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Case 551, Instructor Copy

## TAKING ON TURKMENISTAN

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### DELIVERING BAD NEWS

Newly appointed Ambassador Tracey Jacobson arrived in arid Turkmenistan at 3:30 am on August 25, 2003, on a Lufthansa flight. She had her first government meeting at the Embassy at 9 am, and at 10 am arrived at the gold-domed Presidential Palace to present her diplomatic credentials to President Niyazov.<sup>1</sup>

It was a key moment in U.S. relations with Turkmenistan, and Ambassador Jacobson had some tough messages to deliver to an unpredictable dictator. Turkmenistan could face U.S. sanctions from two different U.S. laws, for not allowing people to leave Turkmenistan (the Jackson-Vanik amendment of the Trade Act of 1974), and for severe violations of religious freedom (the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998—IRFA). Turkmenistan had an authoritarian dictatorship both during and after Soviet rule; it was the most dictatorial of the former Soviet Republics.<sup>2</sup> But conditions had worsened after an attempted attack against President Saparmurat Niyazov the Great, President for Life, in November 2002. The government restricted foreign travel for citizens, reinstating a requirement for exit visas and denying its citizens the right to leave the country. This violated U.S. law (the Jackson-Vanik amendment passed during the Cold War and still operative) which carried the threat of loss of U.S. trade and assistance. The government of Turkmenistan controlled all aspects of life including religion, only allowed (and closely controlled) Sunni Islam

and Russian Orthodox Christianity, banned all other religious groups and practices, and harassed and abused religious persons, in some cases even torturing them. For these reasons the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the Helsinki Commission, members of Congress, and others advocated designating Turkmenistan as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC), the law's term for the world's worst abusers of religious freedom. IRFA required the State Department and USCIRF to issue an annual report on international religious freedom, and to issue recommendations concerning which states were "countries of particular concern" due to "systematic, ongoing, and egregious" violations of religious liberty. If Turkmenistan was designated a CPC, the law required U.S. government action, and Turkmenistan could face a variety of sanctions (IRFA identifies a wide range of diplomatic and economic tools that the President can apply to CPC countries).

What would be the most effective way to deliver this tough message and improve human rights? Turkmenistan was isolated so U.S. leverage was limited. Although Turkmenistan was the first Central Asian country to join NATO's Partnership for Peace program at the Cold War's end, it was a neutral, unaligned country. It was not a big recipient of U.S. aid because of Turkmenistan's poor human rights and religious freedom record. There was not much trade; although Turkmenistan has by some estimates the world's 4th largest reserves of natural gas, as well as oil reserves, it did not have pipelines to

transport its main product to international markets. At this time the only pipeline went to Russia, was not in good repair, and the Russians were not interested in paying market rates for Turkmenistan's gas, causing tensions in relations with Russia. Relations with neighboring Uzbekistan and Kazakstan were marred by disputes over water, environmental degradation, and the Caspian Sea. But the United States had some leverage: Turkmenistan wanted better U.S. relations for economic and security reasons. It was interested in foreign investment and technologies to develop its energy reserves. With a Soviet-style, government controlled economy still in place, energy profits could spur needed economic development (50 percent of Turkmenistan lived in poverty), and potentially sidestep pressures for painful economic reforms. Also, Turkmenistan was alone in a dangerous neighborhood. The U.S. and NATO allies were at war across Turkmenistan's southern border in Afghanistan. Violent Islamist extremism was destabilizing governments across Central Asia. Drugs flows also caused instabilities, as heroin moved from Afghanistan across the neighbors into Iran, Russia, and Western Europe, causing concerns at the borders.

While public and international opinion could influence the U.S. government's designation of Turkmenistan, they were difficult tools to use against Turkmenistan's non-democratic state. As in other former Soviet Republics in Central Asia, after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 the former communist leader Saparmurat Niyazov changed his political identity from communist to nationalist. The former Communist Party was renamed the Democratic Party but retained its monopoly on power. No other parties were permitted to operate. After "elections" (there were no opposing candidates and reportedly 99.5 percent of the populace voted for Niyazov), President Niyazov continued to rule Turkmenistan dictatorially as "President for Life."

