

Track II diplomacy and its impact on Pakistan India peace process

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Introduction

Successful crises management has been an important security objective for most of the modern states, which implies having an ability to control the escalation of crises so as to preclude any unintended effects. A further objective might be to avoid the outbreak of war by creating firebreaks that attempts to guarantee a pause before hostilities start.

Anselm Straus wrote many years ago that a society is a “negotiated order” and that unless you are capable of getting all you want all the time, you had better learnt how to negotiate. “In fact, things will work better if you can negotiate in a cooperative and constructive way, because doing so preserves relationship as well as helps you get some of the things you want”.¹

In case of Pakistan-India, the two traditional rival neighbors, either no mechanism exists to contain a crisis or such mechanisms like Joint Anti-Terror Mechanism (JATM) fail to address the crises. The tension between India and Pakistan has given birth to arms race and armed conflicts and badly shaken mutual confidence, and created deep-rooted suspicions between the people of two countries. Because of pervasive sense of fear and unlimited rivalry, both the countries have failed to make any substantive gains in terms of socio-economic developments or establish a dependable security apparatus. The net cost of the enmity is visible in the form of lopsided development- heavy defense expenditures and teeming poor population. Being the two nuclear states, it becomes important to create an atmosphere of good will so that in future tangible moves could be made for peace, because, though, the entire region has witnessed conflicts, wars and extra regional involvement and “though bilateral disputes vitiated regional security and political environment, the core of conflict remained between Pakistan and India”.²

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The prevailing enmity of Pakistan and India evolved gradually since the occupation of India by Muslims. The post-independence era instead of ushering in a new age of mutual respect and cooperation has increased and institutionalized the conflicts and disputes. More than six decades down the road and the two countries have not moved out of a perpetual state of fragile peace and reap benefit of mutual cooperation in various fields. So far, all efforts to bring the two neighbors to a reasonable and ego-sustaining settlement through official negotiations have failed. Often half-hearted efforts made under foreign compulsion did more harm than good. As Moonis Ahmar says, “Lack of political-will within Indian and Pakistani regimes to ameliorate bilateral ties on the basis of equality and peaceful coexistence exacerbated historical cleavages and political and religious mistrust between the two countries”.³

Official efforts started at the very beginning to smooth the unpaved road of relations but no headway had been made except a few solitary events. (Liaquat-Nehru pact, Indus basin water accord and Runn of Khutch are notable examples of peaceful solution of problems). Though official channel or Track I is most authentic form of conflict resolution but in certain extreme cases it serves to enlarge the differences. The modern states are mostly led by the realist perspective of the international relations and their official talks are hampered by the search for power and protection of core interests. India –Pakistan and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts are mentionable cases in this regard. The failure of official channel allows other factors to jump into the fray to try a way out of the impasse by trying to follow the peace models based on conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation.

In case of Pakistan and India, all these three models of peace can be found in the Track II peace initiatives as various actors are trying to change the relations matrix between them and recast the relations from conflict to peace mode. In such cases the failure of official channel, i.e. Track I, paves way for Track II and other unofficial channels known in common parlance as religious diplomacy, cricket diplomacy, people to people contacts and Confidence Building Measures (CBMs).

This paper aims to trace evolution of the non-official channels like Track II and other tracks between Pakistan and India and their impact on peace efforts between the two countries.

The study highlights the fact that the failure of the two states to move ahead has weakened their monopoly as the final arbiter of peace or war. This is one of many lessons that are becoming evident at the end of the

day. The birth of Track II including people to people contacts, endless visits by parliamentarians, journalists and academics and the beginning of multilateral tracks in the shape of more traffic across the Wahga border, are just the by-products of lackluster performance of the officials of the two countries. These private efforts have helped to improve the atmosphere between the two countries by keeping the channels of communication open when officially the two sides suspend all links, which recently happened after the Mumbai attack in 2008.

It is based on descriptive, explanatory and analytical methods and explores how the Track II diplomacy developed between Pakistan and India and its impact on peacemaking efforts between the two countries. It uses mostly the documentary evidence to build the argument. Background interviews have been held with various individuals involved in the Track II diplomacy to get clarity about the issue. Various books, articles, editorials, and essays on the topic have been sifted through for the relevant written material. The libraries, newspaper and journal collections and other relevant resources have also been used. The facilities of leading think tanks including Institute of Regional Studies and various online resources have also been used.

