



## Role of Track 1.5 Diplomacy in Conflict Resolution

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### **Abstract**

*Diplomacy has been used as a tool to influence decisions and behaviors of foreign governments and people through dialogue and negotiations instead of resorting to war and violence. When relations between two countries are marked by distrust, confidence building measures are taken to rebuild the trust and improve communication between the states. And here, the role of multi-track diplomacy proves effective in transforming international relations into a collaborative effort of multiple actors working towards peace and cooperation. Track 1.5, a part of multi-track diplomacy, aims to bring state and non-state actors together to provide peaceful solutions to conflicts. This paper with the help of qualitative approach, seeks to analyze how Track 1.5 diplomacy builds trust, explores solutions and prepares the way for official peace agreements.*

**Keywords:** Track 1.5, Conflict resolution, Track I, Track II, Multi-track diplomacy

### **Introduction**

There can be multiple tracks of diplomacy. There is not one fixed mechanism or fixed route to create contact with other countries. There are multiple avenues through which interactions can take place across the world- among governments, citizens and private businesses- helping to make the anarchic international system more stable.

Multi-track diplomacy can be explained with the help of complex interdependence model. The world is made of different types of entities like states, international non-governmental institutions, private businesses, MNCs- and these entities are interacting with each other. According to Keohane and Nye, instead of state leaders, various branches of government and different actors maintain relations between states. Military force becomes less useful and economic and institutional instruments become more useful. The question arises that when so many different types of entities are involved in global politics then why the conventional form of diplomacy is still being followed. There is a need to include individuals, institutions and communities in order to build a more stable and peaceful world.

By the 1990s, it had become evident that governmental exchanges or official dialogue alone could not resolve conflicts between two countries. Moreover, increase in intra-state conflicts in the 1990s confirmed that 'Track I' diplomacy was not an effective method for securing international cooperation or resolving conflicts. Rather, there was a need for more interpersonal approach in addition to government mediation. For that reason, former diplomat Joseph Montville coined the term Track II diplomacy. He said that only Track I diplomacy was not enough. There is a need to include citizens and various non-governmental institutions in order to establish inter-personal relations between various countries.

Later scholars Dr. Louise Diamond and John McDonald said that Track II diplomacy does not recognize all forms of diplomacy. They coined the phrase 'multi-track diplomacy' to include everyone from ground level work of private citizens to the top-level meetings of state heads.

For the purpose of the study, the research article will focus on Track 1.5 diplomacy which is a part of multi-track diplomacy. The article analyzes the concept of Track 1.5 diplomacy and its role in conflict resolution. The paper also focuses on certain case studies where the Indian government have utilized Track 1.5 diplomacy.

## **Literature Review**

The purpose of reviewing the literature for the study is to obtain relevant information and develop a comprehensive understanding of the research topic

Hoan et al. (2026) provides a comprehensive analysis of Track 1.5 diplomacy and its role in conflict resolution, using United States and Europe as case studies to demonstrate its effectiveness. The study examines how Track 1.5 diplomacy bridges the gap between Track I and Track II diplomacy and shows how the synthesis of these two tracks can lead to more effective solutions for resolving conflicts.

Further expanding the conceptual foundations, Mapendere (2000) explores the role of Track 1.5 diplomacy in conflict resolution and how it complements Track I and Track II diplomacy with particular reference to the Carter Center, an organization working in the sphere of Track 1.5 diplomacy.

Extending the discussion to a broader analytical perspective, Longhini & Zimmerman (2021) analyzes the role of Track 1.5 diplomacy from a discourse-based approach to explain that non-state actors and individuals are legitimate players in international politics. The authors use Munich Security Conference in Europe and Shangri-La Dialogue in Asia as case studies to support this argument.

In addition to these perspectives, Goumenos (2018) argues that parliamentary diplomacy can be considered as a form of Track 1.5 diplomacy for conflict resolution.

The practical relevance of Track 1.5 diplomacy is further illustrated by Heiling (2008) who examines the role of Track One and a Half diplomacy and the contribution of mediation process in resolving the conflict in Aceh, Indonesia.

Moreover, Davis (2025) explores the various applications of Track 1.5 diplomacy in the context of nuclear issues in the South Asian region, with particular emphasis on India and Pakistan. The authors draw on their experiences of participating in Track 1.5 diplomacy, suggesting that the decisions made and insights gained from such engagements can be valuable for future policymakers in managing global challenges.

