What is the Future of Track II Diplomacy in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict?

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Introduction

The persistence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (hereafter "the conflict") is well-known. Equally well-known have been the attempts of international actors - especially since the Madrid conference in 1991 – to mediate a solution to the conflict. Efforts through "Track II diplomacy" (hereafter "Track II") to support or assist these attempts have received less attention, but have played critical roles. The most widely-known example is the series of meetings that led to the Oslo Accords. They were initiated at the Track II level and facilitated by a Norwegian third party out of public view. Other examples are less-well known – some have achieved considerable success, while others have not.

This paper seeks to answer the following questions: Can Track II still contribute meaningfully to the resolution of the conflict, and if so, in which areas and ways? My belief is that the conflict has reached a level of maturity that shapes the number and type of Track II initiatives that can provide value toward resolving the conflict. The major finding of the paper is that a smaller number of more specific initiatives are likely to make such a contribution in the short to medium-term, as opposed to large-scale projects which seek primarily to break down psychological barriers to "acceptance" by each side. A number of Israeli and Palestinian Track II experts were interviewed for this paper. These interviews form the basis of the research conducted to answer these questions.

This paper is organized into four major sections. The first section analyzes how the status of official negotiations has contextualized past Track II projects – it concludes with a brief assessment of the current status of official negotiations. The second section covers various definitions of the term "Track II." It ends with an exploration of the interviewees' views on Track II's purposes. The third section attempts to define and

evaluate the "success" and "failure" of Track II initiatives. It provides an assessment of what is – and what is not – likely to succeed in future initiatives. It is a best practices-type analysis of the experience of those who are likely to participate in future Track II talks.

The fourth section discusses the role of third parties in Track II. Best practices research in Track II emphasizes the importance of giving participants ownership over Track II processes.[1] But participant ownership does not preclude a role for third parties to play in the initiation, sponsorship, and facilitation of Track II talks. The issue of third party involvement adds a policy dimension to the question of the future role of Track II, especially for those seeking to undertake future Track II initiatives. Understanding the role of the third party may help in identifying ways in which opportunities for Track II may be seized and how Track II practitioners should act.

Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the likely uses for Track II in the conflict and the challenges ahead.

Methodology

Track-II Diplomacy: Lessons from the Middle East, by Agha, Feldman, Khalidi, and Schiff, evaluates the contribution of Track II talks to conflict resolution in the Middle East and seeks to determine under what conditions such talks may contribute to conflict

[1] See Peter Jones' discussion of ethical responsibilities in "Canada and Track Two Diplomacy." Published in the Canadian International Council's series *A Changing World: Canadian Foreign Policy Priorities*, No. 1. P. 7.

resolution in the region and beyond.[2] It aims "to evaluate the circumstances under which Track II talks can prove a useful tool in conflict resolution and to identify the factors that determine their successes and failures."[3] Toward that end, it provides a history of Track-II initiatives on the conflict and evaluates their impact.

This paper proceeds by using a complimentary analytical framework to that of Agha *et al*. *Track-II Diplomacy* outlines critical issues in the field of Track II that have important practical and theoretical implications. It builds on previous literature in the field by exploring the practical and theoretical aspects of the major Track II initiatives relating to the conflict. Other issues and the contributions of other authors relevant to Agha *et al*.'s framework will also be discussed.

Interviews conducted for this paper explored the views of Israeli and Palestinian experts who have previously been involved in Track II diplomacy initiatives relating to the conflict. The purpose of the interviews was to establish the interviewees' previous involvement in Track II, their views on the talks and the results, whether future Track II talks are likely, and what those talks will look like. The data collected will be analyzed within the framework provided by Agha *et al*. Also, new issues (those not covered by Agha *et al*.) that emerged from the interviews will be added to the paper's framework.

Track II is seen by Agha *et al*. as a tool to peacemaking that is likely to see continued use in the conflict.[4] Given the persistence of taboo and sensitive topics – and the lack of a permanent resolution to the conflict – the future use of Track II seems likely. But the

[2] Agha, Hussein, Shai Feldman, Ahmad Khalidi, and Zeev Schiff. *Track-II Diplomacy: Lessons from the Middle East*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA: 2003. P. 1.
[3] Ibid, p 2.
[4] Ibid.

difficult questions remain: Can Track II talks continue to contribute to conflict resolution and how?

Terminology and Factual Overview

This paper assumes a basic familiarity with the term “Track II diplomacy.” Throughout, the terms “talks” or “initiatives” or simply “Track IIs” will be used interchangeably when referring to these unofficial, informal discussions. The term “participant” will denote those from conflicting parties who take part in Track II talks. “Interviewees” are the Track II experts – veterans of several Track IIs each – who were interviewed for this paper. “Third parties” are Track II practitioners, i.e. those who initiate, sponsor, or facilitate Track II. This distinction will be explored in a later section.

The purposes of this paper also require a general familiarity with past Track II initiatives. The basic facts of each initiative are discussed where relevant. However, for a more detailed look at these talks, please consult Aga *et al*. and other sources mentioned in this paper.

Section One: Track II Context

This section draws on the history of the conflict and official negotiations in order to contextualize past Track II efforts. Present opportunities for Track II will be shaped by the current status of official negotiations. Understanding the historic role of official negotiation and their impact on Track II is necessary for a contemporary analysis.

From 1973 Onward

The result of the 1973 war, according to Agha *et al*., was that the "new environment set the stage for a surge of Arab-Israeli exchanges…such contacts were also propelled by a genuine desire by various Israeli and Palestinian individuals and groups to establish a meaningful dialogue and promote the prospects for peace with the other side."[5] A new Palestinian political platform meant that the PLO was eager to engage in talks that would increase the likelihood of its participation in the official peace process.[6] Track II talks that resulted from this include the Hammami-Avneri and Sartawi-Peled channels, discussed in detail by Agha *et al*.[7] In short, the PLO's "quest for legitimacy"[8] at the official level resulted in their desire to pursue contacts at the unofficial level.

[5] Agha *et al*., p. 10.
[6] This attitude is explained well in Agha *et al*., who list four factors: PLO leadership believed they served the national interest; the PLO leadership was highly responsive to personal initiatives; the vast existential chasm highlighted the need for dialogue and the value of useful contact; and the PLO sought recognition as valid negotiating partner for the Israelis. "This quest for legitimacy took on an additional aspect after U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's 1975 commitments to Israeli not to open a dialogue with the PLO unless it overtly and unequivocally recognized UNSCR 242 … and "renounced terrorism."" P. 11.
[7] Agha *et al*., p. 11-15
[8] Ibid, p. 11.

These talks are interesting for two reasons: one, they helped break Palestinian taboos on dealing with Israel by allowing knowledge of their existence to go public;[9] and two, the eventual assassination of both Hammami and Sartawi at the hands of PLO extremist Abu Nidal[10] demonstrates that the boundaries of acceptable behaviour created by domestic politics are transgressed at great risk to participants' lives. "Spoilers" are very much a part of domestic politics on both sides[11] and, to various degrees, provide a type of "enforcement mechanism" when official and unofficial actors progress too far in advance of their societies. Further, the PLO leadership's support of and supervision over Hammami and Sartawi's activities[12] is additional evidence of the way in which Track I structures the space available for Track II.

These early initiatives, in the words of Agha *et al*., "did not resemble any structured attempt at a Track II exercise, and were often closer in style and substance to "therapy" sessions."[13] The Track I setting was such that these talks were limited in scope – they first had to overcome many initial difficulties in these exploratory talks. Conflict resolution was not on the agenda; rather, these first talks sought to acclimatize participants to one another, explore perspectives and perceptions, and clear the air of grievances. Those initial barriers – the result of the Track I environment at the time – dictated this approach to Track II. International interest in the conflict, and Track II talks, also began to take shape. The participation of Pierre Mendes-France (former prime minister of France) in the Sartawi-Peled talks, coupled with Austrian chancellor Bruno Kreiski's encouragement, was a modest but significant beginning.[14]

[9] Ibid, p. 13.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Abu Nidal on the Palestinian side and Yigal Amir on the Israeli side are two examples.
[12] Agha *et al*., 13.
[13] Ibid, p. 11.
[14] Ibid, p. 12.

The 1982 invasion of Lebanon, and Defence Minister Sharon's failure at eliminating the PLO, led many to consider non-military approaches to finding a political solution to the conflict.[15] However, political settlements demand dialogue over the issues they seek to overcome. The constraints imposed on dialogue with the PLO – especially the 1986 law forbidding Israeli citizens from contact with the PLO – made dialogue difficult to initiate and sustain. Official constraints thus stemmed the supply of official capacity to meet the growing demand for these talks. Consequently, unofficial talks were initiated, many taking the form of Track II dialogues.