Evolution of Track II diplomacy

The term Track II diplomacy was coined in 1981 by Joseph Montville, a US diplomat to differentiate it from Track I diplomacy which refers to diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts through official channels. The practitioners of Track II consider it a serious technique for any serious discussion on the controversial issues and a pre-negotiation trick. Track I proves clumsy in many ways due to numerous compelling factors, hence the Track II. "Track II diplomacy is unofficial contact and interaction aimed at resolving conflicts," writes, John McDonald, Chairman and co-founder of the Institute of Multi-Track Diplomacy in Washington DC.⁴

The concept was expanded in an article in the journal *Foreign Policy* (winter 1981), which Montville wrote jointly with William D. Davidson, a psychologist. Its title suggests the theme: *Foreign Policy according to Freud- How to Instill Mutual Confidence in Atmosphere of Deep Distrust*. He said, "Track II diplomacy is unofficial, non-structured interaction. It is always open-minded, often altruistic and...strategically optimistic based on the best-case analysis. Its underlying assumption is that actual or potential conflict can be resolved or eased by appealing to common human capabilities to respond to good-will and reasonableness. Scientific and cultural exchanges are examples of Track II diplomacy".⁵

Track II diplomacy and its impact on Pakistan India peace process

It is a “process of unofficial dialogue between disputing parties, conducted directly or with the help of third party, by the influential citizens who normally have access to their governments and have ability to influence the public opinion”.⁶

Track II may be also explained as informal and unofficial activities between members of adversary groups that aim to develop strategies, influence public opinion and organize human and material resources in ways that might help resolve their conflicts.⁷

The vital components of Track II are followings:

1. It is unofficial
2. It is informal
3. It is between individuals/groups of the parties in conflict. (However the third party may drop in as the facilitator. Examples are: Oslo process between Israelis and Palestinians, Neemrana process between Indians and Pakistanis, Sri Lankan peace efforts facilitated by the Norwegian govt.)
4. It has mostly the tacit approval of the government. (Governments jealousy guards the right to make the final peace and castigate any aberration on the part of Track II practitioners.)
5. Its proposals/findings are non-binding.
6. It helps to dispel the mistrust by discovering new grounds for interaction and peace.
7. Individuals involved in the Track II have access to the power corridors and may influence the official Track I and help to build public opinion and a momentum for change.

There is growing community of conflict resolution practitioners. Every individual or organization offers something different in term of methodology, conceptual backgrounds or general approach. Whatever route is taken for Track II, it must have twin aims: immediately it should promote dialogue and CBMs; but in long terms it must doggedly go to the heart of the conflicts. An important purpose of Track II is to create conducive atmosphere. For this, it must evolve pattern for future compromises that should be realistic and practicable “which the government being the consumer can buy and sell to the people”.⁸

During its formative years, Track II mainly focused on the works of the professional in the field of conflict resolution. These professionals would bring together their expertise and knowledge and discuss various conflicts and resolutions. But with the passage of time, Track II was in a

way democratized to involve everyone who can say something reasonable and whose suggestions could not be taken causally. Now a number of individuals from diverse backgrounds are keen advocates of Track II. They include:

- Retired armed forces personnel
- Retired civil servants
- Active academics
- Human rights groups
- Media persons
- Sports persons
- Women-rights activists
- Cultural groups
- NGOs
- International stakeholders
- Politicians (Especially those in opposition)
- Peace activists

Track II may be a home grown phenomenon or product of external interest of foreign groups and countries. In South Asian context it is influenced both by internal and external factors. It may dwell on the peripheral issues letting the prickly ones lying on the ice for a substantial period of time. It may take the shape of CBMs or a simple dialogue, smothering the hot edges with constant fanning of good will sweetmeat. For example, in European cold war tug of war, the crucial spadework was done by officials in the bilateral and multilateral CBMs. In the Middle East, Track II paved the way for the Oslo peace initiative. In South Asian imbroglio Track II activities have been on the cards for a long period.

Sundeep Waslekar in his ACDIS Occasional Paper titled “Track Two Diplomacy in South Asia” has pointed that basically the Track II diplomacy has twin objectives of economic cooperation and conflict resolution. He says that H.T. Parekh, an Indian financial wizard is credited with the initial efforts at expanding regional economic cooperation in the 1960s, who setup an informal group of Bombay based business executives and financial professionals to lobby for South Asian common market. The activities of the group remained limited to few mini-seminars and consultations with the officials of various governments. “Parekh published a series of different articles on South Asian common market in Bombay newspapers that were compiled in a book ‘India and Regional Development’ in 1969..... Within two years of publication of Mr. Parekh’s book war took place between India and Pakistan resulting in the

partial dismemberment of the latter. There was no supporter for any regional cooperation effort. The Bombay group disappeared”.⁹

Later on, a more ambitious effort for economic cooperation in South Asia was made in December 1985 by the launching of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), this time by Track 1.

Another initiative for wider regional cooperation came from Independent Group from South Asian Cooperation (IGSAC), by Dr. Ponna Wignaraja, a former UN official from Sri Lanka. The UN funded the group and it worked on assumption that peace and cooperation in South Asia will remain a dream unless poverty is tackled.