## **Objectives**

1. There are new ways of resolving conflicts that do not rely solely on traditional forms of diplomacy. In this context, the research article aims to examine the role of Track 1.5 diplomacy and how it combines elements of both Track I and Track II diplomacy to address conflicts effectively.
2. To know how states incorporate Track 1.5 diplomacy in their dealings and negotiations with other states.

## **Methodology**

The study employs a qualitative approach using secondary sources like academic books, journal articles, international and national news outlets, and websites. The paper uses case studies in the context of Indian Foreign Policy to demonstrate how India uses Track 1.5 diplomacy to improve bilateral relations with other countries.

## **Tracks of Diplomacy**

Conflict is endemic to human existence, survival and political relations. In trying to find the best methods of resolving conflicts, a variety of types of diplomacy has been identified (Mapendere,2000).

When talking about diplomacy Track I comes to mind first. Track I diplomacy is the most conventional form of diplomacy. It is formal and involves government-to-government interactions. The decisions are binding.

Prime ministers, foreign ministers and diplomats of various countries are present in these meetings. The problem with this method is that sometimes there are ego clashes which leads to deadlocks. Although this form of diplomacy will always stay relevant, there are other tracks of diplomacy which will supplement and complement Track I diplomacy.

Track II diplomacy involves retired diplomats, academics, think tank experts, non-governmental institutions. They not only represent the states but also informally explore solutions to complex issues without any official pressure.

Track 1.5 diplomacy or Track One and a Half diplomacy is a powerful hybrid model. It incorporates features from both Track I and Track II diplomacy. It combines the flexibility and openness of Track II diplomacy with realistic ideas and policy access from Track I diplomacy. It involves both non-governmental experts and current government officials, but they attend in their personal capacity and not as formal representatives. Participation in Track 1.5 diplomacy is non-binding. Some notable examples of Track 1.5 diplomacy are Munich Security Conference in Europe, Shangri-La Dialogue in Asia and Carter Center in United States.

Track 1.5 diplomacy is often referred to as back-channel diplomacy which means a 'covert line of communication that runs parallel to or replaces official embassies.' The dialogue happens in strict secrecy. Some of these sessions are organized under Chatham House Rule. It allows participants to use information from the discussion, but is not allowed to reveal who made any particular comment. It creates a safe space to express and debate on controversial topics without fear of public attribution. To quote Mahatma Gandhi from his address at a meeting at Chatham House, "the best way of arriving at the solution to any problem, political or social, is for the protagonists of rival views to meet one another and talk things out with sincerity and candor".

## **Role in Conflict Resolution**

Susan A. Naan describes Track 1.5 diplomacy as a mode in between Track I, comprised of official actors and Track II diplomacy (Heiling, 2008). Building on this conceptual understanding, Mapendere defines Track 1.5 diplomacy as 'peacemaking activities undertaken by non-political third parties between high political representatives of warring groups, or governments' (Mapendere, 2000)

Track 1.5 diplomacy acts as a communication bridge between hostile or rival nations. It acts as a forum for conflict resolution. A suitable example is the US-China Strategic Nuclear Dynamics Dialogue, organized by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the China Foundation for International Strategic Studies. Since its inception in 2004, this annual Track 1.5 diplomacy has enabled US and China to address their issues on various subjects like nuclear strategy, arms control etc. (Hoan et al, 2026). Another example regarding the role of Track 1.5 diplomacy was the negotiation of the Oslo Accords between Israel and Palestine in 1993. This was organized by the Fafo Foundation which was a Norwegian non-governmental research institute. Israeli and Palestinian academics participated in this dialogue process in order to develop an unofficial draft agreement in the first phase of negotiations before talks moved into unofficial channels (Davis, 2025).

Track 1.5 diplomacy is used for dealing with regional security matters like maritime disputes, arms control etc. It creates a safe space to test new ideas and gauge reactions before official negotiations. It also helps in addressing non-traditional security issues like climate change, global health, cybersecurity, where experts in respective fields and policymakers come together to develop solutions to these challenges.

Track 1.5 diplomacy helps solve serious conflicts faster because official diplomacy is often slow and rigid. It is also useful for talking to difficult actors like non-state groups or unrecognized governments without formal recognition. However, Track 1.5 diplomacy has limits in power, trust and openness. Even though it includes experts and semi-official representatives, it can still face political pressure similar to Track I diplomacy. The mediator does not have real power to enforce decisions. There is also an ethical concern that unelected people

can influence foreign policy decisions. Since the discussions in Track 1.5 diplomacy happens behind closed doors, there can be a lack of transparency.

