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# Track II as a method to break barriers: Pakistan-India relations since 1980

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**ARTICLE**

# TRACK II AS A METHOD TO BREAK BARRIERS: PAKISTAN-INDIA RELATIONS SINCE 1980

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**Abstract**

*Track-II diplomacy made major contribution in reducing tension between the US and Soviet Union during late 1950's and 1960's. Attempts have been made in the past to apply the concepts developed particularly during 1960's to other regions of the world. South Asia at one time had more than a hundred channels, only a few have survived. Some of these ventures have been one time exercise while others have survived for several years.*

*Socialization process has been more successful than the other three stages. Filtration and transmission also hold great significance but several factors have retarded their growth. Implementation can only take place when the earlier three stages have been successful. However, it needs to be recognized that several ideas developed under Track-II initiatives have been implemented e.g. the establishment of hotline connecting the leadership of land forces of Pakistan and India. Some CBMs can also be traced back to Neemrana and other Track-II initiatives.*

*Mindsets of common people and decision-makers need to be changed, in that lies the real success of Track-II initiatives.*

**Keywords:** Track-II Diplomacy, Initiatives, Socialization, Filtrations, Transmission, Implementation

**Introduction:**

Track II has gradually emerged as a dependable mechanism for reducing tensions in regions where conflicts are rampant. Since many years scholars have been focusing attention on Track II as a way of promoting peace. Some of these studies have made significant contribution towards promoting an understanding of Track II as a method of tension reduction and conflict management.

Practitioners of diplomacy particularly professional teams running the foreign offices in South Asian countries had certain reservations about Track II. Members of civil society interacting with members representing the adversary were seen as lacking in expertise. They were also considered to be naïve and ill informed. Some professionals looked upon the efforts of Track II practitioners as 'meddling'. Even though some of these misperceptions still persist but on the whole there seems to be better appreciation of the aspirations and potential of Track II even among professional diplomats.

Harold Saunders, a well-known US diplomat spent a life-time practicing Track I. Saunders was involved in negotiations leading to Camp David agreement between Egypt and Israel in 1978. After his exit from regular diplomatic role he got involved in Track II dialogue between Russia and the US generally known as Dartmouth Conference Series. He has also

been involved in the Track II initiative for the objective of promoting democracy in Tajikistan.(Montville, 2006) His book "The Other Wall" is considered to be significant contribution to the field. According to Saunders, Track II diplomacy is based on members of civil society engaging in 'policy related problem solving dialogue'. The dialogue centres on 'elements of the overall political relationship, solutions to arms control problems, resolution of regional conflicts, issues of trade policy, or other areas of competition'. Saunders clearly distinguishes between Track II and other initiatives involving people to people contacts the purpose of which is simply to get to know the other side.[1]

The 'hard' Track II dialogue as pointed out aims to resolve disputes between governments but a lot of Track II initiatives do not fall in this category. The 'soft' Track II is designed to promote an understanding of the perceptions and viewpoint of the adversaries but even in such cases the ultimate objective is to help in the resolution of issues dividing the two sides. (Kaye 2007)

Louise Diamond and John McDonald define Track II as 'non-governmental, informal and unofficial contacts and activities between private citizens or groups of individuals sometimes called non-state actors'. (Jones 2008)

From the above discussion it is obvious that the definitions of Track II vary from general to specific. At the simplest level one can consider any contact across borders which does not involve government officials to belong to Track II category. Under this frame-work one can include any interaction between women groups or scholars. Even exploratory contacts between groups of people providing they are not government officials fall within this category.

It is quite common in certain cases to include serving government officials or even military officers in Track II initiatives. However, in majority of cases ex-government officials, retired civil and military officials, serving academics and media representatives are preferred. Quite often politicians and other members of the civil society end up joining governments which enables them to put their ideas into action. These examples suggest that the wall between Track II participants and government circles is not insurmountable. The linkages between Track I and Track II exist at many levels, this situation is often referred to as 'Track one and a half'. (Kaye 7)

Quite contrary to public expectation in the age of media most practitioners of Track II do not desire media coverage and prefer a low profile. They do not seek publicity for several reasons. Firstly, publicity creates hype and public expectations rise beyond all realistic measures. The results often do not measure up to public expectations leading to failure. Secondly, the fear of premature exposure of ideas can serve as a deterrent forcing people to be more circumspect when it comes to expressing themselves freely. Thirdly, less flexibility is possible under the glare of media. In other words Track II participants might adopt an inflexible approach for the same reason that Track I participants do.

