

# **Part I**

**of Concept Paper on tolerance enhancing  
measures in rural Tajikistan  
for GTZ:**

Tolerance Building

General Approaches

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# General Approaches to Tolerance Building

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# Tolerance

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Tolerance is a key value of modern Western democracies and features prominently in the political and social discourse of these countries. Needless to say, how much tolerance is good and whom to tolerate, is also an issue of heated debate within these societies. However, tolerance is not just a value, but is also believed to play an instrumental role in stabilizing democracies and constructively managing conflicts within democracies. Because of this, the concept of tolerance is of particular relevance for the NGO and development sector and is also of great interest to the social sciences. Through a number of different approaches scientists and practitioners try to understand and support tolerance, both within Western democracies and as part of development and peace building projects in the Third World. After decades of research and practice there is a significant amount of knowledge regarding the nature of tolerance itself and about the various approaches that designed to promote it.

In the following we will first define and describe the term tolerance and then turn to the various approaches used within development and peace building to support its emergence in societies in transition or under special circumstances.

## Chapter I – Describing Tolerance

In general terms tolerance can be defined as **the acceptance of or endurance with views and beliefs other than one's own**. In most empirically observable cases, however, tolerance is not infinite. In social practice tolerance is always situated between the extremes of “anything goes” and “zero tolerance”. Tolerance has its limits, some views and actions are accepted others not. The wider the range of ideas and attitudes that are accepted, the more tolerant a person or a society is. Democratic societies usually draw their limits around ideologies that aim to overthrow the democratic system itself (e.g. certain communist, fascist or religious fundamentalist ideologies) or are harmful to others (e.g. paedophilia). In this sense the concept should also be visualized as centring around a **norm with a core, a periphery and areas falling outside of the boundaries of the norm, i.e. outside of the tolerated range of otherness** (compare [scheme I](#)). With regard to the origin of tolerance norms one can usually identify key persons such as religious, political or cultural opinion leaders, institutions etc. as playing a crucial role in defining and interpreting the boundaries, range and specific features of the norm. While these persons or institutions might play an important role the setting and

interpretation of tolerance values there is nevertheless a diffuse and hardly controllable interaction between opinion leaders (persons or institutions) and the wider public: some norms and interpretations are accepted, others are not.

With regard to the usage of the term “tolerance”, at least two specific sets of meanings need to be clearly differentiated.

- (1) Tolerance can refer to a general phenomenon of human societies to organize life and to manage conflicts. In this sense its specific nature and content can vary widely and is more of an analytic tool. The way tolerance is institutionalised, normatively embedded and limited in a given society is then closely related to what is frequently called the social capital of society. The idea of social capital on community level is usually used to refer to the quality and quantity of a communities civic ("micro") and political ("macro") assets (see [scheme II a](#)). Despite the fact that the term is usually used with positive connotation in particular with regard to more traditional societies that may be rather weakly equipped with other forms of capital (human, physical, financial) it is crucial to notice that social capital, while defining tolerance in society, both sets and limits tolerance levels (for the case of positive feed-back see [scheme II b](#)).<sup>1</sup>
- (2) Another frequent understanding of tolerance refers to a specific social value that has its origins in European Enlightenment. It was understood as a social virtue and was derived from the respect of individual conscience. In its further evolution the concept came to mean a right of the individual to be tolerated and is thus also included in the UN charter as a human right. This specific understanding of tolerance as a human right is also a key value of democratic societies – both in a pragmatic functional as well as in a moral sense. As a relatively recent development also an active interpretation of tolerance as a specific democratic value has emerged. In this context people do not just passively accept others’ claim for tolerant treatment, but actively seek tolerant attitudes for others. In this context one should also mention the concept of pluralism. Tolerance could be understood as being either the norm that “protects” pluralism or as the expression of modern tolerance ideals.

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<sup>1</sup> Woolcock 1999

## *Tolerance and prejudice*

With regard to the limits and quality of tolerance / intolerance values also the related concepts of stereotyping and prejudice has to be mentioned. There seems to be an intrinsic relation between tolerance values and prejudice against stereotyped others. The precise nature of this connection is, however, more complex than usually suggested. In itself stereotyping is not disruptive. It helps us to control the vast amount of information we are flooded with daily by way of small theories that classify this reality. Without stereotyping and consequent classification we would have to discover and define reality everyday over and over again – a clearly impossible task.

Prejudices, the ugly side of stereotyping, might, however, be more problematic. Prejudices are usually understood to be stereotypes that are resistant to change when confronted with contrary information. They have an interesting dual, emotional but also functional-rational aspect that becomes apparent when looking at a key corollary of prejudice: discrimination. By labelling a group as dirty, unreliable, morally questionable, etc. its exclusion from certain services, benefits or entitlements can be justified. Embracing prejudices can thus be rationally profitable at least for some members of a group holding prejudices against another group. A further aspect of prejudice relates to in-group cohesion. By holding prejudices against a certain group or class of people social contacts with them are stigmatised and limited and in-group values strengthened. In this sense prejudices do not necessarily lead to open conflict – but potentially even

### **The issue of prejudice and informational-isolates in the region**

#### *The problem*

The retreat of social groups – let it be religious sects, ethnic minorities or socio-professional groups – to isolated islands of self-information is often a reaction to perceived exclusion and discrimination. Since exchange of information with mainstream society is strictly limited such communities may go unnoticed for quite some time and may even not ever develop into a larger problem from the point of view of society at large. The risk is, however, that radicalisation and development of the organisational potential of violent strategies of protest or acquisition of resources also go unnoticed aside from social control.

In a previous study we have made this case for the Azerbaijani settlements in Georgia (Koehler 2002). In Central Asia, the emergence of the IMU, still existing splinter groups of armed Mujahedis in Rasht valley or religious counter-cultures in Uzbekistan may also be cases in point.

Another related issue are informational watersheds between social groups inside the community. Access to social capital and control of local knowledge is unevenly distributed between the sexes and generation. This is not to say that the most privileged group – older men – have total control. Also they are excluded from the specific local knowledge of women and young men while the knowledge of the first is traditionally more relevant. Civil war temporarily empowered ways of knowing of the younger male generation.

#### *Measures*

In Tajikistan “cultural” differences between sexes, generations and regions may be more significant than between ethnic groups. What follows is

- Gender and generation specific approaches to development projects in general and to tolerance building activities in particular need to be developed;
- Structured meeting points, flow of information, access to resources, and development of common interests needs to take also the non-religious and non-ethnic watersheds of knowing into account

to self-discrimination and self-exclusion. If taken to the extreme social units may effectively insulate themselves against outside informational inputs that might question their assumptions, while still physically living in society at large. With regard to terrorist networks leading seemingly integrated lives for years in target-societies Georg Elwert called this phenomenon informational isolates (Elwert 2001a).

Finally, prejudices can easily become self-fulfilling prophecies, for instance by leading to the rational (in this sense: reality-based) stereotype that “they don’t like us, they are threatening to us”, which in of course leads to hostile or defensive postures towards the threatening “Other”. The role of prejudice and how to deal with it is a main focus of the debate on tolerance promotion and will be discussed later.

### *Why to promote tolerance?*

The next set of questions relates to the function or the value of supporting tolerance in a society. There are at least three powerful reasons for this:

- (1) Tolerance is a moral value; trying to prevent the stoning of women accused of adultery or reducing discrimination against untouchables in India or gipsies in Romania, fighting the exclusion of women from education and other spheres of life in Afghanistan does not necessarily and directly improve the general stability of a country. It is nevertheless important. Promoting tolerance is thus an aim in itself.
- (2) Tolerance can be an efficient tool of conflict management.
- (3) Tolerance is a central and thus instrumental value of modern democracies.

The last two items need further elaboration, which leads us to the question of tolerance and conflict management.