But instead of drawing on communist ideology for legitimacy, President Niyazov justified his authoritarian rule in the name of his own personal blend of religiosity, personality, nationalism, and Islam, a combination of a cult of personality with religious ties to Sunni Islam. He insisted on being referred to as Turkmenbashi, meaning the father of all Turkmen. Niyazov wrote a self-declared "holy book" called the "Ruhnama," the Book of the Soul," which contained a mixture of spiritual proverbs, moral guidelines, and history. The Ruhnama was required by law to be placed in all mosques alongside the Koran. It was required reading in all schools and universities. All state institutions propagated the Ruh-

nama. Verses from the Ruhnama were featured prominently on billboards, state-run news broadcasts and newspapers, and it was even inserted into the Turkmen driving test. Niyazov blurred the line between Islam and himself with the construction of a new central mosque named after him, the largest mosque in Central Asia (with room for 20,000 worshippers at a cost of \$100 million) in his home town of Kipchak, near the capital, Ashgabat, to foster pilgrimages to his birthplace. The mosque is engraved with verses from the Ruhnama on the walls and in large letters among the four 295 foot Minarets and 164 foot tall golden dome, alongside verses of the Koran. President Niyazov said his words were placed on the mosque to serve as "guiding stars" for Turkmenistan, and also so that ordinary people would have native language inscriptions they could understand, and not only Koranic verses in Arabic. The state-controlled media broadcast hymns praising Niyazov, and comparisons between President Niyazov and the Prophet Mohammed. Niyazov renamed the days of the week (Saturday was "Spirituality Day"), and the months of the year, naming some of the months after himself, his mother, and the Ruhnama. Streets, towns, a television station, and even a meteor were renamed after Niyazov. Monuments of him were constructed all over the country, including a 246 foot tall marble Arch of Neutrality in central Ashgabat, which was topped by a 40 foot golden statue of Niyazov that rotated throughout the day so that the figure's outstretched hands followed the path of the sun. Night lighting of the statue made it appear that Niyazov hovered over the capital city. Wedding parties celebrated at the monument. "The statue was designed to make him look like a god," said Alexei Malashenko, a specialist in Central Asian politics at Moscow's Carnegie Centre.<sup>3</sup>

Turkmenistan's Constitution afforded Niyazov considerable leeway to rule by decree, which he did. Western analysts emphasized the eccentric nature of Niyazov's decrees, such as his ban on gold teeth. His distinctive hairstyle led to comparisons with Elvis and Stalin. The BBC dubbed it "Stalin in Vegas."<sup>4</sup> But in the sheer number of decrees Western analysts often missed their trajectory: by banning the Internet, circuses, operas, ballets, the Academy of Science, loud radio music, lip syncing, and the playing of recorded music, Niyazov was building a bulwark against any possible avenues for foreign influence, agitation, and destabilization in Turkmenistan. By banning libraries and hospitals outside of the capital, he kept doctors and books close to the center of his power where he could con-

control them. His decrees removing a year from the school curriculum made it impossible for Turkmen's high school graduates to enroll in foreign universities. His bans on beards and long hair worked to identify and check influence from foreign Islamic extremists. He even wanted to control the weather, and reduced the head of the national meteorology service's salary by half for not reliably forecasting the weather in Turkmenistan. Perhaps, as many contended, he was marked by the loss of most of his family at an early age to the Earthquake of 1948, which killed two thirds of Turkmenistan's population. Perhaps that was why he renamed "bread" after his mother. But there was also a method in his repression.

Ambassador Jacobson believed control was the rationale in Turkmenistan's religious repression. "Niyazov was not anti-religion per se. This was an extremely locked down autocracy. Anything he didn't control was seen as a threat. There was a fear of Islamic extremism and anything that was not state-controlled. There were no independent NGOs when I arrived. The first independent NGO allowed during my tenure was the bee keepers association." At the time Turkmenistan's once-strong cotton crops were failing. "There were no independent media. Religion was part of that. They didn't like these new groups coming in."<sup>5</sup>

In a 90 percent Islamic country, Niyazov worked to control Islam, through his Book of the Soul and control over religious leadership. He fired the chief Mufti, replacing him with a young loyalist. The government Council on Religious Affairs controlled the hiring, promotion, firing and training of Sunni Muslim and Russian Orthodox clergy. The Russian Orthodox were a small and non-threatening group, comprising only 2 percent of the population. The rest were outlawed. This was accomplished by an extremely restrictive law on the religious groups allowed to officially register. A group needed 500 adult citizens in each locality in which it wished to register, and religious leaders must be Turkmen citizens appointed by the government. Groups with 500 members throughout the country but not concentrated in a single location (such as the Bahai and many protestant groups), and groups with foreign

religious leaders (Roman Catholics) were thus not allowed to register. Unregistered religious groups were subject to government harassment, criminal charges and arrests, fines, imprisonment, and beatings. This harassment of religious groups increased after the assassination attempt on Niyazov.

