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The OSCE Long-Term Mission to Tajikistan

The Conflict

The origins of the conflict in Tajikistan go back to the collapse of the USSR when the Tajiks in 1991 were facing the fateful decision on the future political orientation of their young state. This, along with the transformation of the political and economic system and other structures, gave rise to a vigorous conflict which the participants took to the point of civil war (1992-1993). In the course of the conflict two main parties emerged: the "People's Front" under the current President, Emomali Rakhmonov, and a coalition of representatives of the opposition parties (the "United Tajik Opposition", UTO) dominated by the "Party of Islamic Rebirth" (PIR) which seeks the transformation of Tajikistan into an Islamic state.

However, from the beginning, this clash did not derive its force from differing ideological and political points of view but from the conflict of interest between Tajik *regional elites*. Because of the traditionally pronounced fragmentation of society into regional groups (ethnic, cultural, economic and political), the young state lost, with the fall of the old centralist Soviet structure, its greatest strength - its national facelessness. As long as the central state functioned and the Tajiks were not in a position to seek out their own national profile, this national facelessness helped to ensure that the differences between regions did not predominate. But when the Soviet structures fell apart and lost their authority, that strength - this same national facelessness - was transformed into the country's greatest weakness. The regional elites, immediately following national independence, began to give the state a Tajik face and started competing with one another to see who could shape that face the most: which region would it be? The Kulyab or the Leninabad, Karategin, etc.? This competition, which ultimately turned into civil war, reflected the fundamental defect in the political system of Tajikistan - the lack of consistency between the traditional political power structures and the time-honoured regional identities of the Tajiks.

Initially, the "People's Front" emerged as the military victor at the end of 1992. The leadership of the PIR and, to some extent, the other opposition parties fled into exile in Afghanistan; using it as a base, the UTO had been conducting a war against the government since 1994, infiltrating its "Mujahideen" into Tajikistan.

The OSCE Mission

At the beginning of 1994 during this phase of civil war, the OSCE Mission began work in the capital city of Dushanbe. It moved in on a many-layered domestic social conflict which, although this was scarcely noticed by the Western public, is one of the most vigorous in the OSCE area and has almost everything a "modern" conflict "can offer": a political power struggle, ideological-philosophical controversies, Islamic "fundamentalism", rivalries over economic resources, regional disputes, problems with national minorities, and the intervention of regional powers. Despite the many victims (some estimates run as high as ca. 200,000 dead between 1992 and 1997), a half million refugees, most of whom have fled to neighbouring countries, and massive human rights violations, no external power has considered a military intervention. Thus outside institutions concerned with the conflict such as the OSCE, the UN and international NGOs can focus exclusively on political methods of conflict settlement.

The OSCE Mission mandate requires it to maintain contacts with the regional and political forces in the country and to facilitate dialogue and confidence-building between them. It is to actively promote respect for human rights, support and monitor the observance of OSCE norms and principles, and find ways in which the OSCE can help with the development of legal and democratic political institutions and processes. In addition, the Permanent Council in 1995 gave the Mission the responsibility to monitor the human rights situation of repatriated refugees and assist them with their reintegration into Tajik society. This work is being pursued in close co-operation with the UNHCR. For that purpose the Mission established three branch offices in the south of Tajikistan - in Sharituz, Kurghon-Teppe and Dusti.

When the Mission started work in February 1994 it was the responsibility of the French Central and West Asian expert, Olivier Roy, to give form and substance to its activity. As the result of a fact-finding trip on the Tajik conflict that he had carried out for the CSCE in 1993, Roy concluded that the civil war of 1992 had been "waged on the basis of regionalist rather than ideological division"¹ between hostile camps.