The desire to shun publicity sometimes gives rise to a situation whereby Track II is regarded as a secret venture. This impression is incorrect and needs to be rectified. There is a difference between not seeking publicity and being secretive. For some the line between the two might be thin but it is important to remember that the line does exist.

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[1] *Ibid*

**Historical Background:**

Although Track II has become more popular since the end of Cold War but it should not be forgotten that the method was used to reduce tension during the Cold War years. The best known example the Dartmouth Dialogue between Soviet and US citizens began in 1959. It continued for twenty nine years contributing significantly towards tension reduction and conflict management. Its major contribution was to improve the political environment between the two super powers. As the environment became conducive to conflict management and conflict resolution both the camps were beneficiaries of the process.

Dartmouth initiative was viewed as a successful exercise. Attempts were made to replicate the process in other parts of the world. Track II initiatives were also used in times of actual crises. When the US discovered the presence of Soviet missile sites on Cuban soil instead of approaching formal diplomatic channels, the US opted for a Soviet journalist who happened to be in the US at the time of the crisis.

Track II and Track I and a half have been used to ease tension in the Middle East. A group of Palestinian and Israeli citizens participated in the back channel negotiations in Oslo. These people lived together, ate their meals on the same table while negotiating. Israel had deliberately created hurdles (in the form of laws) in order to prevent negotiations between the two sides. These laws had to be changed before Israeli citizens could participate in the Oslo process. Members of both teams enjoyed tremendous influence in their societies. This was the first organized effort to break the ice.

Finally, the process resulted in a breakthrough but the process came to a standstill a couple of years after its initiation mainly due to Israeli intransigence. Failure to achieve results also led to disappointment on the Palestinian side. The loss of support for the peace process among common people has made compromises difficult.

After Oslo many other Track II channels were opened bringing Palestinians and other Arabs face to face with Israelis. Some of the members participating in these channels had direct access to government officials but others e.g. students and academics even when lacking access to their governments played a role in reducing tension.

Non-official and informal contacts have been used in Central Asia to promote democracy and to help build suitable environment for conflict resolution. Multiple initiatives in the Track II framework were launched among Azeris, Armenians and Georgians which succeeded in reducing tension but did not resolve any major conflict. (Rieg 2001)

**South Asia and Track II Diplomacy:**

Before embarking on an analysis of relevance of Track II to South Asia it will be fruitful to survey regional politics. The South Asian region enjoys rich history. When British imperial set up withdrew from the region all states in South Asia gained independence. India was the largest and most heterogeneous. Pakistan composed of two separate wings divided by a thousand miles of hostile Indian Territory was the only country with clear Muslim majority. Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives and Burma (now known as Myanmar) were also part of South Asia. All South Asian states are multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-racial in composition. As far as religion is concerned there is great diversity. Each religion is further sub-divided into sects and sub-sects.

South Asian states suffer from three issues which have made economic progress

difficult. There is a dearth of educational facilities in rural areas and small towns. Government run schools and colleges offer educational facilities which do not compare with facilities provided by private schools in big cities. Even in large cosmopolitan cities standard of education varies greatly. The majority is therefore unable to break out of grinding poverty.