Despite the law restricting contact with the PLO, Moshe Amirav – an influential member of Israel's right-wing Likud party – succeeded at holding talks with Sari Nusseibeh – a respected Palestinian academic – on the basis that the talks held were only to be an "intellectual exercise."[16] The PLO's representative in Jerusalem, Faisal Husseini, was brought into the circle. Prime Minister Shamir allowed the talks to proceed on the condition that they remained secret. Once news of their existence emerged, they were quickly ended by the arrest of Husseini (ordered by Israeli Prime Minister Shamir) and an attack on Nusseibeh at the hands of Palestinian youths.[17] This initiative, as argued by Agha *et al.*, was quickly taken over "by events" stemming from the first *Intifada*.[18]

The character of Track II initiatives was influenced greatly by the aforementioned 1986 law. As a result, talks had to be held as "academic conferences," similar to the Amirav-

[15] Ibid, p. 19.
[16] Bregman, Ahron, and Jihan El-Tahri, *The Fifty Years War*. London: Penguin Books, 1998. P. 184.
[17] Ibid, p. 186.
[18] Agha *et al*., p. 24.

Nusseibeh talks.[19] Third parties began to play an increasingly prominent role in hosting them. The American Psychiatry Association, the Brookings Institute, and the Institute for World Politics at San Diego State University each played this role.[20] Most importantly, Agha *et al*. characterize these as part of a "cumulative and continuing process."[21]

The best example of such a process was that led by Herman Kelman at Harvard University.[22] Started in 1984, the talks were generally construed as an initiative aimed at "overcoming the barriers to a negotiation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."[23] The talks focused first on exchanging existential concerns, and sharing viewpoints and opinions. This phase ended with progress at the Track I level, i.e. the start of the Madrid Conference. The second phase of the talks started following Oslo – they focused largely on the parameters established by the Accords, specifically on final status issues such as the fate of both Jerusalem and the Palestinian refugees.[24] Crucially, these talks shifted in focus as events at the Track I level unfolded. Their purpose shifted from a soft/broad/socialization approach to a more hard/focused/policy-oriented approach (these approaches are discussed in the following section).

Most importantly, the Madrid process' eventual stagnation led to an opening for Track II. Negotiated in secret in Norway, the Track II talks produced the framework for an

[19] Ibid, p.20.
[20] Ibid, p. 22.
[21] Ibid, p. 21.
[22] Please see Kelman, Herbert C., "Interactive Problem Solving in the Israeli-Palestinian Case: Past Contributions and Present Challenges" in *Paving the Way: Contributions of Interactive Conflict Resolution to Peacemaking*, ed. R.J. Fisher, (New York: Lexington, 2005); Kelman, Herbert C., "Experiences from 30 Years of Action Research on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," in K.P. Spillmann & A. Wenger (Eds.), *Zeitgeschichtliche Hintergründe aktueller Konflikte VII: Zürcher Beiträge zur Sicherheitspolitik und Konfliktforschung*, No. 54, 173-197, 1999; and Kelman, Herbert C., "Contributions of an Unofficial Conflict Resolution Effort to the Israeli-Palestinian Breakthrough," *Negotiation Journal*, January, 1995. All three articles are available at: http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/faculty/hckelman/researchpapers/internationalconflict.htm.
[23] Kelman, Herbert in Agha *et al*., p. 25.
[24] Ibid, p. 27.

agreement that came to be known as the Oslo Accords. Though Oslo is one of the more widely-known Track II initiatives, its lessons must not be exaggerated. The process failed at developing a wide constituency, having been agreed upon between a highly exclusive group of representatives from both sides. The current challenges to implementing the Oslo formula – the Hamas/Fatah split, among others – may be rooted in Oslo's lack of inclusion of a broad constituency to advocate its implementation.

What shape will Track II talks take in the short to medium-term? Where can they still contribute to conflict resolution? An exploration of the current Track I context may shed light on these questions.

Current Track I Context

The period beginning with the al-Aqsa *Intifada* in 2000 until the present has seen significant instability. The death of Arafat in 2004 and the election of Hamas in January 2006 signalled increasing Palestinian political support for a new group of leaders, one less open to compromise with Israel.[25] Their election, and subsequent seizure of control over the Gaza strip, has created a major rift between the two major camps in Palestinian politics: on the moderate side, the Fatah-dominated P.A., located in the West Bank; and the other, more radical Hamas in Gaza.

The current situation is characterized by the continued schism in Palestinian politics and a new right-wing coalition government in Israel. The recent Gaza War further demonstrates an emerging locus of conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

[25] "Hamas: Charter (August 1988)" in Laqueur, Walter and Barry Rubin, eds. *The Israel-Arab Reader*. London: Penguin Books, 2008. P. 341-8.

Moreover, Hamas' legitimacy as a credible political alternative to Fatah and its increasing control of events "on the ground" raises the issue of who can deliver on future negotiated agreements. The Hamas/Fatah split also alters the "who can talk to whom about what" equation, particularly in light of Hamas' official policy positions advocating the destruction of Israel. From the perspective of the Israeli government, Fatah may be too weak to deliver on a deal and Hamas too unsavoury a partner for official negotiations.

Internationally, there is a renewed push on the part of the Obama administration to see progress on the conflict.[26] The Quartet – comprising the US, EU, UN, and Russia – has been created to: 1) foster greater international cooperation on the conflict; and 2) revive the principles established at Madrid and carried through to Oslo.

In which ways can Track II contribute to conflict resolution, given the history of past initiatives and the current Track I context? The next section explores the various purposes of Track II, which should help in providing an answer to this question.

[26] "Middle East Envoy George Mitchell," in *Time*, by Alex Altman, Jan. 22, 2009.

Section Two: The Purpose of Track II

Defining Track II

The purpose of this paper requires a discussion of Track II categories that focuses on the participants, substance and purpose of Track II talks, i.e. the "who," "what," and "why." Defining Track II matters from a methodological standpoint. One interviewee noted that establishing the facts of interviewees' previous experience in Track II depends on one's definition of Track II.[27] Definitions vary across authors. This section explores the differences and similarities between the major authors on the subject. Later, it explores interviewees' perceptions of Track II's purposes, as informed by their own definitions of what constitutes Track II.

Agha *et al*. define Track II talks as "discussions held by non-officials of conflicting parties in an attempt to clarify outstanding disputes and to explore the options for resolving them in settings or circumstances that are less sensitive that those associated with official negotiations."[28] Here, Agha *et al*. define the "who" as "non-officials." Participants are either non-officials, such as journalists, scholars, and former officials, or officials acting in informal capacities.[29] The substance under discussion, the "what," is the "outstanding disputes" they share, and the purpose of the talks, the "why," is the exploration of options for resolution. Additionally, this definition pays attention to the sensitivity of settings and circumstances that can be associated with official talks.

[27] Interviewee #2.
[28] Agha *et al*. p. 1.
[29] Ibid.

In the view of Agha *et al*., Track II talks can be divided into the categories of "hard" and soft."[30] Both types share the basic purpose of exchanging information and views towards creating understandings between parties in conflict.[31] This, in their view, constitutes the "soft" approach to Track II. The purpose of such talks is to expose parties to the other side – to "humanize" the conflict and, it is hoped, encourage participants to disseminate their new perceptions and understandings within their respective societies. This purpose, construed broadly at the societal level, aims to further reconciliation by creating groups of individuals prepared to engage the other side on the basis of new ideas and understandings.[32]

"Hard" Track II talks can help governments negotiate political agreements by opening channels for communication that otherwise would not be open.[33] Channels typically open to officials at the Track I level – those of official diplomacy – may be inadequate for dealing with sensitive issues between parties who may not recognize each other. Hard talks share the purpose of information sharing, etc. discussed above; however, they add a degree of specificity through their pursuit of political agreement at the official level, an objective that is far less elusive and more readily defined than those of purely "soft" talks. Agha *et al*. thus characterize hard talks as less modest.[34]

Fisher, writing about "interactive conflict resolution,"[35] (ICR – a term that is sometimes used interchangeably with "Track II") states that the term encompasses "a variety of

[30] Ibid, p. 3.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] "Interactive conflict resolution" and "Track II diplomacy" are used by Fisher almost interchangeably. The difference between the two is more of emphasis rather than substance – certain authors choose to emphasize various aspects of such talks. For example, the term "Track II" refers to the unofficial character

unofficial, facilitated interactions between antagonists in violent and protracted conflicts."[36] Fisher's discussion of the term's history is instructive.[37] Some previous terms have emphasized different aspects: "Controlled communication," for example, refers more to process; "problem solving conflict resolution" includes both process and purpose.[38]

Further, Fisher distinguishes between two categories of unofficial activity: "focused," emphasizing "small group, problem-solving discussions between unofficial representatives"; and "broader," consisting of "facilitated face-to-face activities in communication…that promote…reconciliation among parties engaged in protracted conflict."[39] Fisher's analysis provides further basis for thinking about Track II in two broad categories, in this case "focused" and "broader."

Kaye's study of Track II "focuses on a subset of unofficial activity that involves professional contacts among elites from adversarial groups with the purpose of addressing policy problems in efforts to analyze, prevent, manage, and ultimately resolve intergroup or interstate conflicts."[40] She chooses a definition that captures activity that "relates to policy and involves consciously organized problem-solving exercises."[41]

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of the talks, specifically with relation to "Track I" or official diplomacy. "Interactive conflict resolution" refers more the process of such talks, i.e. how they work, and the roles of participants and third parties.