At that time, Roy reached the following conclusions with regard to conflict settlement and the *external* management of it, especially the role of the OSCE: as for national reconciliation, there remains (for external conflict managers) the question of priorities - negotiations with the armed opposition in Afghanistan (i.e. negotiations in an international framework) or activities within the country? Although these two approaches reinforce each other, any approach to the question of national reconciliation, in view of the fact that the conflict is more of a regional than ideological character, should be aimed at enhanced representation of the regions in the central government as well as at

1 Olivier Roy, Report on Tajikistan, CSCE Forum for Security Cooperation, Vienna 1993, p. 6.

the institutions of a state governed in accordance with the rule of law.² Roy recommended that for strategic purposes two lines of conflict management be established: one aimed at diplomatic negotiations with the armed opposition and the countries of the region, the other at political stabilization *within* the country. Although these two lines are mutually supportive, Roy stressed the need to pursue them *independently of each other* because the parties to the conflict would otherwise be frozen into their respective positions and the Tajikistan problem reduced to a matter between *two* ideological groups when in fact it was infinitely more complicated than that.³

The steadily growing intensity of the conflict and the high level of "socialization" that it had experienced between 1993 and 1997 later confirmed the correctness of Roy's recommendations. The most prominent element of Roy's approach was his understanding of the Tajikistan conflict as a *social* conflict, to treat it as such and organize the activity of the Mission accordingly.

For a variety of reasons, however, the OSCE and its Mission never succeeded in establishing the second line of conflict management recommended by Roy, aimed at political stabilization *within* the country. But this is precisely the approach that is urgently needed for constructive transformation of the conflict in Tajikistan. Before we go into the reasons for this, however, a brief overview of the Mission's most important fields of activity is in order.

Activities in the field of human rights had priority. For a long time a prominent part of this was the establishment of the office of an ombudsman as an independent Tajik human rights institution. This office was to be answerable only to the Parliament and all Tajiks were to have free access to it. Underlying this project was a decision of the Permanent Council of the OSCE and a draft law worked out by the Tajik side. There are many reasons an ombudsman would have represented a significant step towards democratization, legal certitude and a relaxation of the political climate in Tajikistan. These include the prevailing atmosphere of legal uncertainty in the country, continuous violations of human rights during the civil war and thereafter, crude offences against elementary principles of press freedom and freedom of opinion, the murder of independent journalists and prominent scientists, forced recruitment military personnel and failure to provide basic care for members of the military and prisoners, and other violations of law on the part of the state which were documented and sharply criticized by international human rights organizations and also by Tajiks themselves. There were Tajiks, up to and including people in the office of the President, who recognized these facts and were interested in setting up the institution of an ombudsman. In co-operation with them and with independent, democratic Tajik jurists, draft laws were worked out. But despite very intensive work by the Mission - especially by its Head of Mission at that time, the Bulgarian diplomat Gancho Ganchev - which was enthusiastically supported by Western embassies, particularly

2 Cf. *ibid.*

3 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 14.

the German Ambassador Alexander Beckmann, the project failed in the face of resistance from hardliners in the office of the President.

The Mission does a great deal of work to promote democratic processes and institutions and to build a system embodying the rule of law. Contacts and joint events with Tajik NGOs are a part of this - with independent associations of judges and attorneys, for example, or women's organizations and university students. In co-operation with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw a number of measures were also carried out jointly with the Ministry of Justice whose Minister is well aware of the country's weaknesses in the area of legal certainty and open to co-operative efforts to overcome them.

It is hard to find adequate words of praise for the activity of the Mission members in the branch offices in southern Tajikistan who, working under difficult conditions, help with the reintegration of civil war refugees who have returned home. The often complicated obstacles that occur (occupied houses, rejections, legal disputes, etc.) have to be reconciled in detailed and difficult dealings with the local authorities frequently enough not without danger.

Of special significance for the OSCE was its role as observer at the so-called inter-Tajik talks between the two parties to the conflict which were conducted under the aegis of the UN from 1994 until 1997. Although the OSCE was "only" an observer, the related contact work required a fair measure of diplomatic skill and co-operation with the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT). The Mission began early to put together ideas for peace consolidation measures to be undertaken in collaboration with UNMOT and the specialized organizations of the UN represented in Tajikistan. It took the lead in the area of "reconciliation and democratization". In addition, the Mission is represented in the international Contact Group to monitor observance of the Moscow agreements.