Second major problem is lack of resources when compared to rising population. In some cases even in the presence of natural resources the nation is unable to benefit due to a combination of economic and political factors.[2] The problem of political instability also plagues most states in the South Asian region[3]

Third factor which cannot be ignored is the increasing number of interstate disputes in the region. The longest standing dispute is the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India. It has already resulted in off shoots like Kargil dispute and Siachen conflict. Apart from these the water dispute which emerged soon after independence when India decided to stop the flow of water into Pakistan. After injecting tension in the Pakistan-India relations for more than two decades the matter was resolved in 1960 with the help of World Bank. This conflict has resurfaced with new vigour due to India's policy of diverting water from rivers allocated to Pakistan under the Indus Water Basin Agreement to meet its own growing need for water. This is a serious violation of Indus Water Basin Agreement; needless to say it has soured Pakistan-India relations. There are a host of other conflicts between the two nations e.g. Pakistan's charge that India is training and infiltrating terrorist groups into Baluchistan and Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa provinces of Pakistan. The growing instances of terrorism in Pakistan are causing loss of lives, property and business opportunities further aggravating the problem of poverty. India has also accused Pakistan of similar actions in the past. Track I has not been very successful as hardliners on both sides do not support the idea of promoting social, economic and political ties unless the other party succumbs to the hardliners point of view.
India's support to Tamil Tigers fighting against the Sri Lankan government was a major irritant in relations between the two countries. Many years later, however, India realized that fomenting trouble in Sri Lanka was counterproductive as it could worsen India's own Tamil problem. Now with the defeat of Tamils in recent military operations launched by the Sri Lankan armed forces, there are expectations of positive change in the form of growing tourism and trade opportunities giving a boost to Sri Lankan economy.

Bangladesh-India relations have also suffered due to Indian allegations that economic migrants from Bangladesh are creating problems in Assam and West Bengal province of India. Bangladesh denies the charges of infiltration and terrorism leveled by India. Water dispute between the two countries was resolved and generally both governments made efforts to negotiate their differences. Some issues have still not been resolved and the two governments are very much divided on what steps to take.  Bangladesh accuses India of imposing non-tariff restrictions against goods from Bangladesh. There have been border skirmishes between the two sides leading to loss of life on both sides.

Two additional factors regarding South Asia need to be taken into account. There are two regional nuclear powers that also happen to be rival powers. In the Middle East Israel is the only nuclear power, therefore, it is able to dominate the region even at the expense of regional peace. In South Asia although Pakistan is much smaller in military terms and its

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[2]There are often problems between different provinces concerning resource mobilization, lack of technology and lack of finances can further complicate the situation
[3]Even in democratic states acts of violence and subversion do occur.

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population is less than one-fifth of the Indian population, nuclear capability of Pakistan is a great equalizer. In view of this Pakistan's smaller economic sector and other disparities do not lead to the same type of vulnerabilities which are found in other regions.

South Asia has SAARC which includes all regional states. The dominant position of India due to its large population, size of territory and economic capabilities has aroused apprehensions in the region. One more factor which has somewhat handicapped SAARC is the fact that no contentious issues can be discussed at this forum. It has, therefore, failed to play a major role in promoting peace through conflict resolution. The region will gain immensely if reforms are introduced making it possible for regional states to resolve their disputes through this forum.

**The Role of Track II In South Asian Politics:**

As already pointed out there are no regional platforms available to states at a time when interstate and intra-state conflicts are rampant in the region. Track II is more concerned with interstate disputes although it has not achieved much success in this either. It does not directly deal with intra-state conflicts but it can play a role in preventing third parties from getting involved in these domestic conflicts. Very often in South Asia, regional states get involved in internal problems of their neighbours thus adding yet another source of tension and conflict.[4] Because of this indirect role in strengthening regional peace sometimes, Track II is unable to get credit for its contribution to regional peace.

As mentioned earlier, due to a legacy of regional conflicts, governments have developed sensitivities which often do not allow them to take peace initiatives particularly, where they are most needed. Following a contrary policy might be viewed by the populations as a sellout. Politicians have been swept out of power for taking 'softer' position on issues regarded as important by the people. By the same token politicians could increase their electoral appeal by adopting a 'harder' line on issues considered by majority of people as important. (Riegg4) As politicians are sensitive to electoral requirements while they are also interested in keeping non-official diplomatic channels open they have no option but to keep such contacts out of the purview of general public.

