“The point is to not be diplomatic”: A Practice Theoretical Exploration of Track 2 Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific

by

Darya (Dasha) Berezhnova

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Name:	**Darya Berezhnova**
Degree:	**Master of Arts**
Title:	**"The point is to not the diplomatic": A Practice Theoretical Exploration of Track 2 Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific**
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	Jérémie Cornut Supervisor Associate Professor, Political Science
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Abstract

The various activities collectively known as “Track 2 diplomacy” have been notoriously difficult to define using international relations (IR) theories. This project leverages the recent practice turn in IR to re-engage with the concept and explain what Track 2 is in practice: a collection of diplomatic and non-diplomatic activities with an ambivalent view of traditional diplomacy. Drawing on 18 virtual interviews with members of Asia-Pacific Track 2 networks, the project combines practice tracing and grounded theory to paint a rich empirical picture of participants’ everyday practices, their material environments, and the background knowledge on which they rely. A new framework for understanding practices is proposed, arguing that the relationship between the conceptual categories of setting, background and performance can explain how and why practices change. This project questions the assumption that “Track 2 diplomacy” is indeed “diplomacy,” and instead emphasizes the voice of the practitioner in defining this phenomenon.

Keywords: Track 2 diplomacy; Asia-Pacific; practice theory; diplomatic studies; grounded theory; expert interviews

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List of Acronyms

APR	Asia-Pacific Roundtable
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CSCAP	Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific
CSIS	Centre for Strategic and International Studies
EEPG	Experts and Eminent Persons Group
IPR	Institute of Pacific Relations
IPT	International Practice Theory
IR	International Relations
ISIS	Institute of Strategic International Studies
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PAFTAD	Pacific Trade and Development Conference
PECC	Pacific Economic Cooperation Council

Chapter 1.

Introduction

In 1957, the town of Pugwash, Nova Scotia became host to the first Pugwash Conference, a meeting of 22 eminent scientists from the United States, the Soviet Union, Japan, and other countries. Their topic of discussion was the threat to humanity posed by nuclear weapons. No diplomats, state representatives, or other key decisions-makers were present. Despite this humble beginning, Pugwash Conferences continued and, at the height of the Cold War they contributed to the Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963, the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968, and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972 ("About Pugwash," 2013). This type of unofficial, transnational dialogue on pressing policy issues, held with scholars and scientists rather than policymakers, was one of the first instances of what is now known as Track 2 diplomacy.

Track 2 diplomacy then expanded to the field of conflict resolution, with the most notable example being the unofficial trust-building initiatives between Israel and Palestine that led to the Oslo Accords of 1993. In the Asia-Pacific region[1], Track 2 activities turned to confidence-building instead of conflict resolution, and focused on regional and economic security. The 1960s saw the establishment of the Pacific Trade and Development Conference (PAFTAD), a policy-oriented academic conference, and the 1980s saw the establishment of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), an independent regional mechanism populated by officials and non-officials alike (Elek, 2005). In 1980s, the ASEAN[2] Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS) was also established, which is an influential network of security-related think tanks. Building on successes with previous economic and security-related Track 2 processes, the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) was then established in the 1990s. The appeal of unofficial dialogue, aimed at building trust and generating

[1] The region of the world commonly described to include East Asia, Southeast Asia, Oceania, and the Pacific coast of North America.

[2] ASEAN stands for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Established in 1967, ASEAN is a regional Track 1 organization comprised of 10 member states: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

ideas rather than sticking to pre-defined national policy positions, has enticed actors in a number of contexts over the course of the last 60 years.

To this day, governments in the Asia-Pacific region and neighbouring countries continue to invest and take an interest in informal diplomacy processes, whether directly by sending representatives to meetings or indirectly via funding (Job, 2003). A broad variety of actors also continue to engage in informal diplomacy activities. These actors are most commonly academics, as in the Pugwash Conferences, but may also be former government officials (civilian or military), and members of non-governmental organizations, including think tanks,[3] business associations, or social organizations. At times, acting government officials also engage in informal diplomacy processes (Kraft, 2000). These participants also take part in informal Track 2 networks, which are based on personal and professional relationships formed through Track 2 participation.

In order to understand the current picture of Track 2 in the Asia-Pacific, a brief introduction is needed. The Council for Security and Cooperation in Asia Pacific (CSCAP), a long-running Track 2 process, hosts numerous invitation-only study groups focusing on security issues impacting the region, and "mirrors" the priorities of the Track 1 ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). The ARF, however, has an associated Experts and Eminent Persons Group (EEPG), which has been categorized as Track 1.5 and Track 2. The Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC) is another well-established Track 2 process which is a formal observer to the official-level Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). PECC has member committees in many economies on both sides of the Pacific, and hosts large-scale conferences. In terms of think tanks, the Institute of Strategic & International Studies (ISIS) in Malaysia and the ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS) organize the yearly Asia-Pacific Roundtable (APR), a high-profile conference that attracts participants from around the world. Finally, although the Shangri-La Dialogue is officially a Track 1 summit for defense ministers, security experts are also invited, making it part of the Track 2 network (*IISS Shangri-La Dialogue*, n.d.) Additionally, there are many smaller, ad hoc, and bilateral Track 2 processes in the region. Though is has been nearly 30 years since the heyday of Track 2 diplomacy expansion in the Asia-Pacific region, the continued

[3] It should be noted that in some countries, think tanks are quasi or fully governmental organizations instead (Ambrose & Tang, 2013).

existence of Track 2 networks and institutions suggest that the practice remains relevant and applicable to modern international relations.

Given the storied history of informal diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific (not to mention the rest of the world)[4], it is unsurprising that there is extensive scholarship on its utility for conflict resolution and regional security. In the Asia-Pacific, scholars have focused predominantly on the latter, describing informal dialogues as a mechanism for states to achieve diplomatic goals through backchannel routes, a way for subject-matter experts to improve policy, a socializing process and an ideational laboratory (Ball et al., 2006). Likewise, it is not surprising that much of the Track 2 literature is practitioner-focused, sharing best practices and illustrative case studies (Jones, 2015; Townsend-Gault, 2002). Unfortunately, the international relations (IR) discipline has engaged relatively little with the topic, leaving it under-theorized. More concerningly, in the last 15 years Track 2 scholarship about the Asia-Pacific has slowed down greatly. As Track 2 processes are still ongoing, this lack of contemporary literature is contributing to an understudied contemporary phenomenon. Not only does the slowing down of academic conversations about the practice of Track 2 diplomacy hinder the development and adaptation of the practice to current times, but the aging literature on the topic risks being disconnected from today's geopolitical and technological realities.

