member of the group had lost his job because of his political views, and another had been advised that it would not be safe to return home. Both were members of the opposition team at the dialogue. By the fourth round, most members, including those identified with the pro-government camp, felt the government was losing control. Overcoming the resistance they demonstrated at the end of the third meeting, participants talked at length about the problems of starting a negotiation. One of the main obstacles they discussed was the divided nature of the opposition. Whom would the government invite to the table?

Between the fourth and fifth meetings, the opposition forces, both in Moscow and in Iran and Afghanistan, formed a center for coordinating the opposition forces and announced its creation in a jointly signed statement. Two members of the dialogue group were signatories. Although discussion in the fourth meeting of the need for one opposition negotiating unit provided background for this opposition move, there is no evidence that it was a direct cause.

During the fifth meeting, the opposition members of the dialogue presented the opposition's new position regarding negotiations with the government. At the end of that meeting, pro-government participants felt that the new opposition position could provide a basis for negotiations.

During this stage, the three most important issues identified by the whole group were: creating conditions for the return of refugees; disarming; and developing a new constitution and political structures for Tajikistan. A number of corollary problems were identified in conjunction with the return of refugees. These involved, among others: differentiating among types of refugees; identifying particular social and economic work that would be necessary to help refugees return home; creation of a security and community environment that would persuade refugees that they would be safe if they returned home.

In addition to the substantive issues, the moderators distilled from the conversations some of the fears and perceptions each side held of the other. The pro-government participants were concerned that a united opposition front represented a threat to order and stability in the country. Being mostly the product of the Soviet system, they feared that opposition ideology and practice would lead to disorder, lack of discipline, and uncertainty. Among the opposition participants, there was a sense of grievance that they had been driven out of the country by the banning of their organizations, armed attacks against their offices, closing of the opposition press, dismissal from jobs, physical threats, and actual killing of opposition members. The moderators presented these views during the fifth round of the dialogue and asked for corrections from the participants. For the most part, the participants agreed with these summaries. Our effort at this stage focused on how to begin to develop communication that could allay fears each side had of the other.

Stage 4: Building Scenarios

Having probed the dynamics of the relationships that cause the problems they face and identified how they would like to change those relationships, participants now were engaged in new tasks: (1) identifying the obstacles to moving in the desired direction; (2) thinking of steps that can be taken in the political arena to remove those obstacles; (3) naming actors who can take those steps; and (4) relating those steps to each other in some mutually reinforcing sequence. During this stage, the participants shift to joint thinking, described by Rouhana (1995: 331) as “. . .the mode of interaction between the participants in which they consciously and purposefully take into consideration the set of needs, concerns, constraints and fears of both parties when they consider new options and ideas in moving toward improving the relationship between their societies.”

Between the fifth meeting in January 1994 and the sixth meeting in March 1994, a U.N. envoy had made substantial progress toward convening a negotiation between the government and the opposition forces. At the sixth meeting, just before the first round of U.N.-sponsored negotiations, the dialogue group produced a document titled “Memorandum on a Negotiating Process in Tajikistan.” That memorandum was an outline of the main elements of a scenario, suggesting a negotiating structure along the following lines: The two negotiating teams under U.N. mediation would serve — in addition to their negotiating responsibilities — as an oversight body for four

working groups on the following topics: (1) security and disarmament; (2) constitutional and political processes; (3) refugee return and reintegration; and (4) economic development.

At the ninth meeting, held in September 1994, the moderators asked participants to list the obstacles that stood in the way of normalizing relationships and political activity in the country. An extensive list of obstacles to national reconciliation was compiled. Among others, they included:

- a large number of refugees both inside and outside the country create abnormal conditions;
- a large number of weapons are in the hands of the population;
- people are denied elementary rights;
- widespread lack of confidence in the government;
- a low level of political culture — “a proletarian way of thinking”;
- the present leadership depends on illegal armed units; and
- the opposition feels the government would share power with other regions.

After discussing the possible list of obstacles, participants were asked to think of what could be done — in all areas of life — to remove the obstacles identified by the group. In this critical phase of the dialogue process, the participants began to struggle with the impasse that would be created if each side insisted that steps to satisfy its needs be taken before steps in response to the other side's needs. On their own, they began to think in terms of integrating steps for both sides into an interactive sequence of reciprocal moves.