Of course, these many and varied responsibilities can only be met through intensive contact work at various levels of society and political life, e.g. with the office of the President, the Foreign Ministry and other ministries, social institutions and representatives of science, other international organizations that are represented locally, NGOs and the diplomatic corps.

But let us return now to our reasons for the observation that constructive conflict management in Tajikistan still urgently needs a line of approach aimed at political stabilization *within* the country but that the OSCE and its Mission did not succeed in establishing this approach.

A One-Sided Approach to Settlement

A political-diplomatic conflict settlement between the two warring parties - described here as a "horizontal settlement constant" - was pursued by the United Nations and UNMOT in agreement with the OSCE. There was agree-

ment in and between the two organizations that settlement of the Tajik conflict called for a balance of interest between the political and regional actors of *Tajikistan*. This insight was followed, in the policies and documents of both the UN and the OSCE, by an appeal to the parties to the Tajik conflict to achieve "national reconciliation". Thus national reconciliation can be understood in this context as a political goal of external conflict management whose realization, expansion and stabilization call for the choice of an instrument that will serve that purpose. But there was no clear definition of how national reconciliation was to be understood in concrete terms (political content, possible forms, internal forces on which to focus support) under the conditions prevailing in Tajikistan and of what the appropriate instruments to strive for might be.

Early UN documents make clear that "national reconciliation" was postulated as a fundamental requirement for both internal and external conflict management. The UN and the OSCE understood this to mean the inclusion in the settlement process of the largest possible circle of Tajik political forces. Thus the President of the Security Council (among others) on 23 August 1993 called upon the government and *all* opposition groups to take part in a negotiating process *with the broadest possible participation of all political groups and all regions of the country*, aimed at the goal of national reconciliation. And he called upon the affected parties to respect the fundamental political rights of *all* groups in Tajikistan in order to achieve stable reconciliation.⁴ What emerged from the diplomatic process - which we do not intend to describe in detail here - was, however, just the opposite. The main political instruments chosen for a peaceful settlement of the Tajikistan conflict were: first, the inter-Tajik talks which were set up under the aegis of the UN and under the observation of a number of countries and regional organizations, including the OSCE; second, a Joint Commission of both warring Tajik parties, established to monitor observance of the Agreement on a Temporary Cease-fire that these parties concluded on 17 September 1994 in Teheran and has regularly been breached ever since. The Joint Commission was regarded as the "formal machinery for implementing the Agreement".⁵ Through Security Council Resolution No. 968 of 16 December 1994, UNMOT was bestowed with a mandate to assist the Joint Commission, clarify cease-fire violations, and maintain close contact "with *the* parties to the conflict" (author's emphasis).⁶ The "Government of Tajikistan and *the* Tajik opposition"⁷ (author's emphasis) were thus recognized as *the two sides* in the settlement of the Tajikistan conflict and therefore internationally accepted and legitimized.

4 Cf. United Nations, Department of Public Information, The United Nations and the Situation in Tajikistan, Reference Paper, New York, March 1995.

5 Ibid.

6 Cf. Resolution No. 968 (1994) of 16 December 1994, in: United Nations, Department of Public Information, Yearbook of the United Nations 1994, The Hague/Boston/London 1995, pp. 596-597, here: p. 596.

7 Statement By The President of The Security Council, S/PRST/1994/56, of 22 September 1994, in: *ibid.*, p. 594.

The inadmissibly generalized term "opposition" was synonymous with and thus legitimized the UTO which was operating mainly militarily from its base in exile.