The recent practice turn within the IR field has brought about interesting studies of diplomacy from an everyday practice-centred perspective (Sending et al., 2011). However, these studies focus on traditional, official diplomacy – otherwise known as "Track 1" – and its conventional practices. As practice theoretical scholarship of diplomacy only continues to expand (Pouliot & Cornut, 2015), it is crucial that studies of a broader range of diplomatic practices should be conducted. This study looks at practitioners of unofficial diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region through a practice theoretical perspective. The **research question** asks: "**What is Track 2 diplomacy in practice?**" The first sub-question asks: "Which practices of Track 2 practitioners in the Asia-Pacific region are truly diplomatic, and which are not?" The second sub-question asks: "What can the practices of those engaged in Asia-Pacific Track 2 networks tell us

[4] Examples of Track 2 diplomacy being used for preventive diplomacy, mediation, and conflict transformation exist across nearly all continents (Crocker et al., 1999; Fisher, 2005; Jones, 2015).

about the shaping roles that environments and socialization processes play in guiding global actors towards certain actions, and away from others?"

The premise of this project questions the assumptions behind labelling a set of – by definition – non-diplomatic activities as "Track 2 *diplomacy*." In asking these questions, the purpose is to depart from the literature on informal diplomacy typologies, which focuses heavily on the types of actors involved, and instead look at what the actors *do* in their day-to-day lives. Additionally, this project does not observe the phenomenon of Track 2 diplomacy from a traditional diplomatic viewpoint – which often leads to assessments on the usefulness of Track 2 activities for supporting formal diplomacy in achieving its objectives. Instead, it focuses squarely on the experiences and perceptions of those involved in Track 2 activities. By placing emphasis on political action and its underlying meanings, this study uses a specific empirical case to tease out how the set of practices known as "Track 2 diplomacy" are simultaneously diplomatic and decidedly non-diplomatic (or even un-diplomatic). In a limited way, this study also contributes to a larger theoretical discussion on what role practices play in world politics: by abstracting away from the specificities of the case to understand mechanisms at play, it is possible to make interpretations about socialization and environments in general.

This study uses a practice theory framework to answer the research question. This is an interpretive research project that aims to create an empirical picture of the everyday practices of Track 2 participants in the Asia-Pacific region, and develop a grounded theory to inductively understand Track 2 diplomacy in practice. The aim is to generate a limited theoretical explanation within a specific cultural and geographic context; there is no predetermined thesis to test, but rather an open-ended and exploratory approach that aims to build knowledge grounded within interview data.

Most scholarly works defining Track 2 diplomacy focus on what it is not: it is not official, not involving diplomats, and not formal. This inevitably leads to the question: what *is* Track 2 diplomacy? Some explanations of Track 2 diplomacy prioritize its conventionally diplomatic features and paint it as just a hybrid form of diplomacy. Other explanations focus on its heterodox features and its departure from diplomatic practices altogether; it is explained as non-diplomacy. Theoretical explanations of Track 2 diplomacy as an IR phenomenon are few, and empirical examples are so diverse that it is difficult to draw comparisons. Further complicating the matter are sub-categorizations

of Track 2-like activities that aim to reflect empirical messiness; for example, “Track 1.5” is commonly used to refer to Track 2 activities that explicitly include acting officials.

Applying practice theory to the case of contemporary Track 2 in the Asia-Pacific provides the entry point to needed to better define and theorize Track 2, and to bring together the practitioner-focused and theory-focused Track 2 literatures. A practice tracing methodology foregrounds what practitioners do and helps in re-constructing the tacit knowledge that underlies their practices. On day-to-day basis, Track 2 practitioners in the Asia-Pacific perform both diplomatic *and* non-diplomatic practices, which causes a tension that they expertly navigate. This project suggests a new framework for understanding practices: a combination of setting – where practices are performed; background – which is the sum of the practitioner’s personal and social knowledge; and performance – where the practitioner enacts the practice itself.

By tracing practices back to their contextual roots, this study reconstructs both the conventional diplomatic practices and the surprisingly non-diplomatic practices of Track 2 participants. While the activity is called Track 2 *diplomacy*, participants are not actual diplomats, and so it is not immediately clear why and how they might be acting as though they were. It seems logical that Track 2 participants – at least those who come from non-diplomatic careers – would behave like academics, scientists, or business leaders. The combined framework of setting, background and performance demonstrates how participants carry the socialization, training, and experiences they received in their career to the Track 2 setting, and how they undergo a second process of socialization when learning to become competent Track 2 practitioners. While background knowledge is generally tacit and must be re-constructed by the researchers, the present case allows a glimpse into the re-structuring of background knowledge, when practitioners must consciously adjust certain practices upon entering new settings, while unconsciously continuing others.

Through combining practice tracing and grounded theory analysis, the study interprets the distinction that practitioners draw between “Track 2” and “diplomacy,” and identifies the essence of Track 2 to better understand what it really is (Pouliot & Cornut, 2015). By reconstructing the diplomatic and non-diplomatic practices in Track 2 diplomacy, it is possible to create a practice-based definition of Track 2 diplomacy. Pouliot and Cornut (2015) explain how this may be done:

> In order to reach that level, we must climb the so-called 'ladder of abstraction' and strip the concept of its deeply contextual elements. As historically and culturally situated as specific diplomatic practices may be, still there must be an analytical core that may be extracted from this diversity (p.299)

By "climbing the ladder of abstraction" from the minute practices of Track 2 participants to the categories generated through grounded theory, it is possible to identify the core of Track 2 diplomacy and generate a new understanding of how the conceptual categories of performance, background, and setting enable and constrain diplomatic practice (Pouliot & Cornut, 2015).

As practice theoretical approaches focus on individuals' interactions, this project aims to illuminate the connections between practitioners' assumptions, shared understandings, and their interactions within the unique structure of Track 2 diplomacy processes. 18 open-ended, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a variety of Canadian and international Track 2 diplomacy participants in the Asia-Pacific region, coming from a variety of professional backgrounds, in order to better understand the particular Track 2 landscape and their daily activities within it. From this rich empirical picture, participants' social positions and existing practical knowledge were re-constructed in order to build a partial conceptual understanding of Track 2 diplomacy in practice.

