

Negotiating an End to the Conflict in Tajikistan

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine the negotiation process that terminated the Tajik civil war and the reasons behind its success, a modest but notable one given the frequent difficulty in ending civil wars through negotiation. The article provides an overview of the Tajik negotiation process, using the three-stage model of the negotiation process. Based on this chronological account and analysis, the concluding part of the article examines key factors that came into play in bringing about the negotiated settlement. It has been shown that the Tajik negotiations went through qualitatively distinct stages suggested by the model, and that the negotiated outcome was made possible primarily as a result of the interplay between internal dynamics among the warring parties and external involvement of major third party interveners, namely Russia, Iran, and the United Nations.

Keywords: detail phase, diagnostic phase, formula phase, negotiation, mediation, Tajikistan

Introduction

While the Tajik conflict is among many civil wars that erupted around the globe in the wake of the Cold War, it has received much less international attention and publicity than other post-cold war internal wars, such as those in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda, and Somalia. Yet it was no less bloody and brutal, and as in other civil wars, there existed serious mutual distrust and strong commitment to a unilateral, military solution, as well as stubborn resistance toward a negotiated, political solution, from beginning to end, on the part of both the Tajik government and the opposition. Viewed in this light, the Tajik civil war is noteworthy for its relatively rapid settlement through negotiation in June 1997, after having escalated into a full-scale war in May 1992 (Barnes and Abdullaev 2001: 8). Thus, an explanation of how the Tajik civil war came to a negotiated settlement and why it eventually became possible is called for. This article attempts to answer these questions.

After providing some brief background information regarding the nature and

history of the conflict, this article examines the negotiation process in Tajikistan, drawing on the model of a negotiation process put forward by Zartman and Berman (1982). In their model, the process generally consists of three stages: (1) the diagnostic phase (or prenegotiation), where conflicting parties diagnose the situation, explore the possibility of negotiating, and decide to do so; (2) the formula phase, in which they try to reach a common definition of their conflict and negotiate a formula for solution; and (3) the detail phase, where the parties negotiate the specifics of that formula. Certainly, it is a tall order to clearly distinguish these stages in reality; they might overlap each other, and there can also be movement back and forth between them. Nonetheless, the use of the model is intended to provide the structure for analysis and enhance a more systematic understanding of the Tajik negotiation process, which might otherwise appear to be a mere train of events. Drawing on this analysis of the negotiation process, the last part of this article then discusses the reasons behind the successful outcome.¹

The Civil War in Tajikistan

There is a tendency among casual observers to treat the Tajik conflict as an ideological clash between secular conservatism and Islamic fundamentalism. Certainly, ideology was a factor that led Tajik parties to wage this conflict. The ruling elite of the Communist Party strove to preserve the old Soviet order and a secular state in Tajikistan, in which it would continue to assume a monopolistic role. The Islamic-democratic opposition alliance, in contrast, advocated a change to the status quo through the building of a democratic state, in which previously underrepresented forces, especially Islam, were to have the voice they deserved. This ideological dimension of the conflict provided a rationale for the alignment of external stakeholders; Russia and Central Asian states shored up the neo-Soviets, while Iran and other Islamic states sided with the Islamists.

But most expert accounts of the conflict depict it as rivalries between local groups rather than between ideological camps. For instance, Olivier Roy (1998) has stressed that the primary cause of the Tajik conflict was deep-rooted localism, and that the ethnic explanation emphasizing Tajik-Uzbek animosity is inadequate to grasp the core of the Tajik problem. Indeed, the integrity of the Tajik state has remained fragile and the identity of the Tajiks has been based on affiliation to a particular region rather than the state itself. Tajikistan's structural and topographical features are background factors causing such regionalism. At the time of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic's creation in 1929, its border was demarcated in such a way that the republic happened to contain

¹ The author's earlier article (Iji 2001: 360-364) contains a chronological summary of the inter-Tajik negotiations.

many ethnic minorities inside of the border, while leaving a large portion of the world's Tajik population outside (Akiner 2001: 13-15). Nonetheless, it was Soviet policies that added elements of rigidity and exclusionism to regionalism in Tajikistan. They caused political and economic disparities among regions, giving rise to regionally-based patron-client networks that vied for the power and benefits it necessarily brought (Atkin 1997: 292).

As long as the Soviet system of rule, dominated by the *nomenklatura*, had continued to fulfill its intended functions, regionalist tensions had been held in check. However, by the mid-1980s, as the Soviet regime underwent reform and its control over Tajikistan's state apparatus weakened, power struggles among the country's different regions intensified. By the end of the 1980s onwards, the ruling elite from Leninabad in the north, who had been the most privileged politically and economically, were increasingly challenged by major opposition movements with nationalist, democratic, and Islamic orientations, which drew support from the southern regions of Gharm, Kurgan-Tyube, and Gorno-Badakhshan. In order to fight against these opposition groups, Leninabad entered into an alliance with the southern region of Kulyab, which was able to provide military muscle. Concurrently, the collapse of the Soviet's centralized, planned economy placed a serious strain on Tajikistan's economy, which was the poorest of all the Soviet republics, highly dependent on subsidies flowing from Moscow. As a result, regions within the country became caught up in the struggle for scarce resources (Akiner 2001: 25-27; Niyazi 1994: 168-179).