[36] Fisher, Ronald .J., *Interactive Conflict Resolution*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997. P. 1.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid, p. 2.

[40] Kaye, Dalia Dassa. *Talking to the Enemy*: *Track Two Diplomacy in the Middle East and South Asia*. Rand Corporation, 2007. P. 6.

[41] Ibid.

In Kaye's view, most Track II talks related to the conflict are included in the field of "conflict resolution." She contrasts this approach – and its prevalence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – to the purpose of regional security-focused Track II, which she describes as more focused on "long-term socialization and the generation of new ideas, not immediate policy change."[42] The latter type offer regional participants the opportunity to slowly and gradually understand new ideas in relation to their own realities, aiming to shape policy debates "over time."[43] The continuing and long-term aspects of these talks are contrasted to the short-term and immediate-focused processes such as Oslo.[44] In sum, Kaye distinguishes between two categories of processes: the first emphasizes elite participation on policy problems (as they relate to conflict), with the goal of influencing (and resolving them) immediately. The second type aims to generate and disseminate ideas over the long-term in an effort to shape debates through a process of socialization – a process in which those participating in Track II talks seek to include other regional experts in the discussion to build momentum for the ideas generated. Kaye's later discussion of the process of creating a "*constituency* for regional cooperation"[45] (emphasis added) underscores the value this approach places in disseminating ideas widely by enlisting new advocates.[46]

What does each definition tell us about each author's view of Track II? Each conceptualization of Track II centers on two broad categories. Agha *et al.* introduce the

[42] Ibid, p. 3.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid, p. 4.
[45] Ibid, p. 22.
[46] Other works on Track II and regional security provide additional insight into this topic: Ball, D., Milner, A., and Taylor, B., "Track 2 Security Dialogue in the Asia-Pacific: Reflections and Future Directions," *Asian Security*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2006; and Jones, Peter, "Filling a Critical Gap or Just Wasting Time? Track Two Diplomacy and Middle East Regional Security," *Disarmament Forum, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research*, Issue 2, 2008.

"soft"/"hard" distinction; Fisher discusses "broad" vs. "focused" talks; and Kaye distinguishes between long-term socialization and immediate policy change.

These conceptualizations have important consequences for the types of participant, substance, and purpose each authors discusses, i.e. the "who," what," and "why." The definitions differ, but they share a common foundation. The similarities between the definitions – and the binary nature of each – make a case for grouping them into the hard/focused/policy-oriented and soft/broad/socialization approaches to Track II. [47]

Mapping the Purposes of Track II

The following discussion builds on the earlier work of this section by mapping interviewees' purposes for engaging in Track II. Participants may choose to take part in Track II talks for a number of personal or professional reasons. According to one interviewee, it is important to distinguish between these individual purposes – those that provide personal or professional benefit to participants – and process purposes (those that benefit the Track II process).[48]

Why is determining the purpose of Track II important? This paper seeks to understand the history of Track II talks related to the conflict and to explore the possibilities for this method's future contribution to conflict resolution. Toward this end, interviews with experienced Track II participants were conducted to explore their experience and their

[47] Peter Jones' comprehensive discussion of definitions and types of Track II can be found in "Canada and Track Two Diplomacy." P. 3-5. He provides some support for grouping Track II into two broad categories, observing that "in some ways, "hard" and "soft" Track Two share characteristics with Fisher's "focused" and "broad" dimensions of Interactive Conflict Resolution." Additionally, he notes "the field of Track Two is a fluid one. The terminology is far from fixed, and the same terms can be used to mean quite different things," a key point.

[48] Interviewee #8.

views on Track II's future. Understanding the purpose each participant perceived in each initiative may help explain their motivations for participation as well as what might motivate them to participate in future Track IIs. Individuals will only be motivated to participate in initiatives that have the potential to meet their purposes. Exploring these purposes is fundamental to explaining why participants choose to participate, what they hope to achieve, and how Track II initiatives may contribute to conflict resolution.

Each initiative necessarily differs from the next in terms of purpose, as each is the product of unique circumstances and motivations. Moreover, each participant chooses to engage in Track II for a set of reasons that is unique. No one Track II is the same, just as the purposes each participant brings necessarily differ to some extent. Aga *et al*. suggest an initiative's purpose should be "well-defined and mutually agreed" but with a degree of flexibility added in case of unforeseen changes, as was the case with Oslo.[49] They also note that a "clear program of action" may be more important for "hard" Track IIs and less important for "soft" initiatives. Those with less direction at the outset may develop a more clearly define purpose as talks progress.[50]

Determining the purpose of a Track II is also a key component of determining its success or failure. The satisfaction of participant purpose is one measure by which the success of Track II can be determined. It is not the only one, but it is significant. This will be discussed in a later section. Next, each interviewee's purposes for engaging in Track II are explored. The answers were mostly the result of questions asked from the "1 – Background" section from the interview questionnaire (see Appendix A).

[49] Aga *et al*., p. 171.
[50] Ibid.

Personal and/or Professional Goals

The realization of personal or professional goals as motivation for participation in Track II should not be viewed as necessarily myopic or self-serving; rather, personal and Track II process goals can be complimentary.[51] For example, one interviewee described politicians who seek to build careers on their participation in Track II. This, in the interviewee's estimate, was a legitimate purpose, so long as these political careers are built on "something good"[52] – something that contributes to conflict resolution. Participants often benefit from professional capacity-building in the form of education about negotiation and process skills.[53] Other benefits include gaining greater understanding of the other's political system, which may appear complex from the outside.[54]

Understand and Learn from "the Other"

Certain Track II initiatives purposefully lack concrete objectives and focus on encouraging ongoing discussion of issues.[55] Instead of specific objectives, this type of wide-ranging Track II encourages general discussion about broad themes, allowing participants from across the region – those who might not otherwise have the

[51] Interviewee #6.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Interviewee #3.
[54] Interviewee #2.
[55] Interviewee #1.

opportunity to meet – to discuss issues that matter to the region and make contact with each other.[56]

However, some interviewees argued that this represents a secondary goal of Track II.[57] Those initiatives sponsored by government tend to aim at more concrete objectives, while those supported by non-governmental organizations tend to focus on developing understanding and trust between participants.[58] Another participant doubted the extent to which this purpose is still relevant to the conflict, arguing that Israelis and Palestinians are now familiar with each other and know "each other's neuroses" quite well.[59]

Attempts to understand "the other" are those in which participants seek to inform their own perceptions of those with whom they are in conflict. This happens through what Kaye terms "socialization." At what point does socialization – and specifically the process of change undergone by "the other" – become a deliberate attempt to manipulate the other? One interviewee acknowledged that a long-term goal of Track IIs including members or representatives of Hamas have, from the Israeli perspective, the implicit goal of moderating Hamas' policies toward the movement's eventual integration into the peace process.[60] The process of socialization is inherently dynamic, with multiple actors operating together over time – the exact purpose motivating the behaviour of others can be difficult to ascertain. However, overt attempts to change the attitude of the other – and to make them conform to one's preferred policy – are likely to

[56] Interviewee #1. This point about developing contacts is echoed in comments by Interviewee #8 and Interviewee #11.
[57] Interviewee #4 and Interviewee #11.
[58] Interviewee #11.
[59] Interviewee #2.
[60] Interviewee #1.

be greeted with hostility due to the existential nature of the conflict. Such motivations often go unspoken for these reasons.[61]

Create Political Initiative

Political initiative can be initiated by Track II at the decision-making level, the level of public opinion, and the steps in between. The case of Oslo represents an initiative at the decision-making level, while the Geneva Accord is a good example of Track II aimed at public opinion.[62] In the case of Geneva, an effort was undertaken by both sides to demonstrate a willingness to find compromise despite the violence emanating from the Second *Intifada*. One Palestinian interviewee explained that Geneva helped express the group's desire to combat conservative forces on both sides that were attempting to "destroy the peace process."[63]

But the political relevance of Geneva has been challenged in recent years. Specific criticisms include the lack of diversity of political opinion among participants from both sides.[64] The initiative's attempt at spreading its message through public dissemination has not been an unquestioned success.[65] In the case of Oslo, according to one interviewee, the breakthrough achieved by way of Track II is unlikely to re-produce

[61] Interviewee #1.
[62] The Geneva Accord website provides an overview of the agreement and activities to promote it: http://www.geneva-accord.org/ Accessed Aug. 11, 2009.
[63] Interviewee #6.
[64] Interviewee #2.
[65] Ibid.

itself.[66] Both sides have acknowledged each other in official terms, and subsequent challenges to the Oslo process have arisen due to the difficulty present in navigating the substance of the conflict beyond the issue of recognition. Moreover, Oslo has been criticized for its failure at building a wide coalition. To one interviewee, it failed to attract the political support necessary for full implementation because it was largely an "elite process."[67]

Another political initiative mentioned was the consolidation of political positions on one's own side. Track II, in the opinion of the interviewee, has helped the Palestinians overcome the difficulties of reconciling their competing interests and presenting a united position.[68] The Palestinians, in his view, were motivated to develop a common "Palestinian" position as it became clear that informal contact with Israel was a priority of Fatah from the late 1970s onward.[69]

Create New Ideas

Most interviewees discussed "creating new ideas" as a purpose of Track II.[70] However, one interviewee related a sum of personal experiences that casts doubt on what kind of new ideas have been sought, and Track II's degree of openness to those of a more unconventional nature:

> (The Track IIs in which I participated) were never really there to create new ideas. They were trying to fit a square peg in a round hole. They took as given the existing Oslo framework and tried to get parties together in a mediation way. This was problematic, as Oslo broke down

[66] Interviewee #5.
[67] Interviewee #11.
[68] Interviewee #6.
[69] Aga *et al*. on p. 11 provide an account of Fatah's decision to pursue these informal contacts and the effects this decision had on the development of Track II channels.
[70] Interviewee #4, Interviewee #5, Interviewee #9, and Interviewee #11, among others.