The twelfth dialogue session (in June of 1995) met against the background of the fourth round of the U.N.-sponsored talks, which had taken place in Alma Aty and in which two members of the dialogue participated. The dialogue group produced a memorandum on national reconciliation in Tajikistan. The memorandum elaborated a program of actions that included many reciprocal efforts to be undertaken by the government and the opposition, in the near term, to create conditions for the conclusion of an agreement on a political process of national reconciliation. The thirteenth round of the dialogue focused on the elaboration of options to implement the decision reached in the official negotiations in August 1995, to establish a Consultative Forum/Congress to create conditions for making peace and reaching national accord in Tajikistan. The participants produced a three-page memo detailing the composition, functions, mode of operation, and ways by which the Consultative Forum/Congress could interact with the government.

There are some periods in such an ongoing dialogue when participants must take time to absorb new developments. The seventh (May 1994) and eighth (June 1994 in the United States) meetings concentrated on absorbing

the fact of official negotiations and trying to lay out the elements of a political process for national reconciliation. The tenth (November 1994) and eleventh meetings (March 1995) concentrated on understanding the situation created by a constitutional referendum and presidential and parliamentary elections.

Stage 5: Acting Together

The purpose at this stage is to develop practical ways the agreed-upon scenarios might be put into action. Whether participants will take action is still a matter of difficult choice for each of them. The Tajikistani Dialogue group moved momentarily into this stage when they took the "Memorandum on a Negotiating Process in Tajikistan" to their negotiating teams and to officials in Tajikistan, and requested its delivery to officials in Russia, the United States, the United Nations, and the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The memo produced at the twelfth meeting was also shared with concerned official bodies. One of the delegates to the official talks told the facilitators that the proposals generated during the twelfth round of the dialogue, were discussed in a meeting between the president of the country and the leader of the opposition.

During the fourteenth dialogue session, the participants decided to make an appeal from the dialogue to the president of Tajikistan, the leader of the opposition, the heads of negotiating teams and the international persons attending the last round of the official inter-Tajik talks held in Ashkabad, Turkmenistan on 30 November 1995. They urged that the Consultative Forum/Congress be given high priority at the new round of official negotiations.

The participants are still struggling to find ways and mechanisms to make the work of the dialogue more fully known inside Tajikistan. In December 1995, dialogue participants living in Tajikistan stated that the time has come for them to organize "micro-dialogues" in Tajikistan. They would work in pairs to organize and moderate dialogues of their own, patterned on the Tajikistani Dialogue, to begin broadening the process of dialogue within the republic. We will be monitoring the development of these "micro-dialogues" very closely in the coming months. The civil society is still in its infancy in the country. Four dialogue participants are heads or top officials in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Tajikistan. State control over the activities of these organizations is still great, though dialogue participants residing inside Tajikistan have said they believe the political leadership inside the republic today is more attuned to the ideas and opinions of the NGOs than it was in the past.

Impact of the Political Atmosphere on the Dialogue

Continuous changes in the political scene frequently imposed restrictions on the dialogue deliberations. Over the course of the dialogue, we have learned how important it is to pay attention to what has happened in the time between meetings. The interval usually allows time for digesting insights from

the previous meeting. Events that take place during this time can either play a facilitative or an inhibitive role on the proceedings of the following meeting.

One example of the latter happened during the eighth round of the dialogue. This meeting was held in the United States, a few days before the second round of U.N.-sponsored negotiations in Tehran. The dialogue focused on two questions: (1) What political system of sharing power could give adequate expression to the interests of different regions, political movements and ethnic groups? and (2) How can we begin a political process moving toward resolution of the conflict in ways that would provide a foundation for such a political system?

The participants created a document that expressed the common ground they had reached but, in the end, did not sign it. Despite a number of procedural variants proposed by the moderators, they could not agree on how to incorporate their differences in the document, which otherwise outlines a broad area of agreement. This disagreement over procedure was just a symptom of the limits usually facing participants in an unofficial dialogue. The problem stemmed from their concerns over the upcoming U.N.-sponsored negotiations. At this critical juncture, they felt they could not afford to agree on a paper that might put them at odds with their respective home communities. Members of the pro-government group did not want to be seen as agreeing to a document that expressed opposition views in any way. Members of the opposition group did not want to get too far out in front of their U.N. negotiating team. Hence, it behooves moderators of similar unofficial groups to track the evolving political situation constantly and assess its potential impact on the ongoing unofficial deliberations continuously.