There is an obvious discrepancy between the valid goal of national reconciliation on the broadest possible level set by the UN as well as the OSCE and those instruments finally chosen for this job. The result was that in the course of external conflict settlement the range of negotiating partners on the Tajik side was diminished substantially although the UN and OSCE had originally regarded them indispensable for national reconciliation. Moreover, this reduction in opposition parties was institutionalized by the UNMOT mandate.

Because of what he saw and experienced in Tajikistan the author cannot avoid speaking openly about the consequences of the above-described discrepancy. The group of militant politicians from the Party of Islamic Rebirth, originally relatively small, who pursued their political goals in exile - mainly through the use of violence - had succeeded in using the war to achieve international recognition.

The "Socialization" of the Conflict

The reduction described above was also contrary to the development of the conflict itself. In its further course, this conflict, which had been a political confrontation between two groups with isolated crises, spread rapidly "downward" into the broad base of society. The reason for this development was as follows: after their initial military victory, the clan elite of the Kulyab region established themselves at the head of the state. The group of people who took over the state in this way began immediately to secure power to assert their own particular interests. Accordingly, they put their own people in the top positions in the central and regional governments and ensured that the legislation of the young Tajik state as well as its political and economic systems served their interests.

It was at this point, at the latest, that the *content* of the conflict in Tajikistan became more important than a power struggle between *two* actors because in a fundamental way a certain direction had been set for the entire process of transition and state-building. The content of the social transformation process was determined by one regional segment of society and was directed primarily not towards representative democracy but towards a kind of "clan oligarchy".

The Kulyabi policy of outvoting in turn provoked the elites, clans and large families of the other regions. Just like the Kulyabis, they found themselves at the very beginning of a social transformation, and they too began to advocate their own interests in a "robust" fashion. Disputes over the division of state property and privatization, which leading international economic organiza-

tions emphatically wanted to see hastened in order to improve the overall conditions for development of a market economy, added to the strength of their resolve. Along with that there was a mechanism which has characterized the behaviour of elites caught up in the transition process in all CIS countries: the essence of that specifically post-communist understanding of how to assert power under the conditions that prevail during the transition to a market economy lies in seeing the quickest possible (and most irreversible) transfer of political power into property as the key issue. Consequently, political power, too, is viewed as a kind of property which (as is the case with economic property) one tries not to share. Thus the sharing of political power is at the same time automatically perceived and conceived of as sharing of economic power, and vice-versa. The elites in other regions, in their various zones of influence, went over to the practice of securing access to their own economic resources and sources of profit. Rivalry over these resources triggered vigorous disputes between field commanders and others in positions of responsibility at the national, regional, communal and local levels. In these grass roots disputes the use of weapons and violence was almost as widespread as in the war itself.

The OSCE Mission was often a direct witness to these disputes. Ordinary Tajiks as well as communal representatives with complaints over forced occupation of houses or land often turned to the Mission's branch offices for assistance. Women from the Kolkhoz complained about the illegal seizure of land, peasants appealed for assistance against the arbitrary behaviour of field commanders. These people rightly saw such events as a violation of their human rights and not infrequently the OSCE Mission was even able to help them obtain redress. But this was no more than a drop in the ocean and did nothing to solve the conflict. The social processes accompanying changes in the nature of the conflict, brought about by the establishment of the clan oligarchy, led to the growth of the number of actors and parties involved.

For a better understanding of the dynamics underlying the conflict it is important to remember that the more the conflict penetrated society, the weaker the support for the warring sides became. From about summer 1996 on, weariness over the war prevailed in the country along with dissatisfaction with all those who were continuing the war and the armed clashes. This dissatisfaction was directed above all towards the two main actors in the civil war, the government and the UTO.