> for specific, concrete reasons. None of the facilitators tried to break out and find those reasons and approach things differently – it was the same square peg in the same round hole. There was much re-examination of the past to see if anything was missed, but always within the existing framework. Many Track IIs were often setbacks. You would see them (the Israelis) backtrack from previously held positions as a result of political developments.[71]

This criticism reveals an important question regarding the purpose of Track II: Should it exist to support the official track, or should it provide freedom to explore ideas that would not normally be welcome in official talks? The majority of interviewees sided with the former purpose. But some, like the interviewee in question, expressed regret that Track IIs were less open to dissenting viewpoints. One interviewee noted that the purpose of Track II is often determined by the initiative's source of funding, and government sources tend to favour those initiatives that support the official track, while NGO-funded talks are more open to the exploration of new ideas.[72]

Consequently, one must take account of the source of funding in understanding the purpose of each Track II. As evidenced by the statements of some interviewees, participants tend to be aware of the source of funding behind each initiative.[73] Understanding the future shape of Track II work requires an assessment of this factor.

Influence Broader Society

One interviewee rightly noted a possibly confusing element of the interview questionnaire (Appendix A).[74] "Influence broader society" was listed as one of several

[71] Interviewee #2.
[72] Interviewee #11.
[73] Interviewee #8.
[74] Interviewee #4.

objectives Track IIs could possibly have. In the interviewee's view, there was confusion between purpose and means. "Influence broader society," to him, is a means by which you accomplish a certain purpose. In this case, his understanding of the purpose of Track II is to influence and inform government[75] – influencing broader society is a means by which this is achieved.

Promote Civil Discourse

Promoting civil discourse is a purpose that is related to the maturity of a conflict. It is a purpose necessary at a certain point in conflict, and it can be less useful in others. One interviewee described the major issues of the conflict (Jerusalem, borders, refugees, etc.) in the early 1990s as "virgin territory."[76] According to him, the purpose was not "to slay the dragon, but rather to housebreak it," and "rational discourse" on the major issues simply did not exist prior to this time.[77] As a result, Track II initiatives took on a different purpose, aiming for grievances to be aired in order to move toward substantive discussion. Initial talks in this context are unlikely to produce substance until these grievances are aired.

Produce Documents

"Serious" unofficial talks have purposes that go farther than developing personal interactions, according to one interviewee.[78] The key, to some interviewees, is for

[75] Ibid.
[76] Interviewee #10.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Interviewee #3.

unofficial talks to influence government.[79] How are governments influenced? One interviewee noted various policy inputs at which influence can be directed (including the political and bureaucratic levels), as well as the difference between influence from contacts and from timely documents. [80] In the case of the latter, the influence of such documents often has a "delay mechanism."[81] It is unlikely for issues to be thought out in advance by governments – thus, a vacuum of such documents exists as a result. Documents (reflecting understandings, ways forward, etc.) become necessary if/when official talks resume. When such a moment arrives, this vacuum "sucks in the insights, documents, and proposals of Track II."[82]

Influence Government

The objective of Track II is often to influence government;[83] the question is how, according to one interviewee. [84] As discussed above, it is important to acknowledge the difference between purpose and means: Influencing government is the purpose, while the media and society at large are examples of means of doing so.[85] To one interviewee, the purpose of Track II is to send useful information to the highest authorities, respecting the rules of the initiative (the Chatham House Rule, for example).[86]

[79] Interviewee #3, Interviewee #4, and Interviewee #10.
[80] Interviewee #1.
[81] Interviewee #10.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Peter Jones notes, "all of the various concepts described envisage Track Two as playing a role in support of traditional diplomacy within the nation-state system as it presently exists," except for the work of Vincent Kavaloski. "Canada and Track Two Diplomacy," P. 5.
[84] Interviewee #1.
[85] Interviewee #4.
[86] Interviewee #8.

But timing, or conflict "ripeness,"[87] can determine the extent to which such efforts succeed. The "mutually-hurting stalemate" discussed by Zartman describes a situation in which parties perceive ripeness due to negative conditions on each side – such situations drive parties to finding compromise. But Track II can also play a role in *creating* ripeness without the need for the negative conditions that compel parties to negotiate. By bringing together representatives of large and influential groups, Track II may help participants believe policy changes are possible and beneficial. If the ideas behind these policy changes can be disseminated more widely, or adopted by decision-makers, ripe moments for policy change may be created.

Some initiatives aiming to influence government have fallen victim to poor timing. To one interviewee, the poor timing of one such initiative was the result of the Sharon government and its unwillingness to negotiate for peace during the second *Intifada*.[88] Aga *et al*. note the Israeli government's use of Track II to verify information between Tracks I and II, as well as between multiple Track IIs, as in the case of the AAAS discussions, Oslo, and Track I.[89] Multiple tracks may cause confusion, however. Aga *et al*. observe that the AAAS talks "fell victim to the success of Oslo," with the Palestinians ultimately abandoning it so as not to cause confusion by speaking with Israel through too many channels.[90]

Do Purposes Change?

[87] The issue of timing, or "ripeness," is summarized well in Zartman, I. W. "Ripeness." *Beyond Intractability*. Eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder. Posted: August 2003 <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/ripeness/>. The dialogue over the concept of ripeness is extensive and important. It cannot be summarized here for lack of space, but other sources capture it well, including I.W. Zartman, "Ripeness: The Hurting Stalemate and Beyond," in *International Conflict Resolution after the Cold War*, eds. D. Druckman and P.C. Stern, (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000).
[88] Interviewee #2.
[89] Aga *et al*. p. 68.
[90] Ibid.

In asking this question, it helps to keep in mind one interviewee's comments on the difference between purposes and means for achieving them, as mentioned above.[91] Another interviewee argued that the objectives of Track IIs may change, but their basic purpose never does.[92] To him, conflict resolution and the achievement of a permanent status agreement are the overall purpose of Track II as it relates to the conflict. However, discussions surrounding this purpose are different today than they were 10 years ago.[93] The Clinton parameters, the Taba talks, and the Geneva Accords, among others, provide guidance for official and unofficial talks. Though each government's commitment to their provisions is mixed, they have shaped the view of what a permanent status agreement is expected to look like. However, one dissenting view argued that the objectives of Track II are generally unclear at the outset.[94]

Conclusion on Purpose

A finite amount of free time, combined with multiple opportunities to engage in Track II work, suggests that experienced Track II participants will choose their commitments with care. They are unlikely to accept invitations to participate in meetings that do not satisfy their purposes.

Understanding "the other" has been a core purpose of Track II, but has its marginal utility declined as the conflict has progressed and matured? Israelis and Palestinians, to quote

[91] Interviewee #4.
[92] Interviewee #1.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Interviewee #2.

one interviewee, already "know each other,"[95] and the conflict is no longer about "taming the dragon."[96] The need for understanding each other and promoting civil discourse are common to all conflicts, and achieving these can be positive. But the conflict in question has attained a level of maturity that would relegate these purposes to a lower level of importance. However, one must remember that interviewees from both sides tend to have had more contact with "the other" than average citizens, through official and unofficial channels alike. Whether or not the two societies at large would benefit from greater mutual understanding is another question. Opportunities for softer Track II may exist for this purpose.

The current political situation makes clear that permanent settlement is far from assured in the short-term. Creating political initiative for a permanent settlement may be of particular importance at this stage, especially at the broader, societal level. But how feasible is this goal? Experience demonstrates the limitations of other Track II initiatives aimed at influencing public opinion, such as the Geneva Accords. If a wider array of political views is brought in to Track II discussion to compensate for the limitations of Geneva, could such talks still forge common understandings and shared ideas? Or, could they help to encourage the consolidation of positions on either side?