### *Tolerance and Conflicts*

Though for most people there seems to be an obvious link between tolerance and constructive or at least not overly destructive conflict management, the connection is not simple. Unfortunately in the literature related terms such as conflict resolution, reconciliation, reducing prejudice, mediation and tolerance are frequently lumped together. Tolerance is, however, neither conflict resolution, nor conflict management or reconciliation, but it can play a crucial role in achieving all these aims.

Tolerance becomes relevant in relation to conflict when considering how to deal with opponents. For a better understanding of the connection between conflict and tolerance a quick look at the main characteristics of group conflict is necessary. Group conflict occurs only under certain conditions: a real or perceived divergence of interests and a virtual homogenisation of groups (if no groups can be constructed group conflict does not occur – it is just a critical situation). For a conflict to turn violent or at least highly disruptive and unregulated, a further condition is usually also necessary: the stigmatisation of the “other”. To sustain violent conflict the groups involved must stay motivated to invest in violence and remain loyal to their leadership. This is achieved foremost by fear of a demonised other and organising coercion against more tolerant group-internal forces.<sup>2</sup> Thus the complex of tolerance-intolerance-prejudice plays an important role in socially disruptive conflict: Stereotyping / prejudices define groups in a situation of a diffuse divergence of interests. A non-acceptance and stigmatisation, i.e. intolerance, of the other group or at least their interests legitimises non-regulated forms of action against them. Tolerance norms, on the contrary, can help diffuse the conflict:

- (1) The most obvious way in which tolerance affects conflicts is by accepting a person’s or a group’s religious, political etc. values and habits as basically legitimate. This entails basically a respect for difference as a positive value or pluralism. In some cases the simple extension of a tolerance norm can solve a conflict in society.
- (2) More often, however, it does not address the root cause of a conflict, the basic underlying divergence of interests, but it acknowledges the basic legitimacy of the opponent and his stake in the conflict (respecting the right of an opponent to regulated contest). Conflict is thus not necessarily solved, but shifted to a zone of regulated contest that is not or at least less harmful to society. Here, tolerance-norms promote negotiated outcomes for conflicting interests. Tolerance in this sense is important to translate uncompromising either-or conflicts into more-or-less conflicts, open for compromise and win-win situations.<sup>3</sup> In Western democracies religious groups might compete with each other for followers and might even try to convert members of another congregation, but they are not allowed to fight other groups with violent

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<sup>2</sup> Zürcher, Koehler, Baev 2002 for the mobilising role of organised fear in conflicts in the Caucasus and Koehler, Zürcher 2003a for the need of sanctioning tolerant members of once own group in order to organised sustainable violence

<sup>3</sup> It was the economist Albert Hirschman who convincingly demonstrated how the ability of (democratic) society to transform uncompromising either-or conflicts into more-or-less conflicts with negotiated and accepted outcomes is in fact the backbone of complex societies (Hirschman 1994).

means or prohibit the exercise of their beliefs. In many cases regulated conflict is even understood to be in the interest of society as a whole, e.g. the democratic competition of parties or market competition.

- (3) In the special case of democracy tolerating an opponent means to respect his right to all forms of democratic participation and contest (as a party, as a voter, as a pressure group, etc.). By extending equal rules of contest to all participants also the legitimacy of the outcome of competition will be enhanced.<sup>4</sup>
- (4) Norms of tolerance define the level of discrimination in a society towards a certain group or category of people. This way tolerance-norms also influence the key issue of access to resources: the more tolerant a society is the more even access to resources will be and the more transparency in accessing and distributing resources will be tolerated by the governing elites.
- (5) Finally, it seems that tolerant individuals feel less threatened by others deviating from their beliefs.

The limits of tolerance are, however, also important in regulating conflict. As has been mentioned, tolerance-norms can be conceptualised as having a core, a periphery and borders. Accepting the breaking of the rules of regulated conflict or ignoring the limits of the tolerance norm itself would erode the wider tolerance norm (threat of revolution rather than innovation or the limited transgression of revolt in scheme I). At this point sanctions have to set in, which can be either informal social sanctions (e.g. stigmatisation of the rule-breaker) or more institutionalised forms of sanctioning involving the police, the judiciary, religious authority etc.. An extreme formulation of dealing with the limits of accepted behaviour is the zero-tolerance strategy.

Thus, while tolerance usually does not solve conflicts, it makes them less threatening and legitimises their less destructive or even constructive regulation (compare [scheme IIb](#)). All-out conflicts and uncontrollable escalation become significantly less probable. This analysis of tolerance as a means of conflict regulation allows us to restate the question, why to promote tolerance in development projects.

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<sup>4</sup> The sociologist Niklas Luhmann observed the fundamental role of due procedures of societal decision-making in legitimising subsequent results and the institutions producing and implementing those results (Luhmann 1983 (1969)).

## Tolerance and Modernization / Democratisation and Rural-Urban Divides

### Issue of urban-rural divide in the region

#### *The problem*

The Soviet Union was widely perceived as a centralised, unified and strictly controlled society. Contrary to this image unplanned and in fact often unlawful pluralist arrangements between official socialist institutions, informal networks and traditional institutions were typical for at least the imperial southern peripheries (Caucasus and Central Asia). This is true in particular for the rather remote mountainous regions. Legal pluralism (at times integrating with the state-order at other times competing), de-facto private property of pastures, forest or other local key-resources, private entrepreneurship by virtue of informal networks with access to kolkhoz-markets and bazaars all over the former Soviet Union and last but not least legal and illegal work-migration despite restrictions on movement (*propiska*) inside the Soviet Union were not uncommon (Koehler 1999). Rural society of the Soviet South was the *terra incognita* for apparatchiks in the centre, western sovietologists and, indeed, most urban dwellers, in particular the so-called intelligentsia, in the SU alike. (Koehler 2000)

Two aspects of rural-urban dissonance are of particular importance in post-soviet Central Asia:

- Social/physical mobility relying on informal social capital for networking, securing interests of family, sometimes the wider community and compensating for formal disadvantages in relation to cities. In Tajikistan in particular, owing to the dynamics of protracted civil war, some rural networks proved particularly successful in taking over power and acquiring resources in the centre.
- There is hardly any knowledge about rural society in urban centres, in particular among intellectual elites, despite the fact that most political leaders ground their power in their (rural) home-provinces. Some of the most pressing problems of Central Asian countries are in fact rooted in rural society.

#### *Approaches*

- Raising social competence among urban elites in dealing with village related issues, in particular among students and young professionals. Work experience with local and International NGOs targeting rural communities could be considered. This idea is currently explored between the AGHP / Central Asian University and MSDSP's CDU.
- Enhancing and structuring chances for rural migrants in cities enabling them to be successful independently of the specific social capital of rural networking and mutual obligations of solidarity (compare MSDSP 2002, November).

Contrary to widely held beliefs, many pre-modern or at least non-democratic societies possess complex and specific values of tolerance in the sense of accepting other opinions and beliefs. However, processes of modernisation and democratisation introduce new challenges and new forms of competition for which traditional systems of tolerance-values and traditional institutions of tolerance were not designed (e.g. the democratic competition for political power, positions in the bureaucracy etc.). The result can be truly explosive: unregulated competition leading to escalation and violent conflict.

Reportedly there existed a long tradition of inter-religious tolerance in places like Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia or Tajikistan that allowed people belonging to different ethno-religious groups to organize their daily lives in a more or less harmonious way free of overt conflict. In addition, many potentially contentious issues, such as the distribution of resources or working places were either not up for competition or were regulated from the outside, i.e. the communist party. The existing values and norms of tolerance were adequate for the situation.

With the collapse of socialism these resources became the subject of competition unregulated by traditional institutions or values of tolerance.

The challenge of modernization and the question of tolerance values in the rural context is even more pronounced and less well understood than in urban areas. There are a number of factors that contribute to the difference. There is an aspect of time lag in picking up new ideas and opportunities in rural areas, since rural areas are further away from global developments than urban areas. Other differences are structural. Rural areas tend to be characterized by face-to-face relations with smaller populations and less diversity to deal with in terms of tolerance. To an extent, especially in weak states, rural areas remain outside of the reach of the state.