Under these conditions an "internal opposition" developed which could be seen more or less clearly in all regions. This opposition combined rejection of the Kulyabi centre policy of outvoting other clans with the war-weariness of the population and began to search for a way out of the dead-end street into which confrontation between two warring parties had led the entire society. This in turn resulted in a further aggravation of the sub-conflict between the centre and the regions. Especially in the important northern region of Leninabad, the backbone of the Tajik economy, a "Bloc for National Rebirth" took

form around Abdulmalik Abdullayanov, the former prime minister and rival of Rakhmonov in the presidential election of 1994. This Bloc and people close to it demanded a right of participation in the inter-Tajik talks and for the first time offered alternative ideas as to how this framework could be used to eliminate the fundamental weakness of the Tajikistan political system. Its proposals were also presented to UNMOT and the OSCE Mission.

Thus within a few years the object of the conflict and the actors involved in it - hence the conflict itself - had been "socialized" resulting in a very complicated situation. It proved extraordinarily difficult to deal with this because the effort to do so touched on the underlying causes of the conflict: the fundamental weakness of the political system mentioned above and the competition between the various regional elites. A "formless mass", and "vertical conflict variable" emerged out of this which led into the social depths of the conflict causes and for which international organizations were in the final analysis unable to develop adequate instruments.

The Ends and Means Dilemma

By the middle of 1996 it was obvious that the warring parties in Tajikistan had become isolated. The special representative of the UN Secretary-General and director of UNMOT, Gerd D. Merrem, after only a few months as mediator in the country described the two main actors in the conflict as political minorities: "If the two blocs took part in a fair election they would (...) not even get ten per cent of the votes. Neither President Rakhmonov nor the opposition stand for a national idea with which the people can identify."⁸

For those of us who as members of international organizations - including the OSCE Mission with its political responsibilities - were trying to deal with the conflict, there appeared as a consequence to be a discrepancy between the high degree of "socialization" that the conflict had by this time reached and the very limited social base of the conflict parties with and through whom the conflict was supposed to be settled. At the same time, this made clear that a *discrepancy* had developed *between the ends and means of conflict settlement*. The Mission had come to a fork in the path, a situation that called for conceptual decisions. Should our treatment of the Tajikistan conflict continue to focus on the two *warring actors* as the central parties (and hence our point of contact) and leave them at the centre of both *national and international efforts to settle the conflict*? Or should we try to bridge the discrepancy and aim at substantive arrangements and a group of participants that might open the way to a balance of interests (consensus) between the regional elites? What results could or should international conflict management attain: de-escalation between two warring parties *or* a substantive settlement of the conflict's causes? Was the "or" in this case even permissible? For the purposes of

8 Cf. Neue Zürcher Zeitung of 7/8 December 1996 (editor's translation).

a conceptual approach to the further management of the conflict, could one even make a distinction between de-escalation and a substantive settlement of the conflict's causes? Or did they mutually reinforce each other?

Both the OSCE Mission and UNMOT had recognized the need to aim at such substantive arrangements and a group of participants that might open the way to a balance of interests and consensus between the regional elites. The difficulty, however, lay in expanding the internal social base for conflict management in such a way that it did not interfere with the inter-Tajik talks under UN leadership aimed at ending the civil war. There were certain political tendencies in the UTO that made one suspect that they would have liked to play the OSCE and the UN off against each other and against the government. This too had to be kept constantly in mind while the OSCE was monitoring inter-Tajik talks.

But the UN and the OSCE had themselves worked their way into a contradictory situation. On the one hand the UN, through the talks, tied the actual warring parties into an international diplomatic process and exposed them to the pressure of the Security Council. This was an important controlling factor. On the other, the warring Tajik actors were well aware of the international monopoly position they enjoyed by having the UN as external conflict manager. This position gave them room to manoeuvre. Without the connections provided by the inter-Tajik talks they would under normal (i.e. peaceful) circumstances probably never have had such close contact with world political powers or with economic and financial organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank. The clan oligarchy, in particular, discovered in the inter-Tajik talks a kind of "reversible pressure potential" vis-à-vis international organizations, which played into the hands of their quest for monopoly power. This nourished their self-confidence and gave them the strength to turn aside every effort by a second or third international organization even to raise the subject of expanding the domestic social base of conflict management (working concepts: "national reconciliation" or "consensus of the elites").