The creation of new ideas was cited by most participants as a common and worthwhile purpose of Track II. In seeking to do so, initiatives should be clear from the outset as to whether the new ideas sought should conform to a pre-agreed framework of assumptions – or not. The most likely set of framing assumptions will likely be Oslo and its following agreements, in light of Track II's more common purpose of serving Track I.

[95] Ibid.
[96] Interviewee #10.

Producing documents has been a key component of serving Track I. It will be important to identify which areas could benefit most from new documents, i.e. in those areas in which little to no work has taken place. One interviewee noted the refugee file, and specifically the right of return and the Jewish nature of Israel, as such areas.[97] Another interviewee noted the ease with which initiatives fail to treat subjects seriously, often sliding into "bullshit."[98] But he also noted the "nuts and bolts" of political agreement over the Old City of Jerusalem and control over its holy sites as other areas where serious work remains to be done. Attempts to influence government do not always take immediate effect. The "delay mechanism" mentioned by one interviewee means that the usefulness of any documents produced will be tied to ripe moments, whether they come or not.

The source of Track II funding was also explored, and a link between each Track II's purpose and its sponsor was drawn by some participants. Those seeking to convene Track II initiatives must remain cognizant of the appropriateness of sources of funding required to satisfy the purpose of their initiatives and their related consequences.

This data collected in this section point to the potential for Track II to satisfy personal, professional, and process goals. Crafting such initiatives will be key to ensuring the quantity and quality of future Track II participants. It is an important component of success, the next subject to which this paper turns.

[97] Interviewee #8.
[98] Interviewee #10.

Section Three: Success and Failure of Track II Talks

Defining Success

Before judging whether a particular initiative was successful or not, one must determine what constitutes both "success" and "failure." Doing so is difficult.[99] Interviewees were nearly unanimous on this point.

Though a difficult task, interviewees were able to identify a number of indicators of success. One recurring theme was the need to include "relevant people."[100] Those Track

[99] Agha *et al*. p. 5. Also, Peter Jones' "Canada and Track Two Diplomacy" contains a section which discusses whether a generic model of "success" can be developed. This topic is identified by Jones as one the major recurring questions in the field of Track II (P. 10). It concludes by suggesting that "hard and fast rules" are unlikely to be found. Other authors have wrestled with this issue, and the issue requires space beyond what is available in this paper. Please see Chigas, Diana . "Track II (Citizen) Diplomacy." *Beyond Intractability*. Eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder. Posted: August 2003 <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/track2_diplomacy/>; and sources identified in Peter Jones' "Canada and Track Two Diplomacy," including Jones, Peter. "Filling a Critical Gap or Just Wasting Time? Track Two Diplomacy and Middle East Regional Security,"*op cit.*; Lewis, H. "Evaluation and Assessment of Interventions," in Beyond Intractability, eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess, (Boulder, Colorado: Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, September 2004), 11 August 2009, www.beyondintractability.org/essay/evaluation; D'Estree, T.P., L.A. Fast, J.N., Weiss, and M.S. Jakobsen, "Changing the Debate about 'Success' in Conflict Resolution Efforts," in Negotiation Journal, (April 2001): 101-113; Church C., J. Shouldice, *The Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Interventions: Framing the State of Play*, (Letterkenny, Ireland: Browne, 2002), http://www.incore.ulster.ac.uk/publications/research/ incore%20A5final1.pdf; and C. Church and J. Shouldice, *The Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Interventions, PART II: Emerging Practice and Theory*, (Letterkenny, Ireland: Browne, 2003), http://www.incore.ulster.ac.uk/publications/research/THE%20FINAL%20VERSION%202.pdf.

IIs that are "object-oriented" – those that seek to create concrete documents or proposals – were also believed to be more successful.[101] In contrast, unsuccessful talks were described as "touchy-feely, fuzzy, amorphous exchanges of ideas, and people-to-people projects."[102] On a more basic level, one interviewee believed that any process in which Israelis and Palestinians are talking to each other and not killing each other is, to some degree, successful.[103]

In general, interviewees tended to agree that impact on Track I is the most important measure by which to judge Track II's success. This view accords with the work of Fisher, which states the most pertinent contributions of Track II are those that help "pave the way" toward official agreements.[104] It is worth noting that "paving the way" may happen on more than one level. Track II may facilitate official agreements, but it may also serve broader goals, such as societal reconciliation. This latter process is by nature multi-faceted and may provide an array of opportunities for unofficial dialogue.

Finally, another common response centered on the need to adjust measures of success to the goals of each process. In short, success depends on goals and whether they are met – or not. For this paper, success will be defined as "the satisfaction of purpose," and conversely failure will be defined as the opposite. The preceding discussion on purpose revealed differing and overlapping definitions of purpose among interviewees. It explored the distinction between personal and process goals, a distinction of value to the discussion of success. As such, the concept of success will be looked at by establishing

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[100] Interviewee #2, Interviewee #3, and Interviewee #11.
[101] Interviewee #10.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Interviewee #3.
[104] Fisher, Ronald J. "Conclusion: Evidence for the Essential Contributions of Interactive Conflict Resolution," in *Paving the Way… op cit.*

the degree to which participant and process purposes were met. Did individual Track II participants achieve the personal goals they set for themselves? Did the Track II process achieve its desired outcome? A third aspect should be added to this discussion: The role of the third party and their purposes. The future of Track II on the conflict is bound to the perceptions third parties have of their potential contribution to conflict resolution and their desire to initiate further talks. Perceived failure of past third party Track II engagement may reduce the likelihood of future third party sponsorship and/or facilitation, just as the opposite may encourage it. The next major section of this paper, following this discussion of success and failure, explores this issue.

The interviewee data collected for this section came from the first two questions of section "3 – Evaluation" of the interview questionnaire.

Explanations of success and failure are bound to reflect the differing and overlapping definitions of purpose discussed earlier. As such they are complex and subjective.

Participant Success

What do participants "get" out of Track II? Interviewees' assessments of the success of their own goals as participants were mixed, but generally positive. One Palestinian interviewee noted that she has gained a significant amount of knowledge about the Israeli political system, including its decision-making processes.[105] One Israeli interviewee gained a new appreciation for the importance of choosing words carefully when meeting with Palestinians.[106] Track II can also help participants maintain a certain

[105] Interviewee #2.
[106] Interviewee #4.

closeness and continuity with issues that may fall off the Track I radar.[107] Similar successes were mentioned by other participants, most of which related to increased knowledge of "the other" and non-commercial networking opportunities. Diana Chigas, commenting on the results of Track II, notes "the most commonly observed change is the breaking down of negative stereotypes and generalizations of the other side."[108] However, many interviewees noted that both sides are, by this stage of the conflict, very well-known to each other.[109]

One Palestinian interviewee expressed a unique view on Track II's role as a channel for fulfilling her "national duty."[110] This national duty is comprised of a need to assert Palestinian rights and views that might not otherwise be heard, as many prominent Palestinian activists are either imprisoned or lack sufficient command of the English language to participate in Track II.

However, despite these successes, these same interviewees doubted the overall success achieved in Track II. Optimistic third parties often made participants feel as if it was their responsibility to get along, which appeared at times as attempts to create false hope.[111] Are the individual successes of participants enough to justify Track II? The same Israeli participant mentioned above expressed scepticism about this, despite claiming many individual benefits over the course of many processes.[112]

[107] Interviewee #5.
[108] Chigas, "Track II (Citizen) Diplomacy."
[109] Interviewee #2.
[110] Interviewee #5.
[111] Interviewee #2.
[112] Interviewee #4.

Despite reservations about the overall usefulness of Track II, one participant summed up the cost-benefit analysis faced by each potential participant well: "Track II adds value, otherwise I would not participate."[113] Ultimately, participants decide for themselves whether a particular Track II will satisfy their purposes. If it should fail in doing so, withdrawal is always a possibility.

Some interviewees expressed reservations about participating in too many Track IIs. At the current stage of the conflict, and with a great number of past and existing processes to consider, these interviewees explained that their decisions to participate in future initiatives are made with a degree of selectivity and caution.[114] Most interviewees are professionals who have demanding and time-consuming careers. Others are retired, but lead active post-career lives that constrain their availability to participate in Track II talks. Their participation is very rarely remunerated;[115] one of the few rewards they obtain is the opportunity to visit new places or experience luxurious accommodations, but even this can take away from time spent with family and other pursuits.[116]

Process Success

A recurring point echoed by several interviewees was the need to judge individual Track IIs according to the purpose(s) determined for each process at the outset. A wide range of possible goals was described. Minimalist goals include simple meetings to exchange views – more ambitious goals are those that seek to create documents reflecting joint understandings that would then be transmitted to decision makers and, it would be hoped, acted upon. Interviewees were asked about "modest" vs. "ambitious" goals of

[113] Interviewee #5.
[114] Interviewee #2, Interviewee #5, and Interviewee #11.
[115] Interviewee #5.
[116] Interviewee #1 and Interviewee #8.