The weak governance structure of the Tajik state was increasingly strained by a combination of such factors as large-scale mass mobilization for political activities, the severe economic plight, the general breakdown of law and order, and the emergence of militias for self-defense. As regionalism—a fault line in the Tajik society—became salient, the newly formed coalition government failed to govern the country effectively in the face of strong disapproval from the Leninabadi-Kulyabi alliance. The anarchical situation eventually led to a full-scale civil war in mid-1992 (Lynch 2001: 49-55; Rubin 1993). Since it was the Popular Front, the Kulyabi militia, apparently aided by Russian and Uzbek forces, that defeated opposition forces, the Kulyabis, led by Emomali Rakhmonov, took the lead in forming a government in November 1992, treating the Leninabadis as a junior partner. The Rakhmonov government moved to consolidate its embryonic rule and restore order, continuing the military offensive against opposition strongholds. Even after the peak of violence in early 1993, there occurred incessant fighting, particularly on the Tajik-Afghan border, as opposition forces, assisted by Afghan militants, continued to make an armed incursion from northern Afghanistan into southern Tajikistan. The Russian military, in the form of the 201st Motorized Rifle Division and Border Troops, served as the backbone of forces to launch a counterattack

and maintain law and order in the country (Lynch 2000: 150-172). It then took approximately one year for the Tajik parties to come to the negotiating table under the auspices of the United Nations (UN).

Lead-up to Negotiations: The Diagnostic Phase

While it is rather difficult to pinpoint the onset of the diagnostic phase in the Tajik case, it is certain that it was a shift in Russian policy toward Tajikistan in mid-1993 that provided a major impetus to the preparations for the launch of negotiations between the Tajik parties. In July, a serious crisis on the Tajik-Afghan border, in which the opposition's onslaught claimed the lives of a substantial number of Russian servicemen, alarmed Russian policymakers and made them recognize that it was no longer feasible to rely on military means exclusively. The possibility of initiating negotiations that would seek a political settlement of the conflict thus became necessary (Jonson 1998: 9). Russia accelerated diplomatic initiatives to sound out the Tajik adversaries and interested states in the region on their willingness to engage in negotiations. In parallel, the UN, represented by Secretary-General's Special Envoy Ismat Kittani, also held successive talks with Tajik and external stakeholders in order to mobilize regional peacemaking efforts (UNSG 1993).

What proved to be a further step in Russia's efforts at paving the way for negotiations was the meeting between Russian Foreign Intelligence Service Director Yevgeny Primakov and Said Abdullo Nuri, the leader of Tajik Islamists, held in Tehran in November. There, Primakov reassured Nuri that the Islamic opposition would be a legitimate party to the negotiations, in exchange for the latter's acknowledgement of Russian interests and continued military presence in Tajikistan (Dubnov 1996: 50; Lynch 2001: 58-59). While intensifying diplomatic efforts, Moscow also undertook to coordinate peacekeeping activities with Central Asian states within the framework of the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Mediation efforts aimed at bringing about negotiations gained momentum after the turn of the year. In early 1994, Ramiro Piriz-Ballon, a newly appointed UN special envoy, confirmed the basic willingness of both Tajik sides to start negotiations under UN auspices without any preconditions (UNSG 1994a). In March, Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoly Adamishin succeeded in clearing final obstacles to the opening of negotiations. After visiting Dushanbe and eliciting the Tajik government's firmer commitment to the talks, Adamishin went to Tehran, where he convinced the opposition to reciprocate, while resolving other outstanding procedural issues regarding venues and observers. Adamishin also confirmed with Iranian officials that two countries would cooperate to achieve a negotiated settlement of the conflict in Tajikistan (BBC 1994).

Meanwhile, a process of various opposition elements coalescing into a single entity was under way. They were widely varied in terms of ideological, geographic, and organizational orientations, and the issue of who would represent them was a major obstacle to the onset of official negotiations. On the Islamist side, the Movement for Islamic Revival in Tajikistan (MIRT), of which the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRP) formed the core, was set up in Taloqan, northern Afghanistan, by exiled opposition leaders under Nuri's chairmanship (Abdullaev and Akbarzadeh 2002: 144). On the moderate side, the Coordination Center of the Democratic Forces of Tajikistan in the CIS was established in Moscow (Abdullaev and Barnes 2001: 84). Eventually, these opposition parties and movements joined together to form the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), which was to act as a negotiating partner with the Tajik government. Such a "valid spokesperson" for the opposition side is what ought to be put in place during the diagnostic phase in the context of negotiations in internal conflict (Zartman 1995: 10).