One contribution of this project is to expand and invigorate the relatively small and dated literature on Track 2 diplomacy by analyzing the unique empirical case of Track 2 in the Asia-Pacific region. Track 2 in the Asia-Pacific region provides an interesting case study: it is often multilateral, which allows access to large, diverse networks of participants; it addresses a variety of policy issues, including both long and short-term issues in the economic and security realms (broadly construed); and it consists of diverse processes, ranging from the highly institutionalized and well-established to the relatively ad-hoc. This project also makes a substantive contribution by helping practitioners and policymakers better understand this relatively under-studied phenomenon. Another scholarly contribution of this project is to add to the growing international practice theory (IPT) literature by explaining how Track 2 practitioners combine diplomatic and non-diplomatic practices, and how their performance is influenced by social and material contexts. Finally, this project also makes a methodological contribution via its novel approach: combining practice tracing with

grounded theory analysis and conducting an interview-based research project solely via video-conferencing. By applying a novel theoretical approach to a unique empirical case study, this project will fill a significant gap in both substantive and theoretical literatures.

The remainder of this thesis provides a brief review of relevant literature on Track 2 diplomacy and international practice theory (Chapter 2), and the theoretical framework used to develop the project and analyze data (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 describes the methodological choices made throughout the project, as well as trade-offs and limitations of those choices. Chapter 5 provides an in-depth empirical picture of the practices of the 18 participants interviewed throughout the course of this project, while Chapter 6 offers an analysis of the findings and a limited theoretical explanation. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes with the key take-aways and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2.

Literature Review

This project is located at a hitherto unaddressed junction of theory and substance. In order to understand how the project fits into existing fields, it is necessary to review the origins and evolution of the literatures on Track 2 diplomacy, take note of the scholarship on the particular case of Asia-Pacific Tack 2, and assess why the practice turn in IR lends itself well to the current study.

2.1. From "Interactive Problem Solving" to "Track 2 Diplomacy"

The words "Track 2 diplomacy" appeared relatively late compared to the emergence of activities that might now be described as Track 2 activities. Although the Pugwash and Dartmouth Conferences, established in the 1950s and 1960s, are among the earliest widely-recognized examples of Track 2 activities, the lesser-known Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR) preceded them by nearly 30 years (Hooper, 1988; Jones, 2015). The goals of these initiatives, broadly speaking, was to create networks of well-connected scholars, establish dialogue across national lines, and attempt to influence policy and public opinion through publications and direct recommendation to the government level. They were also seen as a means for governments to have sensitive discussions without being seen to take a position on them, or open new channels of communication during conflict. With the democratization of diplomacy and increased public scrutiny, official actors saw the appeal of using these processes for doing "backroom" or "quiet" diplomacy. Western IR scholarship in the mid to late 20th century were dominated by realist theories and ignored these initiatives. Instead, it was the field of conflict resolution, not IR, that first picked up the ideas which came to be titled "Track 2 diplomacy" (Jones, 2015).

Scholar-practitioners, disapproving of the dominance of realist IR theories at the time, began developing the idea of using non-official elites as facilitators of dialogue in conflict situations. John Burton, a former Australian diplomat, wrote about the concept of "controlled communication" in 1969, after using these techniques in addressing a conflict

between Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore[5]. Social psychologist Herbert Kelman, heavily involved in Israeli-Palestinian conflict management, was inspired by these ideas to develop the concept and techniques of "interactive problem solving" (Kelman, 1998, 2015). Canadian scholar Ronald Fisher further refined the concept as "interactive conflict resolution" (Fisher, 1993) and advocated for engaging broader society as well as elites in these dialogue processes (Jones, 2015). Of course, the conflict resolution literature is not limited to these three influential figures and is quite rich in empirical accounts of similar dialogue processes around the world. However, the majority of the conflict resolution literature on international Track 2-like processes does not engage with IR theory, and is instead aimed at practitioners. In a comprehensive overview of *Track 2 Diplomacy in Theory and Practice*, Jones (2015) posits that scholarship on these dialogue processes may be "doubly marginalized" as they have been largely dismissed by IR literature as too anecdotal and practitioner-focused, and ignored by officials as irrelevant.

The words "track two diplomacy" first appear in William Davidson and Joseph Montville's 1981 article "Foreign Policy According to Freud," which describes the phenomenon as "unofficial, non-structured interaction" that is complementary to official diplomacy – logically labelled "track one diplomacy" – and serves to address its shortcomings (p.155). Published in Foreign Policy magazine, this influential work was directly aimed at an audience of diplomats and officials, translating Kelman's ideas into policy-oriented language. The term took off and became widely used to refer to Cold War-era dialogues on nuclear security and Middle Eastern peace dialogues.

Since then, the term has been operationalized in a variety of ways, with scholars modifying the definition and adding sub-categories such as "Track 1.5" diplomacy, which describes official actors who participate in unofficial dialogues in their private capacities (Nan, 2005), and "Track 3" diplomacy, which describes transnational, unofficial dialogues between civil society members (Jones, 2009). Diamond and McDonald (1996) developed the theory of "multi-track diplomacy," a systems-based approach to peacebuilding that split diplomacy into nine different "tracks" and argued that all must be

[5] For a detailed description of Burton's techniques, please see Burton, J. W. (1969). *Conflict & communication: The use of controlled communication in international relations*. The Free Press.

engaged in creating a peace process. This proliferation of sub-categories of Track 2 diplomacy may be leading to conceptual confusion, as oftentimes the lines between each sub-category seem blurred. Nevertheless, the common factor among all of these "Tracks" is that, other than Track 1, every sub-type operates through unofficial channels, whatever they may be. A discussion of the concept is further developed in Chapter 3.

2.2. Region-Building Track 2: the Case of the Asia-Pacific

Although they began in the field of conflict resolution, studies of Track 2 do also appear, to a limited extent, in the IR field. The literature on Asian regional security represents some of the only academic work where the study of unofficial dialogues and IR theories overlap. Unlike the conflict resolution literature on Track 2, the regional security literature does not present detailed techniques and examples of how to run informal dialogue processes. Instead, it assesses the contributions of Track 2 to region-building, or lack thereof. Jones (2015) points out that the conflict resolution literatures and the regional security literatures on Track 2 "exist in splendid isolation" with one another (p.27). Although both fields use the term "Track 2 diplomacy" to refer to unofficial dialogue processes, there is virtually no cross-referencing between the two. He concludes that the topic falls in the gap between the practice-theory divide and argues for both theoretical and methodological eclecticism when studying Track 2.

Studies on the development of Asian cooperative security frequently engage with the concept. Arguing that regional security in the Asia-Pacific can be achieved through sustained dialogue and the development of new norms, these works emphasize the contributions of Track 2 processes (Ball, 1994; Dewitt, 1994). Job (2003) describes Track 2 participants as "norm entrepreneurs," whose discussions lead to socialization, redefinition of interests and identities, and widespread acceptance of new norms in the region. From a Track 1 perspective, Acharya (2009) also argues that official and unofficial dialogues led to processes of norm development and identity-building, which contributed to the creation of a regional security community in Southeast Asia. Earlier works do not focus explicitly on IR theory, but engage with constructivist concepts such as norms and ideas, while later works explicitly use a constructivist framework for their analyses.