There is no simple general conclusion as to how rural areas react to the challenge of modernization and democratisation. A survey conducted in 1997 in Haiti found that people in remote areas of the country were more positive about the post-international intervention political system, the state, and politicians in general, than was the urban population (ADF 1997). This is very probably because the rural population had no exposure to the new structures. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, however, rural areas tend to be more nationalistic and thus less favourable of the post-war multi-ethnic political and social structure.

At the same time rural areas might also offer a chance for conflict resolution and the development of certain tolerance norms. In the words of Rafique Keshavjee (AKTC) “mountain societies are at the same time a powerhouse of diversity while bearing the risk of conflict”.<sup>5</sup> Traditional institutions of dealing with conflict and negotiating and maintaining tolerance within the context of the community are more likely to be intact than in urban surroundings. Some authors like Peter Waldmann even suggest that remote areas in predatory weak states might be better off organizing their own life without the state than with the presence of the state, i.e. that traditional institutions might be quite apt to deal with certain aspects of modernization (Waldmann 2002). While this assessment might be too optimistic, the potential of traditional institutions in dealing with change should be considered.

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<sup>5</sup> Personal conversation on March 6<sup>th</sup> regarding the Mountain Universities of Central Asia programme and the Aga Khan Humanities Programme of the AKTC

However, the introduction of democratic decision-making mechanisms (elections, majority rule) might also upset traditional institutional structures such as the local predominance of a certain prestigious clan. A hierarchic system of tolerance (of live-and-let-live) might thus be challenged. A system particularly prone to this challenge may be highly institutionalised networks of patrons and clients with well-defined mutual responsibilities. Next to kin-relations these networks often serve as the only existing social security system in many weakly institutionalised states in Central Asia and the Caucasus region. This way democratisation can trigger violent conflict. Another potential source of conflict arises when traditional informal and new structures compete for power.

Modernisation, democratisation and globalisation thus introduce new social and political structures and new forms of competition with which old values of tolerance and institutions are not equipped to deal with or even contradict. In this context especially the concept of decentralisation has to be mentioned. According to Donald Fuller the idea of decentralisation has become a development dogma defining it almost as a precondition for democracy (Fuller 2001, 10-12 May). However, given the very real difficulties in providing funding

#### **Issue of informal networks in the region**

##### *The problem*

The social capital that rural communities in Tajikistan make use of in order to counter the organisational shortcomings of the state have ambivalent implications both for individual social mobility and adaptation to new circumstances, just as for democratic and market-economy orientated development in general. Most important assets of social capital in the region are networks of trust and obligations of solidarity, constructed around the extended family (*avlot*), various kinds of neighbourhood (*mahalla*, *guzar*, *kishlak*) and patron-client relationships of different making.

While those relations provide for a certain degree of complexity in socio-economic relations and allow for limited flexibility under conditions of poorly performing or absent state institutions they also put a limit on organisational adaptation and required social mobility (see [scheme IV](#)). Informal networking may at the same time provide for a degree of social security while also corrupting access to or performance of administrative positions. The fact that the dynamics of civil war empowered rural social capital in building central political (originally even more importantly also military) leadership is complicating the matter even further. The prevalence of networking in the highest echelons of power has institutionalised a kind of parallel *raison d'état* that is not necessarily a weak state or a corrupt state but rather a network state existing parallel to the formal (an apparently weakly institutionalised) state structures. (Compare for the Caucasus Koehler 2002)

Differentiated approaches to network-capabilities are therefore needed, regarding both the constructive and restraining aspects of this ambivalent social capital.

#### **Issue of decentralisation in the region**

##### *The problem*

After decades of centralised administration and centrally planned economy there is a significant lack of institutional heritage for effective local self-government in political and financial terms. Leading international agencies have therefore placed the facilitation of decentralisation high on their agenda. The lack of political will among the apparatus and the institutional weakness of the newly found bodies of local self-government are, however, only part of the problem:

- There is a striking structural difference between regions with centrally monopolised resources (cotton as cash-crop, industry, drug trade-roots, raw-materials) and vast regions without any relevant resources;
- Decentralisation of governance without rudimentary local resources to decentralise is like peasants liberation without peasants. Most mountainous regions of Tajikistan will always depend on transfers from the outside – either directly from donor-organisations or eventually from centrally managed redistribution of resources between the regions. The loosening of (even informal) central control over resources in the better-off

for local self-government, decentralisation might even exacerbate conflicts in transitional societies. The question thus arises how to “tame” these new conflicts. Introducing ideas of modern democratic tolerance seems to be an obvious answer, clearly also compatible with the values of the international NGO and GO sector. Reality is, however, more complicated and modern democratic tolerance especially is a highly complex notion. Understanding the factors that influence modern democratic tolerance might offer solutions.

provinces can, on the other hand, lead to a repetition of the breakdown of the Soviet Union on a much smaller scale: unregulated competition very easily translates into violent conflict for political control over the rules of access.

- Post-soviet countries such as Tajikistan, Azerbaijan or Georgia experienced a kind of worst-case decentralisation of statehood: fractionalisation and civil war among competing regional groups. Re-introduction of some semblance of central control – even in the form of parallel network state – has at least initially been greeted as a significant success by society. Decentralisation therefore is a highly politicised issue.

#### Approaches

- From beneath – community development and community unions
- Professionalisation and responsibility of members of administration and local self-government
- Providing resources to distribute for local self-government

### *The Causes of Democratic Tolerance*

Modern sociological literature usually considers three factors as directly determining the level of political tolerance in a population:

- (1) commitment to democratic values
- (2) the perception of threat or insecurity respectively security
- (3) individual psychological characteristics, most aptly described as dogmatism or narrow-mindedness

A number of further factors can be identified as indirectly influencing tolerance, such as education. The effect of education is transmitted through attachment to democratic values. The more educated a person is, the more exposure he / she can be assumed to have had to such values and consequently a stronger commitment to democratic tolerance. The relationship, however, is not straightforward. Intellectual elites are

#### **Issue of education in the region**

##### *The problem*

Education goes both ways in terms of values of tolerance or intolerance. During the break-up of the Soviet Union it was the educated provincial intelligentsia with new access to mass media that radicalised, spread prejudice and played a crucial role on the ideological side of conflict. Tolerant practice that had existed and partly survived after the downfall of the SU, in rural communities, on the other hand did not depend so much on formal education. This was rather local knowledge of best practise of how to deal with conflicts arising inside ones community. It might be a peculiarity of Soviet heritage that official education was weaker in promoting tolerance values than social practice and local knowledge proved to be. The advocacy of tolerance values through official educational institutions would therefore be a rather new

known to have played a significant role in nationalist or fundamentalist mobilization. Their organizational and managerial know-how can in fact become an important factor in contribution to conflict escalation. Whether education leads to heightened tolerance or will become a factor in conflict escalation seems to be connected, among others, to the values associated with education (e.g. democratic, nationalist or religious fundamentalist) or the social and economic situation of these elites (e.g. intense competition for white collar jobs, etc.).

phenomenon. The sharp drop in state-sponsored education particularly in rural areas adds to this problem. Even according to official statistics there are already more mosques than schools built in Tajikistan. Adding to under-funding and declining standard of teaching is the competition to the official school-system by (bribe-free) religious teaching – up until now also on a rather low professional level, a situation that could change with the return of a significant number of religious teachers being trained in countries like Saudi Arabia at time being. The latter would be potentially better equipped in capturing the imagination of a dispossessed young generation.