The Launch of Negotiations: The First Formula Phase

Whereas the formula phase is conceived as a single stage in Zartman and Berman's framework, it is subdivided into three periods when applied to the Tajik case, with the aim of pointing out qualitative differences in the way the formula was actually negotiated (or not negotiated seriously enough) by the parties. Again, the boundaries between each phase are inevitably blurred, but such conceptual distinction is intended to serve an analytical purpose.

The Tajik government and the opposition entered into formal negotiations in Moscow on 5 April 1994. The UN sponsored the successive negotiations, with Piriz-Ballon acting as the chief international mediator. The talks were also attended by representatives from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan, as well as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)—known as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) until December 1994—and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). These observer states took turns hosting successive rounds of talks.² The presence of these third parties at the talks worked to internationalize and legitimize the negotiation process.

In the Moscow round, the two sides managed to set the agenda for the following rounds of the negotiations, identifying three clusters of issues: political settlement, refugees and internally displaced persons, and the structure of government in Tajikistan

² Precisely speaking, some of them joined the observer group in the middle of the negotiation process. Turkmenistan served as an observer from the Ashgabat round in November 1995, the CSCE/OSCE from the Tehran round in June 1994, and the OIC from the Islamabad round in October 1994 (Goryayev 2001: 34-35).

(UNSG 1994b). Although some tangible result was achieved as to the second issue in the form of the agreement on the creation of a joint commission, substantial progress was lacking in the first and third issues. In regard to the first issue, the sides were unable to agree on a ceasefire; the government demanded as a precondition for serious negotiation that the opposition should lay down their arms and surrender, while the opposition regarded the rebellion as the only way to have its grievances heard, doubting the seriousness in seeking a negotiated solution on the part of the regime.

With respect to the third issue, the part and parcel of the formula for a solution, there appeared to be the largest difference between the positions of the two sides. The opposition presented a proposal to set up a State Soviet or Council of National Agreement, a transitional body that would consist of the representatives of the conflicting parties on a fifty-fifty basis. The government flatly rejected the proposal because it was not interested in any sort of power-sharing at this stage. Such a position was apparently influenced by Russia, which was diplomatically active as the host for the round, but was only half-hearted about pursuing a political solution. This was partly because there was an internal split within the Russian leadership; while the Foreign Ministry was keen to pursue a political solution through the UN-mediated negotiations, the military viewed the efforts with suspicion and favored a military solution (Zviagelskaya 1998: 163-164). Amid deepening tensions that were a result of the publication of a new draft constitution by the government, the Tajik parties met in Tehran on 18 June for the second round of negotiations. They focused on reaching an agreement on a ceasefire, and although they were eventually able to agree on the temporary nature of the ceasefire, as well as on what kind of hostile activities were to be prohibited, they failed to seal the agreement due to the difference over the timing of its effectuation (Panfilov 1994). Following these inconclusive talks, the government moved to further consolidate the regime. At the nineteenth session in mid-July, the Tajik Supreme Soviet approved the draft constitution, announced the holding of a referendum on it in September, and decided to conduct a presidential election simultaneously. As the opposition responded by stepping up its military operations, the peace process stalled, and the UN moved to bring some pressure to bear on the parties to demonstrate their commitment to the negotiations by threatening to suspend them. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali warned that the deteriorating situation obliged him to reconsider whether to continue to prepare for the third round of talks in Islamabad. This warning, together with increased military pressure from the opposition, induced the government to declare some conciliatory measures, including the postponement of the proposed presidential election and referendum to November (UNSG 1994c, 1994d).

The softening of the government's position led the Tajik parties back to the negotiating table at a consultative meeting convened in Tehran on 12–17 September.

Both sides were indeed represented by more senior officials than they were at their previous talks, which was indicative of their renewed commitment to finding a negotiated solution to the conflict; Abdulmajid Dostiev, First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, led the government delegation, while Haji Akbar Turajonzoda, First Deputy Chairman of the Islamic Revival Movement of Tajikistan, headed the opposition team (Zviagelskaya 1998: 166-167). On the last day of the meeting, the parties agreed that the ceasefire was to take effect upon the deployment of UN military observers and last until the day of the referendum and presidential election. An agreement was also reached on the release of political prisoners and prisoners of war, and it was to be implemented within one month (UNSG 1994d). With the arrival of a small group of UN military observers, the ceasefire eventually came into force on 20 October. The achievement of the ceasefire agreement in Tehran appeared to be brought about mainly by concerted pressure from Moscow and Tehran, the two major outside powers involved in the Tajik conflict; Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Chernishev convinced the Tajik government to sign the ceasefire agreement, while Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Vaezi contributed to guiding the opposition into agreement (Hay 2001: 40).

At the third round, held from 20 October to 1 November in Islamabad, the sides managed to extend the ceasefire agreement until February 1995. Bent on strengthening its power and legitimacy, the Dushanbe government was determined to adhere to its unilateral strategy. In the allegedly rigged presidential election on 6 November, Rakhmonov defeated his sole competitor, Abdumalik Abdullajanov, Tajik ambassador to Russia and former prime minister. A new constitution was also adopted as a result of the referendum held on the same day. In mid-December the UN Security Council formally established the UN Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) as a peacekeeping mission, but ceasefire violations continued on both sides (UNSC 1994).