Much of the literature on Track 2 in the Asia-Pacific also focuses on cataloguing the many processes that have long been present in the region. The *Dialogue and Research Monitor* was a publication begun by Paul Evans, Shirley Yue and a team of Canadian researchers in 1997, which ran for 11 years and catalogued multilateral Track 1 and Track 2 dialogues on regional security in the Asia-Pacific (*Dialogue and Research Monitor*, n.d.). Kerr provides an overview of the actors involved in Track 2 dialogues, while commenting on their cultural and normative differences (Kerr, 1994). Ball, Milner & Taylor (2006) list a wide range of Track 2 processes in the region, ranging from highly institutionalized meetings to smaller and more flexible processes that are typically organized by think tanks. They also note that the range of issue areas (including terrorism, disease and human security) addressed by regional Track 2 processes has expanded since their inception, suggesting that Track 2 can deal with topics beyond traditional security concerns (Ball et al., 2006). Conceptualizing "security" even more broadly, others discuss the role of Track 2 in supporting regional economic cooperation (Morrison, 2004; Zimmerman & Stone, 2018). Finally, the influential *Asia-Pacific Security Lexicon* catalogues, defines, and discusses the vocabulary of regional multilateral security dialogues of the 1990s (Capie & Evans, 2002). The authors frame their project through the lens of cultural and linguistic difference, acknowledging that the norm developing and idea generating goals of these dialogues occur in a context of diverse background knowledge.

Two Track 2 institutions occupy more space than any others in the Asia-Pacific regional security literature. ASEAN-ISIS and CSCAP are highly institutionalized, influential processes that have been active for over 20 years. They have been praised for their contributions to Track 1 diplomacy, whether through substantive contributions of new ideas or through building confidence and opening new channels of communication (Ball, 2000; Evans, 2000; Kraft, 2000; Simon, 2002). At the same time, they have also been criticized for struggling to say relevant (Capie, 2010) and for their "autonomy dilemma" with regard to government influence (Kraft, 2000).

The autonomy dilemma, or the divide between official and unofficial participation on Track 2 dialogues, is a frequent theme in the literature. The literature on region-building Track 2 seems to have adopted the sub-categorizing of diplomatic "tracks" from the field of conflict resolution. Based on ideal types, Track 1 diplomacy involves only officials; Track 2 diplomacy involves academics, think tank members and retired officials,

while Track 1.5 is a blend (Job, 2003). Kraft (2000) argues that even as Track 2 is supposed to be unofficial, Southeast Asian institutions participating in Track 2 processes are typically closely linked to their national governments. As such, Kraft sees a trade-off between greater efficiency in having close access to policymakers, and less room for independent thought, which is supposed to be the benefit of the low-stakes, unofficial approach in the first place. Some accept the lack of separation between the official and unofficial tracks as a practical benefit that assists the transfer of ideas (Simon, 2002). Others argue that by their very nature, Track 2 processes are not fully autonomous, as they depend on government for funding (Job, 2003). Stone (2011) interprets the official-unofficial distinction as a convenient myth which allows states to have sensitive discussions without fear of attribution. So far, little has been said on how the autonomy dilemma plays out in practice.

Tan (2005) explores a different definition of Track 2 diplomacy that does not necessarily posit it within the official-unofficial hierarchy. By focusing on practices, Tan allows for any actor to participate in diplomatic activities. Tan's conceptualization of pro- and anti- diplomatic practices demonstrates that Track 2 is always unofficial, but sometimes works in support of the status quo, and sometimes actively against it. Tan explains that participants in informal diplomatic processes have both challenged "diplomatic orthodoxy" and been socialized into traditional diplomatic practices (Tan, 2005, p.379). While not explicitly a practice theoretical work, Tan's article is the most helpful for conceptualizing conventional and unusual diplomatic practices in Asia-Pacific Track 2.

What is missing from the Asia-Pacific Track 2 literature is an exploration of what it is in practice. While differences in the professions of the actors involved are used to differentiate the many different "tracks" of diplomacy, it is unclear how these differences play out in practice. Beyond someone's performance as a Track 2 participant, the influence of their past experiences, their social position, and the setting in which they perform should also be theorized. The question remains: what exactly is Track 2? Is it, like public diplomacy, simply another mechanism of traditional diplomacy, or do its heterodoxies differentiate it to the point of being another set of practices entirely? As Jones (2015) suggests, is Track 2 diplomacy not "diplomacy" at all? To answer these questions, the international practice theory literature provides a convenient opening.

2.3. Practice Theory and International Relations

In the years since Pierre Bourdieu first developed his methodological approaches to the study of political sociology, the IR field has undergone a "practice turn" (Cornut, 2016). This turn, unlike the "-isms" of IR which offer competing explanations for the nature of world politics, instead provides a set of approaches, all based upon the fundamental idea that "social realities – and international politics – are constituted by human beings acting in and on the world" (Cornut, 2016, p.1). These human actions are known as practices, and a growing body of scholars have operationalized them in order to analyze and explain the social world.

In *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, Schatzki (2001) provides a comprehensive introduction to practice theory, acknowledging that it can be equally applied to fields like philosophy, social theory, and poststructuralism, with diverging conceptions of what makes a practice and how it can be studied. To explain the practice approach, he first establishes an ontology of practices, focusing on practices themselves as the base unit of study, rather than the individuals that perform them, language, or any other unit. Defining practices as "embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organized around shared practical understanding," he establishes the scope for what practices can be (p.11). Neumann (2002) is among the first to suggest using practice theory to study diplomacy, though specifically through discursive analysis. Nine years later, Adler and Pouliot (2011) open practice theory to the entire IR field, suggesting that its various roots in poststructuralism, social theory and constructivism can yield a fruitful research agenda and facilitate inter-paradigmatic conversations. Some disagree with such an open conception of international practice theory, and instead argue that the ontological basis of the practice approach makes it incompatible with both IR theories based on rational thought (such as realist and liberal theories) and norms (constructivist theories) (Bueger & Gadinger, 2015).

While Adler and Pouliot (2011) argue that practice theory is useful to IR as a whole, Sending, Pouliot & Neumann's (2015) book, *Diplomacy and the Making of World Politics*, advocate using a practice approach to study diplomacy specifically. The introductory chapter proposes practice theory as an avenue to theorize diplomacy while not getting too far removed from real world contexts. The authors argue that diplomacy is a cause of change in world politics, but that existing IR scholarship fails to reflect this.