*Approaches*

- AKHP curricular development and implementation for schools
- Mountain Universities of Central Asia
- Integration of demand for spiritual learning into state-institutions

Finally there are also feedback mechanisms at work between the various factors influencing democratic tolerance. Tolerance is thus not just an instrument of conflict management, but is also enhanced by other institutions of conflict management such as an efficient judiciary or police etc., which in turn are supported by increased tolerance levels. In other words, we can observe here a positive feedback: an institutional “hardware” – controlling risks, perceptions of threat and access to resources – in society enhances tolerance. At the same time, higher levels of tolerance – tolerance being understood as a social value – enhances the functioning of the institutional hardware in the same society (see [scheme IIb](#)).

### *Intolerance and Conflict: the Issue of (Lacking) Development*

For a considerable time it was commonplace to assume that violent conflict and high levels of intercommunal intolerance were directly linked to poverty, low living standards and a lack of development in general.<sup>6</sup> This approach boils down to the assumption that competition for scarce resources and unjust organisation of access to those resources encourages negative stereotypes between competing communities and is likely to trigger violent group conflict at any time. Thus the expectation was that fostering development would also lead to a decrease in tension, negative stereotyping and violent conflict. While this nexus between (good) development practice and decrease of conflict / increase of stability is still the foundation of

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<sup>6</sup> Dependency theory, discussion over the roots of poverty of 60s and 70s

most conflict-sensitive development initiatives<sup>7</sup> the original assumption that poverty causes intercommunal conflict does not pass the test. To date there is a considerable amount of convincing empirical material gathered suggesting that it is usually not the poor and dispossessed that organise group-conflict.<sup>8</sup> Bread revolts have always been the exception and if they occurred violence rarely proved sustainable. Concepts linking development and conflict management in practice have therefore refined their understanding of what kind of lack of development may escalate conflict and what level of society development initiatives should target to reduce this threat.<sup>9</sup>

As has been explained above the relationship between conflict and tolerance is less straightforward than it may seem. The relationship between the particular category of group-conflicts guided by high levels of intolerance and the level of development has yet to be convincingly established. To the best of our knowledge there are no widely accepted and proven general concepts available.

One tentative general observation may be indicated here, though, because it appears to be of some relevance for rural Tajikistan: conflicts influenced by a low level of tolerance require ideology – an imagined collective other reduced to a negative stereotype. As long as local communities are largely concerned with securing the day-to-day existence of their family this kind of ideologised group conflict appears to be unlikely. Conflicts tend rather to be straightforward clashes over limited but crucial resources. Politics and immaterial resources like prestige or honour are of secondary importance. Raising the level of development above the survival mode is bound to change the mode of competition. This may lead to forms of conflict local communities lack the institutional hardware to confront at least in the short run. (see [scheme III](#).)

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<sup>7</sup> Korf, Bauer 2002;

<sup>8</sup> Collier, Hoeffler 2001; for Former Soviet Union Zürcher, Koehler, Baev 2002

<sup>9</sup> E.g. prospect theory, development in reverse rather triggering violence than stable very low level of development; the threat of losing something appears to be more mobilising than the prospect of gaining something (Gosztonyi 1998); targeting grass-root level, community building, civil society or rather concentrating of state-building, good governance

## Chapter II – How to Increase Tolerance

Following the definition and description of the concept of tolerance, we shall now turn to an overview of the main approaches – some academic, others from the practice of social or development – that address the question of how to increase tolerance in a society. Only few of the available methods claim to deal directly with tolerance. Most focus on related subjects, which, however, can have or are believed to have a strong impact also on tolerance levels. Naturally, turning to the details of the pros and cons of the various methodologies one enters a field of heated debate, with opinions and counter-opinions asserting or refuting the efficiency of a certain school of thought.

A decision about which factors to concentrate on in an external project intervention aiming to increase political tolerance has to consider the impact of the three factors on tolerance levels. Assuming that transitional societies significantly differ from stable democracies, we are aware of only one survey that precisely tackles the problem of tolerance and is based on opinion polls conducted in Russia in 1996 and 1998, critical years in a country in political turmoil and economic hardships (Gibson 2002).

All in all Russians scored quite low on levels of political tolerance. Among the main factors influencing the level of tolerance was fear, which had a strong negative impact. Commitment to democratic values had a positive impact on tolerance levels, though it was not strong. However, the author suspects that the weak relationship might be partly due to lacking knowledge concerning the role of tolerance in the functioning of democratic institutions. Interestingly, dogmatism / narrow-mindedness had only small direct impact on tolerance levels. Instead it manifested itself in a relatively strong rejection of democratic values.

Even though Tajikistan is not just a transitional but also a post-conflict state and thus differs from Russia, the findings give us a hint as to where to put the emphasis when trying to support tolerance:

- (1) First and foremost a target of tolerance support should be **reducing the level of threat**. Naturally, this should include *perceptions* of threat as well as *objective* improvement of the degree of security, e.g.
  - supporting the rule of law, strengthening democratic institutions and

- transparency, information and education insofar as information and transparency reduce suspicion and the destructive power of rumour
  - In areas prone to open violent conflict or where violent conflict has taken place various kinds of conflict resolution, conflict prevention and reconciliation projects might also reduce perceived threat from potential opponents and thus raise tolerance levels.
- (2) **Democratic education** might yield important results, though its efficiency in increasing tolerance is not yet well founded. In this sense all kinds of
- dissemination of democratic values including tolerance (e.g. OSCE voter education, OHR public information campaigns in BiH etc.) could be important.
  - Training for representatives of the state closely interacting with the population (persecutors, judges, police, army officers in case of conscription army, local representatives of administration) in order to foster behaviour fit to enhance trust in state structures rather than further deteriorating the often strained relationship.
- (3) Working on personal **dogmatism and narrow-mindedness** does not seem to be the most cost-efficient way of raising tolerance levels. However, in a post-conflict situation dominated by prejudiced rejection of the former opponent this field might have to receive increased attention, i.e.
- Projects emphasising coexistence and interpersonal tolerance
  - Reconciliation projects (see also above)
  - Convincing opinion leaders / gatekeepers of societal norm definitions and interpretations to embrace and communicate tolerance values towards the wider public. Such an approach, however, can only bare fruit if the vested interests of the opinion leaders are not opposed to the tolerance norm (as is the case with political entrepreneurs or even former warlords who owe their careers and social standing to existing intolerance-norms)

In the following section we will describe a number of approaches related to the above outlined factors impacting on general levels of political tolerance. As much as possible we will try to list the various methods following their relevance outlined in the above scheme, though this will not always be possible. Finally, as much as possible, synergies should be used. For example, an income generation project might provide an aspect of reconciliation by bringing hostile groups together and maybe even a gender component, etc.. None of the methods

introduced below promise miracles, but, if well implemented, some have been shown to have a measurable societal impact.

### *Institutions Building*

Institution building (IB) usually refers to both state institutions and some institutions of civil society (NGOs). The private sector (e.g. economy, financial or social services) and informal societal institutions are usually not explicitly dealt with in IB approaches to development. The GTZ as well as several other international Organizations, GOs and NGOs have had extensive exposure to institution building both in the development as well as in the peace-building context. The results are mixed, though it is clear that successful IB programs can have a significant impact with regard to overall security and consequently on tolerance levels. Supporting the performance of the police helps enforce the monopoly of violence, reducing random threats to personal (physical) security. However, attention should be paid to ensure that the new and more efficient institution not be misused as an instrument of oppression or discrimination against minorities or the political opposition. Support of police together with judicial IB strengthens the rule of law, further increasing the predictability of everyday life and enabling official institutional structures to function as institutions of dispute resolution, thus reducing the need for unilateral (violent) self-help.