The restrictions on foreign travel limited religious persons from receiving religious instruction abroad, and from making pilgrimages. Although participating in the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca (the Hajj) is an obligation in Islam, the government only allowed 187 Turkmen pilgrims to journey to Mecca in 2003 (out of the country's quota of 4,600). Perhaps Niyazov intended to supplant local pilgrimages to his birthplace in place of Hajj.

How should the new ambassador raise these issues? President Niyazov was capricious and unpredictable. He might not grant a meeting for many months, especially if the meeting was to discuss potential U.S. sanctions. Ambassador Jacobson could use her diplomatic credentialing meeting for a serious policy meeting. But these were usually pro forma, ceremonial affairs. There were risks to doing this. President Niyazov could refuse her credentials. He had done this before.

An adverse reaction by Niyazov potentially could impair the U.S.-led global war on terror. The government of Turkmenistan provided limited humanitarian assistance in the war in Afghanistan. Due to Turkmenistan's neutrality, the country did not join the international coalition against the neighboring Taliban in Afghanistan after the September 11, 2001, attacks in the U.S. According to UN representative Khaled Philby in Turkmenistan, "Close to 50 percent of all the aid that went into Afghanistan during the war period came through Turkmenistan . . . the bulk of northern aid to Afghanistan came through Turkmenistan."<sup>6</sup> The government cooperated with the World Food Program and United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and other humanitarian agencies in assisting refugees from Afghanistan, and allowing humanitarian assistance materials to move over the border. President Niyazov also permitted refueling and overflight privileges for humanitarian flights.

Ambassador Jacobson entered the Presidential Palace to meet President Niyazov.

## NOTES

1. Ambassador Tracey Jacobson, Interview with Author, May 7, 2010.

2. Freedom House, "Turkmenistan 2004," <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=47&nit=>

346&year=2004.

3. Alexei Malashenko, quoted in Tony Halpin, "Father of All Turkmen Toppled," *Sunday Times*, January 20, 2010.

4. Simon Ingram, "Turkmenistan's Gilded Poverty,

BBC World News, June 19, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2054121.stm>.

5. Ambassador Tracey Jacobson, Interview with Author, May 7, 2010.

6. Khaled Philby, as quoted in UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, IRIN Asia Humanitarian News and Analysis, "Turkmenistan Aid Pipeline to Afghanistan," June 26, 2003, <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=20196>.

## Case 551, Part B, Instructor Copy

### “BUILDING A FULL COURT PRESS: PRESSURE FOR REFORM

Within six hours of landing in Turkmenistan, Ambassador Jacobson delivered the message to President Niyazov that Turkmenistan faced sanctions both for requiring exit visa requirements and harassing religious groups. “Originally his response was to explain the reasons why the rules exist. But eventually it became clear to him that these policies were an impediment to his goal of bettering relations with the U.S. I told him I wanted to work with him right away to find a way to address these problems and avoid sanctions.”<sup>7</sup>

By using the credentialing meeting for a substantive meeting, Ambassador Jacobson was able to emphasize that these issues were priorities for the U.S. government. Perhaps it had been wise to use the opportunity she had, as afterwards repeated requests to meet with the Government Council on Religions were rebuffed. When she finally was able to meet with the Council, she raised the issue of the impending, restrictive law on religious registration. “I met with the Government Council on Religion to discuss U.S. concerns with the new legislation on religion. I told them, ‘Jesus said wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am.’ They replied, yes that’s all very good, but *this is our law*. I told them they ought to have a public debate about changing the law.”<sup>8</sup>

Given the reluctance of the government to move on these issues, Ambassador Jacobson sought to marshal her resources. “I met with the Embassy staff and made clear that this was going to be an important U.S. government priority, and not only a priority of the human rights and religious freedom reporting officers. To be successful it needed to be seen as supported by the mission as a whole. We all engaged, economic and political officers. We worked to break down the stovepipes, to make sure everybody in the Embassy knew our priorities: 1) human rights and democracy, 2) security, and 3) economic development. To make sure we were giving out consistent messages and were speaking on the same page, we had these three goals printed on laminated cards in English, Russian, and Turkmen. Everybody had those cards, from the Deputy Chief of Mission to our drivers, and we passed them out to visitors. I knew this was hitting home when I was out in a very remote village for some agricultural meetings and began to talk about the USG’s interest in human rights, when a local farmer interjected, “We know! We know what the U.S. government’s

three goals in Turkmenistan are.”<sup>9</sup>

Breaking down stovepipes also meant reaching out to the religious communities. “We had representatives of religious groups over to the Embassy. It was the only place we could meet each other, and it became a useful forum to engage each other, even if sometimes religious groups (such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses) were harassed for coming. To be effective we had to really engage with religious communities, the larger civil society, as well as the international community.”<sup>10</sup>