Track II. One interviewee provided greater clarity by rejecting this terminology in favour of "realistic" vs. "unrealistic" goals of Track II.[117]

One measure of process success mentioned by an interviewee is the ability to keep participants engaged in a process over the long-term; those that do succeed tend to keep participants' thinking agile and "sharp" on the issues.[118]

Much of the value generated in Track II is due to the relative secrecy and comfort in which meetings take place. This was echoed by one interviewee who noted that the more successful Track IIs were those without publicity – publicity, in his view, usually hurts processes.[119]

Some processes possess critical design flaws that prevent them from being successful.[120] For example, meetings on the Palestinian refugee issue that seek to discuss only the issue of compensation have frequently failed.[121] This has been due to the meeting facilitator's failure to recognize the Palestinian need to discuss the right of return in conjunction with issues like compensation. As a result, such meetings become derailed for a failure to recognize the complexity and interrelatedness of certain issues.

One interviewee doubted the extent to which Track II achieved its desired results in the way of influencing government through promoting greater understanding.[122] Few participants, in his view, change their views as the result of interactions in Track II.

[117] Interviewee #1.
[118] Interviewee #5.
[119] Interviewee #1.
[120] Interviewee #8.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Interviewee #4.

Another interviewee expressed frustration with those talks that place unwarranted obligations on participants;[123] the luxurious settings and high expectations provided and held by third parties can often have adverse effects on Track II. [124]

Interviewees were at odds when asked about the level of difficulty and the value of various goals. The creation of a consensus document – reflecting the group's consensus view on a particular topic – was described by some as difficult and some as easy. The value of such a document was questioned by some who felt that they often end up on shelves, unused and forgotten. Others believed that documents are essential to the process, providing ready material for official negotiators when the time is right. Nonetheless, one interviewee doubted the value of producing documents, stating that processes that seek this goal tend to be "a waste of time."[125]

As mentioned earlier in this section, some interviewees stated that the more successful Track IIs are those that are "object-oriented." Those that attempted to simulate real negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians – considering that governments on each side would not do this preparatory work themselves – are such initiatives.[126] Object-orientation additionally provides a clear method for determining the success or failure of a particular initiative, as the completion of objective goals is easier to determine. Objective goals vary in terms of difficulty, which suggests the value of organizing process objectives according to a scale representing various levels of difficulty.

[123] Interviewee #5.
[124] Interviewee #8.
[125] Interviewee #2.
[126] Interviewee #10.

The Jerusalem Old City Initiative (JOCI) provides an interesting case for measuring success in a scaled manner. A publication was successfully created as a result of the meetings held to discuss the fate of the Old City of Jerusalem, which included recommendations for a special administrative regime for the Old City. This was a unique and valuable contribution to the debate surrounding the Old City.[127] However, the JOCI has yet to achieve success at the official level. According to one interviewee, it is primarily a third-party series of documents (though it includes significant contributions from Israelis and Palestinians) – it has not yet been accepted by either side.[128] Moreover, until the peace process advances, its chances for implementation remain distant. According to a scaled success model, it was successful in the production of a document containing innovating ideas – this was JOCI's main purpose. Should the success of a Track II like JOCI be judged according to its own internal objectives, or by goals that lie outside the control of JOCI, such as future impact on the peace process? Having ideas absorbed into the official process is an implicit goal of many Track IIs. However, the fact that the official process it is not yet ready to engage JOCI's work does not indicate failure on the part of JOCI. Rather, it achieved success according to its own objectives and its future contribution toward ending the conflict may be subject to a "delay mechanism" (discussed earlier) dependent upon political progress on both sides.

Is the success of a particular Track II's goals the product of internal or external factors? In the view of one interviewee, internal dynamics have a stronger bearing on success than external factors; in other words, "there is something to be said for good management vs. bad management." [129] It would seem that certain goals – producing a document, for example – are dependent on internal factors, including third party

[127] Interviewee #9.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Interviewee #5.

management and participants themselves. Others, such as the official acceptance of such documents, involve political factors that may be difficult or impossible to control. Some have tried: The Geneva Accords initiative was an attempt to influence public opinion – a large-scale political undertaking, including the document being sent to every household in Israel – that, as discussed previously, has had limited political impact.

In the view of one interviewee, if a project's product gets implemented, it will have been a success – if it stays on the shelf, it will have failed.[130] Most interviewees expressed the need for Track II to have an impact on conflict resolution in order to truly succeed. The next section explores the contribution of Track II to conflict resolution.

Conclusion: Contribution to Conflict Resolution

Goals set by various Track IIs, according to interviewees, vary in difficulty and impact on the peace process. Talks may be successful according to their own internal goals, but their contribution to ending the conflict may be questioned.

It is worth considering the incremental nature of the conflict resolution framework laid out by Oslo. Though challenges to this framework have delayed its implementation, it remains the standard guiding approach for attempts to achieve a permanent status agreement. Given this incremental approach, success – conceived as contribution to the peace process – must, accordingly, recognize the success of those Track II processes that achieve significant, incremental contributions to achieving a permanent status agreement. Aga *et al*. argue:

[130] Interviewee #9.

> "The ultimate failure of the Oslo *process* to deliver a final and stable resolution of the conflict over time should not be confused with the effectiveness of the Oslo Track-II talks as a breakthrough *mechanism* in 1993…Whereas the implementation of the Oslo agreements may have been fatally flawed and full of misperceptions and delusions, the fact remains that the Oslo Track-II put in place a pathway to ending the conflict. Ultimately, only a return to this Oslo legacy is likely to provide the basis for a lasting settlement." (emphasis added by Aga *et al*.) [131]

The Olso talks were initially aimed at supporting the official process that was begun in Madrid, which had stalled. There was no intention of replacing the official process begun in Madrid.[132] The Oslo talks' goal shifted once it became clear that significant process could be achieved at the official level. More critically, their contribution to conflict resolution between Israelis and Palestinians – in particular through the mutual recognition achieved between the Israeli government and the PLO – was enormous.

The Oslo case points to a need for flexibility in determining "success." Changing circumstances may present emerging opportunities, and standards for success should reflect an appreciation of the talks' own goals and their contribution to ending the conflict.

Ultimately, success can be determined by measuring the satisfaction of participant, process, and overall (contribution to conflict resolution) purposes. They may be measured separately, but there are also related to one another. Talks that satisfy process and overall goals, but not participant goals, risk discouraging participation in future talks. Those processes that do not succeed according to their own goals are unlikely to serve participant goals or overall conflict resolution. And those Track IIs that have little or no impact on overall conflict resolution will lack relevance and not succeed

[131] Aga *et al*., p. 55-56.
[132] Aga *et al*., p. 5.

over the long-term. However, as one interviewee noted, even unsuccessful Track IIs may continue to receive support from third parties wishing to help;[133] these third parties often lack the critical ability to discern the impact of their sponsorship or facilitation.

We turn next to the role of the third party, a critical issue in the field of Track II.

[133] Interviewee #11.

Section Four: The Role of the Third Party

The role of the third party requires further examination, as it is multi-faceted and influential in the creation, direction, and future composition of Track II initiatives.

First, definition is required. “Third parties” play a number of roles that require clarification. Agha *et al*. distinguish between “sponsors” and “mentors” of talks. They define the term “sponsor” as an institution hosting talks or on whose behalf talks occur.[134] They employ the term “chaperon” to describe “a high-level political leader who serves as a chaperon for the talks” who “would convince leaders of their import,”[135] thus facilitating transfer of Track II product to Track I.[136] Rather than use these terms, this research project developed an initial terminology that referred to “sponsors” and “facilitators.” The term sponsor was meant to refer to the institution hosting, and paying, for the talks, while the term facilitator was intended to refer to the individual(s) charged with running the talks. This terminology accorded with the anticipated responses of interviewees.

Interviewees were indeed concerned with third party roles, specifically two roles: who finances meetings and who runs them. However, further precision was added by one interviewee who noted the differences between the roles of “initiator,” “manager,” and

[134] Aga *et al*. p. 4.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Rather than discuss transfer, this paper focuses on the perceptions of interviewees regarding third parties involved in Track II. For further discussion on the topic of transfer, please see Nan, Susan Allen and Andrea Strimling. "Track I - Track II Cooperation." *Beyond Intractability*. Eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder. Posted: January 2004 <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/track_1_2_cooperation/>.

