Article

International Relations in the 21st Century: The Role of Track-Two Diplomacy in Conflict Resolution

Abstract: *Track-Two Diplomacy has emerged as a vital tool in contemporary international relations for resolving conflicts. This form of diplomacy involves unofficial channels, often involving non-governmental actors, to complement official diplomatic efforts. In today's complex global landscape, where traditional state-centric approaches often fall short, Track-Two diplomacy offers a flexible and innovative approach to conflict resolution. Adopting the communication theoretical framework of international relations which emphasizes the pivotal role of communication processes in shaping global interactions and outcomes, the study explores the role of track-two diplomacy efforts towards conflict resolution while analyzing the Aceh, Indonesian conflict and the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan. The paper finds that Track Two diplomacy efforts has provided a platform for addressing the sensitive issues which the official channels has long overlooked in the two conflicting case studies. The research paper conclude that amidst the several shortcomings and limitations of Track-two Diplomacy, its major advantage is its capacity to engage a wide array of stakeholders, including those who may be marginalized or excluded from official negotiations in conflicting situations. The study recommends 'enhance communication channels'; That is, the Establishment of a system of communication that is consistent and dependable amongst parties involved in a disagreement and the 'Incorporation of Local Knowledge and Expertise; that is the Utilizing the insights and proficiency of individuals inside the local community who possess a deep understanding of the cultural, social, and political intricacies of the issue.*

Keywords: *Diplomacy, Track-Two Diplomacy, International Relations, Conflict Resolution, Aceh-Indonesian, Kashmir.*

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1. Introduction

State actors have historically been in charge of international relations, which involves navigating the complicated world of international politics through formal talks, treaties, and diplomatic channels. However,

new strategies for diplomacy are required due to the dynamic character of international conflicts and the growing interdependence of nations (Nicholson, 2002). One such strategy is known as "Track-Two diplomacy," which is an unofficial, non-governmental avenue for dialogue and discussion that supports official diplomatic initiatives, or "Tracker-One diplomacy." In order to resolve disputes and promote peace, academics, retired officials, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious leaders, and other powerful people participate in conversation and problem-solving exercises known as Track-Two diplomacy (Onditi, 2023).

Track-Two diplomacy originated during the Cold War due to the limitations of regular diplomatic channels caused by inflexible ideologies and mutual distrust (Ahmad, 2023). Informal discussions serve as a crucial forum for the exploration of innovative solutions and the establishment of mutual understanding, free from public scrutiny and political influences (Akindoyin, 2024a). This type of diplomacy functions based on the concept that individuals and groups that are not part of the official government structures can help with communication, build trust, and provide new and creative ideas that official channels may not consider or are unable to pursue because of political limitations (Akindoyin and Akuche, 2024).

Track-Two diplomacy is essential for resolving conflicts as it creates an environment for more adaptable and transparent dialogues (Omeje and Nwaoha, 2021). It enables participants to delve into delicate matters without the concern of immediate political consequences, hence facilitating more open and productive discussions. Informal diplomacy frequently acts as a preliminary step or supplement to formal negotiations, aiding in the moderation of positions, the resolution of misconceptions, and the establishment of the initial consensus required for official discussions to be successful (D'Estree and Fox, 2020). Track-Two initiatives have the potential to overcome impasses and generate prospects for peace that may be unattainable only through conventional diplomatic channels by tackling fundamental problems and grievances in a less formal environment (Omeje and Nwaoha, 2021).

In addition, Track-Two diplomacy utilizes the knowledge and ethical influence of a wide range of individuals and organizations. Academic professionals provide their profound understanding of the current concerns, while former diplomats and military personnel offer practical expertise and credibility. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations play a crucial role in offering viewpoints from the local level and rallying support within communities for peace initiatives. However, religious and community leaders frequently have the confidence and respect of their communities, which allows them to bridge gaps and promote reconciliation on a societal scale.