The result was that, given the currently established external approach with its own range of instruments, the latitude for introducing another line of conflict management with the objective of reaching a "consensus of the elites" had become extraordinarily narrow. Every move towards such a supplementary line of management had to be made in such a way that the approach taken by the UN was not interfered with and certainly not called into question, because that would only play into the hands of the "irreconcilables".

Under these difficult conditions the OSCE Mission developed its own specific instruments:

- Round tables as forums for dialogue between representatives of different groups to give these groups the opportunity for an exchange of views.

- A public discussion club serving intellectuals, journalists, politicians and representatives of national minorities as a place to exchange ideas. The Mission took topics like "urgent issues" which the authorities had declared taboo or did not like to have publicly discussed for this purpose. After the July round of the inter-Tajik talks in Ashgabad, Gerd Merrem took the floor - the first UN chief negotiator to do so - and for the first time provided public information on the status of the talks. The Mission gradually drew representatives of the government and parliament into this discussion so that it began to take on characteristics of an informal exchange between the opposition and the government.
- OSCE symposia and seminars were conducted on certain subjects. Particularly noteworthy was the international OSCE symposium on confidence-building in Central Asia in April 1996 where, before a representative forum of OSCE States, representatives of the Tajik opposition took the floor and presented their views to government representatives. ODIHR seminars on the role of the judiciary in a state governed by the rule of law, and simultaneously a seminar by the OSCE Mission on the same subject but applied to regions, put the question of legal certainty at the centre of discussions involving experts and the public.
- An "economic forum" of the OSCE Mission, at several events held in various regions and Dushanbe, raised the issue of the relationship between economic security and conflict settlement in light of the worsening socio-economic conditions in the country. The various forums took pains to give small and medium-sized businesses in different regions the opportunity to contact each other and present their concerns, complaints and demands to representatives of public authorities and the government who were present.
- Together with the Academy of Sciences and the Institute for Strategic Studies at the office of the President of Tajikistan, the OSCE Mission in February and April 1997 organized scientific symposia on the subject of national priorities in the consolidation of peace. Representatives of the "internal opposition" and of the UTO took part in both of these events.⁹

Among the most important political initiatives was the effort to bring representatives of both warring parties and representatives of the other regions, political groups, national minorities, intellectuals, and military people together at a round table in a neutral place. This OSCE initiative was supported by the UN. That it ultimately failed was mainly due to the problem described above of too little latitude: it met with determined resistance from the government. The clan oligarchy felt that its image as the "elected" representative of all Tajiks had been diminished - an image which as a result of the painful power compromise with the UTO was already being stretched to its limits.

9 The materials from these symposia were made available to the public in a joint publication of the OSCE Mission and the Tajik institutions mentioned.

Finally, this initiative was also sacrificed to questions of more priority. At a certain point in the inter-Tajik talks, when the power compromise between the two warring sides began to take shape and they were more or less observing the armistice, it was given up without a murmur. This came about because the one-dimensional political-diplomatic level of operation, while it could not keep pace with the rapid "socialization" of the conflict, did at the same time develop a strong "logic" of its own that after a certain point could only have been avoided by endangering the inter-Tajik talks. That would have been frivolous, however, and so UNMOT exploited both internal and external motives prompting the government and the UTO towards a "power deal" and accompanying them, with great diplomatic skill and the emphatic support of Russia and Iran, all the way to the agreements of Moscow.

Until the very end no successful way was found to overcome the discrepancy between ends and means. In essence, the two leading political organizations, the UN and the OSCE, had blocked each other with this ends-means discrepancy. They were unable to use their own "reversible pressure potential" which lay in the fact that with a concerted expansion of conflict management towards a consensus of the regional elites, carried out with a carefully balanced division of labour, they could have hit the two warring parties on their real Achilles heel - their own internal isolation.