The U.S. sought partners. “We all engaged to build a full court press. We had meetings among a group of like-minded ambassadors from EU states, the UN, OSCE, real proponents of human rights. Different countries and IGOs have different appetites for how willing they are to engage these issues. The British government was strong, and the Germans were natural partners. Sometimes we’d all use the same talking points. When the Government came out with its repressive law on religion in November, we helped international civil society groups to push back, and tried to get the international community focused on it too.”<sup>11</sup>

These efforts succeeded in generating coordinated action. The U.S. and E.U. collaborated on a UN Commission on Human Rights resolution which criticized Turkmenistan’s poor human rights and religious freedom record. In 2004 the UN Commission on Human Rights issued another resolution calling on Turkmenistan to improve its poor human rights and religious freedom record. And the UN General Assembly followed suit, issuing a similar General Assembly resolution.

International religious freedom advocates and human rights groups outside of Turkmenistan pressed the issues too. Knox Thames at the U.S. Helsinki Commission kept the spotlight on the issue, organizing a letter in October 2003 from 34 members of Congress to Secretary of State Colin Powell, urging that Turkmenistan be designated as a Country of Particular Concern, one of the world’s worst violators of religious freedom, due to its “nearly impossible registration requirements. . . . Groups are denied permission to meet publicly and have no choice but to operate under the threat of harsh reprisals, such as home raids, imprisonment, deportation, internal exile, house eviction and even torture. Even the two registered religious groups, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Sunni Muslim community, are under strict state control with members punished should they dare to speak out.”<sup>12</sup>

The U.S. Commission on International Religious

Freedom likewise continued to speak out on these issues. In 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004 USCIRF called upon Secretary of State Powell and administration officials to designate Turkmenistan as a CPC designation and undertake action against the regime.<sup>13</sup> In July and September 2003, USCIRF urged action in bilateral meetings with official Turkmen delegations at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Human Rights meetings. USCIRF worked with members of Congress as they introduced resolutions in the House and Senate calling for religious freedom improvements in Turkmenistan and designation of the country as a CPC. USCIRF and the Helsinki Commission held a joint Congressional briefing in 2004, to educate members of Congress and their staffs on these issues and push for change. The Helsinki Commission followed up with another letter directly to President Niyazov, calling on him to improve religious freedom in his country.

Ambassador Jacobson believed the complementary pressures brought to bear by Congress and other agencies was quite helpful. “The actions of the Helsinki Commission, having a letter signed by prominent members of Congress whose names the government knew, having the USCIRF report and the IRF report and interest from that office—all this was very useful to demonstrate that the U.S. government cares about this issue. If you are promoting religious freedom in a challenging environment, if it is not seen as a U.S. government, whole of government priority, it’s not going to work. Within a year President Niyazov issued decrees changing both policies, the exit visa requirement and the restrictive religious registration law, although we must continue to monitor implementation.”<sup>14</sup>

Knox Thames agrees that “By successfully creat-

ing a confluence of pressure from the U.S. Embassy and State Department, USCIRF, the Helsinki Commission, Congress, and the UN, advocates were able eventually to move the strange and reclusive Niyazov to liberalize Turkmen policies . . . Niyazov issued a new presidential decree reducing the registration threshold from five hundred people per locality to five individuals nationally and registered many religious communities. . . . Religious groups reported that the climate had actually improved, with groups allowed to meet more freely without the continuous threat of harassment or jail time.”<sup>15</sup>

President Niyazov’s eccentricities continued. He ordered an ice palace be built in Turkmenistan, with cable cars extending to the capital, despite the fact that temperatures routinely climb over 110 degrees in the desert country. He encouraged citizens to think of him as a deity, as he told them “I am the Turkmen spirit reborn to bring you a golden age. . . . I am your saviour. . . . My sight is sharp—I see everything. If you are honest in your deeds, I see this; if you commit wrongdoing; I see that too.”<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, religious freedom improved. “While religious freedoms are still not fully enjoyed in Turkmenistan, minority religious communities have reported an improvement in the overall climate and a greater ability to enjoy their religious liberties.”<sup>17</sup>