Track-Two diplomacy is an important advancement in international relations, particularly in a world where conflicts are becoming more intricate and diverse. It enhances traditional diplomacy by providing alternate methods for resolving conflicts, promoting conversation and comprehension, and ultimately helping to the establishment of a more peaceful and collaborative global system (Palmiano, 2021). Thus, with the exploration of track one diplomacy and track two diplomacy above, it is important to note the clear distinction between track two diplomacy and two track diplomacy. While Track two diplomacy denotes the informal, non-governmental dialogue and conflict resolution efforts between private individuals, academics, NGOs, or civil society actors who are not official government representatives, two track diplomacy denotes the simultaneous use of both Track One (official, government-led diplomacy) and Track Two (informal, non-governmental) diplomacy (Fon and Achiri, 2021). In Two-Track diplomacy, the official and unofficial efforts work in tandem. Track one focuses on formal negotiations between governments or official actors, while Track Two engages informal

channels to complement or support the official process by creating dialogue, reducing tensions, and fostering mutual understanding.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The international relations landscape is becoming more intricate, and traditional diplomatic efforts are often inadequate in dealing with long-lasting problems such as economic instability, two-state conflict, cyber threats, transnational terrorism, climate change, etc. These issues transcend national borders and require global cooperation, yet the international system is often hindered by competing national interests, asymmetrical power dynamics, and geopolitical tensions. Traditional diplomacy, grounded in state-to-state negotiations and treaties, struggles to address such complex, long-lasting problems (Harry, 2023). For example, the Syrian civil war has been prolonged due to the involvement of multiple state and non-state actors with conflicting agendas, rendering peace talks ineffective (Sosnowski, 2020). Similarly, climate change negotiations, like the Paris Agreement, have been stymied by the conflicting economic interests of developed and developing nations, (Carlson et al., 2021). Thus, the international relations landscape is becoming more intricate, making traditional diplomatic efforts often inadequate in dealing with problems in the international community. Track-Two diplomacy, which refers to informal and non-governmental discussions involving powerful private citizens, academics, and former officials, has become an essential complement to official diplomatic endeavors in this particular situation. Nevertheless, the extent to which Track-Two activities are integrated and effective in resolving conflicts has not been well examined and is not fully utilized, creating a notable deficiency in current international relations. Track-Two diplomacy encounters various obstacles, such as concerns regarding its legality, the need for collaboration with Track-One (official government) diplomacy, and the ability to demonstrate tangible effects on conflict settlement (Omeje and Nwaoha, 2021). The casual style of Track-Two diplomacy may give rise to doubt regarding its credibility and long-term viability. Furthermore, the interaction between Track-One and Track-Two participants is frequently characterized by friction, as government diplomats may view non-state entities as intruding on their territory or weakening formal negotiations (Omeje and Nwaoha, 2021).

1.2. Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to analyze the role of Track-Two diplomacy in contemporary conflict resolution, evaluating its advancements, approaches, and impact on peacebuilding efforts. However, the study aims to achieve specific objectives, which include;

i. Analyze case studies of Aceh, Indonesia and the Kashmir Conflict, where Track-Two diplomacy has been effectively utilized for the purpose of resolving conflicts.

ii. Examine the obstacles and limitations that Track-Two diplomats encounter in the current geopolitical landscape.

1.3. Research Questions

i. How has Track-Two diplomacy facilitated conflict resolution in the Aceh and Kashmir conflicts?

ii. What are the obstacles and limitations that Track-Two diplomats encounter in the current geopolitical landscape?

1.4. Contribution to the Study

The contribution of the study revolves on the importance of establishing a system of communication in global politics that is consistent and dependable amongst parties involved in a disagreement. This facilitates ongoing conversation, minimizing misinterpretations and fostering trust as time progresses.

