

# The Sustained Dialogue Process in Tajikistan: 1993- 2005

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## 1. A Brief Description of the Conflict

The causes of the Tajik conflict were many. Some were rooted in the history of Tajikistan, some in the breakdown of the Soviet Union, some in regional politics, and some in the historical events that led to the establishment of today’s Tajikistan. As Olivier Roy puts it, “Most of the difficulties of present-day Tajikistan are linked to the very

definitions of what is Tajikistan and what is a Tajik.”<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Olivier Roy, *The Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes and Implications*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1993, p.13.

Tajikistan appeared on the map in the mid-1920, along with the other countries of Central Asia, when the Soviets territorially divided Turkestan, which they inherited from the tsars and the Emirates of Bukhara and Kokand. The present Tajik republic was first divided between the Soviet republic of Turkestan (created in 1918) and the People's Republic of Bukhara (1920). Later, it became an autonomous region of the new Republic of Uzbekistan, then an autonomous republic in Uzbekistan (1925), and in 1929, a full Soviet Socialist Republic.

The 1920s division was not fair to Tajikistan. Only a small portion of the total Tajik population lived in the newly established republic, and the Tajiks' two most important intellectual and cultural centers, Bukhara and Samarkand, were placed within the borders of Uzbekistan. Stripping Tajikistan of its cultural centers undermined the formation of a Tajik intelligentsia and deprived it of critical human resources for state building. It also hindered the development of a strong ethnic Tajik identity and strengthened the influence of local and regional affiliations on political loyalties, a phenomenon referred to by the Tajiks as *mahalgerai* (localism).

During the Soviet era, the primary base of power for the regime became the northern district of Khujand. It became the economic powerhouse of Tajikistan, the home of all republican Communist Party first secretaries from 1943 until independence in 1991. In the 1970s, the Communist Party leaders started involving people from the southern conservative district of Kulyab, motivated, quite probably, by a desire to broaden their political base and forge an alliance with the south. The monopoly on political power exercised by the Khujand-Kulyab alliance created much resentment among the intelligentsia of the other regions and led, with the advent of *perestroika* after 1985, to the formation of opposition movements. In 1991, the main opposition national parties included the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, and the nationalist Rastokhez Popular movement. In addition to these local actors, Russia and Uzbekistan played crucial roles in the developing conflict by taking sides with the governing coalition against the opposition.

In February 1990, two weeks prior to Tajikistan's first parliamentary elections, violent riots erupted in the capital Dushanbe, sparked by public anger in response to rumors that large numbers of refugees from the Armenian earthquake were to be rehoused in the capital. Blaming the Rastokhez Popular Movement for instigating the riots, the government banned opposition parties from the upcoming elections. In March 1990, the elections produced a Communist party-dominated parliament. On 9 September 1991, the Tajik Supreme Soviet declared Tajikistan's independence.

Independence generated a struggle for power among the different political factions, eventually escalating into a civil war pitting the pro-Communist governing coalition against a Tajik opposition – fragmented at first, united in late 1993 – including Islamists, democrats, and nationalists. The civil war resulted in thousands of deaths and thousands of refugees who fled their country to neighboring Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Russia. In April 1994, a United Nations mediation effort was launched for the purpose of bringing about a lasting peaceful settlement to the conflict. This mediation effort lasted three years and ended on 27 June 1997 with the signing in Moscow of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan.

The principal mechanism for the implementation of the General Agreement was the Commission on National Reconciliation (CNR). The CNR was established with equal representation from both the government and opposition sides (thirteen members each). The CNR's mandate went into full effect on 15 September 1997, with a working plan prepared by its four sub-commissions which respectively dealt with political, legal, military, and refugee issues. In August 1999, the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) announced that no further opposition military units existed – all had been disarmed and either integrated into existing government units or demobilized. That announcement led the government to lift the ban on opposition parties. A referendum and series of elections were held in 1999 and 2000 resulting in the re-election of President Imomali Rahmonov. Although the election process was not considered fair by many international observers, it was the first multiparty election ever held in Tajikistan, with the Islamic Renaissance Party participating for the first time in the post-Soviet era.