The efforts for economic cooperation in the region had been limited to the scholars and economic administrators. The real economic actor like business entrepreneurs generally had been left out of the picture. The result was complete failure.

Due to lackluster progress in the economic field between India and Pakistan, as well as in the whole region, Track II diplomacy in the economic sphere dithered in early 1990s, paving way for political initiatives. “Policy researches realized that economic cooperation would not be viable unless there was a political breakthrough and unless internal system of government changed”.¹⁰ The realization on the part of the scholars and various peace loving groups helped to move towards the real issue i.e. containment of conflicts.

Waslekar says that the United States government and its private institutions played a key role in initiating various CBMs, and Track II diplomacy projects in 1991. Washington was forced to jump into Indo-Pak fray due to a number of reasons. Obviously the administration was buoyant at the success for the Madrid peace efforts. Besides, uprising in the Kashmir and the nuclear threshold status of India and Pakistan also helped. US wanted to improve the relation between the two countries as their rivalry could jeopardize the NPT regime efforts and create difficulties for US policy makers.

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Initially US was interested in nuclear restraints but soon it realised that unless other thorny issue were addressed, the efforts to enforce the non-proliferation regime would be a wild goose chase. The US started by encouraging the local individuals and groups to jointly address all conflicts and thus help in reducing the tension.

US Information Agency (USIS) designed a visitor program in 1991 to help South Asian researchers to visit research centers in US. The individuals involved were so much influenced that they decided to launch South Asia Network for Conflict Resolution but the project never took off. USIS also hosted a series of World Net dialogues between Indian and Pakistani experts, facilitated by US experts and it got Dr. Saunders to conduct a series of workshop on conflict resolution in the region. Dr. Saunders has been a veteran of Camp David, Oslo peace progress and Dartmouth process. (Dartmouth process involved influential US and USSR citizens in dialogue).

But the most ambitious and enduring effort by USIS was the Neemrana Process. A group of distinguished Indians and Pakistanis were invited to meet at Neemrana fort in Rajhistan, India and the participants identified the following issues to be discussed over a long period of time:

1. Conventional arms race
2. Nuclear proliferation
3. Kashmir
4. Economic relations

There were initiatives launched to address the issues between the two countries in the 1990s through Track II. Time magazine and Frontier Post, Lahore, organized a onetime regional conference on strategic issues. In January 1992, academics from the region gathered at Kathmandu to discuss a research agenda for South Asia. Earlier the South Asian dialogue was launched at New Delhi under the auspices of the Center for Policy Research with support of the Ford Foundation.

Another initiative came from abroad in the form of Friedrich Ebert Foundation push to bring the regional scholars together. It resulted in the series of small seminar with the major Kashmir Conference in May 1994. Japan Mission of Foreign Affairs had been funding two sets of regional dialogue annually in Tokyo. US Institute of Peace also has held workshops at Washington DC on Kashmir.

Apart from foreign funded projects, a number of local peace activists slowly woke up to take up the cause of Track II, which led to the creation of Pakistan India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIPFDP) on September 2, 1994 at Lahore. "With the environmentalists, artists and human rights activists from both India and Pakistan meeting regularly in various international and regional forms there was a strongly felt need to initiate a dialogue between the two countries. This was followed by two discussions held by citizens of both countries, first in Lahore on September 2, 1994, followed by second meeting in Delhi on November 25/26, 1994. The deliberations lead to the formation of the People's Forum".¹¹

PIPFDP mostly includes old liberals, remnants of communism, leftists, human rights activists, women rights supporters, general peace activists and NGO, and since its creation, it has been playing important role in Track II efforts. After remaining relatively dormant, it has been revived again recently and it has planned to meet in India in September 2011.

To involve the younger generations in building confidence between the two estranged neighbors, Chris Smith of King's College, London, George Perkonich of the W. Alton Jones Foundation and Stephen P. Cohen of Ford Foundation joined hands to hold a summer school on Arms Control and Conflicts Resolution for young regional strategists, journalists, government officials and scholars. The summer schools were actively participated by women scholars and journalists. Another similar program for young people of the two countries was launched by Henry L. Stimpson Center of Washington D.C. which invited a young Indian and young Pakistani scholar to spend a few weeks together at the center's Washington D.C. facilities to study confidence building measures.

Parliamentarians from both countries (who spent most time when in government to demonize the other country) were also activated by the glamour of the Track II. Benazir Bhutto, opposition leader in 1992, took the lead to invite all opposition leaders in South Asia to Karachi to discuss common vision for the future of region. The same year (1992) Speaker of South Asian countries formed the Association of SAARC Speaker and Parliamentarians.