1.5. Overview of the Research

This research paper is in five (5) sections. The first section which is the introductory part entails a brief introduction of the study, the statement of problem, research objectives and research questions as well as the contribution to study. The second section is the literature review where concepts like Track Two Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution were clearly conceptualized. The third section entails the methodology adopted for the study as well as the theoretical framework; the communication theoretical framework is adopted for the research paper. The fourth section is the result of findings while the fifth section entails the conclusion and recommendations for the study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Concept of Diplomacy

In the global arena, conflicts persist and are prevalent (Jasper, 2021). It is imperative for nations and other international actors to devise measures that might mitigate the repercussions of war, reduce its intensity, and establish peace among conflicting parties. These solutions are widely recognized as conflict resolution strategies. Diplomacy is the most efficacious means, aside from employing force, for alleviating conflict in the global system (Clarke, 2020). Diplomacy is crucial in international relations as it offers strategies and protocols for effectively handling interactions between nations. The approach of managing international relations is commonly regarded as normal, in contrast to war, which is seen as an unacceptable alternative. Diplomacy has a crucial role in facilitating peaceful coexistence among civilized nations.

There is a lack of consensus over the meaning of diplomacy. Diplomacy entails the practice of negotiating to effectively handle international ties, employing ambassadors and envoys to govern and regulate these connections (Berridge, 2022). Furthermore, it has been defined as the distinct practice or craft of diplomacy and the adept management of global exchanges or negotiations (Akindoyin, 2024a). Diplomacy involves the strategic application of knowledge and skill to effectively handle formal interactions between sovereign nations (Akindoyin, 2024b). Diplomacy encompasses conducting international business through nonviolent means and encompasses a wide range of interests, from tiny minutiae in the contacts between two states to critical subjects of war and peace. If this technique fails, there is a potential for a significant crisis or perhaps the outbreak of war (Akindoyin, 2024b).

Throughout the course of history, individuals have employed diplomacy in diverse manners to engage in social interactions. As civilizations emerged and progressed, it became imperative for them to partake in communication, share knowledge, settle conflicts, and cooperate with other communities. Envoys were hired to expedite this correspondence, and over time

they evolved into authorized delegates who were revered as holy and handled with utmost formality. These activities resulted in the development of diplomacy as a method through which players manage their interactions within the domain of international relations and foreign policy. Diplomacy is employed to promote the interests of all entities, be they state or non-state, and although its primary aim is to maintain peace through negotiation, there are instances where coercion or intimidation may be required (Ferguson, 2023). The efficacy of diplomacy hinges on a multitude of elements, with the relative power of the parties involved being of paramount importance.

2.1.1. Elements of Diplomacy

The fundamental components of diplomacy can be analyzed more effectively through two overarching categories: popular and special (Akindoyin, 2024b). The widely commonly denotes the utilization of tact, astuteness, and negotiation prowess in any transaction or negotiation (Akindoyin, 2024b). Nevertheless, it possesses a more precise connotation pertaining to the attainment of collective goals while minimizing expenses within a political framework where the occurrence of conflict is plausible. This term is especially applicable to circumstances that involve disputes among nation-states. It is important to note that diplomacy is not necessary in areas where there is already consensus, but it becomes critical in areas where there is dispute or misunderstanding. The primary objective of diplomacy is to enhance and optimize such situations to the greatest extent possible. It is important to recognize that diplomacy is unsuccessful in situations where there is total disagreement and unimportant in situations where there is total agreement (Akindoyin, 2024b). Agreement and disagreement in international relations are dynamic and subject to change. An agreement on a given issue may potentially contain the underlying causes of dispute. Diplomacy comprises a range of strategies and methods used to develop, implement, and supervise foreign policy, with the objective of peacefully settling disputes, divisions, or conflicts. The instruments encompassed in this set include negotiation, lobbying, conciliation, mediation, treaty-making, arbitration, as well as the collection and dissemination of information. The overarching goal of diplomacy can be succinctly expressed in the following endeavors according to Ferguson, (2023):

    i. Cultivating and restoring relationships
    ii. Defining and adapting relationship boundaries
    iii. Promoting common interests while avoiding damage
    iv. Cultivating emotions in partnerships without inflicting harm