In such a situation, the opening of the next round of talks was delayed, due mainly to objections on the part of the opposition to holding it in Moscow as the sides had agreed (UNSG 1995a). In February 1995, the Dushanbe government proceeded to conduct parliamentary elections without the participation of the opposition, producing a new parliament dominated by the ruling elite. Against a backdrop of renewed military confrontation in early April, and also faced with persuasion by the UN mediators and interested states, the parties finally managed to get around the political quarrel over the venue problem by agreeing to meet for high-level consultations (not for the round of negotiations) in Moscow (UNSG 1995b).

Those consultations convened on 19 April between the government's delegation, headed by First Deputy Prime Minister Mahmadsaid Ubaidulaev, and the opposition's delegation, headed again by Turajonzoda. The week-long meeting produced only modest results; a one-month extension of the ceasefire, an agreement to hold the first meeting

between Rakhmonov and Nuri prior to the fourth round of negotiations, and an agreement to begin those negotiations in late May in Almaty, the capital of Kazakhstan (UNSG 1995b). The Rakhmonov-Nuri summit materialized on 17–19 May in Kabul, convened and facilitated by Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani. 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 (UNSG 1995c).

In this first period of the formula phase, the parties agreed to place the issue of power-sharing on the negotiation agenda, but they failed to confront the heart of the controversy and engage in substantive exchanges in search of a possible formula on it. Rather, they were preoccupied with the achievement and subsequent maintenance of a ceasefire, among other issues.

Stalemated Negotiations: The Second Formula Phase

Starting with the fourth round, the parties came to engage in more substantive and direct negotiations than those of earlier rounds, entering what could be seen as the second period of the formula phase. Indeed, when the conflicting parties met in Almaty from 22 May to 1 June, they began to deal in depth with the key issue of power-sharing in the future system of joint governance. 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 recognize the presidency of Rakhmonov on the condition that he should accept the establishment of such a body (UNSG 1995c). In reaction, and apparently with Russian backing, the government's delegation, represented by Ubaidulaev, showed strong resistance to the opposition's proposal for power-sharing on the grounds of the results of the presidential election, referendum, and parliamentary elections (Jonson 1998: 19). Still, facilitated by the UN envoy Piriz-Ballon and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, among others, the Tajik parties managed to produce a set of piecemeal agreements on lesser issues, such as the exchange of detainees and prisoners of war (UNSG 1995c).

While their delegates were making slow progress on the central issue of power-sharing, the Tajik president and the UTO Chief stepped in again during the summer to produce some tangible agreements. In mid-July, a meeting was held in Tehran for their

second direct talks. Rakhmonov and Nuri agreed to create a consultative forum of the peoples of Tajikistan, where Tajikistanis from all factions would convene and deliberate on a host of problems facing the country, and to let their negotiators carve out the specifics of such a forum at the subsequent round of talks. To all appearances, this forum fell short of the kind of a power-sharing body the opposition had pressed for—that is, a transitional coalition government—but it was contemplated as a possible mechanism to promote national reconciliation. Later in August, the two leaders produced an outline agreement that adumbrated a final settlement and provided guidelines for future talks, leaving aside the thorny problem of power-sharing. This agreement came in the form of the Protocol on the Fundamental Principles for Establishing Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan, which was largely envisioned by the UN mediation team. Piriz-Ballon shuttled between Rakhmonov in Dushanbe and Nuri in Kabul, and helped them sign the protocol separately at their respective locations. It was also agreed that the ceasefire would be extended for another six months and that the modality of inter-Tajik negotiations would be changed to that of a continuous round, which was scheduled to start in mid-September (UNSG 1995d).

The opening of the fifth continuous round (composed of three phases) was delayed by the opposition's objection to Ashgabat as a venue, but it was eventually dropped through the good offices of UN mediators (UNSG 1995d, 1995e). When the parties convened in the capital of Turkmenistan at the end of November, and tried to edge toward substantive negotiations on a new political dispensation, the military confrontation sharply escalated. They barely sustained the political dialogue and discussed the key issue of power-sharing only to reconfirm that there existed wide differences between their positions. The government now proposed to set up a consultative forum of the peoples of Tajikistan in consonance with the summit-level agreement in Tehran in July. But the proposal encountered flat rejection from the opposition, which viewed the forum—consultative and consensus-based—as powerless, and thus useless. Instead, the opposition proposed to create a council of national reconciliation with transitional but real powers in legislative and executive realms, generally in line with its earlier proposal tabled at the Almaty talks. However, the government rejected the idea once again on the grounds that the formation of such a body would be unconstitutional and likely to destabilize the country (Jonson 1998: 20; UNSG 1996a). Thus, the first phase of the Ashgabat round came to naught, ending on 22 December with fresh demands from the opposition raising the hackles of the government. Turajonzoda threatened not to return to the negotiating table for the second phase, demanding that CIS leaders clearly define their position on Tajikistan at their upcoming summit in mid-January, and also that the CIS peacekeeping forces confirm their neutrality (UNSG 1996a; Jonson 1998: 11).

