

# Global Engagement: Creating Cooperation And Friendship Through Culture and Track II Diplomacy

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Cultural exchanges between countries are positive entry points to develop friendly relationships that manifest respect and appreciation for the diversity and uniqueness that exists among peoples and how they live, worship, and express themselves, whether through food, drink, the fine or performing arts, architectural designs, and the defining characteristics of their rituals and routines of everyday living.

Culture also manifests the values which people treasure, whether in the intricate Buddhist drawings in the Magao Caves in China situated near the Silk Road, or the massive Inca stone structures and terraces built high in the mountains of Machu Pichu, Peru, with temples to the sun, water, and natural elements; all examples of the ingenuity of the human potential to create unspeakable beauty that invoke wonderment and amazement throughout the ages.

As global citizens, our duty is to help make this world a better place through acknowledging our interdependence and interconnectivity with each other, and to put into practice models of cooperative behaviors that enhance the well being of the whole. In this globalized world, we have greater access to peoples and places that help us to enter other countries and experience first hand, where and how people live and manifest their resourcefulness that reveal the stories of our common humanity in the face of life's increasing complexities.

The International Academy for Transcultural Cooperation<sup>[1]</sup> seeks to bring diverse peoples together through Track II Diplomacy and cultural events that demonstrate our willingness to participate in collaborative initiatives that promote friendship, harmony and positive engagement. Track II diplomacy strengthens our ability to have open communication and dialogue that can encompass the perspectives of others, and enhance our willingness to work together to create joint strategies to promote, build and maintain peace and security.

## **What Is Track II Diplomacy?**

Track II Diplomacy is primarily a dialogic, citizen to citizen engagement process that addresses how challenges can be solved and relationships built in an unofficial, informal setting that encourages trust, creates understanding, and develops new ideas and thinking to resolve differences, conflict, and negative perceptions, attitudes and

behaviors between peoples. Influential religious, community, academic, NGO and other civil society actors interact with each other, with their resultant endeavors often informing official processes, as well as creating positive transformations in conflicted relationships, and public opinion.

The term “Track II Diplomacy,” was coined by Joseph V. Montville in 1981 in his paper, “Foreign Policy According to Freud,” published in *Foreign Policy*, and defined as “unofficial, non-structured interaction. It is always open-minded, often altruistic...strategically optimistic, based on best case analysis. Its underlying assumption is that actual or potential conflict can be resolved or eased by appealing to common human capabilities to respond to goodwill and reasonableness.”

This type of unofficial engagement can be observed in the Dartmouth Conferences which took place during the Cold War, and brought together US and Soviet Union intellectuals to confer with each other on peace initiatives. The Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs also brought scholars and public figures together during the Cold War to discuss ways in which armed conflict and threats to global security could be reduced. The role of a lay Catholic organization in Rome, Saint’ Egidio, brought together the parties in the Mozambique civil war, which raged for 15 years, and successfully brokered a peace accord.

For Joseph Montville, “saving lives,” was a primary motivation in creating a means of engagement that could move beyond the sometimes intractable positions of official relations, particularly where tensions are high, and any overtures could be perceived as a sign of weakness.

In a later essay, Montville gave a more detailed definition of Track II Diplomacy when he wrote:

*Track two diplomacy is a process designed to assist official leaders...by exploring possible solutions out of the public view and without the requirements of formal negotiation or bargaining advantage. Track two diplomacy seeks political formulas or scenarios that might satisfy the basic security and esteem needs of the parties to a particular dispute. On its more general level, it seeks to promote an environment in a political community, through the education of public opinion, that would make it safer for political leaders to take risks for peace. 2*

Over the years, social scientists, diplomats, academicians, and civil society actors have studied, and continue to study the different tracks of diplomacy, (e.g. Track I, Track I.5 Track II, Track III, and Multi-Track), and have developed a growing, vibrant field of language, definitions, ideas, codes of conduct and ethics, identification of recurring themes, proposed rules of engagement, techniques of conflict resolution, strategies, problem solving working groups, and ways in which the results of these consultations can be “transferred” to official, diplomatic realms. In short, it is a vigorous exercise in understanding the landscape of discord, and tapping into our creativity to find solutions that can bring greater peace, harmony, understanding, and the betterment of society.