Tajikistan is now in a post-conflict, peace-building period. It is a country still in the making. Lately, the Tajik government has been increasingly tightening its grip on political power through the silencing of political rivals and the closing of independent media outlets. Parliamentary elections were held in February 2005. The president's People's Democratic Party achieved a landslide victory in the parliamentary elections. According to OSCE observers, the elections were not fair and did not meet international standards. Government pressure on opposition leaders and independent media outlets is continuing as Tajikistan looks forward to presidential elections in 2006. Many analysts believe that the ongoing trial of Mahmadrusi Iskandarov --- head of the Tajik Democratic Party and former head of the state gas company, Tojigaz--- is politically motivated for the purpose of eliminating potential presidential rivals in the upcoming elections. In late August 2005, Mukhtar Bokizoda, editor of the opposition newspaper Nerui Sukhan, received a two-year jail sentence for allegedly illegally diverting electricity to keep the newspaper operating. In early 2005, the authorities closed down the independently-operated Kaiho Publishing House for alleged tax evasion. Corruption is widespread at all levels of government. Political and economic power is again viewed to lie in the hands of a small regionally-based elite that hails from the southern district of Kulyab. Close to ninety percent of the population lives in poverty. There is a worry that the combination of poor economic conditions, widespread corruption, and growing feelings of exclusion from the political and economic decision-making processes in the country can provide fuel for new hostilities in Tajikistan especially if the presidential elections, as expected, were to be conducted in a blatantly rigged and unfair manner.

## **2. The Sustained Dialogue Process in Tajikistan: The Inter-Tajik Dialogue**

The Sustained Dialogue Process in Tajikistan was launched in March 1993 with the establishment of the Inter-Tajik Dialogue (ITD), an unofficial intervention to deal with the Tajik conflict<sup>2</sup>. From 1993 to 2005, the Sustained Dialogue Process in Tajikistan

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<sup>2</sup> For a succinct discussion of the official and unofficial interventions in the Tajik conflict, see :

has been involved in the four major phases in Tajikistan's peace-making and peace-building processes. The four phases are:

Phase One: Pre-negotiation (March 1993 – April 1994) ---the sustained dialogue process paved the way for the official negotiation which were started in April 1994

Phase Two: Negotiation/Mediation (May 1994 – June 1997) --- the sustained dialogue process played an unofficial role in undergirding the negotiation of a peace agreement and supporting the official peace-making process

Phase Three: Transitional period (1997 – 2000) --- the sustained dialogue process also played an unofficial role in the transitional period for establishing a process of national reconciliation

Phase Four: Peace-building (2000 – present) --- the sustained dialogue process has been focusing in this phase on promoting and strengthening civil society institutions in Tajikistan

Before elaborating on how the Sustained Dialogue Process has been applied in Tajikistan, I would like to discuss in brief the conceptual underpinnings of Sustained Dialogue namely, its concept of relationship<sup>3</sup>, its 5-stages of interaction<sup>4</sup>, and its theory of change.

## **2a. The Sustained Dialogue Conceptual Framework**

Sustained Dialogue is a process for transforming and building relationships that are essential for peaceful societies and effective communities. Dysfunctional relationships in a society evolve over time due to historical, political, social and

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Randa Slim & Faredun Hodizoda, "Tajikistan: From civil war to peacebuilding" in *Searching for Peace in Central and South Asia*, edited by Monique Mekenkamp, Paul van Tongeren, and Hans van de Veen , Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Harold Saunders, *A Public Peace Process: Sustained Dialogue to Transform Racial and Ethnic Conflicts*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> For an elaborate presentation of the five stages in Sustained Dialogue see Saunders (1999).

economic factors. In some cases, these relationships remain latent and manifest themselves in discord and ineffectiveness and a general state of tension that prevails in the society. In other cases, due to catalytic conditions, both internal and/or external, these dysfunctional relationships emerge in the form of an open conflict that in some cases, might take on a violent form. In both of these scenarios, these relationships must be attended to in order to bring harmony to the society and to establish the grounds for a permanent and sustainable resolution of the conflict.

Following are the three building blocks in the Sustained Dialogue conceptual framework:

### *Relationship*

In the Sustained Dialogue framework, relationship is defined in terms of five components:

- 1) Identity** – the many affiliation groups by which people identify and in whose terms they define themselves. These include gender, marital status as well as nationality, region, religion, confession and professional occupation.
- 2) Interests** – what individuals want and care about, in both a substantive context, such as equal education and higher income, and a psychological context, such as respect and right to determine one's own fate.
- 3) Power** – the capacity of individuals to not only control resources and the actions of others, but also the ability to influence the course of events in their life without material resource. Often, it is about a group's perception of its base and the other's base of power.
- 4) Perceptions/Misperceptions/Stereotypes** – how individuals and groups view one another and what they assume about the other's identity, interests, and base of power.
- 5) Patterns of Interaction** – how individuals and groups interact with one another, whether positively, negatively, or not at all. This covers the history of interactions between them and the current state of affairs.