In the course of the second formula phase, the parties deliberated on the formula in greater depth but reached a deadlock. They never even went so far as to reciprocate compromises that would construct an agreeable, workable formula. Instead, they were toying with a weaker, obscure notion of power sharing in the form of a consultative forum. In this situation, the parties barely managed to agree on the overall framework for settlement and its basic principles.

Spurred Negotiations: The Third Formula Phase

The turn of the year saw a major shift in Russia's policy toward Tajikistan, which in turn brought the Tajik parties into the third period of the formula phase, characterized by crises and breakthroughs. In deference to the Tajik opposition's demand, Russia allowed the Tajik conflict to be placed high on the agenda at the CIS summit meeting, held in Moscow on 19 January 1996. Annoyed with the sluggish pace of inter-Tajik talks, Russia, in conjunction with Central Asian states, moved to exert strong pressure on Rakhmonov to negotiate seriously with the opposition and settle the conflict (Panfilov 1996). The CIS's joint action at the Moscow summit largely satisfied the Tajik opposition's conditions for continuing negotiations, and the second phase of the continuous round took place from 26 January to 18 February. 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 the opposition and also from within its own camp (Bulavinov 1996). In the midst of this crisis, Yevgeny Primakov, in his new capacity as Russian foreign minister, visited Dushanbe to underscore Russian interest in stabilizing the situation in the country (Konstantinova 1996).

The outside pressure and the domestic instability led the Tajik government to adopt a conciliatory stance at the negotiating table. Replacing Ubaidulaev as the chief government negotiator, Foreign Minister Talbak Nazarov 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. The opposition side gave consent to the proposal but eventually retracted it, heartened by some military successes. Thus, the session actually convened in early March without the participation of the opposition leaders, reducing a potential milestone in the Tajik peace process to a mere political ceremony. Also at the second Ashgabat talks, the two sides came close to reaching agreement on the consultative forum of the peoples of Tajikistan, but differences over when it should convene prevented any actual agreement. There the opposition insisted that a council of national reconciliation should be established instead, and that it should precede the

convening of the consultative forum (UNSG 1996a).

During the spring and summer of 1996, military conflict continued to escalate, despite extensions of the ceasefire agreement. Further adding to the deterioration of the situation were demonstrations in the Leninabad region in May that called for improved socio-economic conditions and greater autonomy for the region (Lantsman 1996). In the circumstances, the parties needed to devote much attention to finding ways to restore an effective ceasefire in the third phase of the Ashgabat talks in July. Although the parties extended the ceasefire again, this time until the end of 1996, and the UN stepped up its efforts at monitoring its implementation in central Tajikistan, the intensity of hostilities between the sides never diminished (UNSG 1996b). Deliberations on fundamental political issues were sustained but met with little progress. Apparently backed by Russia, the government side tabled the idea of a Commission of Reconciliation that would prepare amendments to the Tajik constitution and electoral law. It also proposed the participation of the opposition in government structures and the legalization of all political parties and movements. The opposition, however, rejected the concept of the Commission of Reconciliation, which would be advisory in nature, and thus, in their view, lack substantive power. Nonetheless, the sides agreed to try and arrange a meeting between Rakhmonov and Nuri in Moscow (Velekhov 1996; Jonson 1998: 20-21).

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, calling 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 (Akbarzadeh 2001).

The Taliban’s capture of Kabul at the end of September 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 the mediators. The Tajik parties demonstrated their renewed commitment to accommodation at a preparatory working meeting of experts in Tehran on 9–17 October, where they tried to prepare a draft agreement for signature by Rakhmonov and Nuri at their Moscow meeting scheduled for mid-October. The parties made remarkable progress in agreeing on the main principles of the formula for settlement, among others, the establishment of a Commission on National Reconciliation (CNR) as an “authoritative body with defined responsibilities and powers”. Unfortunately, the parties failed to complete the draft agreement due to their differences over the exact nature of CNR, which prevented the Rakhmonov-Nuri summit from taking place as scheduled (UNSG 1996c).

As the meeting at the working level ended inconclusively and the momentum was about to dissipate, Rakhmonov and Nuri themselves intervened to take a major step

forward in the negotiation process. At their meeting on 10–11 December in Khusdeh, northern Afghanistan, the two leaders initialed the text of a draft agreement that their delegates had left unfinished in Tehran two months earlier, while pledging to halt ongoing fighting, especially in central Tajikistan (UNSG 1997a). Afghan President Rabbani and his military commander Ahmed Shah Massoud mediated these agreements (Peshkov and Achakhmat 1997: 82-84).