Their broad definition of diplomacy treats who diplomats can be and what tasks they can do as an empirical matter, rather than a definitional one. This is a useful starting point for theorizing Track 2 because it does not qualify or disqualify this activity as a type of diplomacy, but rather focuses on the presence of diplomatic and non-diplomatic practices, and sees diplomacy as an "emergent phenomenon whose form changes over time" (Sending et al., 2015, p.6). Their conceptualization of diplomacy as part of a changing field of social relations is also useful, as it allows for diplomatic practices to change and adapt. Finally, Cornut (2016) provides a thorough review of the practice turn in IR. The author establishes that the practice turn is not a monolithic approach, and acknowledges a variety of competing conceptualizations of practices in IR, as well as epistemological and methodological approaches to studying them.

A growing body of empirical IPT work is currently adding to the rich theoretical literature. Authors analyze diplomatic practices at various sites, including at embassies (Cornut, 2015), on the frontlines (Cooper & Cornut, 2019), and in bilateral and multilateral settings (Pouliot & Cornut, 2017). Other works analyze diplomatic competency through a practice lens, including tactics of control (Adler-Nissen & Pouliot, 2014), diplomatic virtuosity (Cornut, 2018), or symbolic power by means of clothing (Kuus, 2015). Still others cover topics such as diplomatic practices of using technology (Adler-Nissen & Drieschova, 2019), or linguistic diplomatic practices (Faizullaev & Cornut, 2017). Several key texts also provide methodological guidance. Pouliot (2014) offers practice tracing as an interpretive alternative to process tracing. This approach "traces" practices from their performance to their roots, and uncovers the implicit knowledge shared by practitioners in a given context. Participant observation, interviews, and textual analysis are widely accepted as data sources for practice theoretical inquiries (Bueger, 2014; Cornut & de Zamaróczy, 2020; Neumann, 2012; Pouliot, 2012, 2014). Data analysis is eclectic, and generally involves a variety of methods fitting with the interpretive and social constructivist aims of IPT (Cornut, 2016; Pouliot, 2012).

Pouliot and Cornut (2015) outline a research agenda for a practice theory of diplomacy. The authors advocate for "cross-fertilization" between the study of diplomacy and practices, and recommend that future studies look at themes such as "continuity and change," "rationality and practicality," and "social [and…] technical aspects of practice" (p.306-7). Applying practice theory to Track 2 diplomacy will contribute to both the theoretical and empirical literatures.

Adler-Nissen (2015) suggests that IR scholarship and diplomacy are mutually estranged, given the tendency by the former to emphasize theory, and the latter to emphasize practice. Adler-Nissen points to mutual critiques, wherein IR scholars view diplomatic accounts as anecdotal, and diplomats view IR literature as so abstract that it is completely separate from the real world. Following this logic, Track 2 practitioners' work could be understudied because it is perceived as too ad hoc, and thus theoretically insignificant by mainstream IR. Likewise, Track 2 could be ignored by traditional diplomats as well, who may see it as a less important, or even insignificant set of activities. Adler-Nissen's caution of the ontological differences between scholars and practitioners is important to keep in mind when studying Track 2 in practice, because those who participate in Track 2 may not label their activities as a category of diplomacy or see themselves as a type of diplomat. Instead, practitioners see their practice as a series of responses to real world situations. To practitioners, their responses are not calculated based on a rational understanding of the anarchic state system, international institutions, or norms. Instead, practitioners usually do what feels right in the moment based on their accumulated experiences, their perception of their own social standing, and even their habits. As a researcher and an outsider to the world of Track 2 practitioners, it is important to avoid imposing existing theoretical concepts on their activities. A practice approach offers one avenue to study Track 2 from the ground up, and focusing on practice first, and theory second.

It is surprising that the IPT literature does not yet include a case study of Track 2 diplomacy, given that it is a fertile ground for applying practice theory. In an environment where diverse participants come together in a new setting, their practices run into challenges, and their practical logics become visible. At the same time, as these individuals continue to interact and build relationships, they undergo a process of socialization and co-create a new understanding of what it means to be a practitioner. Track 2 and practice theory are mutually beneficial: Track 2 is under-theorized from an IR standpoint, and IPT offers a solution; likewise, Track 2 offers a case where practice can be analyzed through dimensions of setting, background, and performance, and themes of continuity and change exist simultaneously. In the following chapter, a practice-based theoretical framework is introduced, and key concepts are defined.

Chapter 3.

Theoretical Framework

As this project aims to generate a grounded theory, it is a form of "theory-proposing" dissertation (Van Evera, 1997). The goal is not to test an existing hypothesis, but rather to explore the phenomenon of Track 2 diplomacy in the particular context of the Asia-Pacific from a practice-based perspective. As such, the explanatory claims it aims to make are limited to the local context and to the individuals interviewed.

An interpretive epistemological approach has been taken for several reasons. From a practical standpoint, Track 2 diplomacy is conceptualized by its practitioners in practical and relative terms: they know what counts as Track 2 diplomacy because it is what they do, and they know what does not count as Track 2 because it falls outside of their everyday practices. Because each Track 2 process is unique in its purpose, scope, and actors, the practice is fluid and poorly defined. In other words, practitioners rely on an intersubjective understanding with fellow Track 2 participants and other actors, including governments, to make sure that everyone is on the same page. Several features common to studies conducted from an interpretive epistemology includes a focus on understanding over proving, context sensitivity, and the co-construction of intersubjective knowledge (Creswell & Poth, 2018b; Wedeen, 2010). The research question and the conceptual confusion surrounding the Track 2 lead to a pragmatic alignment with interpretive epistemology, but there is also a philosophical rationale.

From a philosophical standpoint, "assumptions about […] reality status and knowability of [one's] subjects of inquiry" naturally lead researchers to adopt either a positivist or an interpretive worldview (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2014, p.xvii). Practice theory approaches also fit best with an interpretive epistemology. Practice theorists accept that the practices they study are meaningful in context, and can be understood as intersubjective rather than universal truths (Cornut, 2016). Additionally, the scholarly process of understanding these intersubjective meanings is highly interpretive, as the researcher must attempt to tease out tacit knowledge from observation of everyday practices. Practice theory provides an entry point to understanding Track 2 not as a sub-

type of diplomacy or a group of specific actors, but rather as a collection of diplomatic and non-diplomatic practices.