It is crucial to understand that the basic functioning of the judiciary and the police is also a precondition of the functioning of democratic institutions. The only reason, other than sheer force, for a political party that loses an election to respect the results is the knowledge that the winner will be institutionally limited in taking advantage of its position and that the same position will be up for competition in the next elections.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, and though the methodology is frequently debated, it is possible to build or strengthen institutions from the outside. Today in Haiti it is the internationally built police and the judiciary that receive the highest scores of legitimacy within the political system – a remarkable feat when considering the fact that in the pre-intervention period the police was an instrument of terror in the hands of Duvalier regime. Another example refers to the Somalia intervention. While the intervention was in almost all respects a failure, the Australian component UNOSOM implemented a committed rebuilding of the police and the judiciary. By the end of their mandate violent crime dropped to nearly zero (Ganzglass 1996). Thus

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<sup>10</sup> if this logic is reversed elections most certainly foster violent conflict (Bosnian example, ethnicisation of political contest) → Snyder 2000

under certain circumstances IB can succeed and consequently can have an impact on threat levels. A subsequent positive influence on tolerance should be expected. The above examples referred to IB in the course of massive international interventions. A much less obtrusive and coercive but nevertheless substantial and externally assisted IB-process has and still is taking place on the Central and Eastern European fringes of the EU in the course of EU-extension. If well funded, well executed and provided with substantial incentives for countries to comply, e.g. accession to the Union, IB can be successful.

**Dissemination / Information Campaigns / Media**

Projects of this category can effect both fear perceptions and knowledge about the democratic value of tolerance. In general, information, wrong information, or the lack of information can have profound effects on people’s behaviour. Dealing with information can have several effects. Direct dissemination can inform people about the details and functioning of the political system they live in, about their rights and of course about the value of tolerance in stabilising democratic

<p><b>Examples from the region</b></p> <p><i>The problem</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No reliable and accessible sources of information outside urban centres</li> <li>• No trust in available means of mass information</li> <li>• Rumours instead of pluralist information</li> <li>• No information about official rights and obligations as citizen</li> </ul> <p><i>Approaches</i></p> <p>Often these approaches are not stand alone projects but an aspect of projects targeting institution building or backing existing educational or informational institutions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salam Radio sponsored by UNICEF, SDC</li> <li>• CARE implemented, SDC financed project on the reduction of violence against women in Khatlon</li> <li>• Soap-Opera project / UNESCO</li> </ul>
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systems. The need to disseminate such information might not be self-evident. In transitional and post-conflict societies people are, however, not familiar with these issues. For example, the already quoted survey in Haiti also tested the knowledge of the respondents about the political structures of the country. Paradoxically, the area about which they knew the least was the structure of local government, while the area they were most knowledgeable about pertained to the duties of citizens as specified in the constitution. A lacking knowledge of the state, especially on the local level, constitutes a lack of transparency, which in its turn gives rise to suspicions and insecurity, i.e. to the perception of threat and the resulting intolerance.

Well-conducted information campaigns can be persuasive and can have a significant impact. A well-funded information campaign of the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina contributed considerably to the success of the property repossession program. The issue of returning property that was occupied by displaced persons during and after the

war to owners from another ethnic group was so contentious that international organizations feared to seriously tackle the issue until the year 2000. To the great surprise of most observers and to a large extent as the result of the public information campaign, the repossession process could be implemented with only a minimum of resistance and violence and is now mostly completed. The campaign linked up to structures of moral arguments regarding property and also informed those waiting to repossess as well as those obliged to vacate property about their rights and obligations.

Professionalising the performance of the media is also crucial. In view of rural areas the media of choice will most probably be the radio. Information is absolutely necessary for transparency, but it has to be the right type of information, objectively informing the public about developments, the “other” (i.e. potential opponent) and disseminate information. If the professional performance of the media cannot be attained, it can become a major factor in conflict escalation let alone the rise of intolerance as has been well documented for instance in the former Yugoslavia or Rwanda.

### ***Opinion Leaders / traditional Mechanisms of Conflict Management***

Uncontrolled conflicts threaten people, thus reducing their tolerance. Obviously, solving or at least controlling such conflicts should reduce threat and consequently raise general tolerance levels, which in its turn should contribute to less destructive conflict management. Once again a positive feedback can be expected to set in. Quite often conflicts need not be solved, but require rather an institutionalised mechanism to be put in place that is able to deal with the problem on a regular and day-to-day routine. Failing states and transitional institutions are frequently not capable to offer such services. As an alternative a strategy of reviving or strengthening traditional

#### **Examples from the region**

##### *The problem*

- Absence of influential advocates promoting tolerance and peaceful conflict management
- Weakness of legitimate state institutions controlling and resolving conflicts
- Loss of influence of traditional mediators due to civil war and changing patterns of social control
- Re-invention or revitalisation of councils of mediators in the Caucasus during absence of statehood in the 90s (e.g. Svanetia in Georgia)
- Revitalisation of various kinds of authorities on village level in Tajikistan while their legitimacy and influence remains unclear, in particular after total overstretch of their capacities due to civil war
- Limited scope of influence of rural traditional Institutions (*kishlak*, family works but that's about it)

##### *Approaches*

- Ambassadors of Trust in the Ferghana Valley, SDC sponsored
- Community-leaders to mediators in border villages of Tajikistan and Kirgistan (Isfara/Badken area), SDC sponsored and implemented by local NGOs FTI and Ittifok
- Leninabad OSCE initiative organising 24 meetings with opinion leaders from all sides

institutions of conflict management or lacking such institutions turning to local opinion leaders has also been suggested. Such institutions or persons can be clan leaders, a council of elders, religious leaders, businessmen etc.. In several cultures even the mediation or decision-making of these individuals is highly institutionalised, e.g. in some Asian countries and parts of the Caucasus. In others it has to be revitalized or adapted to current conflict.

While this approach is highly innovative and holds certain promises, there are also some caveats. Frequently in the course of modernisation these traditional institutions have lost prestige and power. Internal war also tends to marginalize traditional authorities as *warlords* emerge without traditional legitimacy as was the case in Somalia, Afghanistan or Tajikistan and Chechnya. Accordingly the new power holders might resist the revitalisation of traditional institutions. In Somalia, for example, UNOSOM had indeed attempted to negotiate regional peace through traditional councils also involving non-traditional, prestigious local personalities such as doctors. Reportedly, elders and other opinion leaders involved in the project offered their full support. Local warlords were initially taken aback by the prestige of the initiative and grudgingly accepted its conclusion only to spoil it later through a surprise attack.

Another potential pitfall concerns the revitalization of traditional structures that might be in outright contradiction to the institutionalisation of democratic arrangements, such as the institutionalised rule of a certain clan or family. The reinstatement of a traditional law that is in contradiction with modern conceptions of human rights (blood feud, revenge killing, witchcraft processes) is, of course, equally problematic. In conclusion, supporting traditional institutions can be very valuable and efficient tool of development and conflict management. However, before embarking on such projects a thorough and critical context analysis is necessary in order not to cement backwardness or playing into the hands of (mostly urban) elites “speaking the development language”, but possibly pursuing aims that are incompatible with the goals of development agencies.

The impact of traditional conflict resolution is interesting to assess. Solving or managing a conflict through such institutional venues already presupposes the existence of some form of tolerance in the sense that opponents accept the right of each other to access this institutional remedy thus at least to a certain extent excluding the “real” material or physical power of the opponents. The experience of managing conflicts through such institutions as well as the fact

that the institutions themselves are a result of some form of tolerance can have a meaningful impact on tolerance values in the societies involved.

**Conflict Resolution / Mediation-Workshops**

Conflict resolution and mediation as developed by the 1960s peace movement and the school of alternative conflict resolution are also frequently suggested to manage conflicts and thus have to be mentioned. As far as we know there is little empirical evidence confirming the efficiency of the methodology solving concrete conflicts. The workshop system, supposed to work through training and / or

<p><b>Examples from the region</b></p> <p><i>The problem</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of tolerance</li> <li>• New problems out of bounds of local regulating mechanisms</li> <li>• Absence of neutral mediators</li> </ul> <p><i>Approaches</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mediation initiatives in border villages of Tajikistan and Kirgistan (Isfara/Badken area), Train Trainers conducted according to principled negotiations method by outside trainer, SDC sponsored and implemented by local NGOs FTI and Ittifok</li> <li>• Berghof initiatives between Georgians and Abkhazians</li> </ul>
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convincing multipliers to settle a certain conflict, did not result in any spectacular breakthroughs either. The culturally strongly western liberal (if not American) representation of the methodology might even dissuade some participants. On the other hand it might also confer some prestige on the method. In general, this specific methodology might not be very efficient. The basic role of the mediator, present in many cultures, can, however, be crucial for settling disputes if there is a will among the parties to come to an agreement.