2.2. The Concept of Track Two Diplomacy

Track Two Diplomacy refers to an informal diplomatic approach that utilizes unofficial channels to resolve issues and foster partnerships among individuals from other countries or communities (Okoth, 2021). It can also be described as a sort of diplomacy that is not conducted by governments and is characterized by unofficial conversation between individuals or groups. The main goal of this type of diplomacy is to advance global projects, foster peace, and resolve conflicts (Akindoyin, 2024b). Track Two diplomacy is distinguished by its departure from the traditional framework of official diplomacy, which often involves government officials responsible for intergovernmental connections and discussions. Track Two diplomacy emphasizes the engagement of several stakeholders, such as representatives from civil society,

academia, and business, to enhance communication and foster mutual understanding among different cultures and perspectives.

Joseph Montville, a former US diplomat and professor at Georgetown University, is recognized as the originator of the term "track two diplomacy" in the 1980s. Track Two Diplomacy is seen as an additional method to traditional international diplomacy. It involves unofficial routes of communication that can help build trust and understanding between opposing groups. The effectiveness of formal diplomatic efforts was sometimes obstructed by political considerations and established protocols that prevented negotiators from participating in open and honest discussions that could potentially challenge their own preconceived notions or those of their adversaries. On the other hand, track two diplomacy provides a more flexible and informal setting where different individuals or organizations can engage in impartial conversations without fear of reprisal or public criticism (Akindoyin, 2024b). Track Two Diplomacy has now been widely acknowledged as a valuable addition to conventional diplomatic efforts aimed at preventing war, promoting peacebuilding, and resolving disputes (Omollo, 2020).

2.2.1 Principles of Track Two Diplomacy

Confidentiality

Track Two diplomacy is based on the core idea of confidentiality. Confidentiality, in this sense, refers to the responsibility of maintaining the secrecy and privacy of discussions among those involved in diplomatic processes. This idea is considered crucial since it allows individuals to openly share their opinions on sensitive issues without fear of negative public responses or political repercussions. The guarantee of confidentiality establishes a safe setting for participants to openly engage in discussions and produce ideas without any concerns about how their words may be interpreted by external entities (Akindoyin, 2024a). The importance of upholding confidentiality in Track Two diplomacy can be discerned from multiple viewpoints. At first, it helps to spread information among participants that may not be available through official channels. Track Two diplomats have access to exclusive information that is not yet accessible to the general public, or they may possess a more profound comprehension of social or cultural complexities that are not immediately evident from official records or media sources.

Informality

Informality refers to the absence of rigid protocols and procedures that are commonly linked to formal diplomatic encounters. Track Two Diplomacy is distinguished by the absence of pre-established criteria for participant eligibility, the range of issues available for debate, and the methods employed in conducting conversations. Alternatively, people are urged to express their thoughts and interests without restraint in a cooperative setting (Akindoyin, 2024a). The informality of Track Two Diplomacy is a significant advantage as it allows participants to openly explore new ideas and perspectives without fear of reprisal or negative consequences. The lack of established stances or policies among participants enables the use of inventive problem-solving approaches that may not be feasible under the constraints of formal diplomacy.

Inclusivity

Track Two Diplomacy, which involves the participation of non-official players in negotiation processes, prioritizes inclusivity. Inclusivity refers to the principle that all relevant stakeholders should be included in conversations and decision-making processes. This can encompass various entities from civil society, including religious leaders, teachers, business

professionals, and those who may not have formal governmental posts but provide valuable perspectives on the prevailing issues. The underlying ideas of using Track Two Diplomacy emphasize the necessity of incorporating multiple perspectives to achieve effective conflict resolution. By incorporating a diverse array of perspectives, it ensures that all relevant interests and concerns are considered, leading to more comprehensive and enduring solutions. Track Two Diplomacy facilitates constructive dialogue and helps build confidence among parties by engaging with diverse stakeholders (Akindoyin, 2024b).