Ambassador Jacobson concludes that “Cross cutting strategies have a better chance of success: thinking creatively about assets, talking about it across the team as a USG priority, working as a holistic team, getting away from the idea that “it’s not my job to do the IRF (International Religious Freedom) report, to promote democracy and human rights.” When we combine our efforts we can bring our assets to bear to make a difference.”<sup>18</sup>

## NOTES

7. Ambassador Tracey Jacobson, Interview with Author, May 7, 2010.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. U.S. Helsinki Commission, Letter to Secretary Powell, October 22, 2003. Signatories included well-known Congressional human rights and religious freedom leaders Helsinki Commission Chairman Rep. Christopher H. Smith (Republican-New Jersey) and Ranking Member Rep. Benjamin L. Cardin (Democrat-Maryland), Co-Chairman Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell (Republican-Colorado), Commissioners Senator Sam Brownback (Republican-Kan-

sas), Senator Russell D. Feingold (Democrat-Wisconsin), Senator Saxby Chambliss (Republican-Georgia), Rep. Frank R. Wolf (Republican-Virginia) and Rep. Robert B. Aderholt (Republican-Alabama).

13. U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Annual Reports 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004.

14. Ambassador Tracey Jacobson, Interview with Author, May 7, 2010.

15. Knox Thames, *International Religious Freedom Advocacy: a Guide to Organizations, Law, and NGOs*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010, p. 137, and Interview with Author, May 11, 2010.

16. President Niyazov as quoted in “Dictator Orders Ice Palace to be Build in Central Asian Desert,” *The Inde-*



pendent, August 15, 2004, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/dictator-orders-ice-palace-to-be-built-in-central-asian-desert-556642.html>.

**17.** Knox Thames, *International Religious Freedom Advocacy: a Guide to Organizations, Law, and NGOs*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010, p. 137, and Interview

with Author, May 11, 2010; also Ambassador John Hanford, Interview with Author, March 10, 2010.

**18.** Ambassador Tracey Jacobson, Interview with Author, May 7, 2010; also echoed by Ambassador John Hanford, Interview with Author, March 10, 2010.

# Case 551, Teaching Notes

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#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PART A

##### *Descriptive Questions*

What challenges did Ambassador Tracey Jacobson face when she was named U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan in 2003?

In what ways was Turkmenistan “the most dictatorial of the former Soviet Republics?”

Why did Turkmenistan face the threat of U.S. sanctions?

What leverage did the U.S. have with Turkmenistan?

##### *Analytic Questions*

What options did the Ambassador Jacobson and the U.S. Embassy have in dealing with President Niyazov?

What were the pros and cons of these options?

##### *Prescriptive Questions*

What would you have done?

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PART B

##### *Descriptive Questions*

How did Ambassador Jacobson work to “build a full court press” to pressure for reforms in Turkmenistan?

What assets did she have? How did she use them?

##### *Analytic Questions*

What were the pros and cons of this “full court press” approach?

How effective was this approach?

What other options could have been pursued?

What opportunities and reasons are there to integrate religious freedom and human rights concerns into the mainstream of U.S. foreign policy?

What are the challenges to doing so?

What are the costs of failing to promote religious freedom and human rights concerns in U.S. foreign policy?

What lessons can be learned for dealing with repressive regimes?

##### *Prescriptive Questions*

What would you have done?

How can repressive regimes be pragmatically persuaded of the value of religious groups and religious freedom?

How can you work to better advance religious freedom as part of U.S. foreign policy?

#### INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE<sup>1</sup>

The enclosed questions are a menu of various discussion options, not a recipe. Pick and choose

among them, and deviate to fit your own course objectives.

To use case and participatory teaching techniques successfully, attend to classroom culture and dynamics. Establish an environment where participation is the norm, and where students feel comfortable participating. This means changing the existing expectations that the professor will be center stage, doing most of the talking and analysis. Instead, bluntly, professors must learn to “shut up,” and students must learn to “put up.” To facilitate student participation, consider the physical layout of the classroom. If possible, arrange seating into a semicircle or U, or some layout (preferably allowing the students to face each other) that will facilitate students’ direct exchange with each other. If the students can see only you and are directed only to the front, chances are they will listen and direct their comments to you and not to each other. Student name plates on his or her desk, as used at professional conferences, allow participants to learn each other’s names, and encourage students to take responsibility for their own contributions to the class (since they cannot remain anonymous).