**Contact Hypothesis**

One of the classic theories concerning the raising of tolerance is the contact hypothesis dating back to the 1950s. It simply states that under the condition of cooperation and equality contact promotes tolerance among people previously holding intolerant attitudes towards one another. The empirical foundation of the contact theory is thorough and widely accepted though there also exists a counterhypothesis claiming that contact of

<p><b>Examples from the region</b></p> <p><i>The problem</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geography limiting regular contact between regions and thereby fostering regionalism, regional identities and limited exchange of "life"-information</li> <li>• Geopolitical setting historically subdividing the Tajikistan of today in zones of very different cultural, economic and political influence</li> <li>• memory of civil war as regionally organised violence</li> </ul> <p><i>Approaches</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GTZ sponsored MSDSP workshop/training for women groups from Kulyab to Garm, two formerly fiercely antagonist regions (Mamadsaidov 2002, November)</li> <li>• SDC sponsored NGO activities between the Batken region in Kyrgystan and Isfara region in Tajikistan (De Martino 2001, 12 December)</li> </ul>
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different lifestyles and attitudes fosters conflict. The exact conditions regarding when one or the other effect prevails is not clear. It is also far from clear whether contact alone can be sufficient to penetrate informational isolates referred to above. Contact is a precondition but no guarantee for an exchange of information.

In a very recent publication (Pettigrew 1998) the contact hypothesis has been modified adding two interesting aspects to the theory also relevant for projects promoting tolerance: one aspect is the observation that it is first and foremost contact that contributes to increasing tolerance towards a previously rejected “other” though some additional conditions might enhance this effect. The other key observation is that prejudices are much more resistant to change than tolerance attitudes, i.e. that people become tolerant towards each other in spite of remaining prejudiced. Field research in areas of ethnic tensions has repeatedly revealed a discrepancy between values and empirically observable behaviour. Especially in post-conflict situations or in situation with only latent tensions hostile and intolerant public values towards an ethnic “other” can go together with much more tolerant and pragmatic attitudes in everyday interaction. Sometimes it is simply a question of time lag between ending a conflict and readjusting one’s “theories” about the other. On other occasions there remains a persistent gap between public performance and pragmatic behaviour, in particular with regard to mutually beneficial interaction requiring operational trust (like trade on the bazaar, engagement in shadow economy, crime). The family, on the contrary, appears to be in general a bastion with limited pragmatic tolerance towards otherness; except for otherness temporarily accepted in the neutralised status as a guest in societies fortified with institutionalised hospitality as in Central Asia and the Caucasus. In any case, structures of tolerant everyday interaction between publicly hostile groups might offer chances for projects supporting

**Examples from the region**

*The problem*

Crosscutting ties are particularly relevant if a) distinct social groups competitively interacting with each other have no reliable access to information about each other (information failure as in the case of feuding groups) and b) the state is not providing a violence-free environment, strictly limiting the risks of competition turning into violent self-help among those groups. These conditions are met in parts of Tajikistan.

- Ignorance of society beyond village / region
- Hardly any information available on other regions; flow of reliable information not supported less guaranteed by the state
- Absence of state as legitimate arbiter, despite the strengthening of its monopoly of violence since 1998

*Approaches*

Traditionally: building contact and alliances between extended families, clans or villages via

- exchange of women / marriage
- activities on and around the bazaar

Soviet Union:

- education (village → urban centres)
- workplace outside family or village network
- work-migration embedded into kin-networks

More recent:

- NGO activity between regions

tolerance.

Though not directly linked to the approach of the contact hypothesis, in this context also the concept of crosscutting ties and organisational linkages should be mentioned. While the contact hypothesis emphasises the healing effect of social contact between antagonistic groups by making people (emotionally) better disposed towards each other, the latter two concepts focus on “diplomatic” channels and common institutions, through which conflicts can be negotiated and joint interests articulated. For instance with regard to communal violence in India, Varshney observes that when Hindus and Muslims are organisationally connected as in Utar Pradesh, the State tends to perform much better. There lower caste parties have become so successful in integrating Hindus and Muslims in so many towns that extremists, even when the Hindu-nationalist BJP rules the state, no longer have the room to initiate bloody riots.

Consciously or not the contact hypothesis has formed the basis several donor funded projects in conflict areas. Income generation projects, social work, reconstruction projects even externally covered loans in such areas are usually preconditioned on bringing together members of hostile groups. The results are frequently positive and the practice should be further supported in connection with raising tolerance. However, the danger has to be pointed out once again that power-holders such as warlords disinclined to reconciliation can easily disrupt such projects. Regarding its target, tolerance projects using the methodology of the contact hypothesis seem to fit into the psychosocial category of narrow-mindedness. Thus, while in a post-conflict society probably a valid target, in other circumstances it might, however, not be cost-efficient – at least if not combined with other targets such as economic recovery.

### *Working with Youth*

Projects targeting youth can have a significant impact in controlling threat levels in society and also offers a possibility to disseminate new values. The connection of youth, especially young men, to threat levels is well established. Young men are the main perpetrators of violent crime in Western societies. However, while violent young men with a police record might be a deviant minority in the West, in several developing countries the structurally lacking opportunities of this age and gender group creates a significant threat to society as a whole: either “just as crime” (e.g. common violence paralysing parts of Georgia every now

and then) or as cheap labour for militant warlord entrepreneurs. Offering economic alternatives through education, supporting constructive activities, and socializing young men in non-violent interaction-attitudes is thus a major contribution to lowering threat-levels in society and stabilizing democratic institutions. The potential and repeatedly observed danger of youth projects is that it might offer organizational infrastructure for youth groups with violent ideologies without being able to resocialise them. Concerning the precise methodology of youth projects there is a major and very heated debate among social workers and related social scientists.

In any case, the youth of a society constitutes a factor that has to be constructively engaged. On the one hand there is a definite positive and innovative potential in youth if offered a chance to fulfil traditional societal goals such as marrying and establishing a family or goals introduced in the course of the modernisation process, e.g. new consumerist status symbols etc.. On the other hand, if the venues for achieving these aspirations are blocked, youth can become a highly destructive force in society. Thus societies as in Central Asia with a demographic structure in which the young are in a majority are in grave danger of violence if constructive channels of activity are not offered to the youth. Mass work migration is certainly no permanent fix. Working with youth thus becomes a major tool of conflict management in the realm of community development.

#### **Examples from the region**

##### *The problem*

In today's Central Asia it makes sense to differentiate between two mainstream categories of young men (those who stay home and those who do not) and three more particular but relevant types of youth (secular west-orientated careerists, spiritual sense-seekers and the counterculture of drug-addicts and petit-criminals). Tensions between those groups are significant, in particular between the spiritualist and materialist representatives of elite-youth circles. While these differences appear to be still "symmetric" (between equals) the gap between the soviet generation of parents and the new elites/countercultures appears to be a semantic break marked by different cultures of knowing (see [scheme V](#)).

Aside from the differences in the general outlook on the world that appear detached from the orientation the generation of parents and grandparents could offer, there is the crucial problem of a very real lack of opportunities for most young men to start and feed a family of their own. Disregarding the very different perspectives of youth today their material situation makes them dependent on the "old-men" networks of patronage accessible through family-ties (compare social capital issue, [scheme II](#), [IV](#)). Possibly, this is today even more of a problem than in soviet times when real alternatives existed in the official system of chances to make a career. Today the extended family – gerontocratic and patriarchal – is paramount to most members of the young generation in order to secure a living. Alternatives are particularly limited in rural areas. Even most work-migration is organised and controlled within kin-networks. Amongst the up to one million work-migrants are many unmarried young men society has sent into controlled labour-exile in order to generate often the only monetary family income.