Track II provides that much needed privacy to members of civil society to participate in dialogue with adversaries in order to develop win-win situations, from which both sides can benefit. Most of the people taking part in these dialogues are retired diplomats, retired armed forces people and bureaucrats who have time to spare after their retirement. Academics participating in these seminars are not required to resign from their jobs. At times they may face problems which are difficult to handle but on the whole they are encouraged to participate in the process.[5]

The governments are not directly involved although sometimes indirect involvement may be present. Governments do not stand to lose either way. If the process breaks down and there is no positive outcome, the governments can claim ignorance. If, however, the process

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[4]India interfered in the East Pakistan crisis resulting in the breakup of Pakistan. India accused Pakistan in 1980s of trying to do the same in East Punjab which was denied by Pakistan. India is widely suspected of using Afghan soil to subvert peace in two provinces of Pakistan, however, India has been denying this

[5]Some South Asian countries require public sector university employees to seek NOC for travelling. Getting Visa can also be a hassle.

leads to some mutually advantages ideas they can step in and take over from there.

Another dimension which adds flexibility is that Track II does not seek to replace Track I, it can consolidate it. Many initiatives which were implemented e.g. the establishment of hotline between the military leaderships of Pakistan and India was first debated in the Neemrana Dialogue. After its initial discussion at Track II level when all contentious issues were taken care of the idea blossomed into the establishment of the hotline. This hotline has been extremely useful particularly in view of the fact that the two nuclear armed nations can diffuse military tensions before they can grow into something more serious.

**Track Ii: Some of The Challenges In South Asia**

At one stage there were almost a hundred Track II initiatives in South Asia. Most of these were financed by Western countries. They focused on issues which were important from their perspectives. These developed countries often want to convey the impression that they stand by certain values, even if they are not very serious about the implementation of these values in the third world. Most of the initiatives revolved around security issues particularly after the nuclear tests by Pakistan and India in1998. Other initiatives dealt with issues like democracy, gender issues, child labour etc. Due to historical experiences of all South Asian states there are some reservations against political and economic initiative undertaken by foreign donor agencies. Not only do common people but intelligentsia, bureaucrats, intelligence communities and other members of civil society view foreign sponsored peace initiatives with some misgivings.

A number of these initiatives, as already pointed out revolve around security issues including arms control. Since western countries are major arms suppliers to the region and they are earning billions of dollars as a result of this trade, it appears to be no less than an enigma when western nations profess faith in arms control. However, these arms control measures normally deal with nuclear arms and not conventional weapons which partly explains the dilemma. The thrust is also against biological and chemical weapons, as western countries believe that non-conventional weapons proliferation in South Asia, or anywhere else could increase the risk of these weapons, falling into the hands of undesirable elements. Another issue faced by regional civil societies is the selection of academics and other participants. There is no set procedure for selection but one thing is clear, the governments do not play a direct role in the process. Normally a retired diplomat or a retired member of the armed forces is approached by the funding agency which has a free hand in deciding whom to approach. There is no set criterion of selection except that these people are considered to be prominent in their fields and are known to have done some research on issues at hand. All the people selected are not equally interested in the subjects to be discussed. At times these participants are quite inflexible in their approach to regional conflicts and their positions could be a replication of their government's stand on the issue.

The elite participating in these initiatives serve as a bridge between their region and the west as far as ideas behind the initiative are concerned. 'Socialization' is a major stage in most Track II initiatives. At this stage the participants are exposed to ideas already developed in the west. Most of these ideas have already been used in East-West Track II dialogue with mixed results. The purpose behind this exercise is to benefit from the work already done by experts in the West in order to preclude the possibility of reinventing the wheel. However, this approach can also create some problems. The concepts communicated may not be relevant for a particular region. To fill this gap 'filtering' is necessary. At this stage the local

participants try to absorb these ideas and to transform the ones which are more relevant to their conditions. In the South Asian brands of Track II the filtering part was not as effective as it should have been.