"financier" of talks.[137] Thus, the role of "initiator" has been added to this analysis. The resulting terminology, to be explained and explored below, uses the terms "initiator," "sponsor," and "facilitator." Another interviewee built on this distinction by specifying that these roles can be played by separate third parties, or just one.[138]

Initiator

The role of the initiator is a critical component in the development of Track II talks. It takes a certain political and conflict acumen to recognize this type of opportunity necessary for Track II.[139] Moreover, Track II initiators *act* on this recognition by creating the conditions necessary to start talks. This role includes preliminary work to identify participants, potential sponsors, facilitators, and a basic concept around which support can be rallied.[140]

Are Track II talks initiated by the parties in conflict, or by third parties? One interviewee, in reference to the Oslo process, noted the central initiator role played by Yossi Beillin (then Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister) along with Yair Hirschfeld and Ron Pundik, Israeli academics. [141] Not only did Beillin help initiate the talks, but he remained integral to the reporting mechanism Oslo participants developed to keep the Israeli government informed of developments.[142] However, the Oslo case cannot be taken as representative of all Track II on the conflict. Another interviewee stated that the majority of Track II initiatives from his experience were initiated by third parties, and only a limited number

[137] Interviewee #1.
[138] Interviewee #3.
[139] Zartman, "Ripeness."
[140] Chigas, "Track II (Citizen) Diplomacy."
[141] Interviewee #1. See also Aga *et al*. p. 37-42.
[142] Interviewee #1.

are initiated by the parties themselves.[143] A discussion of "supply-led" Track II takes place later in this section. The evidence gathered from interviews suggests that third parties are the primary initiators of Track II talks. They may consult with parties to ensure the appropriateness and timeliness of their envisioned initiatives, but a crucial distinction – and value – lies in their role as initiators. As initiators, they render the task of bringing the parties together easier by relieving any pressure that may come from being first to seek out discussion with the other side.

Sponsor

Sponsors are those who fund and/or provide the good offices for Track II talks. These roles may be performed separately or by the same government or organization. In the case of the conflict, one interviewee explained that most of the funding for Track II comes from foreign governments, with some from wealthy individuals and some from foundations.[144] Another interviewee echoed this view, noting that all initiatives of which he had been a part were at least partly funded by government (both foreign and those of the parties).[145] How does this evidence relate to the previous section, which found that the majority of Track II initiatives are third party-initiated? The high degree of third party initiation, combined with foreign government funding, indicates that there is both the desire of third parties to intervene and the funding to support it. A third party government may boast significant resources, but may be often too restricted to act in an overt manner. Thus they may partner with non-governmental organizations that may help provide good offices for talks.

[143] Interviewee #3.
[144] Interviewee #11.
[145] Interviewee #4.

If governments and other third parties are taking an interest in sponsoring Track II, the question of third party interests arises: what exactly do these parties seek through initiation and sponsorship? This question will be addressed shortly.

Facilitator

The final role discussed here is that of the Track II facilitator. As previously mentioned, this need not be the same actor as either the initiator or the sponsor. Indeed, it requires a specific skill set that differs from that of the initiator or sponsor. One interviewee argues that area-specific knowledge is not as important as possessing facilitation skills.[146] However, another interviewee pointed out the perils of having a facilitator with too little knowledge of the issue at hand. Facilitator ignorance of the issue under discussion, according to this interviewee, was enough to help unite Israelis and Syrians against their American facilitator during the Wye negotiations (a Track I discussion).[147] Having a facilitator with insufficient knowledge can be embarrassing,[148] and can detract from the legitimacy a good facilitator should have.[149]

Do facilitators have their own agendas? This question emerged from interviewee responses. One interviewee described a particular facilitator whose agenda appeared obvious.[150] The Track II's purpose was to discuss the Quartet's proposed "Roadmap for peace" plan. The facilitator, according to the interviewee, "took (participants) through (the Roadmap), asking what was offensive."[151] In other words, the facilitator's non-stated

[146] Interviewee #3.
[147] Interviewee #1.
[148] Interviewee #8.
[149] Chigas, "Track II (Citizen) Diplomacy."
[150] Interviewee #2.
[151] Ibid.

purpose was to discover what elements of the plan offended either side and to report back to the Quartet on what obstacles the plan could face. As Rouhana observes, most interventions described in the literature do not state third party interests.[152] Interestingly, he notes:

> It is one of the very few professions in which the professional seeks to convince people to accept their services free of charge. In some cases, they even pay their clients to receive their services and work on resolving their conflict. When participants in meetings, workshops, conferences, dialogue groups, and seminars meet, their expenses are covered by the third party.[153]

Most facilitators likely have agendas. They choose to initiate, sponsor, or facilitate Track II for reasons that must, to some extent, satisfy their purposes[154] – otherwise, they would not invest the resources necessary to play these roles.

Presuming that most third parties do have agendas, and that those agendas reflect their interests, another question arises: Does this matter? Suspicion of outsiders is likely in conflict situations, and hidden agendas can be detrimental not only to the initiative in question, but to the entire field of Track II itself.[155] It order to add precision to the question of whether third party agendas matter, I suggest two supplemental questions: Is the facilitator's agenda hidden, or open? And does their agenda accord with the purposes of the Track II? Rouhana's recommendation that third parties forthrightly declare agendas or interests at the outset appears to have gained acceptance in the field.[156] Therefore, if a third party declares openly and honestly their interests from the outset, those interests can then be judged by participants as to whether they accord with

[152] Rouhana, Nadim. "Unofficial Third Party Intervention in International Conflict: Between Legitimacy and Disarray." *Negotiation Journal*, July, 1995. P. 262.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid, p. 261-2.
[155] Ibid, 262.
[156] Jones, Peter. "Canada and Track Two Diplomacy," p. 7.

the interests of the initiative at hand. Third party agendas clearly matter – but what matters more is how they are managed by all concerned.

Additionally, the consensus emerging from Track II's best practices literature points to legitimacy and impartiality as key attributes of a successful facilitator.[157] Most participants agreed with this, with slight differences of opinion over the extent to which specific skills (such as training in group processes) were required.

Criticism and Ways Forward

Certain interviewees outlined criticism of the roles third parties have played. One stated that some sponsors have treated Track IIs as media opportunities, but "without the media present, with feel good handshakes, hugs, and the opportunity for host governments to feel they were making progress."[158]

An important theme highlighted by several interviewees is the issue of third party interests. One interviewee likened Track II to a type of politics, and further noted that "nothing in politics is free."[159] One benefit received by government, according to another interviewee, are the new ideas that emerge from Track II activities.[160] However, beyond magnanimously seeking out ideas that may contribute to peace, third parties – just like Track II participants – receive personal benefits from their roles. Interviewees echoed this view, noting that most facilitators are motivated to pursue their own self-interest

[157] Fisher, R.J., *Interactive Conflict Resolution*, *op cit.*
[158] Interviewee #2.
[159] Interviewee #6.
[160] Interviewee #4.

(such as career advancement) through Track II, albeit in mostly in noble, peace-motivated ways.[161]

One interviewee argued that Track II diplomacy – at the current stage of maturity in the conflict – has become a self-sustaining industry.[162] The benefits it provides to Track II practitioners are not monetary, but rather enable practitioners to build academic or other professional careers in the field of conflict resolution.[163] One interviewee described the field as "supply-driven,"[164] suggesting as well that the supply of Track II outweighs the demand. The benefits conferred upon those seen "to be doing something" provide ample incentive for third parties to initiate Track II, given the relatively low cost of hosting talks.

If there is no shortage of third party initiative for Track II (or "supply"), then one must probe the extent and nature of the demand for Track II. The emerging good practices literature in Track II has identified participant ownership as crucial to the sustainability and success of Track II talks.[165] Therefore, third parties seeking to initiate new Track II must identify and act on the demand of future participants. Participant perceptions of the roles of past third parties add a valuable dimension to the question of the future look of Track II on the conflict. Understanding what roles participants perceive as most productive and appropriate can help guide the future behaviour of third parties seeking to assist conflict resolution through Track II diplomacy. This discussion entails an important policy dimension. It may help guide the policy of third parties who seek to improve the quality of and demand for their work.

[161] Interviewee #5, Interviewee #6, and Interviewee #8.
[162] Interviewee #5.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Jones, Peter. "Canada and Track Two Diplomacy," p. 7.

Rouhana's analysis of an unofficial third party intervention in the former Yugoslavia makes clear the need to pay attention to parties' needs.[166] In his view, the third party prioritized issues that did not reflect participant concerns, but rather "third party assumptions of what the parties needed."[167] Moreover, issues pushed by the third party, including psychological concepts such as "healing," "forgiveness," "grief," and others bore little relevance to the conflict's causes or resolution. The third party also imposed levels of analysis that benefited their own work. They were, in Rouhana's view, irrelevant – and, considering the existential danger of the conflict, possibly damaging – to participants.[168] The potential damage to participants includes diminished credibility, psychological harm, reduced optimism, and threats to their lives.[169] Clearly, the costs of poor interventions are serious, and they are more likely to be borne by participants.[170]

How can harm be avoided? How can interventions be improved so as to avoid such outcomes? Rouhana identifies a key problem in the field that, if addressed, may help improve interventions, increasing the chances for positive impact and decreasing the chances for harm. He argues that a lack of methodological definition exists in the field – approaches are often "not defined, coherent, or replicable."[171] This opens the door to third party "freewheeling," guided by "experience and intuition."