By probing these components in a sustained dialogue process, individuals in dialogue can change their relationships in ways that generate the capacities and associations needed to design and implement change in their society.

### *Five Stages in a Sustained Dialogue Intervention*

Sustained Dialogue provides an open-ended process for participants who are willing to come together time after time to probe the dynamics underlying their relationships through the analysis of specific issues and concerns facing their society. People initially come together to discuss the problems facing them in their societies and communities. By analyzing these problems and issues, by working together over a sustained period of time, trust begins to develop among participants. This trust enables the sustained dialogue group to start acting together on finding solutions to their problems and by working together, they start working on changing the relationships that have given rise to these problems in the first place.

Sustained Dialogue has a dual agenda:

- a- It focuses on problems and issues of concern to all dialogue participants and to people in their society.
- b- It simultaneously focuses on the relationships that have prevented the resolution of these problems and seeks to change and transform them.

It is our experience that this dual agenda is implemented over a progression of stages often involving citizens outside government. These stages are not rigid. They are mostly intended as an analytical framework to guide moderators and participants in a sustained dialogue process to provide them with a sense of direction and a sense of the milestones they need to have in mind as they move from analysis of problems and issues to designing of solutions to designing action scenarios to implementation of joint action.

#### **Stage I: Deciding to hold dialogue**

In the first stage, initiators of the process decide to invite different groups in the society to a dialogue process. When there are serious disputes or divisions in the society, people might be reluctant to sit down and talk with members from the other groups. Initiators succeed in this stage by identifying a sense of common interests, articulating a strong case as to why dialogue is needed in their community, and helping potential participants understand the uniqueness of sustained dialogue. Stage I begins when initiators agree

that something must be done about issues and relationships in their community and ends when a group of dialogue participants agrees to meet.

### **Stage II: Naming Problems and Mapping Relationships**

When participants come to the table, they begin by listing the major problems facing the community and the relationships that drive them. Often referred to as “dumping”, this exercise identifies the major issues to be analyzed later in the process, and, because it offers participants an opportunity to vent their own personal experiences and frustration with their problems, it is also a major first step in transforming the relationships within the group. This starting point is crucial for moderators because it sets the tone for the rest of the process, establishing the practices by which the dialogue will proceed. By the end of this stage participants will have agreed on major problems for deeper exploration and built a working level of trust to enable them to work together on their collectively formed agenda.

### **Stage III: Analyzing Problems and Relationships**

The third stage begins as participants agree on the major problems that they need to address to improve conditions within the community. With this step, the actual character of the conversation changes as participants begin to talk *with*, rather than *to* each other. Participants take a more analytical approach to the problems they are discussing, trying to identify the dynamics that drive their underlying relationships. Through these conversations participants learn to see their disagreements and disputes through each other’s experiences, creating a broader, more complete view of the dynamics in the community and moving towards agreeing on strategies to address them.

### **Stage IV: Designing Action Scenarios**

The first three stages of Sustained Dialogue focus participants on the challenges they are facing. By exploring the community’s problems and the relationships that drive them, participants gain better insight into these problems and the obstacles they face to solve them. In stage four, participants change their focus to think positively about what they can do together to address these problems successfully. To reach this stage, participants



will have identified the overall problems that need to be overcome. They now need to think concretely about the steps they would need to follow to solve these problems.

### **Stage V: Acting Together**

Once they have designed scenarios, participants turn their focus outward, first determining whether conditions permit enacting the scenario and then how to coordinate efforts to put it into action. How the group will choose to act depends largely on the kinds of scenarios developed and who the participants are at the table. Dialogue groups in the past have chosen to act collectively, by writing memoranda or launching initiatives, and also as individuals, by bringing the knowledge and experience gathered through the process to their respective corners of the society. This range of options is important because, having come this far, participants may have varying levels of comfort with the different steps to be undertaken. Dialogue moderators must be prepared to help participants understand the range of choices they can make. Participant selection at the beginning of the process has an important impact on this stage because the level of influence participants have in the community will determine the level of influence the group's ideas will have beyond the confines of the dialogue group.