Transmission (Kaye21-25) is a logical extension of socialization and filtering. Ideas learnt and transformed have to be communicated to the governments who are then expected to put them into practice through Track I if they are found to be relevant. Here, too, the experiences of South Asian Track II participants appear to be diverse. The whole process depends on person to person relationships. Some participants of Track II particularly the leaders have access to government officials at the highest level particularly if they happened to be part of the administration before their retirement. These individuals are better able to achieve success in 'transmission' function. Some of the proposals have been translated into concrete reality e.g. the hotline between military officials of Pakistan and India which has already been mentioned.

Although dependence on foreign sources of funding does not go too well with the people in general, there is a paucity of funds from the region itself. If regional states are able to raise funds under a mutually acceptable quota, it would enhance the credibility of the exercise but, the problem is that most of the Track II initiatives in recent times (particularly after the nuclear tests) are restricted to Pakistan and India. The worst thing that can happen to the series of dialogue is for either Pakistan or India to bear much of the expenses. This would raise doubts in the minds of people in the other country.

**Some Major Track II Initiatives In South Asia:**

As already mentioned there have been nearly hundred Track II initiatives in South Asia. While some of these are still on, quite a large number gradually fizzled out. Some of these were one time affair like the Tripartite Initiative between Italy, Pakistan and India which took place in November 1998.[6] The venue of the conference was Rome. Delegates from the three countries mostly included academics although there were some retired government officials from India.

Academics, experts from various think-tanks, members of media, retired diplomats and retired armed forces personnel gathered together in the US in April 1999.[7] Serving US diplomats took active part in the exercise which explored ways and means of reducing tension between the two parties. Averting nuclear confrontation in South Asia dominated the agenda of this conference. Socialization was the main purpose of this exercise, the State Department and people from various US think-tanks tried to suggest ideas which they believed to have been useful in the case of US-Soviet meetings.

Soon after the Indians called off their military buildup on the Pakistan-India borders a onetime Track II conference was called in Nepal. Some experts from Nepal and the US also participated but the majority of participants were from Pakistan and India.[8] It will not be an exaggeration to state that, a very large number of retired senior defense forces personnel from Pakistan and India and also retired diplomats, dominated the proceedings. The idea behind the

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[6]Participation in one time or regular variety has led members to believe that both have their advantages and disadvantages, a great deal depends on the issues.
[7]The purpose was socialization.
[8]Provided a much needed opportunity to break the deadlock and revive security related dialogue.

initiative was to ensure that policies leading to this kind of situation i.e. military buildup would not be repeated. The economists in the group were of the view that if Pakistan and India were to develop trade and other economic ties it would promote peace between them. Among interactions spread over months or even years, Balusa Group stands out, ShireenTahirkheli and her brother Taufiq Siddiqui established the group in 1995 to improve India-Pakistan relations. (Kaye 80_82) The funding for the programme came from UN Development Programme and Rockefeller Foundation. One major idea to emerge from the Balusa Group was the Iran-Pakistan-India natural gas pipeline. It was implied that interdependence between Pakistan and India will grow as a result of IPI gas pipeline. In Europe interdependence between states led to consolidation of peace. It was believed that relations between Pakistan and India will also improve as a result of this venture. Balusa group also concentrated on the resolution of the core issue between Pakistan and India i.e. the Kashmir dispute. The group, despite the fact, that most of its members enjoyed considerable influence in their countries, was unable to leave an impact on national policy.

Shanghai Process began in 1994.[9] It included a number of high ranking participants from China, Pakistan and India. Pakistan and India sent academics, media representatives and retired diplomats while the Chinese and US delegations included government officials in informal capacity. The first few meetings did not go well as the participants tended to be nationalistic. Some delegates leaked out news to the media despite the fact that the group was averse to publicity. The main thrust of the peace process in this case was to resolve strategic issues including nuclear issue. Pakistan had not tested a nuclear device till that point in time but it was widely believed to be nuclear capable while India had already conducted a nuclear test in 1974. No first use and placing limits on the production of fissile material were among the priorities of the group. Through this process the US probably wanted to impose limitations on China which it was not ready to reciprocate itself.