2.3. Concept of Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution refers to the systematic approach of identifying and implementing a harmonious and mutually advantageous resolution to a dispute or altercation (Ridwan et al., 2021). It entails the process of recognizing, tackling, and resolving discrepancies in a positive and productive manner (Akindoyin, 2024b). Conflict resolution refers to the process of effectively managing disagreements and conflicts between individuals or groups in order to produce positive results (Akindoyin, 2024b). The goal is to minimize or eliminate tension and antagonism among those with different viewpoints or interests (Akindoyin, 2024b). Conflict resolution entails comprehending the fundamental reasons behind conflicts, striving to find shared interests, and engaging in negotiations to devise solutions that satisfy the requirements of all parties involved (Ramsbotham et al., 2011). It refers to a collection of methods used to effectively handle conflicts, disagreements, and issues that occur in human interactions. Conflict resolution necessitates the practice of attentive listening, proficient communication, understanding and compassion, appreciation for differences, and a receptive mindset for resolving problems. Its objective is to proactively address issues at an early stage in order to prevent disagreements from escalating into violence or destructive behavior. Conflict resolution is applicable in diverse domains, including business, politics, family dynamics, community development, and international diplomacy. It fosters collaboration, cooperation, and teamwork by allowing communication between opposing parties to achieve a mutually agreeable resolution (Nwafor, 2023).

3. Methodology

The research paper adopts a descriptive research design. Also, the secondary source of qualitative data is adopted for the paper. These secondary sources include academic journals, government reports, media reports, and library sources, etc. The choice of secondary data is because it allows for an in-depth analysis of the role of Track-Two Diplomacy in Conflict Resolution in global politics. Data collected is analysed via thematic analysis.

3.1. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this research is the communication theory of International Relations.

Communication Theory
    The communication theoretical framework of international relations emphasizes the pivotal role of communication processes in shaping global interactions and outcomes. This ap-

proach posits that the way states, international organizations, and non-state actors communicate profoundly influences international politics, diplomacy, and conflict resolution. Several key concepts underpin this theoretical framework:

Constructivism: Central to this framework is constructivism, which argues that international realities are socially constructed through communication. It holds that the identities and interests of actors are not fixed but are formed and reformed through discourse and interaction. Through communication, norms, values, and shared understandings are established, shaping the behavior of international actors.

Public diplomacy: Public diplomacy is a crucial aspect of statecraft that involves using communication to sway overseas public opinion and change how international audiences perceive a country's policies and activities. This encompasses a variety of endeavors, spanning from cultural interactions to the dissemination of media content, with the objective of constructing a favorable perception and nurturing reciprocal comprehension.

Framing and Agenda Setting: Framing and agenda setting are concepts that emphasize the way in which topics are presented and given priority in international debate. Framing pertains to the manner in which information is organized and conveyed, influencing its perception and interpretation. Agenda setting is the process of deciding which subjects receive attention and how they are ranked in terms of importance. Both entities play significant roles in influencing and determining international agendas and policy responses.

Media and Information Technology: The emergence of global media and information technologies has revolutionized worldwide communication. The rapid and extensive spread of information has been facilitated by real-time news transmission, social media, and digital platforms, leading to the emergence of novel methods of diplomacy and public engagement. These technologies have the ability to engage public sentiment, shape policy choices, and potentially transform the dynamics of global conflict and collaboration.

Intercultural Communication: Intercultural Communication refers to the exchange of information between individuals who come from diverse cultural backgrounds. Cultural disparities in communication methods, conventions, and values frequently lead to misunderstandings and disputes. Efficient cross-cultural communication is crucial for achieving successful diplomacy and international negotiations.

Soft Power: Soft power, a term coined by Joseph Nye, refers to a nation's capacity to influence others to comply with its desires without resorting to force or coercion. This influence is primarily exerted through cultural impact, political beliefs, and foreign policy. Communication serves as the means by which soft power is exerted, as it entails persuading and appealing rather than coercing.