### *Theory of Change*

What happens beyond a sustained dialogue intervention? Changing relationships through a sustained dialogue intervention lies at the heart of a wider sustainable change process in the society. According to Sustained Dialogue's theory of change, the following elements are the building blocks in this process:

- I- Establishing spaces where people in conflict come together over a sustained period of time to talk about and resolve their problems. A cumulative agenda is created with questions raised in one meeting providing the agenda for the next. These spaces can over time become important mediating institutions in the society.
- II- Identifying, promoting and training community leaders who are willing and capable of being boundary-spanners in a divided society. In the process of sustained dialogue, these leaders acquire analytical and planning skills and

collaborative working habits that enable them to design, implement and sustain change processes in their communities. These leaders can become over time change agents in their societies and communities. They are the ones who will likely build wide-based coalitions that span the political and social divides in the society.

III- Developing a common body of knowledge, including understanding of each other's experiences, concerns, and interests. This common body of knowledge can provide the basis for a new political narrative in the society that embraces the different perspectives about the conflict.

VI- Acquiring joint capacities to act on problems as a result of short-term successes in designing and implementing joint action during the course of sustained dialogue. As a result of these limited and successful attempts at joint action, participants develop a working level of trust in each other's willingness and capacity to assist in the resolution of these problems. These joint capacities lie at the heart of democratic practices where citizens take an active role in defining and implementing the terms of engagement with their societal problems.

### **3. The Inter-Tajik Dialogue**

#### **3a. From pre-negotiation to peace-making: 1993-2000**

The Inter-Tajik Dialogue, which first met in Moscow in March 1993, was established to provide a forum for pro-government and pro-opposition Tajikistani citizens to come together and discuss the root causes of the Tajik conflict. The objective was then to see whether a group could be formed from within the civil conflict to design a peace process for their own country. The dialogue group involved a core of ten to fifteen citizens of Tajikistan divided between the pro-government and pro-opposition camps. When the dialogue began, the majority of the pro-opposition members were in exile in Moscow. A third-party team that included three Americans and three Russians facilitated the dialogue sessions. The meetings were alternately chaired by the Russian and American co-chairs.

In 1993, there was virtually no communication between the warring parties. The Inter-Tajik Dialogue formed a unique channel of communication across factional lines. During meetings between March and August 1993, participants discussed the origins of the civil war. They concluded in August 1993 by agreeing on the need to start a negotiation between the government and the opposition about creating conditions for the safe return of refugees. When the United Tajik opposition (UTO) was formed in December 1993 in Tehran, two Dialogue participants signed the common platform, and five were named to the steering group of the new opposition coordinating committee formed at the time. In January 1994, opposition participants came to the dialogue with the new UTO platform. Pro-government participants grilled them for over two days. One month later, the government of Tajikistan accepted the UN Secretary General Special Envoy's invitation to join the UN-mediated peace talks. A high-level Tajikistani official later said, "After six meetings of the (Inter-Tajik) Dialogue, it was no longer possible to argue credibly that negotiations between the government and the opposition were impossible." Among the delegates to the first round of UN-mediated official negotiations in Moscow in April 1994, one member of the government team and two members of the UTO team were also participants in the Inter-Tajik Dialogue.

The Inter-Tajik Dialogue continued through the period of official negotiations and then through the three-year transitional period after the 1997 General Agreement and beyond. After the official negotiations started in April 1994, the dialogue participants decided to focus on "designing a political process of national reconciliation for the country." Participants also addressed issues that brought the official negotiations to impasse.

Ideas spelled out in the Dialogue's joint memoranda found their way into the General Agreement on Peace. Dialogue participants, who also took part in the official negotiations, believe the Dialogue discussions of these same ideas preceded those in the official negotiations. In March 1995, the dialogue began deliberating the idea of a "transitional period." The General Agreement adopted that concept to describe the twelve-to-eighteen-month post-agreement phase during which the CNR would try to

implement the provisions of the General Agreement. In May 1996, the Inter-Tajik Dialogue stated in a joint memorandum: “Participants believe that the primary obstacle to peace in Tajikistan is the absence of an adequate understanding on sharing power among the regions, political parties and movements, and nationalities in Tajikistan.” Beginning in the summer of 1995, the dialogue repeatedly recommended the creation of a Consultative Forum for the Peoples of Tajikistan as a mechanism for bringing together different regions and political forces for deliberations on the kind of country they envisioned. Although the forum has never come into being, President Rahmonov and UTO leader Nuri indicated their agreement with the proposal in a 1996 joint memorandum. When the CNR was formed, four dialogue participants were among its members.