This project aims to understand how the backgrounds and settings of Track 2 practitioners enable and constrain them as they navigate their worlds, and trace how these shaping effects appear in their practice. Of the nine interpretive frameworks described by Creswell and Poth (2018b), this project fits best with the goals of social constructivism. The authors note that social constructivist research projects are most interested in social interaction and on participants' unique contexts. When interpreting data, social constructivist researchers are reflexive, and understand the influence of their own background on their interpretation. For this reason, the authors suggest that grounded theory methods are complementary to the goals of inquiry; this discussion is expanded in Chapter 4. Foregrounding practical meanings of "Track 2," this study co-constructs an intersubjective understanding of the concept with interviewees. Throughout the interview process, knowledge is built by interviewees offering anecdotes and reflections, and by the researcher reflexively offering their own interpretation of the practice. Track 2 is interesting because it both mirrors and deviates from traditional diplomatic practices: the actors involved are not diplomats; they do not produce treaties or negotiate conflicts – yet, they act as representatives, communicate national positions, and engage in other kinds of negotiations. Observing the everyday practices of Track 2 participants makes it possible to inductively generate a definition of Track 2 diplomacy and understand it in context.

In order to develop the theoretical framework used in this project, it is necessary to establish the interpretive meanings of two key concepts as they are used in the current context: "practices" themselves, and the phenomenon of "Track 2." To begin, practices and related concepts will be defined based on the main tenets of IPT, and a practical conceptualization of Track 2 will be offered.

3.1. Conceptualizing Practices

Practice theoretical inquiries begin with an ontology of practices; that is, practices form the base unit of study (Adler & Pouliot, 2011b). The question is, what exactly are practices? Adler and Pouliot (2011b) define practices as "socially meaningful patterns of action, which, in being performed more or less competently, simultaneously embody, act

out, and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world" (p.4). The authors explain that practices can be both physical actions by human bodies and the discursive actions of using language. As such, practice theory focuses on patterns of material actions by bodies as well as on discursive actions – neither takes precedence. Crucially, practices must be distinguished from actions and behaviours. Practices are not meaningless actions, because they carry some sort of social meaning. Although this meaning is not universal, practices must mean something to people outside of the practitioner – otherwise, they are just behaviours (Adler & Pouliot, 2011b).

Thus, practice theoretical inquiries do not only seek to observe practices, but also to interpret those tacit understandings that give them meaning. Pouliot (2008) proposes that diplomats' practices are informed by a "logic of practicality," arguing that most of what diplomats do on a daily basis is not based on conscious, rational thought, but on "inarticulate, practical knowledge that makes what is to be done appear 'self-evident' or commonsensical" (p.258). He explains that practical knowledge is "tacit, inarticulate, and automatic," gained from someone's experience over time (p.270). Hopf (2010) proposes an alternative "logic of habit" that might inform diplomatic practices, which is less a form of logic and more an unconscious and involuntary drive to do what one what is used to doing. The current project accepts Pouliot's argument and assumes that while practitioners' logic may be sub-conscious, it is not entirely unconscious and uncritical. Particularly in the unstructured context of Track 2, where individuals come from different professions and likely have differing practical logics guiding their practices, they are provided more agency in continuing or confronting their practice.

The question thus becomes: what makes up a "logic of practicality"? Despite debates on agency versus structure, practice theory generally assumes that an individual's practices are informed by their "definition of self, past experiences, internalized social norms, ways of thinking, background assumptions, prejudices, beliefs, expectations, and so on and so forth – in a nutshell, any pre- and/or unconscious source of meaning-making an individual may have" (Cornut, 2016, p.6). These factors represent an individual's history and help explain why they act as they do. They also influence how an individual perceives another's practices: their understanding is filtered through layers of personal meaning-making. Pouliot (2012) uses the term "disposition" to refer to these factors and their role in influencing someone's practices. In the current project, these dispositional factors will be termed "background." The concept of "background" is fruitful

for understanding Track 2 in practice because its practitioners come from diverse professions and undergo different training; when they come together, differences in their practical logics are highlighted.

Nevertheless, the role that social structures play in the shaping of practices should not be ignored. Social structures can influence practices, making certain practices logical and commonsensical, and others out of the question; in this sense, they also make up the logic of practicality. Pouliot (2012) argues that practitioners' social positions in a field of practice should be considered as part of their background. Cornut (2016) describes a field of practice as a figurative place where "practitioners are in interaction with one another and their practices are constantly reinforcing, emulating, imitating, and hybridizing one another" (p.7). The practitioners in a particular field of practice all understand the unspoken rules of the game, but occupy more or less powerful positions in this field (Pouliot, 2008). An individual's social position also plays a role in shaping their practice, as practices that are self evident and commonsensical to those occupying a powerful position are not available to those in a weaker position. In the present case, the concepts of field and social position are useful for understanding variations among practitioners' comfort level and ease. Based on their capacity to inform someone's logic of practicality, this study conceptualizes social positions as part of "background" as well.

The above conceptualizations of practices and practical logic, including disposition and position, have methodological consequences. Since practical logic is tacit, uncovering it may be nearly impossible. Understanding a practitioner's position and disposition is a matter of reconstruction – that is, interpretation – based on what can be seen, heard, or read.[6] Having started with an ontology of practices, these conceptualizations have guided the direction of inquiry, helped identify what was considered meaningful data, and contributed to the development of analytically useful categories during theorization. Throughout this iterative process, a three category framework emerged that helps clarify and operationalize practices.

[6] This discussion is developed further in Chapter 4.

3.2. Three Categories for Understanding Track 2 In Practice

This section explains the theoretical importance of setting, background and performance as a three category framework for understanding Track 2 diplomacy in practice. Citing Bourdieu, Pouliot conceptualizes a practice as consisting of three dimensions: the dispositional dimension, which represents the tacit knowledge which informs the practice; the positional dimension, from which an actor performs the practice, and the situational dimension, which is when the practice is actually performed (Pouliot, 2012). These three dimensions of practices are encompassed in two theoretical categories in this project: *background*, which covers the dispositional dimension of an actor's tacit practical knowledge, and the positional dimension they occupy in the social space, as well as *performance*, which covers the situational dimension of what and how actors actually perform.

The former category uncovers the motivations of actors for entering Track 2 spaces, the socialization that informs their performances, and their perceptions of themselves and others. The latter category helps identify and interpret practices as they are observed or described. As a directing force which shapes what is appropriate, competent or "logical" in the eyes of a practitioner, the concept of background is a factor which continually influences performance. It can be understood as someone's personal context of what is happening, as well as the frame of reference they share with others in their field. However, there is another factor which influences performance.

The final theoretical category for understanding the practices of Track 2 practitioners is *setting*. Setting is the material context in which performances are enacted; it can be conceptualized as the "stage" on which a performance takes place. While setting may not be widely accepted as a dimension of practice per se, it is helpful for understanding practices because, like background, it is also a shaping force. As in theatrical performances, a stage lets actors know how much room they have to maneuver, which obstacles they must avoid, and which features they can take advantage of. Likewise, when an actor who is used to performing their role on one stage moves to another stage, they must adjust. The settings of Track 2 diplomacy are varied, and they are both familiar and strange to participants who come from other backgrounds and are thus used to other settings. These categories are both emergent from the data

and informed by practice theory. The following sections explain the theoretical importance of the three categories.