Thus, Communication theory provides a valuable lens for understanding the dynamics of Track Two diplomacy in international politics. One key concept from communication theory relevance to Track Two diplomacy is intercultural communication, which emphasizes the role of understanding different cultural perspectives, values, and narratives in conflict resolution. In many conflicts, cultural misunderstandings and deep-seated biases obstruct peace efforts. Track Two diplomacy creates a platform for bridging these divides through open, empathetic dialogue, promoting mutual understanding between conflicting parties. Additionally, dialogic communication, another important facet of communication theory, focuses on reciprocal and participatory forms of communication where both sides actively engage in listening and shar-

ing. In Track Two diplomacy, this dialogue fosters trust, reduces tensions, and creates space for exploring shared interests, thus facilitating progress toward conflict resolution.

Furthermore, systems theory within communication theory underscores the complexity of interactions within a conflict setting. Track Two diplomacy often operates in parallel with official government negotiations (Track One Diplomacy) and other forms of conflict resolution. Communication in this multilayered system helps identify entry points for intervention and builds networks of support that complement formal diplomatic efforts as it is explored in the two aforementioned case study.

4. Discussions of Findings

4.1. Examining the Aceh, Indonesia Conflict and Track Two Diplomacy

4.1.1 Background of the Conflict

The Aceh conflict in Indonesia, predominantly involving the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), has profound historical origins. Aceh, located in the northernmost part of Sumatra, possesses a distinct character that is greatly shaped by its past as a formidable sultanate and its significant contribution to the dissemination of Islam throughout Southeast Asia. After Indonesia gained independence from Dutch colonial authority in 1949, Aceh was incorporated into the Indonesian state, resulting in difficulties arising from its unique cultural, religious, and historical history (Amin, 2020). The conflict intensified during the 1970s following the discovery of significant natural gas deposits in Aceh (Heger and Neumayer, 2022). This led to economic inequalities and grievances among the Acehnese population, who perceived themselves as being sidelined and exploited by the central government (Heger and Neumayer, 2022). The Free Aceh Movement (GAM) was established in 1976 with the objective of attaining independence from Indonesia. The movement was motivated by concerns with economic disparity, violations of human rights, and the aspiration for self-governance (Heger and Neumayer, 2022).

Throughout the course of several decades, the conflict experienced repetitive patterns of violent episodes and efforts to engage in discussions, resulting in substantial human distress and forced migration. The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which caused widespread destruction in Aceh, served as a motivator for peace (Kingsbury, 2022).

4.1.2. Implementation of Track Two Diplomacy

Track two diplomacy was instrumental in resolving the long-standing Aceh conflict in Indonesia, which had endured for almost thirty years. The main participants in track two diplomacy were the Henry Dunant Centre (HDC), which eventually became known as the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, and other foreign non-governmental organizations. The HDC facilitated secret discussions between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), fostering an atmosphere that promoted trust-building and open communication. The initiatives commenced in 1999 with the aim of humanizing the individuals involved in the conflict and tackling the underlying causes that extend beyond the immediate political and military matters (Kingsbury, 2022). The focus of track two diplomacy on cultivating relationships was important in overcoming the impasse that formal negotiations frequently faced.

In 2002, these discussions reached their highest point with the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA), which, although faced with initial difficulties, established the foundation for future peace initiatives (Lee, 2020). The catastrophic 2004 tsunami served as a catalyst, amplifying the urgency for peace and resulting in renewed negotiations facilitated by the HDC and other non-governmental players.

4.1.3 Outcome of the Track Two Diplomacy Effort

The adoption of this cooperative strategy finally led to a mutually beneficial outcome. The Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding, signed in 2005, resulted in the halt of hostilities, demobilization of GAM soldiers, and substantial political and economic concessions granted to Aceh. Furthermore, Aceh was bestowed with substantial autonomy. The efficacy of unofficial communication channels in promoting peace and resolving conflicts was shown by the triumph of track two diplomacy in Aceh.