Certain regional organizations and institutes have been working diligently to promote the dialogue and understanding. A Mumbai based organization International Center for Peace Initiative was active to bring together political leaders from the South Asia in peacemaking efforts. Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad has organized a number of

seminars in this regard. Similar to the Neemrana Process but different in focus is Shanghai Initiative, which deals with nuclear non-proliferation, test ban treaty, ballistic missiles and FMCT issue, and in addition to India and Pakistan, the US and China are also included in it.

Another group called Balsua Group meets on energy and media management issues and hopes to make tangible progress between the two countries on these problems. There is yet another very interesting group called Rimcollians, that meets occasionally. It comprises the alumni of an old school in Dehra Dun and has some distinguished seniors bureaucrats, armed forces officers and businessmen from both sides in their ranks.

Recently the Jinnah Institute (JI), Islamabad and the Center for Dialogue and Reconciliation (CDR), New Delhi, brought together key policy makers from India and Pakistan for a Track II discussion on issues that impact the bilateral relationship. In a two day conference on April 28 and 29, "representatives from India and Pakistan discussed the peace process, the impact of terrorism on Indo-Pak ties, the issue of Kashmir and the role that the media can play in mediating the relationship between India and Pakistan".¹²

With increasing traffic of non-government efforts to resolve outstanding issues, new nomenclatures for such efforts were discovered and experts coined new descriptions like Track III and Multi-Track diplomacy to highlight back door communications between India and Pakistan. One of the concerns of the peaceniks in the Indo-Pak context has been the marginal presence or non-presence of the common people in the peace process. This concern has given birth to a new track called as Track III. Experts believe that Track I and II initiatives involve official and non-official circles and proves inadequate, so holding of Track III dialogue could prove to be more effective than other diplomatic endeavors.¹³

Track III or all other tracks including the Multi-Track are also part of non-official channels which bring people together. Lt. Gen (R) F S Lodhi says that by 1991 it had, however, become clear that the range of unofficial contacts to support the resolution of international conflicts is so far too varied and complex to be adequately covered by the term of Track II. A new phrase Multi-Track Diplomacy was therefore adopted. This includes nine different 'Tracks' for conflict resolution and creating international peace. These include Track 1 (government) and Track II (non-government) conflict resolution professionals backed by seven other

tracks: 1) business, 2) private citizens, 3) research & education, 4) activism, 5) religion, 6) philanthropy, and 7) media.¹⁴

Analyzing Track III Dr. Moonis Ahmar says, as far as Track III channel is concerned, it is primarily limited to the interaction of common people. In case of India and Pakistan, the importance and relevance of Track III diplomacy is because of three reasons. First, unlike Track I and II, in Track III process, popular segments of the society like workers, artists, poets, musicians and others are involved. The exclusion of semi-elite from Track III diplomacy gives a credible image of activities launched under its ambit. Second, in Track III diplomacy, vested interests do not matter and finally, since under the auspices of Track III wide participation from different segments of the society is ensured, which makes it easier to remove mistrust and suspicion at the grass-root level.¹⁵

Experts believe that Track III itself is an integral component of Multi-Track diplomacy because it involves people from different walks of life. Proponents of Track III describe it a formidable and vital tool to minimize mistrust. But it needs encouragement from the officials of India and Pakistan as the final outcome of all peace overtures should be shaped keeping in sight the aspirations of both people and for any understanding proper ground should be prepared well before time. People to people contacts are also important to keep pressure on the Track I for more positive approach for solution of outstanding problems.

Pak-India relations cannot be seen in isolation from the compelling domestic politics based on hate factor. Here are a number of parties, organizations and sub-groups feeding on the venom of the hatred and cross-border enmity. Peace between the two neighbors will be difficult unless religious hardliners across the border appear somewhere in the frame. Incidentally, the following of the religious groups and parties come from the lowest rung of the society, the so-called commoners whom some analysts consider vital for everlasting peace. Traditionally the religious groups and parties stood away from the efforts for peace, but from Pakistani side some of the major religio-political entities have shown interest to join the Multi-Track initiatives for peace. Maulana Fazalur Rehman of Jamiat-I-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) is prominent among the clerics who pay regular visits to India and talks about importance of peace.