Neemrana initiative was launched in 1991 and is considered to be the longest surviving Pakistan-India peace initiative. It is named after a village in Rajasthan where the first conference took place. It is patterned after Dartmouth Dialogue between the Soviet Union and the US. The dialogue takes place at least once every six months alternatively between Pakistan and India. Ten members each from Pakistan and India participate regularly. Since the dialogue has been going on for twenty years some members have changed over the years.[10] Initially Ambassador Paul Kriesberg presided over the meetings. Gradually, he disassociated himself from the initiative[11]and the heads of the two sides accepted joint responsibilities.

Neemrana was funded by Ford Foundation. Chatham House principle of non-attribution has been followed which all participants adhere to.[12] Although not a secret dialogue media coverage is avoided. It is probably due to this reason that the initiative has survived so long.

The purpose of this initiative has been to reduce tension, promote conflict resolution and create better understanding between Pakistan and India. At one stage the two sides

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[9]Ibid.

[10]http://baithak.blogspots.com/2009/09/neemrana-initiative-javed-jabbar.html.

[11]Indians were of the view that there should be no third party involvement, only delegates from the two countries should meet

[12]Baithak, http://baithak.blogspots.com/2009/09/neemrana-initiative-javed-jabbar.html.

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brought teams of businessmen from the two countries to discuss issues related to trade. The purpose of this exercise was to promote trade between the two countries. Neemrana Dialogue also brought women groups from both countries to discuss issues related to them. At one of the meetings in Delhi, Pakistan delegates were able to meet leaders from Indian occupied Kashmir. To reciprocate, Pakistani delegates invited leaders from Pakistani side of Kashmir to meet the Indians in Islamabad meeting.

To what extent has this initiative resulted in conflict resolution and peace in South Asia? Although this question cannot be answered in limited space as there are many reasons why the initiative has not been successful, suffice it to say that the dialogue did contribute towards tension reduction. Some initiatives recommended by the Neemrana participants for the purpose of confidence building have actually been adopted by the two governments. At one stage the two sides were led by diplomats who enjoyed respect in their countries and had access to their governments. Both of them conveyed to their governments major ideas emerging from each session. The transmission function of Track II was thus achieved to some extent in the case of Neemrana dialogue.

Pakistan and India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy began in late 1993.[13] The first joint declaration was made on 4th September 1994 at Lahore. The 8th session took place in Allahabad on 14th to 16th October 2011. The themes of the conference were Demilitarization and Peace Dividends, Kashmir Dispute, Religious Tolerance, Democratic Governance and Globalization and Regional Cooperation. The forum enjoys a bigger membership and its meetings arouse media interest. Many members of the forum are prominent personalities from the two countries.

Among the institutions which have been playing a prominent role in promoting Track II in South Asia is Stimson Centre. The centre started a process of dialogue between India and Pakistan but their main contribution has been the training of Pakistani, Chinese and Indian officials, journalists and academics in arms control and confidence building. The Stimson Centre located in Washington DC, has been providing ideas and training to officials from the three neighboring states i.e. Pakistan, India and China. The objective is to reduce the danger of nuclear conflict, promotion of nuclear non-proliferation, creation of understanding on the Kashmir issue, normalization of relations between India and Pakistan and particularly stabilization of politics in the South Asian sub-continent.

The idea of non-first use of nuclear weapons is not acceptable to Pakistan as it is militarily much weaker than India. There is also a feeling in Pakistan which is substantiated by its historical experiences that India is ready to take advantage of Pakistan's predicaments. Some analysts believe that Pakistan could change its stance only if it could somehow be convinced that India has ceased to have hostile intentions towards Pakistan. It is here that confidence building measures require special significance and resolution of long standing conflicts between the two neighbours could create that environment.

Stimson Centre has also tried to bridge the gap in the thinking of Pakistani and Indian strategists on establishing control over production of fissile material. Like many other areas the differences on this issue also reflect the trust deficit that exists between the two South Asian neighbours. This once again highlights the importance of CBMs in South Asia.