Prior to the tenth meeting, significant events in the political life of Tajikistan occurred:

- The third round of official negotiations in Islamabad consolidated and extended a ceasefire and led to a prisoner exchange.
- A nationwide referendum approved, by a large majority, a new constitution in Tajikistan.
- In an election marked by irregularities, the voters of Tajikistan elected a new president — a former Communist party member and a member of the Kulyabi power structure.

These important events forced participants during the tenth round of the dialogue to shift gears and return to the early part of stage three to rename and reframe the priority problems the group needed to work on. The group this time worked with greater insight and more efficiency than was the case earlier. While group members were reviewing the elements of the present situation and defining the current problems, they were simultaneously moving into stage four by thinking about actions they could take to deal with these problems. Again, the moderators of similar unofficial dialogues should be able to assess which of the ongoing political events warrant a momentary halt in the forward progression of the dialogue. We need

to develop a set of diagnostic criteria to enable us to identify the critical political variants that significantly affect the dialogue process.

Third-Party Roles

A number of researchers argue that third-party intervention should constitute a range of roles and functions. For example, Laue and Cormick (1978) delineated conflict intervention roles ranging from activists and advocates to mediators, observers, monitors, and enforcers. Recently, Mitchell (1993) developed an even broader typology of intermediary "roles and functions." The following reflections, based on Mitchell's categories, outline the range of functions which the third party team in the Tajikistani Dialogue has performed over the course of the past two years:

Convener: Under the auspices of the Dartmouth Conference, the third-party team called for and convened a dialogue among conflicting parties in a neutral setting and away from the public eye. In the words of a Tajikistani official, the dialogue group provided reassurances to the government side that the opposition was ready to negotiate and willing to reach compromise. In addition to acting as a convener, we suggest that, in situations of latent conflicts where this sort of dialogue could play a role in preventive diplomacy, the third-party team must play an educational role or what Adam Curle (1971) refers to as *conscientization*. Curle argues that in a situation where the conflict remains hidden and people are unaware of imbalances and injustices in the system, the third party should act as an educator, erasing ignorance and raising awareness as to the nature of the unequal relationships and the need for addressing the grievances of the disadvantaged.

Unifier: The dialogue has created a space where working relationships are established across Tajikistan's political spectrum. The members of the opposition group have attested that the dialogue deliberations played a major catalytic role in bringing together the different opposition parties under the umbrella of the Opposition Coordination Council to articulate a position that paved the way for the official negotiations.

Enskiller: In May of 1994, just after the first round of U.N.-sponsored negotiations, the opposition group in the dialogue asked the U.S. moderators to organize for them a seminar in negotiation skills. The seminar provided the moderators with the opportunity to teach the opposition forces the tactics of negotiation and the kind of support or infrastructure that is needed in an ongoing negotiation process.

Envisioner: Many of the dialogue meetings turned into lengthy seminars during which members of the third-party team took turns in sharing with the dialogue participants their experiences with other international conflict resolution efforts in Lebanon, Cambodia, the Arab-Israeli arena, Mozambique and Afghanistan. The purpose of these impromptu seminars is to inject into the deliberations new ideas and options for the participants to consider in thinking about mechanisms for dealing with the Tajikistani conflict.

Facilitator: The meetings are co-chaired by American and Russian moderators. The other members of the third-party team intervene at different times during the dialogue to ask pertinent questions or inject relevant data to help move the dialogue from an impasse. The two memoranda produced in the course of the dialogue were drafted first by the moderators, who listened to the participants and set down what they heard. Participants studied the first draft overnight then discussed it in the full group. The changes then produced additional drafts until the group agreed to a final version.

Legitimizer: The third-party team legitimizes the process of an unofficial dialogue in the eyes of the participants by lending its prestige to the proceedings and constantly lending credibility to the results by connecting the dialogue with ongoing official negotiations. Through the efforts of the third party team, the outcomes of the dialogue are constantly shared with official national and international bodies. In this way, the third-party team also plays a connector role.