3.2.1. Setting

The various settings of Track 2 diplomacy are crucial for understanding practices due to their structuring role. Setting is understood here as a shared, local context, where all participants are both enabled and constrained in similar ways by their physical (or virtual) environment and its predetermined structures, such as agendas, time allotted for certain activities, format of events, number of attendees, etc. The concept of setting is not commonly discussed in the IPT literature, with some notable examples including studies of diplomatic sites (Neumann, 2013) and geographical knowledge among diplomats (Kuus, 2016), as well as recent calls for expanding the conceptual "spaces" of diplomatic practice (Kuus in Constantinou et al., 2021).[7] Setting is important to the current project because it is what shapes and frames actor's performances and makes visible their diverse backgrounds.

Setting frames performances by constructing a container around them. Like an obstacle course, the container allows participants to move towards their goals and solve problems as is most natural to them, but makes certain options seem wrong or completely impossible. The walls of the container could be physical, such as the geographical location of a Track 2 process, or the seating arrangement in a room. They could also be structural, such as the agenda or rules and norms of behaviour. Both kinds of setting have a shaping effect, however, because they enable participants to do certain things and constrain or deter them from doing others. Additionally, setting can also be shaped by the performances of practitioners, and thus is not static.

Setting is also useful for making visible the diverse backgrounds of Track 2 participants. The case of Track 2 is unique precisely because it is a gathering of individuals who have migrated from the setting they are used to. In their new setting, practitioners must contend with being enabled and constrained in new ways, which sometimes challenges their existing practical knowledge. While the process of adjusting one's practical knowledge is not easy to observe or discuss, it becomes apparent when

[7] However, it does share interests with historical institutionalism in the field of comparative politics.

Track 2 practitioners recount their learning curve when entering the Track 2 world for the first time, or critique those who behave inappropriately. Most telling are critiques of individuals bringing too much of their "day jobs" into the Track 2 process: what might be logical and appropriate for a diplomat to do in a diplomatic setting, for example, becomes inappropriate in the Track 2 setting. Thus, it is impossible to understand Track 2 diplomacy in practice without also understanding the settings in which is takes place.

3.2.2. Background

From a Bourdieu-inspired perspective, Track 2 cannot be understood in practice without reconstructing the dispositions and positions which subconsciously inform participants' practical logic (Pouliot, 2014). These are encapsulated in the category of background, which represents everything that Track 2 practitioners bring with them to their practice of Track 2 diplomacy. When reconstructing actors' dispositions, Pouliot (2012) advises to "[inductively recover] agents' realities and practical logics" by looking at "insider meanings" they use, and to use these to interpret their intersubjective contexts (p.50). In the case of Track 2, multiple layers of insider meanings may be shared by some but not all participants. An example of an insider meaning that is nearly universally accepted among interview participants is the very term "Track 2," which can be seen in the practice of categorizing various "Tracks" of informal diplomacy processes. However, the language that interviewees use to describe their activities also contains other insider meanings, which are evident only to those who come from a similar professional background (e.g. ex-diplomats using terms that are common among diplomats, but not other professions). While this is an example of discursive practices only, even embodied practices can reflect multiple layers of intersubjective contexts. For example, the practice of giving a presentation was interpreted differently by interview participants. While nearly everyone agreed that the value of Track 2 dialogues was to contribute new policy ideas, those coming form academic backgrounds saw presentations as contributing by sharing expertise, while those coming from other backgrounds viewed them as preventing interactive dialogue.

The second dimension of background is an actor's position in the social field. Their position could be influenced by their social status (e.g. "elite" status as a combination of education, class, and profession) and their experience in the field (e.g. senior versus junior). In diplomatic settings especially, social status and country of origin

can affect actors' performance as well others' perceptions of them (Kuus, 2015). In a Track 2 setting, participants also occupy differing social positions, depending on the factors above. Additionally, Track 2 participants also occupy other fields of practice, such as academic or diplomatic fields, where they might occupy more or less powerful positions. To reconstruct an interview participant's social position, one might observe how they describe themselves and colleagues, or how they react to being interviewed and the snowball sampling process.

Background informs an actor's practical logic by making some things self-evident: due to their professional training, status, identity, and past experiences, a person naturally does things that which are obvious and proper in their current context, and knows what not to do. An actor's background is both their personal context for understanding what they are doing, as well as a shared, intersubjective context for understanding what others are doing (Cornut, 2016). Shared context can develop from having had similar professional experience, participating in similar types of Track 2 diplomacy, and circulating in the same networks. However, these contexts can also differ and even clash when brought together in the Track 2 setting, which leads to conscious and subconscious re-negotiation of what counts as competent performance. At the highest level of intersubjectivity is the overall motivation shared by all Track 2 practitioners to come together for dialogue.

Finally, background as it is understood in the current project is not static. An actor's accumulated experience and perception of themselves in their field informs their practices, but can also be subsequently informed and changed by settings, such as a different environment from the one they are used to, and others' reactions to their performances. Therefore, background is not seen as something prior to practice. It is continuously formed through processes of conscious learning and subconscious socialization that occurs in Track 2 settings and through Track 2 networks.

3.2.3. Performance

Performances are the most accessible dimension of practices because they can be observed by an outsider. Performance encapsulates the range of what people do when they prepare for, attend, and communicate about Track 2 processes. Although generally practices are conceptualized as competent performances (Adler & Pouliot,

2011b), the current category also allows for “incompetent” performance, as competence is highly contextual. Because Track 2 participants come from a variety of professional backgrounds, competent performances as a “Track 2 participant” might look different from competent performances as an academic, government official, or business leader. Although there is a level of understanding for those who are new to Track 2, truly incompetent performances are quickly recognized and corrected by competent practitioners, as became evident through stories told by interview participants. Even the interviews themselves are performances, and were understood and analyzed as part of each participant’s collection of practices – their *performance* as a “Track 2 expert.”

Performances might be directly observed or easily reconstructed from the stories that interviewees tell. However, in order for people’s performances to be meaningful as *competent* performances of Track 2 diplomacy, they must be performed in a shared social context, where an audience of similarly-minded practitioners can understand the culture and language of these performances (Pouliot, 2014). While not directly observable, this shared context can be reconstructed by looking for background and setting dimensions within the interviews.