The ends-means dilemma turned out to be a handicap not only for the OSCE, whose "practical cooperation regrettably has remained scarce", - in Merrem's estimate - "while the personal relationship between the two organisations has been excellent",¹⁰ but for all international conflict management in Tajikistan. In the inter-Tajik talks, the UN had succeeded in developing an instrument that, given the relatively clearly defined military opponents - government and UTO - was appropriate for the conflict in its first phase and thus for that "horizontal conflict constant". It was at once important, right and difficult enough to pursue this approach but, with all its complications, it was politically and diplomatically comprehensible and in this sense the UN was able to support the two warring parties consistently on their path to the ultimate power-sharing compromise. However, the international organizations proved unable to develop adequate instruments for dealing with the "vertical variables" of the conflict - i.e. its more profound social causes. Here, the failure to take into account Roy's far-sighted strategic approach had negative consequences. It did not stick in the memory of the OSCE headquarters or in that of the Mission and this was surely not only because of the frequent changes of Heads of Mission (the Mission currently has its fifth Head of Mission, in the fifth year of its existence) but because of an inadequately thought-out division of labour between the OSCE and the UN.

10 Gerd D. Merrem, What Peace is there to Keep? Challenges for UN Peacekeeping in Tajikistan, in: Susanne Baier-Allen, Synergy in Conflict Management, Baden-Baden 1998, p. 57.

Right now the Mission, in co-operation with other international organizations and NGOs, is concentrating its efforts on the work of peace consolidation. This work is based on the results of the inter-Tajik talks - the "General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan" and the "Moscow Declaration".¹¹ They give the Tajiks a *chance* to change the course of their social development in the direction of democracy and the rule of law, restoration of the foundations of their socio-economic life, and national consensus. However, the UN Secretary-General has himself observed that the General Agreement and the separate Protocols "constitute a broad mandate for political change but do not themselves provide a detailed blueprint".¹²

By now the various bodies agreed upon have taken up their work. Making arrangements for the transitional period is turning out to be extraordinarily difficult. There have repeatedly been serious breaches of trust, attacks and even the murder of politicians on both sides. The wounds opened by the civil war have not healed and the obstacles to communications between the regional elites appear not to have been bridged, as can be seen from the continuing disputes with third parties and armed groups.

Conclusions

The author belonged to the OSCE Mission to Tajikistan for over a year and a half, until the summer of 1997. A number of conclusions can be drawn from his experiences there.¹³

- (1) The Tajik civil war was regarded and treated first and foremost as a war between *two* actors rather than a *social* conflict. The internal dynamics of the conflict and its external treatment resemble two pyramids mirroring one another. While the conflict emerged from a confrontation between two political camps with isolated crises and then continued its course in a "downward" direction rapidly gaining social breadth, it was handled for

11 The "General Agreement" is essentially a collation of agreements that the two Tajik sides concluded in the course of their negotiations. Its most important components are separate Protocols dealing with basic principles for the establishment of peace and national accord in Tajikistan, political aspects of an 18-month transitional period leading to new parliamentary elections, the responsibilities and powers of a Commission for National Reconciliation (CNR), military issues, the repatriation of refugees and guarantees for compliance with the "General Agreement".

12 VNSR, S/1997/4, September 1997, p. 5, point 18.

13 Here the author is relying, among other things, on his own investigation "Synergetische Bestandsaufnahme von Konfliktregelungs- und Krisenmanagement-Instrumenten führender internationaler Organisationen im OSZE-Raum am Beispiel des Tadschikistankonflikts" ["Synergetic Stocktaking of the Conflict-Settlement and Crisis-Management Instruments of Leading International Organizations in the OSCE Area, Illustrated by the Example of Tajikistan"], commissioned by the German *Bundestag's* Office of Academic Services in 1998, as well as on a study on the transformation of the political system of Tajikistan commissioned by the *Volkswagen* Foundation.