At first it was expected that the Moscow summit would be a relatively smooth process, as the two leaders were to meet on 19 December in order to just sign the document that they had already initialed in Afghanistan. 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, to be chaired by a 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. The negotiations in Moscow, however, turned out to be much more complex. The opposition unexpectedly declared its intention to seek changes to the initialed 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 posed a major obstacle to the ultimate signing of the agreement by Rakhmonov and Nuri, and it actually put the negotiations on the verge of a complete breakdown. However, it was eventually accommodated by drafting a separate protocol outlining the primary functions and powers of the CNR (leaving its composition untouched), keeping the Khusdeh agreement intact. Thus, on 23 December, Rakhmonov and Nuri managed to sign the two agreements: the Khusdeh agreement, which demarcated the overall shape of a final agreement, and the protocol of the CNR, which provided for its core element (UNSG 1997a).

Most importantly, the protocol of 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. 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 CNR would then dissolve after the convening of a new Parliament (Abdullaev and Barnes

2001: 69-70). Indeed, the protocol was the product of mutual compromises by the two sides. The Tajik government finally agreed to accord substantial powers to the CNR, although it had wanted to render that body consultative in nature. From the standpoint of the opposition, the CNR would be granted “certain governmental powers, but fewer than the opposition had sought” (Roslova 1996). The CNR was by no means a transitional coalition government with supreme legislative and executive powers that the opposition had sought for. Indeed, the incumbent government would continue to exist in spite of some inclusion of opposition representatives, and the current parliament would continue to function while sharing some of its legislative powers with the CNR.

Several external actors made a significant contribution to realizing these agreements. Russian diplomats, especially First Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Pastukhov, together with UN Special Representative Gerd Merrem, induced the two sides to make reciprocal concessions in the CNR protocol. Particularly, Pastukhov played an important role in delivering Rakhmonov to agreement. On the other hand, Iranian and Afghan mediators were instrumental in convincing Nuri of the need for compromises at the Moscow summit. Additionally, the Tajik leaders were then faced with an urgent appeal for rapprochement from senior UN officials in New York (Rotar 1996; Peshkov and Achakhmat 1997: 83-84). Thus what made the Tajik parties swallow these critical agreements was combined external pressure—the leverages applied by their close patrons, namely Russia, Iran, and Afghanistan, as well as the UN’s influence arising from its international legitimacy and moral authority.

Thus in the third formula phase, the Tajik parties went through a process of bargaining and compromising for the construction of a power-sharing formula. Despite ups and downs in the process, the parties continued to face the constant need to find a mutually agreeable solution, coming under pressure arising from internal instability and external—particularly Russian—influence.

Path toward Final Agreement: The Detail Phase

With the general formula for a settlement put in place, the time had come to add specifics to it. The detail phase began on 6 January 1997, with the opening of the sixth round of inter-Tajik talks convened in Tehran. However, a major crisis involving the forces of Mahmud Khudoiberdyev, commander of the First Brigade of the Tajik army, soon unfolded in Tursunzade. In an atmosphere of heightened instability at home, the parties met in the Iranian capital to refine the formula of the CNR, more specifically, to settle the sticky issue of how many seats the CNR was to have in total, as well as the percentage split of those seats 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 favor. Moreover, the Tajik government flatly turned down the inclusion of the National Revival Bloc on the CNR, denying the very existence of a "third force" (Rotar 1997). Although the parties were unable to resolve the delicate issue of the composition of the CNR, they agreed on its size—fixed on 27 members, but later reduced by one (UNSG 1997a).

Between 20–21 February, Rakhmonov and Nuri again held direct talks in Mashhad, Iran, in order to overcome major obstacles in the settlement of the conflict. They reached an agreement on the statute of the CNR, with provisions on its composition and structure. The CNR would consist of equivalent numbers of government and UTO representatives, leaving no seats for other Tajik parties. As for the structure, the CNR would establish four sub-commissions relating to political, military, refugee, and legal issues. The two leaders also agreed that the UTO would be included in 30 percent of executive branch posts in the government (UNSG 1997b).

In shifting the negotiation agenda from political coexistence to military integration, the parties took further steps toward each other at the seventh round of inter-Tajik talks, held in Moscow from 26 February to 8 March. They discussed disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of the UTO forces into the government power structures, as well as the reform of those structures. On how to accomplish this, the government side, represented by Nazarov, started with the proposal that armed opposition units should first lay down their arms, disband and then merge into the country's regular armed forces in small groups of about 5 to 15 men. In contrast, the opposition's proposal, presented by Turajonzoda, suggested that opposition fighters should initially join the government's power structures unit by unit, retaining battalion and company divisions, and be stationed separately but under a single command. Although the formation of a unified national army turned out to be a complex item on the agenda, as is often the case with negotiations to end internal conflict, the sides eventually managed to reach an agreement with the help of UN and Russian mediators. Under the Protocol on Military Issues, the reintegration of UTO armed forces was to be a gradual process, consisting of four stages: disarmament at the designated assembly points (first stage); incorporation into the country's regular armed forces as separate units and being subordinated to corresponding chains of command, as well as the public announcement of disbandment by the UTO leadership (second stage); suitability screening for individual members of the UTO armed units by the newly-created Joint Review Board (third stage); and the complete merger (fourth stage) (Abdullaev and Barnes 2001: 73-74).