4.2. Examining the Kashmir Conflict and Track Two Diplomacy

4.2.1 Background of the Conflict

The Kashmir dispute originated with the conclusion of British colonial authority in India in 1947, which resulted in the division of the subcontinent into two separate nations: India and Pakistan (Hashmi and Sajid, 2017). The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, characterized by a Muslim majority but governed by a Hindu Maharaja named Hari Singh, confronted the predicament of deciding whether to align with India or Pakistan. In October 1947, armed groups from Pakistan launched an incursion into Kashmir, leading the Maharaja to request military support from India. As a result, the request was agreed by India, a decision that was disputed by Pakistan. As a result, the first Indo-Pak war (1947-1948) occurred, concluding with a truce mediated by the United Nations and the creation of the Line of Control (LoC). This division effectively separated the subcontinent but did not resolve the underlying problem. A substantial portion of Kashmir came under the sovereignty of Pakistan (referred to as Azad Kashmir by Pakistan), while the remaining part became a state inside India.

The conflict has intensified over the course of several decades, characterized by three significant military conflicts between India and Pakistan (1947-48, 1965, and 1971) and countless minor clashes. Both nations assert their complete ownership of the region and have been involved in significant military and diplomatic disputes around it. In 1989, a rebellion broke out in the region of Kashmir under Indian administration, adding extra complexity to the situation. The insurgency has been driven by regional dissatisfaction, religious nationalism, and purported backing from Pakistan (Kuszewska, 2022). Attempts to achieve peace and resolution have been infrequent and mostly ineffective. The situation is additionally complicated by the strategic interests of both nations and the participation of foreign stakeholders. The war has persisted and remains very unstable due to ongoing human rights abuses, significant economic consequences, and the presence of a heavily armed zone. Consequently, it is regarded as one of the most long-lasting and unpredictable territorial disputes globally.

4.2.2. Implementation of Track Two Diplomacy in the Conflict

Regarding the Kashmir conflict, which revolves around territorial disputes primarily between India and Pakistan, track two diplomacy has played a crucial role in promoting dialogue and seeking solutions through unofficial channels, separate from the government. An illustrious

instance of track two diplomacy in the Kashmir dispute is the Neemrana Dialogue, which was initiated in the early 1990s by the United States Institute of Peace. This discussion comprises retired military leaders, diplomats, and academics from both India and Pakistan who convene regularly to deliberate on several matters, including the Kashmir dispute. The sessions, conducted in neutral venues, enable participants to exchange viewpoints, establish confidence, and produce ideas that can then be included into formal diplomatic procedures.

Furthermore, the Kashmir Initiative by the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs is an important application of Track-Two Diplomacy in addressing the Kashmir conflict. This initiative promotes discussions among various parties involved in the conflict, such as political figures, members of civil society, and young individuals, from both sides of the Line of Control (LoC). The purpose of these contacts is to tackle humanitarian challenges, encourage collaboration between countries, and examine measures that foster trust. Furthermore, in recent times, social media platforms and digital forums have also arisen as arenas for track two diplomacy. Virtual conferences and webinars have facilitated the gathering of young individuals from India, Pakistan, and the wider Kashmiri diaspora to engage in discussions regarding their perspectives on the war, peacebuilding, and regional collaboration.

4.2.3. Outcome of the Track two Diplomacy Effort

The aforementioned track two diplomacy exchanges have facilitated the maintenance of communication channels, mitigated tensions during crucial moments, promoted open dialogue, and proposed peace frameworks that have had an impact on official deliberations.

4.3. Analyzing the Barriers and Constraints that Track-Two Diplomats Face in the Contemporary Geopolitical Environment

Despite Track Two's potentials and advantages in international relations, this variant of diplomacy still faces several barriers and constraints in the contemporary geopolitical environment. Among them are as follows;

4.3.1. Opposition from Political and Institutional Entities

Government officials and conventional diplomatic channels frequently regard track-two diplomacy with mistrust, seeing it as a violation of their authority (Jansen, 2020). This resistance is especially evident in underdeveloped nations and authoritarian governments where there is strict control over media and diplomatic discussions. These circumstances restrict the efficacy and range of informal diplomatic endeavors. In addition, well-established organizations may hesitate to acknowledge or endorse track-two ideas because of bureaucratic inertia and the possible danger of straying from official policy positions.