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[13]www.pipfd.org

Among the CBMs currently being followed in South Asia, some important ones are attributed to the efforts of Stimson Centre. One such initiative includes ballistic missile flight test notification agreement, others include military exercise notification and constraint agreements. The centre has also tried to focus world attention on the issue of nuclear terrorism since 9/11.

Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) another Washington DC based think-tank organized three workshops in UK from December 2003 to May 2004. Their main focus was also nuclear threat to stability and peace in South Asia. Pakistani, Indian and US experts not employed with the government have been working towards threat reduction, introduction of better technology for improving bilateral communication mechanism etc with some degree of success. The group has recommended special measures for bringing about improvement in communication system in order to preclude the possibility of miscalculation. CBMs recommended by CSIS have also received positive response from the governments of Pakistan and India.

Cooperative Monitoring Centre at Sandia National Laboratories, New Mexico has also played a prominent role in reducing risk of nuclear war in South Asia. Accidental nuclear wars and other issues concerning nuclear weapons have received special attention of researchers at CMC. (Kaye, p86) The focus of all these endeavours is also introduction of better communication technology which would naturally benefit the US economy as well.
The best way to reduce the possibility of nuclear conflict in South Asia is to reduce tension in the region; therefore, apart from technical issues the CMC has also promoted CBMs and other political mechanisms for reducing political temperature in the region. Kashmir issue being the core conflict between Pakistan and India could have hardly been ignored by CMC. The issue has been taken up on several occasions under CMC initiatives. CMC has produced many reports and left some impact on the thinking of influential decision-makers in South Asia, however, this impact has not been decisive on the issue of Kashmir and control of fissile material.

Several universities in the region are also involved in Track II initiatives. Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) was actively involved in Neemrana Dialogue. Almost all the talks held in Pakistan were at ISSI. They also provided many other facilities (including secretarial services) to the Neemrana team. It made it easier because at that time the head of Pakistani team of Neemrana was also DG of ISSI.

**Assessment of The Role Played by Track II:**

At all the Track II meetings, the atmosphere was generally friendly. Even while divisive issues were discussed, members of the two groups were able to maintain cordiality. This was despite the fact that at some of the gatherings the Indians would begin by denying that there were any really serious contentious issues dividing Pakistan and India. It took the two teams several hours even a whole day to establish that serious disputes were present and they needed to be tackled. India's primary interest was in opening new avenues for its trade while Pakistanis believed that conflict resolution and trade should proceed simultaneously.
Despite good personal relationships there was no real meeting of minds on divisive issues like Kashmir. The fact that CBMs were jointly undertaken by the two neighbouring states shows that Track II was a useful exercise, but it never reached that required level of success which would create the will, to adopt a new way of thinking more conducive to conflict resolution. Adopting cosmetic measures without real progress towards conflict resolution will not lead to

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lasting tension reduction.

Another area where Track II has not been very effective is changing the mindset of administrators and general public. Politicians in democratic countries (Pakistan and India fall in that category) have to take public opinion into account. Public opinion at times seems to be averse to political compromises and tends to view things in black and white. Changing mindsets of officials and general public is the most difficult task. Media has played a mixed role in developing public mindset. After the Kargil crisis broke out between Pakistan and India in1999, Indian media adopted a highly nationalistic posture. The hype created by Indian media did not subside with the end of the crisis. More recently, however, one newspaper from Pakistan and one from India got together to launch "Amnki Asha"[14] which aims to improve relations between the two South Asian neighbouring states. The idea is to improve the image of people living on both sides of the border. The main focus of this endeavour is younger generation as they represent the future of South Asia.

It is also imperative for the governments to step in at a certain stage. We have noticed that so far Track II has achieved limited success, but even if through some out-of-box thinking Track II could be made successful, it would still require decisive government role in order to succeed. Where Track II leaves off, Track I is required to take over. Track I depends on the success of Track II but Track II is incomplete without Track I.