The Mualana took such an undertaking in July 2003 and went to India, where he met a number of Indian leaders including the Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee. Two important attacks were carried out in Occupied Kashmir during Maulana Fazal's stay in India. On July 22, *fidayeen* attacked on the

army camp at Tanda, 35 kilometers from Jammu City. Eight soldiers were killed including a Brigadier V.K. Govil and Northern Army Commander Lt. Gen. Hari Parsad and another Lt. General, two Maj. Generals and 10 Div. Commander Brig. Baldev Singh were injured. Twelve hours earlier to this attack, the militants attacked Vaishnu Devi pilgrims near Katra that took seven lives. The Maulana, who had met Indian premier on the 20th of July strongly disapproved the attacks. A leading daily wrote, "It was most satisfying to find such a noble personality as Maulana Fazalur Rehman ... unreservedly assailing, while on a goodwill trip to India, such assaults...and declaring his strong resolve to stand by the peace process".¹⁶ After 90 minute meeting with Indian Prime Minister, which the official media termed as 'courtesy call' and according to 'The Hindu' was not scheduled "till afternoon (of July 20) ...and ...by agreeing to a meeting the PM sought to make Mr. Rehman feel welcome",¹⁷ the Maulana said he had emphasized the need for India and Pakistan to engage in Foreign Secretary level talks which could prepare the ground for summit. Maulana Fazal also welcomed the peace process initiated by Indian PM and reiterated that Kashmir issue must be solved through dialogue.

Maulana Fazal and his JUI faction enjoy close relation with Jamiat-e-Ulemai Hind (JEUH) and an Indian religious delegation of Deobandi school attended a meeting of JUI in Peshawar in April 2001. Syed Ahmad Bukhari, Imam of Jamma Masjid Delhi, visited Pakistan in 2001 and his visit was categorized by analysts as an effort to win the religious right on the side of peace. Bukhari held meetings with a number of religious leaders and their contents remain largely hidden from public view, it is known that he made an attempt to win the religious right in Pakistan over to the cause of exploring new options in Kashmir and moving towards dialogue to solve the problem. "The fact that he apparently failed to win much in way of concession, of course, only highlights some of the difficulties Pakistan faces internally".¹⁸

The religious initiative is often dubbed as religious diplomacy but it has its own problems. First, it is confined to a few groups and that too only from one side and a particular school of thought. Second, India has so far tried to use Ulemas on its side to cool down tempers in the occupied valley. Even the visit of Maulana Fazal that received widespread audience- ranging from the prime minister to the leader of opposition and the diehards of the BJP, the VHP, the RSS, the Sikh leaders, and the Muslims leaders- was not entirely free of controversy. First, there was a raging debate whether the Maulana was an emissary of the government? Second, his dash to India was without the blessings of the Mutahida

Majlis-e-Amal (MMA). Third, his frank uttering like suggestion to a “roundtable conference”¹⁹ to discuss the modalities of a possible reunion were not received well at home but were music to the ears of his hosts. It all shows that our religious diplomats either out of efforts for peace between India and Pakistan or their engagements so far have been non-productive.

Critical evaluation of Track II diplomacy

The Track II process includes a myriad of initiatives and efforts on the behalf of various individuals and organizations, but broadly, this track involves the following stakeholders:

1. Foreign governments interested in kick-starting meaningful dialogue and bring conflict resolution.
2. Officially sponsored contacts on the part of both governments.
3. Private initiatives involving different streams of interests.

Practitioners of Track II believe that most of the conflicts among countries are usually artificially created and various interest groups portray them as matters of life and death for the common people, who start hating each other due to these conflicts. The proponents of Track II demand for non-state pro peace actors to throw their lot behind the private peace efforts to transform the relationship which is possible by replacing the state-centric paradigms. But the application of this theory on Pakistan India conflict does not answer many questions. Critics say that there are certain obvious flaws in this approach. For example, first, real common people do not figure in the Track II process. Second, as Moonis Ahmar says, “given decades of suspicions, mistrust and lack of political will, the very idea of regional cooperation in South Asia appears idealistic”²⁰, when viewed in the context of official hold on the policies. Third, as conflict between India and Pakistan has attained institutionalized status, the Track II without strong institutional frameworks cannot undo the severity of the conflict and demolish the outer walls of the issue. Track II, given the hard-core issues, may not be able to do the heavy lifting and its real utility lies

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in reducing the intensity of conflict that still brews in the cauldron of typical official diplomacy between the two sub-continental rivals.

Therefore, some of the people believe that keeping in view the importance of the Track II diplomacy, it has not achieved much in terms of tangible gains. “It must be understood that Track II diplomacy is no way a substitute for the official Track 1, government to government or leader to leader relationship. Rather Track II is assigned to assist official leaders by compensating for the constraints imposed upon them by the matrix of their domestic politics. Official diplomacy often remains mired in bureaucratic wrangles and is unable to go beyond the stereotype of war-peace scenario, where peace has acquired a passive quality as being the absence of war”²¹

There are two kinds of people involved in the process of peace making at the Track II level. First, a vast number of groups, organizations and individuals trading in Track II have active or tacit support of the respective governments. But ironically the governments have yet to make up mind for a definite solution of the outstanding issues. A number of individuals involved in Track II process to find common grounds for peace are the retired officials who spent the best part of life as proponents of Track 1 and their minds and physiognomy have been shaped by mutual antagonism, rivalry, balance of power, security concerns and wars. They may be in good books or enjoy excellent relations with the respective governments but they have no aptitude to go an extra mile as required in the negotiations due to the very nature of their relations in the power hierarchy.