The eighth and final round of talks was opened in Tehran on 9 April, as Russia

and Central Asian neighbors pressed harder for rapid termination of the conflict in Tajikistan, increasingly concerned over the prospect of the Taliban's renewed spring offensive in Afghanistan. The talks became stalled, however, over a particular disagreement between the sides on the timing of lifting the ban on opposition parties, and were suspended shortly after. Here the impasse was again resolved at Rakhmonov and Nuri's face-to-face meeting. On 16–18 May in Kyrgyzstan, they succeeded in drawing up the Protocol on Political Issues, which settled the question of legalizing UTO parties and movements, and liberalizing mass media by linking them to the implementation of the military protocol. The government's negotiating position was that the legalization of the opposition parties would come only after the disarmament of UTO military forces, which was rejected by the opposition side. Not surprisingly, the government wanted to make the adversary powerless militarily before allowing it to become a legitimate contestant politically. The opposition, on the other hand, sought to make sure that it would be a viable participant in normal politics when giving up its military means of struggle. The compromise reached by the two leaders was that the government would lift the restrictions on the opposition parties and media following the implementation of the second phase of the military protocol, and that they would operate within the country's constitutional and legal framework. On that occasion, Rakhmonov and Nuri also announced the Bishkek Memorandum, spelling out that the strength of UTO personnel to be stationed in Dushanbe to protect opposition CNR members would be 460 armed units and 40 guards (UNSG 1997c).

These top-level agreements allowed the eighth round of talks to resume several days later. There the parties signed the Protocol on the Guarantees, which provided for the roles of the UN and observer countries in monitoring and enforcing the implementation of all the agreements achieved thus far (UNSG 1997c). Although the parties agreed on the arrangements for political guarantees, they differed over ways to buttress their agreements in military terms. The opposition side insisted that the protocol should provide for the withdrawal of the CIS peacekeeping forces and their replacement by UN peacekeeping forces, to be composed of contingents from the observer countries, not least Iran and Pakistan. But the government's delegation flatly rejected these proposals on the grounds that the issue of the CIS peacekeeping forces fell outside the jurisdiction of negotiators at the inter-Tajik talks (BBC 1997). Thus the presence of the CIS peacekeeping forces was to remain as a major vehicle for ensuring the military stability necessary for the implementation of the agreements.

Thus the parties completed the detail phase of the negotiations, carving out the specifics of the power-sharing formula (such as numbers, percentages, timing and procedures), solidifying the formula with supplementary agreements on military aspects, in terms of integration and guarantees.

On 27 June in Moscow, Rakhmonov and Nuri signed the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan. The two leaders signified the negotiated settlement of the Tajik conflict in the presence of Russian President Yeltsin as well as foreign ministers of the observer countries, and Merrem and other representatives of the UN, the OSCE, and the OIC (UNSG 1997d). These outside actors jointly legitimized and endorsed the outcome of inter-Tajik negotiations that had necessitated about three years.

Conclusions: Explaining Process and Outcome

It has been seen so far that the negotiations between the Tajik government and the UTO proceeded through successive stages of diagnostic, formula, and detail phases to bring an end to the conflict. Now it is necessary, in conclusion, to try to answer a major question: why did the negotiation process move along as it did and lead to a successful settlement of the conflict? In seeking the explanation behind the particular negotiated outcome in Tajikistan, it might be possible to posit that the outcome had been adumbrated from the outset; the nature of the conflict largely predetermined power sharing between the parties as a formula for settlement. As discussed at the outset, the Tajik civil war was primarily a struggle among regions over political power and economic resources, not a contest among different ideological camps or ethnic communities. As Dov Lynch (2001) argued, the lack of conflict over future ideas for the state created common ground between the warring parties. Because there were no viable alternatives to the existing state without secessionist options, nor any prospects for a unilateral victory, the parties were encouraged to build on this common ground and settle their conflict through power sharing. At the same time, it took about three years of negotiations—albeit relatively short in view of general intractability of internal conflicts—before the parties came to accept power sharing as the only solution, ultimately agreeing on a specific form power sharing in order to settle the conflict. Thus, any explanation of the success in Tajikistan must provide some answers to the key question of how the parties came to overcome resistance and to fully recognize and exploit such common ground.

The possibility of political settlement on the basis of power sharing between the conflicting parties was contemplated by the parties from the beginning of the formula phase; it was indeed on the agenda of the inter-Tajik negotiations from the very first round in April 1994. However, both sides harbored a strong mutual distrust of one another, and were indeed far from convinced of the desirability and inevitability of power sharing. Backed by Russia, the Rakhmonov government remained bent on annihilating the opposition and continued to resist making substantive compromises on

the issue of power sharing; the UTO retained the hope of replacing the Kulyabi-dominated government, questioning its legitimacy and right to govern. The parties took some steps towards achieving a ceasefire agreement in September 1994, but their basic positions were still of a unilateral nature, and diametrically opposed throughout the first period of the formula phase.