In many ways, the convergent flourishing of Non-Governmental Organizations, the availability of information technologies, including social networking media, and the multiple challenges facing all of us, provide greater opportunities for various forms of

citizen to citizen engagement. While Track II Diplomacy often takes place in a confidential setting where problem solving workshops are created so participants have the opportunity to address the underlying causes of the dispute, and are free to explore and propose “outside the box” thinking; [2] we also observe how mass mobilization of citizenry over a variety of issues can be highly influential in creating dramatic and rapid changes within the State. For example, Mohamed Bouazizi’s self immolation after the confiscation of his fruit cart set off rioting that toppled Tunisia’s president, and sparked the Arab Spring.

Disputes often arise out of perceived as well as real failings of justice, whether social, economic, political, legal, or a combination of these or more factors which are often intertwined, and not precisely demarcated. When these rapid, reactionary processes of mass mobilizations occur, they have the potential to create powerful unintended consequences that can leave the citizens in an unstable landscape that can subject them to greater vulnerabilities of resultant social disorder, violence, economic disruptions and leadership vacuums.

### **The Benefits and Challenges of Track II Diplomacy**

The benefit of Track II Diplomacy, while less dramatic, can sometimes move at a comparatively glacial pace, and is not open to mass citizenry participation. However, such a process is unlikely to precipitate huge societal destabilization. Track II Diplomacy is usually comprised of small, problem solving workshops that have representatives of the various sides of the conflict engaging in an impartial third party facilitation in an on-going process over time.

There have been concerns raised about engaging with representatives of groups that may be known aggressors with human rights violations that also conduct illicit activities. The fear of giving legitimacy to such groups by virtue of bringing them to the table is not helpful in overcoming the fact that the dispute cannot be resolved without the offending parties present to engage in the process of working together to find resolution to the dispute. There may also be laws in place that make any engagement with such offending parties illegal.

There are several practical considerations that must be thought through in undertaking Track II Diplomacy. Some of these considerations are: 1. having a thorough assessment of the landscape, (e.g. what are the issues, the history giving rise to the issues, what attempts have been made previously to resolve the issues, who are the primary actors); 2. ascertaining the feasibility of undertaking the initiative, (e.g. whether there is sufficient funding for the process, which may take place over time, whether there are prohibitions against travel, against contact with offending parties, whether a safe environment can be provided for the participants); 3. creating a strategy; 4. a process design; 5. follow up procedures and activities, and 6. an evaluation. [3] Consideration should be given to carefully documenting the entire initiative, and ascertaining the degree of impact which the transfer of information about the initiative has on Track I Diplomatic efforts on the dispute. Track II diplomacy can be an important way to give voice to the voiceless or marginalized, and can also be influential in shaping and transforming public opinion.

Most Track II Diplomacy initiatives are *ad hoc*. As such, there does not exist any coordinated national, regional or international mechanisms by which these initiatives can be rapidly constituted and engaged. While each initiative has to be specific to the particular dispute or challenge at hand, having a “go to” resource which can provide models of best practices, as well as the methods and processes utilized in successful outcomes would be greatly beneficial.

Cultural events and activities can also be woven into the process, through a number of mediums, whether by way of songs, dances, food and the like, that can be intermittently provided during breaks, or as activities at the conclusion of the day’s work. Such events can be valuable in deepening appreciation for the respective cultures of the participants, and can also be important ice breakers in cultivating a more relaxed, social atmosphere among them. Cultural activities provide immediate experiential references of why we are one human family clothed in the diversity of colors, languages, talent and artistry, learning the ways of sharing and being together.

### **Conclusion**

The globalization processes, whether economic, cultural, or political, has made our world smaller, and more intertwined than ever. We increasingly realize that no one person or country acts in isolation, and that the conduct of one has impact upon the whole. Conflicts in any given part of the world are brought directly into our homes through the media and various information technologies. We witness the suffering of many people who are victims of disputes, and it is in all of our best interests to help each other and build cooperative models of working together to find solutions to our disputes and global challenges, of which there are many. As the world’s population grows, our entire living system becomes increasingly taxed, and our survival depends on how well we can live in peaceful co-existence with each other, and our sacred environment.

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[1] A nascent organization founded and led by Audrey E. Kitagawa, since 2012.

[2] *A Changing World: Canadian Foreign Policy Priorities No 1, Canada And Track Two Diplomacy*, Peter Jones, Copyright 2009, Canadian International Council

[3] *Conducting Track II Peacemaking*, Heidi Burgess and Guy Burgess, Copyright 2010, Endowment of the United States Institute of Peace