the most part with only one "single" instrument - the UN's inter-Tajik talks - thus moving in precisely the opposite direction. This way of handling the situation neglected the early perception that the settlement of the conflict required a broad social approach and limited itself instead to dealing in detail with only the two warring parties. The high level of "socialization" that the conflict eventually reached not only changed the conflict situation but altered the requirements for a solution and the participants needed for such a solution. In 1996/1997 these participants were more varied and numerous than at the beginning of the conflict in 1992. Neither the internal nor the external treatment of the conflict managed to find a way to resolve its key issue in the agreements that were finally signed and there was no success in the search for an underlying consensus to overcome the fundamental weakness of the political system as described here. These facts can also be regarded as a fundamental defect in the results of conflict management.

- (2) The "socialization" of the conflict ought to have called for changes, both in substance and in the choice of instruments for conflict management - and in the methods of co-ordination between the international organizations and NGOs. *Instrumentally*, a *dual approach to management* had begun to take form which should have been more closely co-ordinated between the UN and the OSCE but which could have eliminated the ends-means discrepancy and established a line of conflict management *parallel* to the UN's negotiations with the two warring parties, and aimed at building a consensus among the regional elites. In this case, however, the understanding of roles and of division of labour ("one leads, the other supports") displayed by the OSCE and the UN failed in the face of the intensive "socialization of the conflict".
- (3) The course of the Tajikistan conflict shows a direct causal relationship between the evolutionary intensity and the high level of socialization of the conflict, on the one hand, and the transformation of the system - as well as the political and economic approaches to that transformation - on the other. The course of the Tajikistan conflict has made clear that system transformation and the capacity of a society for civil conflict management influence each other. System transformation, combined with that militant and confrontational political approach that won acceptance in the struggle over changing the political system of Tajikistan, created a conflict situation that seems to be more or less immune to external management and yet is unmanageable or only partially manageable even with isolated measures because in such a situation society loses its capacity for social self-regulation and conflict settlement.
- (4) The confusing mixture of social causes and content evidenced in the Tajikistan conflict - in which it is extremely difficult to implement external conflict management - is not specific to Tajikistan. It can be seen, more or less clearly, in almost all countries in transition in the CIS area. It

makes sense, therefore, to draw conclusions for the activity of peace missions in this area. They are as follows: conflict management, in substance and choice of instruments, ought to attach more importance to interpreting and settling ethnic/national, ethnic/regional and/or political/religious conflicts, even limited and local ones, as social conflicts. In the case of social conflicts, this objective requires a *dual approach* from the very beginning in which *one* political-diplomatic line of management concentrates on making peace between the immediate warring parties while, *parallel* to this, *another* line, making use of a broad range of national, international and/or regional organizations and NGOs, devotes itself to a dialogue with other socially relevant actors in order to establish, in the course of conflict management, a broad foundation for mutually acceptable solutions. It is precisely internal social conflicts such as the one in Tajikistan which for their peaceful transformation and the building of a *stable* peace require the broadest possible inclusion of the whole society. This is also of particular importance for conflict prevention.

Existing international and regional organizations already have what is needed for a dual approach of this kind, but it has to be well thought through and undertaken in a co-ordinated fashion. Whether and to what extent this succeeds depends largely on the political and economic circumstances under which external conflict management and conflict prevention are carried out. As the Tajik example has shown it is hard for external conflict managers to keep up with the evolutionary intensity and the high level of "socialization" which internal social conflicts tend to develop under the conditions of transition. They should not be held responsible for this, of course, because transitional processes are not influenced by them but by much more powerful external actors - mainly by Western countries and the leading international financial and economic organizations. The adaptation of policy on this level can only be accomplished by collaboration between states, international and regional organizations and NGOs.

A joint conceptual approach ought to aim at finding a way to introduce and maintain system transformation in an evolutionary and reform-oriented manner so that it can follow a generally peaceful course and ultimately help to bring a superordinate criterion to the fore: namely, maintaining a society's ability to function during the phase of transition.