The process of these two one-sided positions being brought together into a formula for a new political dispensation began slowly and tentatively at the fourth round in Almaty. It was still the case, however, that in this second formula phase the two sides continuously presented proposals aimed at advancing their own unilateral positions, without there being any serious effort to bridge the differences between them. The result was a stalemate, but from this, the search for a formula gained momentum, particularly in the third period of the formula phase, beginning in 1996. At that juncture, both parties had certainly begun to perceive the need to seek a way out of the conflict, although they frequently encountered deadlocks and crises at the negotiating table. With each side's winning mentality and commitment worn down, they came to realize that they were in a "mutually hurting stalemate" (Zartman 1989). Both sides had begun to lose confidence in a unilateral, military victory, and slowly realized that there was a need instead for a compromised, political solution. The Rakhmonov regime had never been capable of defeating the UTO outright and was now also faced with rebellious challenges from within. The UTO, on the other hand, was able to achieve some military successes and disturb the regime, but had no strength to replace it (Jonson 1998: 26-27; Lynch 2001: 56-58). The parties' predicament was also compounded by the unsettling effects of the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Under these circumstances, Rakhmonov and Nuri reached an agreement on the CNR, a new body for promoting political coexistence, at the Moscow summit in December 1996. Following this breakthrough, the parties were able to go on to the detail phase, during which they negotiated the details that would implement the formula and eventually conclude the final peace agreement in June 1997.

However, the success of the Tajik negotiations cannot be solely attributed to the policies and actions of the warring parties. Rather, the involvement of mediators, which influenced those internal dynamics at various junctures, was certainly a major contributing factor.³ It was clearly the collaboration between Russia and Iran that served as the driving force behind the progress of the peace process. Capitalizing on a powerful source of leverage, they pressured the Rakhmonov government and the Islamic opposition respectively to make the mutual concessions necessary for settling the conflict. This form of complementary pressure was already evident toward the end of the diagnostic phase, and contributed to bringing both Tajik sides to the negotiating table in

³ Earlier articles by the author (Iji 2001, 2005) have focused on this external dimension of the Tajik peace process.

Moscow in April 1994. The Russian-Iranian joint influence also came to the fore during the first formula phase; it was instrumental in leading them into the ceasefire agreement at the Tehran talks in September 1994. Subsequently, as Russia and Iran became increasingly serious about settling the Tajik conflict with a Taliban regime on the rise in Afghanistan, they strengthened cooperative mediation efforts. In the third formula phase, these two states worked together in leading the Tajik parties into key agreements on power sharing at the December 1996 summit in Moscow. Importantly, such intensification of the joint mediation occurred against a backdrop of a change in Russian policy. Although Moscow was initially intent on consolidating the Rakhmonov regime and eliminating the opposition militarily, it eventually began to seek a political resolution to the conflict after coming to the belief that a quick victory was unlikely, and a continuation of the war would prove very costly for itself. As a result, Russia abandoned its policy aimed at winning the conflict and acted to push Rakhmonov for a settlement. In particular, it was during this critical part of the formula phase that external pressure, combined with the internal ‘hurting stalemate,’ produced the renewed momentum that the Tajik parties needed to reach an agreement on the formula. Additionally, during the detailed phase, similar effects continued to work on the parties in order for them to uphold the established formula.

Although Russia and Iran were at the centre of international mediation efforts, other external actors also helped to bring about the settlement of the conflict. When other observer states hosted negotiations on their territory, they were given an opportunity to take the lead in facilitating them, and to provide additional pressure and good offices to the parties. No less important, the UN mediators played a role in the diagnostic phase, and once formal negotiations got started, they acted as the sponsor and coordinator of the negotiation process, making a significant contribution to ensuring its continuity through the formula and detailed phases. The organization’s international legitimacy and impartiality allowed its representatives to chair the rounds of the negotiations and serve as a line of communication between the conflicting sides, as well as among the observer states. The UN mediation team was also in a position to devise a broad peacemaking strategy and enlist political support for it from other third parties. At times, the UN mediators moved to add to the pressure exerted by state mediators on the Tajik parties (Goryayev 2001).

In sum, the parties to the Tajik conflict muddled through a series of negotiation stages in order to achieve a political settlement, both by virtue of their actions and policies and the influence of the mediators’ involvement. These internal and external dynamics interacted with each other to bring about the negotiated outcome. But it should also be remembered that the outcome of the Tajik negotiations was a modest success. The cause of the conflict—a struggle over power and representation among regions—

made possible a settlement by means of power sharing, but the underlining cause of the conflict has remained to date; the power sharing achieved has proved to be limited and superficial, to the extent that regionalism still prevails in the country as a bar to efforts at consolidating the nation politically, economically, and socially. Therefore, the Tajik case stands not only as a success to emulate in trying to terminate violent civil conflict through negotiation and mediation, but also as a cautionary tale about the limits of such tools of conflict management.

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