## **India and Track 1.5 Diplomacy**

The main aim of Track 1.5 diplomacy in Indian foreign policy is to enhance bilateral relations, explore policy options and create a forum to discuss sensitive issues without the rigidity of formal negotiations. One such example is former External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj who during her tenure employed Track 1.5 diplomacy on several occasions. Given below are certain instances where the Indian Government used Track 1.5 diplomacy in its dealings with other countries.

- **India-United States-** the use of Track 1.5 diplomacy can be traced back to May 1998 nuclear tests done by India and Pakistan. Track 1.5 dialogue process was constituted with experts from US, Pakistan and India to share their views on nuclear strategy. US shared their lessons from its nuclear experiences focusing on nuclear safety and crisis management. Indian experts justified their nuclear policy on the ground that it was only to maintain a minimum credible deterrence. Pakistan experts expressed concerns about India's military strategy and relied on nuclear weapons for defense. Despite differences, India and Pakistan showed some optimism about maintaining nuclear stability in South Asia (Davis, 2025).

U.S. and India have often used Track 1.5 diplomacy to resolve nuclear issues. The signing of the civilian nuclear agreement being one such example. Here, although Track I diplomacy played a significant role but Track II and Track 1.5 diplomacy were equally important in addressing nuclear issues and maintaining peaceful relations between U.S. and India. The most recent example of cooperation between United States and India through Track 1.5 diplomacy is the launch of TRUST (Transforming the Relationship Utilizing Strategic Technology) initiative in 2025. It was hosted by Carnegie India in New Delhi. The TRUST initiative is a collaborative effort involving government-to-government, academia and private sector from both sides, aimed at promoting technological development.

The United States and India have also cooperated on non-traditional security issues such as on cyber security issues. The first U.S.-India Track 1.5 Cyber Dialogue was held in 2016 against the backdrop of India's growing digital economy. It was co-hosted by Observer Research Foundation, Delhi and the Council on Foreign Relations, New York. The dialogue aimed to address 'cyberspace policy issues, combat cybercrime and advance norms of state behavior in cyberspace.'

- **India-ASEAN-** relationship with ASEAN countries have been a key factor in India's Act East Policy. The Delhi Dialogue is a premier annual Track 1.5 event to discuss political, economic, socio-cultural engagement between ASEAN and India. It has been held annually since 2009. In the Ministerial Session of the ninth edition of Delhi Dialogue held in 2017, former External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj observed that 'ASEAN and India are natural partners that share geographical, historical and civilizational ties.' Political leaders, policy makers, senior officials, diplomats, business leaders, think tanks and academicians from both sides participated in the discussions. The objective is to address regional security, economic integration and digital connectivity.
- **India-Myanmar-** in 2023, India hosted a Track 1.5 discussion on the Myanmar crisis with government representatives from Myanmar's neighboring countries- India, China, Thailand, Laos, Bangladesh as well as Cambodia and Indonesia. It also included think tank representatives from these countries. Representatives from only the military junta in Myanmar, which calls itself the 'State Administration Council (SAC)', were invited to the meeting hosted by the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), a think tank funded by India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). The dialogue addressed issues affecting neighboring countries that share borders with Myanmar, particularly challenges arising from the country's instability such as refugee crisis, humanitarian aid, countering transnational crimes etc.

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- **India-European Union (EU)**- India and EU cooperate on climate change issues through Track 1.5 diplomacy, bringing together government officials, academic experts and industry leaders. As both aim to achieve carbon neutrality, such interactions help strengthen EU-India climate cooperation.
- **Kochi Dialogue**- it is a Track 1.5 diplomacy forum organized by the Centre for Public Policy Research (CPR), a Kochi based think tank, in collaboration with Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. It brings together policymakers, experts and business leaders to discuss global issues like geopolitics, trade and security. The 2025 event focuses on strengthening ties between India and the Gulf Countries.

## Conclusion

Modern diplomacy is multi-dimensional – not limited to governments. In today's multipolar world where many countries and actors influence global politics, Track 1.5 diplomacy is especially important because it is flexible, inclusive and explores new ways to solve conflicts.

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