Socialization, filtration and transmission have been mentioned as important stages in the Track-II process. Socialization has been proceeding in a more or less satisfactory manner. Various western countries particularly the US assume that what was found to be useful in their case can be applied as gainfully in other cultural environments. One can consider this approach to be ethnocentric but it cannot be denied that US think-tanks, universities and even the State Department are successful in communicating their ideas to Pakistanis, Indians, Chinese and other Track II participants from Asia, Africa and Latin America. One cannot assume the same about filtration and transmission due to several factors.

Absorbing concepts from other sources and producing a synthesis is not an easy task. When people from two different cultural and political environments try to absorb and synthesize the same concept, sometimes the result may be entirely different from each other.

It is the 'filtered' matter which has to be 'transmitted' to decision-makers. What they gather from it depends on the lenses of 'national interest' which cannot be overlooked. Implementation needs to be considered the final stage in this multiple stage model of Track II. There have been some notable examples of implementation but they are few. In most cases Track II ideas were either considered to be unrealistic, unpractical and undesirable. Sometimes foreign offices consider the work of civil society unacceptable meddling in serious issues. According to professionals, it can be tolerated if it remains confined to its own track.

**Making Track II More Useful:**

If Asian countries are serious in their pursuit of peace and wish to use Track II to achieve their peace objectives, they will have to evolve a mechanism for reforming the

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[14] 'Amanki Asha' or 'Hope for Peace' a process launched by Jung (Pakistan) and Times of India has been quite successful.

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process.

The first thing that needs to be changed is the approach. Track II should not be viewed only as a way of reducing tensions and managing conflicts. Conflict resolution should be the final objective. The whole process is derailed when either due to prolonged deadlock in Track II or because of bottlenecks in transmission and implementation little progress is made towards conflict resolution. Frustration impedes further progress and erosion of faith in the process is the natural result.

For this change to take place development of a new mindset is imperative. Participants of Track II and decision-makers need to look at disputes as common problems to be settled mutually. Currently, the 'we' and 'they' frame-work is very much in evidence. Changing the image of the 'adversary' is also essential. To put it simply the other side in a dispute should not be viewed as an enemy but as a party which is facing the same problem as we do. However, it is easier said than done. When India uses disproportionate force in Kashmir to suppress demonstrations it becomes difficult for people in Pakistan not to view India as an adversary. Similarly, when India blames Pakistan for supporting the movement against Indian occupation, the people of India see Pakistan as an adversary.

It is also necessary to select the right people who know about issues to be debated and have an interest in promoting cordial relations with the other party. Track II can deliver positive results only when it is seen as a platform to deal with common problems and not as yet another battle ground to confront the enemy.

The media cannot change reality. They can only report what is happening on ground. It puts a heavier responsibility on members of Track II and Track I. If conflicts are actually resolved then the media may be expected to focus on this positive development. If there is no progress in conflict resolution then the media cannot be expected to generate favourable evaluation. The media should, however, play a positive role by not reporting 'rumours' or exaggerating things for the sake of increasing circulation or viewership.

**Conclusion:**

Track II, which emerged after WWII played an important role in defusing tensions between the two super powers. In a globalized world Track II carries greater potential for bringing adversaries together for two reasons. Firstly, media's role has expanded; it shapes opinions and determines priorities. Secondly, the civil society occupies a central place in calculations of peace and harmony. The paper acknowledges that Track II has been relatively less successful in the case of South Asia. The lack of success can be explained by several factors which have been discussed. Many of these factors are equally applicable to other regions like Central Asia, Middle East and Africa. South Asian states need to learn from the experiences of other states. But these lessons have to be transformed keeping regional realities in view. The need for coordination between Track I and Track II is vital and the interdependence between the two tracks can hardly be denied.

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> Rousseau held a similar view. The more a country asks of its citizens, the greater their devotion to it. "In a well-ordered city every man flies to the assemblies." Under a bad government, no one participates in public life "because no one is interested in what happens there" and "domestic cares are all-absorbing." Civic virtue is build up, not spent down, by strenuous citizenship. Use it or lose it, Rousseau says, in effect. "As soon as public service ceases to be the chief business of the citizens, and they would rather serve with their money than with their persons, the state is not far from its fall."
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> Michael J. Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy,* p.128-129