The second group or the rest of Track II proponents are the so called outcasts composed of old remnants of communism, part time liberals, people associated with the NGO's having their own agenda for peace, human rights, women rights and peace activists, artists, journalists and writers. This group does not enjoy the support of large number of people, as it has no roots in the masses. Their meeting with bulk of empty rhetoric and resolutions, even seminars and good will gestures are at the best cosmetic, as both sides remain deeply divided over the main issue and a single blow like attack on the Indian parliament may fling the vast South Asia in a deadly war

Track II, for most part, is secretive. All-important discussions by influential people are classified and hidden from the common people. For example the third round of Shanghai dialogue in Islamabad from Feb 22 to 25, 1997 was an exclusive affair for the participants and only a press note

was issued at the end of the deliberations. Similarly, the Neemrana process is going on for years but common people and media are seldom taken into confidence about the kinds of interactions and their outcomes.

The unofficial tracks are so mysterious that no systematic literature is available and former foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi once said that there was no record of the back channel communications held during Musharraf's time between Pakistan and India.²² Due to lack of progress the critics of Track II are already writing its obituaries. "Regrettably this process is running into a dead ending.... if this trend continues, the Track II process will be drowned in the sea of desperation, as it were. That tragedy needs to be averted".²³

Former foreign secretary of India Salman Haider writes that some of the observers are frankly skeptical about this exercise (Track II), and a many similar ones, maintaining that they lead nowhere and their chief use is no more than to promote another round of similar talks, in a seasonally salubrious location. About the type of individual pursuing Track II, Salman Haider observes, "Not do such observers fail to note, apropos, of the personnel involved, their readiness to do a volte face after leaving office and become critics of policies they have spent a lifetime in promoting".²⁴

According to Lieutenant General (R) Sardar F. S. Lodhi the utility of Track II lies in consultation, dialogues and training. "Consultation is the most common. It brings people together from conflicting groups in their personal capabilities to facilitate discussion or generate new and creative ideas for solving problems. When these unofficial participants have political influence, then their ideas can be included in official (Track 1) conflict resolution process as well".²⁵

The real philosophy of Track II was enunciated by General (R) K. M. Arif: "Track II is neither in conflict with nor a substitute of the meaningful negotiation at the official level..... True the decision taking responsibilities exclusively rests with government or the agencies directly concerned with the disputes".²⁶

But the groups like PIPFDP claims independence from the controls of the governments and seek logic for Track II in the concept that let the people interact, find consensus to cohesion or confrontation. Governments should than be in better position to settle the thorny issues. That "good walls made good neighbours" is not applicable to each and every case. Good relations may be possible when people and especially true

intellectuals have freedom of movement across the border and visa restrictions were flattened. “The fault perhaps lie not so much in the concept of unofficial exchanges but in the nature of forums and the type of people involved”.²⁷

Salman Haider gives a different logic for continuation of unofficial channel: “In truth as we have it (Track II) is neither trivial nor sinister. It has its own processes, which are far removed from regular diplomacy and serve a different purpose. Neither side in such an exercise has to bring any formal position to the table: There is nothing to negotiate, no search for solution or even a conclusion”.²⁸ Haider says that experts from various backgrounds are brought together (in Track II) to provide useful supplement to the official channel.

A number of people simply believe that Track II will perform the impossible. Such thinking is naive as well as divorced from ground realities because, first, the masses on the both sides are out of the picture; second the important religious right of both India and Pakistan have yet to make up minds for meaningful dialogue. To bring in more stakes holders as well as true commoners, more diverse and comprehensive modus operandi is required and expert term such a technique as multi-track diplomacy.

A G Noorani says that Track II demands as much discretion as Track I with one vital difference: there is a conscious effort to reach out the other side; to understand its fear and aims in order to evolve formulae which show a way out of impasse, however, imperfectly. Interaction between Track I and Track II is the heart of problem. “If the state has no use for such efforts, they must be directed at public opinion. It will be a sheer betrayal were Track II to share its recipes to suit the tastes of the consumer”....(on the other hand) “Track II would be sterile if it did not address to the concerns of the state and formulate solutions, which try to meet them”.²⁹

Impact on Pak-India peace process

Due to decades of animosity, the idea of peace and regional cooperation between India and Pakistan sometimes seems as an idealistic fantasy. But the idea is not entirely out of place as there had been intermittent spans of peace when the two countries “enjoyed a substantial reduction of tension in the mid 80’s, when the politics of conflict shifted to one of cooperation in South Asia”.³⁰