It behooves us to study further the variety of functions performed by the different members of the third-party team at each stage of the dialogue process and match these functions to the different stages of the conflict, from the latent and hidden to the violent stage.

A Civil Society Strategy

A second level of the framework for managing conflict involves working with the nongovernmental organizations (or NGO community) inside Tajikistan and building on existing traditions of public talk and deliberation in order to broaden the public's participation in the governance of public life. The aim of this strategy is to strengthen and, if necessary, establish in the long-term what we call "boundary-spanning organizations" in the Tajikistani society. This means bringing together individuals from different competing groups to work on achieving a number of superordinate goals. Experience shows us that this type of organization is often lacking in divided societies. The NGO sector is frequently divided along the traditional cleavage lines of the society.

Central to this strategy is the concept of public space. The term "public space" has been variously referred to as "free space" (Evans and Boyte 1992), or "third place" (Oldenburg 1989). According to Evans and Boyte, a free space involves "ordinary" people who are in the process of creating a public through joint decision making. Ideally, "the relationships of free space draw on localized and particular interests, but also connect participants to larger patterns of decision making, social life, and institutional practice" (p. ix). Free space action is transcommunal, joining separate groups through common discourse. It serves as a linkage between communities and the public arena. Free space is not synonymous with voluntary associations; rather, it denotes settings where people control their own political actions, while distinct community networks tend to be insular. In a similar vein, Oldenburg notes that the "third place" provides a means for developing a collective identity among members of a community. It brings out people's inherent sense of responsibility.

ity for public domain and collective issues by providing a greater sense of community and a more active identification with the greater good.

The tradition of public space exists in most cultures. In Tajikistan, a public space people often refer to is the council of elders that is found in each village. It is an informal group consisting of respected and revered elders in the village. Whenever a wedding is about to happen or a funeral is to be organized, the council gets together to pool the village resources and divide tasks among the different families in the village.

Building on this existing local tradition, the dialogue participants discussed the possibility of establishing a national council of elders. This would be an informally constituted group that would deliberate and speak out on important problems in the country. Its members could serve as a source of guidance for NGOs to achieve maximum complementarity from their work. At other points in the dialogue, it was suggested that the national council of elders could also monitor the process of national reconciliation.

It was also suggested during the twelfth round of the dialogue that a "Congress of the Peoples of Tajikistan" be created as one of the mechanisms of a national reconciliation process. The Congress would bring together citizens from all regions, political parties and movements, and national communities to consider and solve important questions facing the people of Tajikistan. The dialogue members decided that the procedure for deciding the convocation, status, functions, and powers of the Congress could be determined during the U.N.-sponsored negotiations.

In the long term, the dialogue group provides a continuing public space for discussing current problems in the development and strengthening of a Tajikistani nation. When the situation inside the country becomes safer, this space could be institutionalized as a permanent feature in the public life of Tajikistan — a group that continues to deliberate on problems in the life of the country. In the mid-term, the challenge is to determine if this group can encourage similar dialogue groups inside Tajikistan. Fear remains the major obstacle to this achievement. For the present, a range of activities has already been achieved by a number of dialogue participants with the purpose of strengthening civil society in Tajikistan.

The U.S. sponsors are working with a number of NGOs interested in working in Tajikistan. They have put together an NGO strategy toward Tajikistan to determine whether and how humanitarian assistance and help with rehabilitation and community development can be vehicles for helping to build the infrastructure, both for reconciliation and for a nationwide political system and civil society.

One member of the dialogue has chartered the Oli Somon Foundation, which is one of the few independent NGOs in Tajikistan today, to undertake a variety of projects. The foundation, which already has ten employees, has planned such activities as organizing a series of seminars at Tajik University on the rule of law, with the hope of putting on the public agenda issues of human rights and the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society. Another member of the dialogue and a member of the Women's Association of Tajikistan has founded her own organization, the Tajikistani Center for Citizenship Education. The Center will sponsor public policy workshops around the country to involve citizens in nonpartisan discussions of issues of concern to all of them. She is also trying to organize a number of roundtables around the country involving educated women to discuss what their role in a democratic society could be. The Women's Association of Tajikistan is engaged in monitoring how humanitarian aid is distributed within Tajikistan. There is a view that aid passing through state structures is often unjustly distributed — that the best way to distribute aid is to use local public, women's, and veterans' organizations, and organizations of national communities. One major obstacle to a more effective role by existing NGOs, is the division that exists within that sector. Each group is engaged in its own activities and is unaware of what others are doing.