You can “warm up” the class by beginning the discussion with softball, easier, descriptive, scene setting questions, and when they are more at ease and more folks are participating, move to the more high voltage or more difficult questions. “Softball questions” engage students in the material at a low stress level, and can be moved through rather quickly to get a number of people participating and get the facts of the case out on the table. You might ask basic factual questions here, a battery of short, closed, descriptive questions easily drawn from the case (for example, “Who were the actors? What were their interests? What were their options?”). Later in the class, you can push them to evaluate these early answers or offer their own solutions (What were the pros and cons of these options? Which actors and interests mattered most? What would you have done?)

Or if you are short on time and want to immediately peak their interest in cases, or if the class is a participatory group and doesn’t need much “warm up,” you might dive right to the most controversial points of the case, by asking “What is the Ambassador’s problem?” or “What should the U.S. government do?” Emphasize that they don’t need to be an

expert to answer the question. All they need to participate in the discussion is the information which was contained in the case. If the group is more reluctant, save high threshold questions (which require students to go out on a limb more, offering more personal judgments or prescriptions for action), for later in the discussion, after you have people participating.

One means to “prime the pump” and direct student attention to particular points is to distribute 4–5 questions prior to the students doing a particular case. These questions help the students prepare for class discussion, focus attention on key points, and can give shy students a written “prompt” to have in front of them to break down their discomfort in speaking.

Early in the course or in the session you might pair students up or use more group exercises, in which students discuss a particular topic among themselves before reporting back to the class as a whole. This can encourage participation (since there is safety in numbers), engage students first at a lower threshold (it can be easier to talk to two students rather than the whole class), vet poor answers, and boost confidence. Splitting the class into two sides for a debate can serve the same purpose, although since there are more opportunities for a student to hide in a larger group, the professor must take care in a debate format to ensure that voices besides the most gregarious are heard. In two party debates, especially on negotiations or bargaining cases, “the switch” can be a useful technique to really get students to look at all sides of an issue. After asking students to argue one point of view, at some point midway through the debate, unexpectedly ask the students to switch sides and argue the other position. Role playing can also be useful earlier in the semester or class, since a student is not being asked to expose his or her *own* views, but to represent the views of a participant in the case. Role playing can also be a good device to draw out more quiet students, or to acquaint more opinionated students with an opposite viewpoint.

This is the bread crumb method. Get students to bite on the first few questions and in the first few sessions with a positive result, and as they become more comfortable with each other, the method, and the material, you can push them farther into the forest. As the session and the course wear on, “raise the bar” for participation. You must increase the level of difficulty of the questions somewhat quickly, or students will get bored (and perhaps lazy in their preparation and participation), and class discussion may settle in a rut. As the session and course move

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1. Dr. Maryann Cusimano Love, “Strategies of Engagement,” in *The ABCs of Case Teaching*, Ed. Vicki Golich, Georgetown University, Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, 2000, [ecase.georgetown.edu/abcs.pdf](http://ecase.georgetown.edu/abcs.pdf).

on, ask fewer softball, descriptive, open-the-box questions, and instead ask harder questions (more evaluative, prescriptive, analytic, judgmental and interpretive questions), and pose more challenging followup questions (“can you explain that?” “do the rest of you agree?” “how does that square with...?”), spending less time and emphasis repeating or validating students’ points. As the students get more proficient in participation, get to the “red meat” of the case more quickly, allow the students to chew on it with less direction from you, and get out of the way.

Besides the “actors–interests–options” questioning technique, you might use “the puzzler” questioning technique. Have the students generate the reasons against something occurring (why Vietnam was not designated a CPC in 2003), and subsequently ask them why this eventually occurred. The class creates a puzzle or paradox, then solves it. Another technique is the “big bang” method of questioning, where you begin the case discussion

(with little or no set up questions) by directly posing a big, controversial, high voltage question (“Is U.S. human rights policy effective?”), allowing the student discussion to get more heated and directed to each other, with the professor stepping to the sidelines. For the big-bang method to be effective, students have to be “primed” enough to take over the discussion, and the question has to be controversial enough to get them to bite and to generate some real heat (and light). Also important is using questions which touch on emotional issues, both early in the course (as a hook and as a signal of things to come), and later when they may be more ready to take the heat.

Classes and students are always different, so there is no magic method or strict timeline for advancing through the learning curve. Listen to your students, pay attention to how well they seem to be meeting content and participation goals, and adjust your lesson plans accordingly.