But such brief respites, fewer as they were, created only the illusion of progress where there was no substance and had dangerous lulling effect on public conscious. It is believed that when bubble of the false peace bursts, not only it shatters the atmosphere of feel-good, but also it inundates all positive moves for peace. That is why the two countries have failed to find solution to the problems and the region is considered as nuclear flash point. "In his address to the UN General Assembly in the autumn of 2002, Secretary General Kofi Anan identified hostility between India and Pakistan as one of the most 'perilous' threat to the global peace and security. 'In South Asia', he noted, 'the world has recently come closer for many years past to a direct conflict between two nuclear weapon-capable states. The underlying causes of the conflict must be addressed,'" he argued.³¹

The official efforts for resolution of mutual problem suffered setback, creating space for non-official moves and the initiatives under Track II and multi-track have been partly instrumental in creating a constituency for peace, though slim and still at the nascent stage. Track II cannot directly solve the thorny issues but it has helped the two sides prepare grounds for high level engagements. It has been observed that the private initiatives in 1990s played role for creating atmosphere for better understanding which led to the visit of former Indian Prime Minister, A B Vajpai, in 1997 to Pakistan when the two sides signed historic Lahore Declaration.

When the Lahore spirit was washed away by the Kargil adventure and the relations deteriorated, civil society was ready to help build trust. Later on, when the military government of Pervez Musharraf made efforts to rebuild the ties with India, the non-official channels of communications between the two sides became active. Musharraf paid visit to India which failed to settle the key issues but it further opened up avenues for Track II initiatives. His early years saw wholesome trans-border engagements among bureaucrats, retired military officials, trade representatives, media groups' bilateral interactions and civil society exchanges. The overall atmosphere dramatically improved which proved helpful for the two sides to launch the composite dialogue after the Islamabad summit on the sidelines of the SAARC moot in 2004. The joint statements issued after the meeting not only mentioned Kashmir but the obligation to tackle terrorism, again a clear sign of accommodating each other. Contrary to past bad habits when each and every move was trumpeted as victory, this time each side was found praising the other for flexibility. It was for the first time in the troubled history of the two countries that Track I, Track II and Multi-Track were moving in the same positive direction after the

launching of composite dialogue in 2004. It proved good for peace efforts as interaction among various tracks had been vital but its potential was not fully utilized as there was no set pattern to use multiple peace efforts for mutual benefit. The Multi-Track picked sufficient momentum and parliamentarians, judges, lawyers, artists, writers, journalists, peace activists, joy riders and a number of other people visited the two countries from 2003 to 2008, (when these efforts were suspended due to Mumbai attack which killed over 166 people and for which India blamed Pakistani based groups).

Pakistan and India relations are complex and there remains a high degree of unpredictability between the governments of the two countries.

The multilateral private engagements continued during the following years and helped to cool down the tempers in critical situations. For example, when the relations hit the rock bottom after the Mumbai attack and brought the two armies in eyeball to eyeball confrontation, a Pakistani media delegation dared to visit India and engage with the civil society and officials. The visit was reciprocated by an India delegation and tried to build the relations when all official channels were suspended.

It has also been seen that the groups like Neemrana remained active during all these years by meeting alternatively in India and Pakistan and made substantial contribution in the peace process. Sundeep Waslekar says that that the process did well since its inception and “by the fall of 1995 the Neemrana process had reached a state where the two sides could agree on most issue except Kashmir”.³² Though, as per their policy the participants in the groups did not share the discussions with the media or other people but it is believed that their ideas spearheaded some key CBMs related to Kashmir like the mode of travel between the two parts of the divided region.

The Track II can be useful to create atmosphere of good will but it is not substitute of the official diplomacy as the private initiatives do not have the mandate to decide on the behalf of the respective states and governments. Pakistan and India relations are complex and there remains a high degree of unpredictability between the governments of the two countries. People witnessed wells of good will before and in the wake of Lahore and Agra summits but all those wells dried up in no time. Critics say that a single incident can take wind out of the sail of peace, as proved by the Mumbai attacks. There are questions deeper and baffling. Say, for

example, the extremists on the two sides, some of whom are anxious to start a war between the two nations.³³

The thaw in the relations could be dubbed as the victory of the moderates but we do not have any yardstick to measure that victory or a guarantee to the fact that the extremists would not stage a comeback. The final status of the land of trouble, Kashmir, is yet to be ascertained. President Musharraf has suggested in an interview with the Reuters to meet somewhere in the middle³⁴ but Indian side failed to respond in the matching proportion. In the days of crisis like post-Mumbai tension, the Track II diplomacy remained the only ray of hope. The private engagements continued when the two sides were not ready to talk. It was seen that the interactions became more thorough and the experts from the two sides found new neutral avenues like Malaysia to meet and discuss all outstanding issues and emerging problems like water. The private diplomacy has once again helped the two sides to reengage and now they are officially have extensive talks on all issues. In the absence of any official communication, only Track II could have helped them to come together and make joint efforts for peace.