At the end of 2000, after twenty-nine meetings, the Inter-Tajik Dialogue was still meeting and had become what we call “a mind at work in the midst of a country making itself.” There can be no doubt that the Inter-Tajik dialogue played a role in the peace-making process in Tajikistan, but determining exactly what that role was illustrates one of the continuing problems in assessing the impact of unofficial dialogue interventions. In complex and dynamic political situations such as the one that prevailed at the time in Tajikistan, it is almost impossible to identify precisely which of the many inputs bears most responsibility for change on the ground. One of the lessons learned from the Tajikistan peace process, observes Gerd Merrem, former UN Secretary General Special Envoy to Tajikistan and the official mediator in official talks, is that “in a two-track approach, an NGO-facilitated dialogue between Tajiks on existing political and socio-economic antagonisms enabled those personalities within the polarized conflict to look beyond what separates them. This exercise, facilitated by a former US official with skill and perseverance, has clearly facilitated compromise at the negotiation table.”<sup>5</sup>

### **3b. Reconciliation and Peace-building: 2000-**

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<sup>5</sup> Gerd Merrem, “The Tajikistan Peace Process: UN Achievements to Date and Challenges Ahead,” unpublished document, March 1999, p. 14.

When the transition period to implement the peace agreement formally ended in February 2000 with the completion of a series of elections in Tajikistan, the Inter-Tajik dialogue members formed the Public Committee for the Promotion of Democratic Processes (known as the Public Committee). The Public Committee was formally registered in March 2000 as a non-governmental organization and opened its offices in the capital, Dushanbe.

The formation of the Public Committee marked a transition point in the Sustained Dialogue Process. It moved it from being an outsider-controlled dialogue initiative to an insider-owned change process that aims at strengthening the public involvement in Tajikistan's political and social life and shoring up an emerging peace constituency in the country. It also promoted the design of a strategy for the purpose of widening and deepening the impact of the sustained dialogue process beyond the circle of 10-15 influential citizens who formed the core of the dialogue group.

In June 2000, the Public Committee launched a four-track civic initiative in Tajikistan. The four tracks are:

- Track One: Establish a network of regional dialogues inside Tajikistan building on the Public Committee's experience with the Inter-Tajik Dialogue. The regional dialogues involve close to 20 local community leaders in each of 7 regions of Tajikistan who meet on a regular basis to discuss conflicting issues in the society such as the relationship between state, society and religion in Tajikistan.
- Track Two: A training program in collaboration with the Ministry of Education of Tajikistan for the purpose of designing an undergraduate university curriculum and completing a textbook in the field of conflict resolution and peace-building. This includes training a cadre of 24 Tajikistani professors from 8 universities to teach this field of study. The first Tajik-Western textbook in conflict resolution and peace-building is now under preparation.
- Track Three: Establish a network of regional economic development committees targeting communities that have suffered the most during the civil war and which have exhibited strong ethnic divisions in their midst. These committees bring a

- core group of community leaders to engage in a dialogue process aimed at identifying local development needs and designing and implementing a community-wide economic development strategy.
- Track Four: Launch a national Tajikistani Issues Forums Network, whose objective is to promote the practice of deliberative talk and discussions of public issues of concern to Tajikistan's citizens.

The four tracks are in different stages of implementation. Track Four was launched in 2001 and succeeded in establishing a very lively network of issues forums around the country. Over a two-year period, these forums provided spaces for local people to engage in public discussions of problems such as poverty, unemployment, the country's educational system. Out of these discussions, a series of small initiatives were launched in some communities mostly having to do with repair and improvement of local schools or in creating job opportunities for young women in some districts. All these initiatives were locally funded by either private individuals or by the community at large. This track was suspended in 2003 due to lack of funding.

Work in the other three tracks is ongoing. The regional dialogue track has succeeded in establishing 7 regional dialogue groups that meet once every month to discuss issues that might present a threat to the sustainability of the peace process. So far, they have focused on a hot and divisive issue in Tajikistan namely, the new relationship to be established between the state, the society and the religious institutions/elements in Tajikistan. Some of these dialogue groups have engaged in some conflict resolution efforts at the local and regional level and have so far played some role in generating ideas for solutions that in some cases were implemented by local authorities. Most importantly, they have in my opinion succeeded in identifying the basic elements of a common ground around which official policy on this controversial subject can be shaped.

The educational track is completing its planned activities. The curriculum has been adopted by the Ministry of Education and will be introduced in all Tajikistani state universities. Five regional resource centers in conflict resolution and peace-building will

be established at 5 regional universities. These resource centers will house a small library of books and documents in the field of conflict studies and peace-building. The major purpose of this track is to introduce Tajikistan's university generation to new concepts about conflict and conflict analysis, about peace-building and reconciliation, and to teach them skills in negotiation and mediation. One way by which this project sought to do that is through the study of Tajikistan's local traditions of conflict resolution and peace-building. This rich Tajik history must be celebrated and resurrected in the public mind as a means to enhance the culture of peace and spirit of tolerance which are the hallmarks of the Tajik way of life.