Conclusion

This dialogue is still in process. Our objectives for the future include spinning off other dialogue groups from this core and encouraging the establishment of a number of boundary-spanning organizations to develop civil society and democratic practice in Tajikistan. Our challenge is to define an agenda for this unofficial, ongoing dialogue that is on the cutting edge and not reactive to the outcomes of the official negotiations. It seems clear that, for the short-term, we need to work on the components of a process of national reconciliation and outline a corresponding scenario of interactive, mutually reinforcing steps to be undertaken by the government, political parties, national communities, NGOs, and other sectors of the population in Tajikistan.

NOTES

This article is dedicated to the memory of our friend, professional colleague, and mentor: Jeffrey Z. Rubin.

1. This article was originally presented as part of a panel at the International Society of Political Psychology meeting, "Managing Conflicts in Divided Societies," 5-9 July 1995, in Washington, D.C.

The project we outline here is managed by Harold H. Saunders and Randa M. Slim at the Kettering Foundation with significant grant support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. The Russian partner in this project is the Russian Center for Strategic Research and International Studies.

2. The Dartmouth Conference, which began in 1960, is the longest continuous bilateral dialogue between Soviet (now Russian) and U.S. citizens. The Regional Conflicts Task Force was formed in 1982 to probe the dynamics of Soviet-U.S. interaction in such regional conflicts as those in Southern Africa, the Middle East, and Afghanistan. The Task Force has met every six months since August 1982.

With the demise of the Soviet Union, the task force decided to apply the process of dialogue that it had developed through the 1980s to one of the conflicts that had broken out in the Commonwealth of Independent States. The task force selected Tajikistan because of the dangers it seemed to present to a wide circle of international interests if the civil war spilled over the borders to embroil other countries, the fact that there was little attention from the nonofficial community to the war there, and the existence of long-standing relationships between Russian members of the task force and significant sectors of the population of Tajikistan.

REFERENCES

- Chufrin, G.I. and H.H. Saunders. 1993. A public peace process. *Negotiation Journal* 9: 155-177.
- Curle, A. 1971. *Making peace*. London: Tavistock Press.
- Deutsch, M. 1973. *The resolution of conflict: Constructive and destructive processes*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Evans, S.M. and H.C. Boyte. 1992. *Free spaces*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Laue, J. and G. Cormick. 1978. The ethics of intervention in community conflicts. In *The ethics of social integration*, edited by G. Bermant, H. C. Kelman, and D. P. Warwick. Washington: Halstead Press.
- Lederach, J.P. 1994. *Building peace — Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*. Paper submitted to United Nations University, Tokyo, Japan.
- Mitchell, C. 1993. The process and stages of mediation: Two Sudanese cases. In *Making war and waging peace*, edited by D. Smock. Washington: U.S. Institute of Peace.
- Oldenburg, R. 1989. *The great good place: Cafes, coffee shops, community centers, beauty parlors, general stores, bars, hangouts, and how they get you through the day*. New York: Paragon House.
- Rouhana, N.N. 1995. The dynamics of joint thinking between adversaries in international conflict: Phases of the continuing problem-solving workshop. *Political Psychology*, 16(2): 321-345.
- Roy, O. 1993. *The civil war in Tajikistan: Causes and implications*. Washington: U.S. Institute of Peace.
- Saunders, H.H. and R. Slim. 1994. Dialogue to change conflictual relationships. *Higher Education Exchange*, 43-56.
- and ———. 1994. *Dialogue to change conflictual relationships: The Tajikistan dialogue*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology, June 1994, Spain.
- Wallensteen, P. and K. Axell. 1993. Armed conflict at the end of the Cold War, 1989-1992. *Journal of Peace Research* 30(3): 331-346.