The non-official channels of diplomacy works by smoothing the twisted edges of mutual relation and binding the loose ends. The multi-track creates stakes for peace and an atmosphere of good will that is always an asset in the permanent solution of the issues. For its greater efficacy, more and more commoners should be involved and especially those who can put forth resistance to anti peace moves. Most of the states are hostile to private initiatives as it is deemed an encroachment on their domain as final arbiter of war or peace but the true proponents of peace should not lose heart and create new ways to bring the adversaries to points of convergence. The paradigm shift to the Track II and other private efforts is set to bring more tangible dividends in the future, provided more organized efforts are made in this regard. People believe that unofficial communication can help to lift the haze of mistrust and bring people together. "I recall that when we lit candles at Wagha border a decade ago on the night of August 14-15, we were only a dozen-odd people. Last August there were two lakh on the Indian side and nearly half a lakh on the Pakistan side, raising slogans of Hind-Pak dosti (Indo-Pak friendship)".³⁵

'Dawn' published the response of 26 writers and poets of Pakistan to the question: "Should Pakistan and India Bury the Hatchet".³⁶ All of them overwhelmingly supported the peace move, which shows the presence of considerable constituency of peace on the both sides of the divide. But still

there are heavy barriers to peace due to the existence of hard-liners and extremists in the two countries and unofficial channels should involve them at some level to bring peace in the region. However, the private initiatives are going on and in a recent meeting of the Islamabad Dialogue group on April 28 and 29, the participants unanimously concluded that peace and cooperation was in the interest of India and Pakistan. "To achieve this end, both India and Pakistan must make a concerted effort to bridge the trust deficit between the two nuclear states, increase cooperation to combat common enemies such as terrorism and work with sustained zeal to resolve outstanding strategic issues like Siachen and Sir Creek," they said in the deliberations.³⁷

Conclusion

Track II diplomacy has gained momentum and new ideas are being incorporated to promote the atmosphere of goodwill between Pakistan and India. Media has also joined this effort and Jang group and Times of India have jointly launched Aman Ki Asha, featuring articles and new stories that reflect positive developments between the two countries. Pakistan has allowed the screening of Indian films and Pakistani artists frequently go to India- some to feature in Indian movies and others to hold concerts. Another phenomenon which is mostly ignored is the proliferation of FM radios in Pakistan that often play Indian songs and help reduce the cultural hostility between the people. It shows that various Track II initiatives are running parallel and making ground for official level hard talks to settle key disputed.

But there is no magic wand to clear the mist of misunderstanding within days. They say it is better to be hopeful even when there is none and fortunately there is a lot to be optimistic. First, the people have the realization that the traditional tactics cannot change the status quo that has eaten away the better part of their progress during the last half a century. Second, both countries realize the virtue of secret diplomacy and allow the private process to continue despite differences and suspension of talks. Third, the moderates in the two countries believe that the extremists are trying to divide the people by committing violence. Fourth, the new threats like global terrorism have changed the traditional concept of security. Fifth, global challenges like environment issues, free market economy, smuggling, drug trafficking, human smuggling, trans-border crimes and piracy are new threats which can be jointly faced and subdued. Sixth, zero-sum game has started to take its toll in form of exhaustion and people are questioning the virtues of stalemate. Finally, to cap it all, the sole super power of the world, the United States, is pushing the two sides for peace.

The importance of keeping officials engaged was highlighted when India, contrary to past, refused to directly blame Pakistan for July, 2011 Mumbai bombings which killed 19 people and it also did not cancel the meeting of two foreign ministers in the last week of July. It shows that there may be unseen difficulties ahead, demanding real statesmanship and courage to bring a paradigmatic shift in the relations of the two countries which need not only change in the thinking of the official

Track II can play vital role in changing the mindset of hate and recreate new mutual bonds of respect and cooperation. If private initiatives are supplemented by the official efforts then peace could be possible.

but also transformation in the minds of the people. Track II can play vital role in changing the mindset of hate and recreate new mutual bonds of respect and cooperation. If private initiatives are supplemented by the official efforts then peace could be possible. Let the two sides allow Track II, and Multi-Track move forward and remember this end piece by Nelson Mandela, who is considered as the symbol of resistance and icon of peace in the modern world.

“Whenever things threatened to fall apart during our negotiations- and they did on many occasions- we would stand back and remind ourselves that if negotiations broke down the outcome would be a bloodbath of unimaginable proportions, and that after the bloodbath we would have to sit down again and negotiate with each other. The thought always sobered us up and we persisted, despite many setbacks. You negotiate with your enemies, not your friends”.³⁸

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