##### *Approaches*

- Organising structured meeting points for youth, e.g. youth-centres (WV in Kvemo Kartli in Javakheti, OSCE piloting in Khatlon)
- Pedagogically valuable pastime like team-sports
- Practically useful education, including crafts
- Dis-embedding work-migration enabling young work-migrants taking control over the money they earn (compare [scheme IV](#))

## Gender

As must have become obvious in the previous paragraph, conflict and subsequent threat levels have also a clear gender aspect. Whether tolerance values themselves are gendered is not clear though. Comparative statistical evidence suggests that more patriarchal societies are also more prone to engage in international militarised conflict and internal feuding (Otterbein 1994). The leading participation of young men in civil wars is clear, though it might still be hypothesised that they are mere executives. Nevertheless, there might very well be a connection between gender and internal

war, because of which projects supporting equal treatment of women might also have a long-term side effect of making a society more peaceful and more tolerant. The impact is, however, most probably not very strong.

A linear connection between patriarchal values and violence is, however, insufficient. The societal embedding of violence is much more complex and constitutes an interrelated system in which women play a significant role in upkeeping violence. By definition societies with endemic violence are also characterised by lacking physical security and monopoly of violence by the state. Under such circumstances the physical security of the family relies on the violent capabilities of the males of the family unit. Accordingly women's attitude towards violence is highly ambivalent as observed e.g. in Albania by Schwandner-Sievers 1999 or in Georgia by Koehler 1999. On the one hand women seem to have a strong wish to see conflicts peacefully settled. On the other hand, however, there is a strong and rational fear that in the context of effective "lawlessness" such "weakness" would invite others to predate on the family. By using the rhetoric of shame and honour (prestige) towards their men women tended to sustain the culture of violence. Demanding simple value change is under such

### Examples from the region

#### *The problem*

Women in rural Central Asia are excluded from most public places. Girls in many parts of Tajikistan are often taken out of school at an early age and introduced to domestic duties intended to make 'good women' out of them. Given a high rate of male migration, most villages have quite a few households de-facto headed by women. Women in the rural Soviet South were used to shifting between a traditional identity in the family and *hawli* (compound) and a modern one at work. Today, however, women are only permitted a traditional identity insofar as most enterprises of the old economy are defunct. The sharp contradiction between de-facto and traditional de-jure positions (responsible, leading women, men dispossessed of the material potency needed to fulfil their family duties with regard to his dependents) has escalated domestic violence and family conflicts in recent years.

#### *Approaches*

- SDC funded CARE project against domestic violence against women in Khatlon
- Women protection and women empowerment with different implications for short-term escalation of gender related conflicts

circumstances insufficient to address the problem. Violence in such a context is not just a male-centred culture but also the result of a lack of physical security guaranteed by the state.

### *Reconciliation and Truth*

Of special interest in a post-conflict setting is reconciliation and truth about past conflict and atrocities. In a number of post-conflict situations truth commissions or criminal courts have been set up to address this problem of justice. The explicitly posited goal of at least some of the programs was to re-establish trust and tolerance between the previously hostile groups. In spite of these goals and assumptions, an empirical confirmation of efficiency is still outstanding. A recent investigation on the impact of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa was the first to confirm the assumption: truth did indeed contribute to reconciliation and subsequent tolerance among the white and coloured populations of the country – especially if there was additional contact with the other groups. Interestingly, however, truth did not lead to meaningful attitude change among the white Afrikaans or black South African communities, both of which still lack extensive contacts with other groups. In addition, one might hypothesise that at least in the short run, the truth might even exacerbate feelings of mistreatment on the side of the black community as it was mostly they who suffered the brunt of abuse and oppression.

There are also culturally defined ways of dealing with the memory of past conflict. Some cultures are more pragmatic in putting the past behind, developing new ties in the present and concentrating on the future. Such strategies of oblivion can of course have a strong impact on conflict resolution, particularly when contacts between formerly hostile groups are frequent and close. An interesting aspect of such processes is either avoiding the topic altogether when contact occurs or locating guilt outside of the relationship. Returnees in Bosnia or in the Gali region of Abkhazia in Georgia routinely use both strategies. In interethnic contacts sensitive topics are avoided or the guilt is allocated outside: “whatever happened, happened” it was the fault of “politicians” and outside forces in general. Emphasis is put on individual suffering, on the loss of property, family members and hardships. An official aspect of this problem manifests itself in devising new textbooks of history for schools – a project strongly advocated by the international community.<sup>11</sup> Other cultures are less capable of forgetting. Communities with a strong normative notion of collective shame arising from victimisation often limit the rehabilitation of honour to violent revenge. Examples of institutionalised

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<sup>11</sup> → Berghof Centre for Constructive Conflict Management text-book development project in Abkhazia

vendetta in some mountain communities of the Caucasus or the Balkans give ample evidence for such “prison houses of culture”.<sup>12</sup> Another prominent culturally enforced counter-strategy to healing through oblivion is the perpetuation of grievance and trauma over generations, though devoid of the notion of shame and rehabilitation through violent means. The Armenian case is a well-described case in point.<sup>13</sup>

In both examples grievances of the past are kept alive and are nurtured, perpetrating the conflict and making reconciliation extremely difficult.

While there is a strong cultural aspect in what concerns the management of memory, the strategic influence of politics is also paramount in the process. Most cultures are familiar with several strategies of dealing with past injuries: forgiving, forgetting but also keeping the memory alive of past injustices or taking revenge. Obviously, political groups with a vested interest in the status quo of conflict will emphasise the latter. The fact that the way in which the past is dealt with is also the result of strategic decisions of key actors, offer possibilities for external intervention.

Last not least some analysts of post-conflict environments particularly in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union make a strong point according to which the accounts of conflict (or suppression) can only be settled by official recognition and due procedure.<sup>14</sup> Rather than suppressing the memory of injustice endured, voice ought to be given to the victims and their relationship to the perpetrators requires to be settled in an environment devoid of the superiority of the latter. According to this approach only by institutionalising due procedure and dealing with the past can the vicious circle of either perpetuated conflict or perpetuated trauma be overcome.

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<sup>12</sup> Zürcher for Chechnya, Koehler 2000, Schwandner-Sievers for Albania, ... for Montenegro

<sup>13</sup> → Koehler, Zürcher 2003b; Platz 1996

<sup>14</sup> Borneman 1997

### Examples from the region

#### *The problem*

"The Tajik civil war was driven by overlapping antagonisms arising from generational, ideological, regional and inter-communal competition", which "were eventually subsumed into the confrontation between the government and the *United Tajik Opposition*." (Akiner 2001) Many of the underlying fractures within the Tajik state from before the civil war still exist, i.e. drug trafficking, religious militancy and criminal activity remain major threats to stability and this also includes the instable situation in neighbouring Afghanistan. By the end of the war Tajikistan was effectively a failed state and the political system consisted largely of local warlords keeping regionalism very much alive (ICG 2001, December). Atrocities and grievances of the war were not tackled. To the contrary the violent experience was eliminated from public and by virtue of socially backed suppression also from private discourse. Socially embedded strategies of oblivion after violent conflict may be considered a form of healing; the effectiveness and inherent risks are disputed, though.

There are a number of indicators showing that the already very limited approach to reconciliation set up in the peace-agreement – basically limiting itself to arrangements concerning amnesty, power and resource sharing and reintegration of combatants – is gradually being disposed of by the governing elites. There are no ongoing indigenous efforts of reconciliation. This may culminate in new escalation of conflict. Today the potentials for internal war appear even higher than they were before the Tajik civil war.