However, Track II scholars appear to have heeded Rouhana's call for greater methodological rigour and evaluation, at least in part. The emerging literature on best-practices is evidence of this. Jones, for example, provides his own list of ethical

[166] Rouhana, Nadim. "Unofficial Third Party Intervention in International Conflict," p. 260.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid, p. 260-1.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid, p. 260.

responsibilities for third parties, including: “first, do no harm;” ensure long-term third party commitment; help parties “find their own (solution);” be modest as to the potential impact of the initiative; and promote transparency regarding the third party’s background and realism in what can be accomplished.[172]

Rouhana’s call to empiricism, however, has not been fully heeded. A debate lingers between those who call for greater scientific rigour and those who see Track II as more art than science.[173] Those who view it as more of an art doubt the extent to which experimentation can be systematized, given the uniqueness of each conflict and intervention. The debate continues.[174]

Where else can this work be improved? Instead of devising hard and fast rules for Track II to follow, interviewees pointed to a number of areas specific to the conflict that may benefit from improvement. One suggestion was made to increase attentiveness to the composition of the meetings, in particular to possible asymmetry between the sides.[175] In this Israeli interviewee’s experience, the Israeli side tended to include more traditional Track II participants, namely former officials and leaders in civil society with influence but no official positions. On the Palestinian side, the interviewee noted a lack of such participants. This, in his view, is due to the relative weakness of Palestinian civil society as compared to Israeli civil society. As a result, Palestinian participants tend to be much closer to Track I, if not Track I officials themselves. Equal attention should be paid to the effects of self-selection on the composition of both sides, including when recruitment is

[172] Jones, Peter. “Canada and Track Two Diplomacy,” p. 7.
[173] Ibid., p. 6.
[174] See the summary of this debate in Peter Jones, “Canada and Track Two Diplomacy,” p. 6.
[175] Interviewee #3.

delegated to trusted members of each side and when participants choose to either accept or decline invitations to participate in Track II.

The relevance of participants was a recurring theme. The standard definition of relevance has been prior involvement in Track I, according to one interviewee.[176] In her view, some experts with relevant knowledge are invited, but this tends to be the exception. Relevance may need redefinition: two interviewees were particularly vocal about the need to include greater diversity in Track II participants.[177] Both spoke of it as an "old boys club" that pays scant attention to the perspectives of women and youth.

Throughout, interviewees noted the value of creativity in getting past official blockages.[178] Creativity, while not the exclusive domain of women and the young, would certainly benefit from greater diversity. Moreover, if relevance is to be redefined it may do so to include those who are most relevant to broader societal acceptance of the ideas generated in Track II. This idea may have the potential to shift Track II away from its traditional participant base – i.e. former officials and influential non-officials – toward the outer rings of "multi-track" diplomacy.[179] It may help provide channels to a greater number and variety of segments of society who will ultimately decide the fate of Track II-inspired ideas through their elected leaders. However, it also risks losing the unique ability of Track II to produce policy and political insight by expanding participation and possibly compromising the private nature of meetings.

[176] Interviewee #8.
[177] Interviewee #5 and Interviewee #8.
[178] Interviewee #2, Interviewee #8, Interviewee #9, and Interviewee #11.
[179] Diamond, L. and J. McDonald, *Multi-track Diplomacy: A Systems Approach to Peace*, 3rd ed. West Hartford CT: Kumarian Press, 1996. The "multi-track" diplomacy model, as put forward by the authors, includes nine separate tracks, including official diplomacy, Track II, business, religion, and others. Taken together, these tracks form an entire "system" with significant interplay between tracks.

In terms of facilitation, the suggestion to make meetings more "object-oriented" was discussed above. A desire was expressed for facilitators who know the basic facts about the conflict, who are skilled facilitators, and most importantly, who recognize that the parties are the most knowledgeable and the owners of their own process.[180] The Swiss facilitation of Geneva Accords, for example, met this standard according to one interviewee.[181]

[180] Interviewee #8.
[181] Ibid.

Conclusion

This paper asked the following question: Can Track II still contribute meaningfully to resolution of the conflict, and if so, in which areas and ways? The conflict has reached a level of maturity in which big breakthroughs, such as Oslo, are unlikely to happen again. But incremental and productive work may still be completed.

This paper relied primarily on data collected in interviews with Track II experts – those with previous experience as participants. Many of these experts continue their participation in Track II and many will likely participate in future initiatives. Therefore, they collectively provide unique insight into Track II's future contribution to resolution of the conflict.

In which areas can Track II contribute to conflict resolution? Areas that were mentioned include the Palestinian refugee file, specifically the issue of the right of return and the Jewish nature of Israel; and the Old City of Jerusalem, including the "nuts and bolts" of political agreement over its control and the future of its holy sites. The Obama administration's renewed interest in the peace process suggests that the vacuum of ideas and documents on these topics may soon need filling.

This paper also suggests a number of lessons for Track II's future on the conflict. Certain purposes – such as getting to know "the other" – may no longer be relevant, given the maturity of the conflict. Others, such as aiming to speed the socialization of members of Hamas into the peace process, may not be realistic. Realism and relevance are tied to the status of official negotiations. Track II's primary purpose has been to support the

official channel. As a result, identifying purposes for future Track IIs requires finding areas in which they can add value to official negotiations.

Success is difficult to define, but it can be defined according to whether participant and process purposes were met, and whether the initiative contributed to conflict resolution. An argument in favour of a “scaled” success was made in order to allow for this type of analysis.

Third parties seeking to initiate, sponsor, or facilitate Track II should be wary of the potential pitfalls of each role, as identified in this paper. Much of the initiative for Track II comes from third parties, and they exert significant control over Track II processes. This entails certain responsibilities to ensure both ethical and realistic work is undertaken. In order to ensure high quality participants, functional processes, and contribution to conflict resolution, the purposes of each must realistic and relevant.

Fostering lasting solutions remains a critical area for Track II. First, the failure of the Oslo process to end the conflict – to date – suggests the need to create future processes that seek to enlist broader sets of allies for greater societal acceptance. Second, the inability of the Geneva Accords to attract widespread political support indicates a need for diversity and representation among Track II participants. Those who criticized Geneva’s political relevance argued that its participants from both sides largely agreed on most issues, and that more extreme participants were not included. But can each prescription be followed while retaining the ability of Track II to manage issues differently and more productive than Track I? Broadening processes risks initiatives’ privacy, while including extremists risks the ability to achieve agreement.

Ultimately, successful future initiatives will be those that correctly calibrate purposes, identify realistic goals, strike a balance between relevant and representative participants, and situate themselves to assist Track I. Track II may never again produce a breakthrough on the scale of Oslo, but a smaller number of focused initiatives may, over the long-term, provide modest assistance toward an even greater goal: conflict resolution.

Appendix A: Interview Questionnaire

By: Ian B. Anderson

The following questionnaire will be used to explore the views of Israelis and Palestinians who have previously been involved in Track II diplomacy initiatives relating to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Its purpose is to establish the interviewees' previous involvement in Track II, their views the process and its results, whether future Track II talks are likely, and what those talks will look like.

Interviewees will be selected from across the political spectrum in Israel and the Palestinian territories in order to capture information that is as representative as possible. Confidentiality, anonymity, and other guarantees will be assured to all those who participate. To this end, and prior to its undertaking, a consultation with the Research Grants and Ethics Office of the University of Ottawa will be conducted to assess whether or not the project requires an ethical review.

The questions have been divided into three categories: Background, Procedural, and Evaluation.

Questions:

1 – Background

Please describe your association with Track II initiatives on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

In what capacity did you participate in Track II talks?

How many Track IIs have you participated in?

a. 1-5
b. 6-10
c. 10+

Of those, what percentage was third party sponsored, and what percentage was strictly Israeli/Palestinian sponsored?

2 – Procedural

Of the Tracks IIs you participated in, how many would you consider Track II, Track 1.5, or some other type of dialogue?

How many were known to Israeli and/or Palestinian officials?

How many included officials acting in a 'private' capacity?

Who selected the participants on each side? How were they selected?

Did membership in the process change as it went forward? Why? How was this done?

What were the initial objectives of each initiative (please rank for each Track II):

a. Share perspective, get to know one another
b. Create new ideas
c. Influence government
d. Influence the media
e. Influence broader society
f. Other

Did the objectives change throughout the process?

What were the mechanisms of transfer?

How was each initiative organized?

a. What was the role of the third party? What their role beneficial or not? Why?
b. How were the sessions structured? What their structure beneficial or not? Why?

3 – Evaluation

For each Track II process, do you believe it was “successful”? How do you measure success?

More generally, what in your view are the hallmarks of successful and unsuccessful Track IIs?

Given your experience, and the current state of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, do you believe Track II can play a beneficial role? If so, what role? What shape will it take?

Is the current political situation in the Middle East and globally amenable to further Track II diplomacy on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict?

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Interviewee #4: Interviewed by author, Tel Aviv, 18 May 2009.

Interviewee #5: Interviewed by author, Ramallah, West Bank, 12 May 2009.

Interviewee #6: Interviewed by author, East Jerusalem, 20 May 2009.

Interviewee #7: Interviewed by author, East Jerusalem, 20 May 2009.

Interviewee #8: Interviewed by author, Tel Aviv, Israel, 14 May 2009.

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Interviewee #10: Interviewed by author, Jerusalem, Israel, 18 May 2009.

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