4.3.2. Absence of Legitimacy and Acknowledgment

Track-two diplomats frequently encounter challenges pertaining to their legitimacy and acknowledgment. Due to the lack of official status or mandate, their efforts might be easily disregarded as unofficial and insignificant. The absence of official acknowledgment can weaken their capacity to shape policy and obtain pledges from important participants. The lack of official approval also results in restricted availability of resources and platforms essential for effective diplomacy.

4.3.3. Limitations on Available Resources

Track-two diplomacy sometimes lacks the financial and logistical resources that are available to established diplomatic channels. Securing consistent funding for such activities is frequently irregular and dependent on individual projects, which poses difficulties in maintaining persistent efforts. Scarce resources can limit the range of activities, impede long-term planning, and impact the ability to continuously engage in many geopolitical circumstances.

4.3.4. Obstacles to Effective Communication

Efficient track-two diplomacy is highly dependent on effective communication. Language barriers, cultural misinterpretations, and absence of a shared framework for communication might hinder meaningful interactions. Moreover, in the era of digitalization, the rapid dissemination of false information and propaganda can undermine trust and the legitimacy of track-two activities. Ensuring the security and clarity of communication is becoming more intricate in a world where cyber dangers are becoming more advanced.

4.3.5. Volatility and Complexity in Geopolitics

The current geopolitical environment is marked by swift transformations and unforeseeable fluctuations. Rapid changes in conflicts and alliances might provide challenges for track-two diplomats in staying relevant and adjusting their plans accordingly. The existence of a multipolar world order, characterized by diverse and frequently conflicting interests, adds complexity to the task of seeking common ground and establishing consensus.

4.3.6. Vulnerabilities to Security

Diplomats assigned to track-two negotiations sometimes work in unstable circumstances where security risks are substantial. Interacting with parties involved in areas of conflict or under authoritarian rule can subject individuals to personal risks, surveillance, and harassment. These hazards pose a threat to the safety of diplomats and also discourage their involvement and restrict the effectiveness of track-two diplomacy initiatives.

4.3.7. Impact of Non-State Actors

Terrorist organizations and multinational businesses, among other non-state entities, are assuming more prominent roles in global events. Their behaviors and objectives can add intricacy to conventional diplomatic endeavors and introduce more levels of complexity for track-two activities. Successfully managing these complex interactions necessitates a sophisticated comprehension and deliberate involvement, which is difficult due to the informal and frequently limited resources associated with track-two diplomacy.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, in Aceh, Indonesia, track-two diplomacy was pivotal in resolving the conflict between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). Facilitated by the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), led by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, informal dialogues laid the groundwork for the 2005 Helsinki Agreement. This agreement ended decades of violence by addressing Acehnese autonomy and economic grievances. By providing an informal platform for communication, track-two efforts allowed both sides to discuss

sensitive issues without the pressure of immediate political consequences, ultimately contributing to a formal peace settlement.

Similarly, in the Kashmir conflict, track-two diplomacy has involved academics, retired military officers, and civil society organizations from both India and Pakistan, as well as international mediators. These unofficial dialogues foster understanding and trust-building, even as official talks stall. While they have not resulted in a comprehensive solution, track-two initiatives have helped de-escalate tensions by promoting cross-border dialogue, confidence-building measures, and people-to-people exchanges. Hence, through the lens of communication theory, track-two diplomacy acts as a low-risk, high-reward channel for conflict transformation, allowing parties to explore solutions outside the constraints of formal negotiations, ultimately easing the path to peace. Track-Two diplomacy plays a crucial role in achieving peaceful resolutions to crises by supporting official diplomatic efforts. It fosters understanding and cooperation in a difficult global environment.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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