#### *Approaches*

- Reconciliation commission between government and opposition (defunct)
- Conditions of peace-deal / avoiding the subject of justice and reconciliation and rather focussing on position (resource) sharing and reintegration of combatants being consistently demolished by government
- Strategies of oblivion as healing

## Chapter III. - Recommendations derived from sociological theory for the case of Tajikistan

Any considerations as to what projects should be applied to a special case, must begin with a **brief analyses of the general situation**. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the civil war, Tajikistan is currently a more or less peaceful though thoroughly shattered and traumatized country located in one of the most volatile regions of the world. The post-socialist transition has not offered any significant and tangible benefits to the vast majority of the population. In fact, the entire aim and vision of the transition process is also open and unclear: transition from a socialist economy to where?

Thus, Tajik society is caught up in a **deep crisis**, a **process of rapid transition** with no clear goals and destination, but one that is changing nearly all aspects of life on almost all possible levels in frequently contradictory ways: migration, breakdown of traditional patterns of life with a simultaneous, partly conscious, partly unconscious process of falling back to traditional institutions, changing gender roles, Islamisation, westernisation, modernisation, new modes of economic activity, etc..

No typical conflict patterns can be observed aside of the fact that conflicts in this context tend to be **elite rather than identity-group conflicts**. One of the main reasons for the absence of

group conflict is the weakness of ethnicity as a political and ideological force. With regard to the causes of conflict, they are frequently rooted in resource competition or ideological, political and value incompatibility, e.g. Islamists vs. secular modernisers, etc.. Caution should be applied though as ideological conflict frequently only masks resource competition. The reference to elites as driving forces behind conflicts should not conceal that through their loyal clientelistic networks of followers they implicate much larger segments of the population than the primarily interested groups and have thus proven highly disruptive.

With regard to **conflict “mentality”**, generally one can observe a very pragmatic attitude, which, in theory, should provide for a less destructive conflict management. However, at least among the elites, there is a strong sense of perceiving conflicts in terms of **“winner takes all”**. The problem is not a cultural inability to compromise, but in sticking to the compromise, both in the sense of own actions as well as with regard to beliefs about the actions of a counterpart. This understanding of conflict combined with a weak to non-existent sense of ethnic or societal responsibility can make these conflicts truly threatening and open to escalation. There can be no doubt that the general sense of societal disruption only further exacerbates the situation.

In summary the conflict analysis indicates a society in deep crisis, with a pragmatic but intensely competitive conflict mentality and lacking ethnic identification and societal responsibility beyond family and village. Conflicts are mainly between elite cliques and not between wider societal groups. The latter are only involved in conflicts in their role as clients of elite groups. Introducing local self-government or even non-governmental self-management on the wrong level and without careful preparation could thus introduce a new bone of contention and thus a new and highly explosive competition in a context where the winner is expected “to take all”.

### ***What can be done?***

Indeed, promoting institutionalised tolerance could be of significant benefit in the new context of local self-management. However, **the gravity of the crisis** in Central Asia in general and in Tajikistan in particular **must dampen expectations**: there is no quick fix and only modest improvements can be hoped for.

Keeping in mind (a) the three main causes of political intolerance – i.e. democratic values, perception of threat and “narrow-mindedness” – and (b) the above sketch of conflict analysis the following preliminary recommendations can be made:

### **General Remarks**

- (1) A **general strategy** is required!
- (2) **The problem should be addressed on all levels**, i.e. national, regional and local through various complementary approaches
- (3) **Synergies** with already running projects should be actively sought out by feeding, if possible, direct or indirect tolerance promotion activities into already ongoing projects
- (4) If possible **coordinating and broadening activity** with other NGOs and IOs **to a general campaign**
- (5) **Ensuring full government support** – if needed, lobbying government for ensuring necessary policy or legislative changes etc. in order to ensure smooth project implementation and implementation of an institutionalised tolerance framework
- (6) Handing out **projects** in a way that might be perceived **as bribes** or giving the impression of bribing a group or a community in exchange for political peace **should be avoided** at all costs!

### **Working with values**

As mentioned, tolerance is also a question of values. In this sense communicating, strengthening and promoting certain tolerance values should also contribute to higher levels of tolerance. The following activities are thus proposed:

- (7) **disseminating positive democratic tolerance values**, especially with regard to conflict mentality (the loser of a contest also has a place in society!)
- (8) promoting a culture of rejecting or **stigmatising** (social sanctions) “**intolerance**” and “winner takes all” behaviour
- (9) **increasing social responsibility values** – promoting regional / local identification (“our village”) might offer an opportunity in this sense; even clientelistic “clans” of elite conflict are usually regionally or locally organized and identified, i.e. there are rudimentary regional identity concepts available. While this kind of regionalism proved to be a formidable force in organising violent conflict during civil war it also holds the potential of fostering social responsibility transcending the functioning but limited social units of the village (*kishlak*) and the extended family (*avlot*).

- (10) **dissemination / promotion can take several forms:** theatre groups, promotion by opinion leaders and prominent personalities, information campaign in selected mass-media outlets, NGO workshops, more conscious communication of these values in other ongoing projects, etc.
- (11) **being transparent:** communicating the importance of tolerance values for society and of entire tolerance promotion program; why it is important and how it helps society make conflicts less dangerous.
- (12) **being culturally sensitive:** wherever possible the value dissemination should lean on “traditional” or rather locally accepted value concepts to convey the message

### *Threat perception*

Reducing the levels of real threat and insecurity on the one hand and the perception of threat on the other hand relates to two distinct sets of action: changing values as outlined above and reducing insecurity. As already mentioned the main problem appears not an inability to compromise, but to enforce what has been agreed, ensure that it will last and to secure the durability of the institutional structures to negotiate such compromise. The general effect of reduced insecurity can be explained as follows: if a party involved in a conflict expects a more generous or tolerant behaviour from its opponent, it feels less threatened and consequently might itself behave in a less threatening, i.e. more tolerant way. In addition to the above outlined value related recommendations (items 7-12) the following programs are suggested:

- (13) **strengthening state institutions** directly dealing with the population (capacity building, institution building); ideally this should lead to greater security through greater impartiality and professionalism. Perceptions of reduced arbitrariness felt by competing groups and individuals in general should reduce threat perception and thus intolerance
- (14) **ensuring / building institutional safeguards** into official institutions against single-elite-group (i.e. clan) dominance
- (15) **supporting / empowering non-elite sections** of society with regard to project, political etc. decision-making; since often they are not directly involved or interested in elite conflicts, it seems probable that they would influence processes against the observed pattern of “winner-takes-all” in favour of a “live-and-let-live” attitude
- (16) **strengthening institutions** (informal, traditional or new) **that favour consensual decision-making** and which emphasise the right of all groups to put

forward their interests and be tolerated and remain part of the political field even when losing on one issue; the latter is essentially a value dissemination issue (see item 7). Strengthening such institutions could e.g. take the form of a small project fund for village infrastructure projects for which these institutions could apply.

- (17) Based on **contact theory** simply bringing together hostile factions might lead with time to a more tolerant and accepting attitude towards the other.
- (18) **opening up alternative economic resources** – probably run by other and ongoing external donor funded programs; the logic behind the suggestion is that the more resources are available, the less exclusive competition becomes.

It has to be emphasised that the program recommendations suggested in the two sections, one concentrating on values the other on reducing threat levels, are complementary. One might argue that building institutions that introduce more security, protection and predictability to society is more important. To a certain extent this might be true. However, without a sufficient value foundation, in traditional sociological terms legitimacy, the new institutions have no chance of effective functioning. **In summary, what a concerted and well-planned tolerance promotion can achieve is to lock in a gradual self-reinforcing mechanism of value-change and institution building (scheme IIb):** stronger institutions providing security and predictability promote tolerance values while stronger tolerance values support the functioning of institutions that provide security and predictability to society.

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