The economic development committee project has succeeded in establishing 10 such committees in all four major provinces of Tajikistan and have so far had modest success in implementing small scale economic projects mostly in microfinance, greenhouse building and the establishment of Tajikistan's first for-profit private garbage collection initiative.

#### **4. Reflections on the Sustained Dialogue Process**

##### **4a. Limitations**

The Sustained Dialogue Process is in its first stages heavily driven by the moderators. Without skilled moderators who really grasp the concept of relationship and can use it as a diagnostic framework in guiding the group through its deliberations, this process would not achieve the results it seeks to have. The issue of how best and how quick we can train moderators of sustained dialogue is something we are grappling with ourselves. The training program we have developed at the International Institute for Sustained Dialogue (IISD) is an iterative, experiential process which requires that trainees start their own sustained dialogue initiatives and the training is customized to assist them in the different stages of the process.

It is time-consuming and would require a long-term commitment from the participants. Being sustained and being focused on the repair and transforming of relationships, it does require a fairly good amount of time to work. In the absence of an

open conflict when there is no urgent need to deal with the problem(s) at hand, participants might be reluctant to devote the time necessary to make this process work.

This process focuses on people who have an “integrative” mindset i.e. who are already willing to engage with the OTHER because s/he has realized that the problem won't be solved by one party alone and that all concerned parties must collaborate to get things done. Hence, such a process is often criticized for involving and working only with the “converted” which is, in my opinion, a fair criticism. What one hopes from a sustained dialogue process in a situation of open conflict is that it would create a dynamic and momentum that would compel the so-called “rejectionists” or hardliners to engage in for fear of being left out of the process.

Being unofficial in its essence, its impact is limited by the parameters set by the official bodies. For example, a corrupt local government has succeeded in impeding and all-together stopping the work of one of the economic development committees because of the local officials' corrupt practices. This process assumes a fair amount of freedom and integrity in implementing the process as the moderators and participants see fit. In societies with authoritarian and corrupt governments, this freedom is either non-existent or sorely limited.

#### **4b. Strengths**

Being a sustained process, it creates a space, a body of knowledge, skills and capacities which are crucial to any sustainable change process in a society. This space, knowledge, skills and capacities can perform other functions in both peace-building and conflict prevention. A sustained dialogue process can provide an early warning function. Influential members in a country's policy influencing communities can work in a sustained dialogue space on diagnosing emerging political, social and security threats to the peace process and design alternative options for meeting those threats. The dialogue group can also articulate potential policy choices for meeting future threats, and become a disseminator of those ideas in the country's political debate.



For this process to work, it requires an outsider-insider partnership both in the make-up of its moderating team and when implementing actions on the ground. The insiders gain analytical and operational skills and legitimacy vis-à-vis their own group(s) and the outsiders broaden their scope of analysis and expand their experiential base. Furthermore, having a moderator team that involves a number of individuals, each fulfilling distinct yet complementary roles and functions, is a strength because it ensures that the process is never dependent on one particular person and hence subject to his/her weaknesses, and instead relies on the collective skills and experience of a moderator team.

By focusing on the relationship as the main unit of analysis and the focus of transformation and change, this process is not likely to create some short-term palliative solutions but rather to lay the groundwork for a permanent solution to the conflict(s). A focus on the underlying relationships that lie at the heart of the conflict will help in preventing re-emergence of the conflict when conditions on the ground change in the future.

A well-defined concept of relationship and a well-tested 5-stage framework provides the moderator with a diagnostic tool to rely upon in mapping the milestones in the dialogue process that would enable the group to get to joint action. Because the 5-stage framework is quite flexible, this enables the moderator team to respond to realities on the ground as they rapidly evolve in a civil war. In Tajikistan, this included redefining the purpose of the dialogue group as it related to the official mediation effort, and its role in post-conflict peace-building phase when it stopped playing an unofficial mediation role and decided to organize itself into a non-governmental organization.

A sustained dialogue process can be the incubator for a change process in political, socio-economic and cultural fields. The four-track initiative of the Public Committee in Tajikistan attests to the ability of a sustained dialogue group to design and implement action strategies in a variety of domains and involving many stakeholder groups.