This category is also named “performance” to foreground the performativity of what Track 2 practitioners do. Diplomacy itself can be interpreted as a form of theatre, where diplomats deliver performances as a representative of the state (Constantinou, 1996). Likewise, Track 2 “diplomacy” can also be interpreted as theatre, though one where actors perform more than one role. Unlike traditional diplomacy, those taking part in Track 2 might simultaneously perform as a Track 2 participant, as a representative of a state, as an expert, as a respected member of a profession, or as an individual acting in their “private capacity.” In this sense, they may still be performing diplomacy by taking on the role of a representative, but they are not actually doing diplomacy.

3.3. Conceptualizing Track 2

Unlike the theoretical concepts discussed earlier in this chapter, the concept of Track 2 diplomacy has been extensively co-constructed with interview participants. The conceptual starting point was taken from the conflict resolution and regional security literatures on the topic, but the definition has been supplemented by practitioner understanding as well.

Due to the rather strange evolution of the concept and the mutual isolation of the conflict resolution and regional security literatures on Track 2, the term itself is difficult to define. Most simply, a "track" is a channel of communication. Track 1 diplomacy is so-called because it is conducted through official channels by diplomats and ambassadors, while Track 2 diplomacy is conducted through unofficial channels, by non-official actors. Davidson and Montville's (1981) original definition of "unofficial, non-structured interaction" is sufficiently broad to encompass all variations of the activity. However, this conceptualization defines Track 2 diplomacy by what it is not: not official, not involving diplomats, and not formal. This inevitably leads to the question: what *is* Track 2 diplomacy?

As discussed in Chapter 2, most of the Track 2 literature focuses on actors over process. Despite the proliferation of various sub-types of diplomatic tracks, it is still unclear which label applies best in certain contexts. In a comparative discussion of Track 2 across regions, Peter Jones (2015) provides an illustrative example: "[i]ndeed, much of what is referred to as 'Track Two' in the Southeast Asian context might be called Track One and a Half in others" (p.27). Collier and Levitsky (1997) discuss the problem of analytical differentiation while avoiding "conceptual stretching" in the context of democracy subtypes. However, their general conclusions also apply to the case of Track 2 (Collier & Levitsky, 1997). Using Sartori's (1970) "ladder of generality," Collier and Levitsky argue that when scholars move down the ladder of generality to more and more specific subtypes of a concept, this may ultimately stretch the concept; when they move up the ladder, this yields a more general concept that is less precise but could encompass all possible variations. In the case of Track 2 diplomacy, it seems that much of the existing literature attempting to define these unofficial processes has moved down the ladder of generality. This may be useful to practitioners, who are aware of the process and only need to know the actors involved, but is theoretically challenging.

In any case, there is currently no satisfactory over-arching concept which describes the processes of unofficial "diplomacy." This situation is leading to conceptual confusion, as "Track 2" is simultaneously taken to be a specific sub-category of unofficial diplomacy done by well-connected experts, as well as a synonym for the general category of all activities relating to unofficial dialogue processes. The further these sub-categories get from official diplomacy – technically speaking the only actual form of diplomacy – the more confusion there is about how to define "Track 2."

Jones (2015) points out that despite its popularity, the term “Track 2 diplomacy” is actually a misnomer: only professional diplomats can do the work of diplomacy. By labelling unofficial dialogues as a form of diplomacy, the term has connotations of official state interaction. He suggests instead that Track 2 can be defined as “unofficial dialogues […] involving individuals with some close connections to their respective official communities, focused on cooperative efforts to explore new ways to resolve differences over, or discuss new approaches to, policy-relevant issues” (p.24), deliberately leaving off the “diplomacy” element. However, this too leads to conceptual confusion: if the second track is suddenly bereft of the first track, how does this change its process and purpose? A practice perspective helps to overcome these linguistic barriers to understanding Track 2.

Track 2 processes seem like they are born out of traditional diplomacy: actors often look and sound diplomatic (and sometimes are actual diplomats); their goals match or complement those of their governments; and they deal with similar challenges. Even the various settings in which Track 2 processes take place bear a resemblance to Track 1 settings: summits in high-profile locations, or quiet informal meetings in hotel restaurants. However, a practice perspective shows that Track 2 is also distinctly non-diplomatic in its settings, the backgrounds of its participants, and their performances. Instead, Track 2 can best be conceptualized as a dialogue process that contains both diplomatic and non-diplomatic practices. Though the title of “diplomat” is reserved only for those in an official role, diplomatic practices can be performed by anyone. As such, Track 2 dialogue processes combine diplomatic and non-diplomatic practices to create something unique. For this reason, the current project foregrounds the term “Track 2,” but does not forget the traces of “diplomacy” left within.

The three categories of setting, background, and performance help illustrate this claim. Setting is a container, shaping practice by allowing certain actions and preventing others. While a practitioner feels comfortable in a setting, their performance is utterly natural, and their practical logic is fully subconscious. In a new setting, however, practitioners are forced to contend with new options and constraints. Likewise, when practical logics bump up against a new social context with new expectations for what constitutes a competent performance, the tacit becomes explicit. When practitioners enter Track 2 for the first time, they are forced to consciously reflect on what makes a good Track 2 practitioner, and thus co-create a new definition of the practice.

Chapter 4.

Methodology

Creswell and Poth (2018a) point out that one's philosophical worldview informs the direction of research and impacts methodological choices during data collection and analysis. If methodology is seen as "applied ontology and epistemology" (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2014), the choice of methods is ultimately informed by the ontology of practices. The overarching methodological approach of this project is inspired by Pouliot's (2014) "practice tracing" methodology, which is the interpretive equivalent of process tracing. Many of the methodological choices for this project are based on the IPT body of literature. Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive methodological guide for conducting research within a practice-based framework, but several key IPT articles provided guidance and examples (Adler & Pouliot, 2011b; Adler-Nissen & Pouliot, 2014; Bueger, 2014; Cornut, 2015; Pouliot, 2012, 2014). Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2014) address the blurred lines regarding conducting research under interpretivist epistemologies, stating: "philosophy or theory and method do not seem to be as clearly separable in interpretive work as they are in quantitative [positivist] work" (p.xxiv). Practice tracing guided everything from interview script design, to interviews themselves, to data analysis. This chapter introduces briefly practice tracing, describes methodological choices including case selection, data collection, and data analysis, explains the compatibility of practice tracing and grounded theory, and delves into the trade-offs and limitations of the choices made.

4.1. An Introduction to Practice Tracing

The dual goal of Pouliot's (2014) practice tracing methodology is to locate practices within their intersubjective social contexts, and then to abstract away from particular practices by categorizing them; these categories are useful for analytical discussions of practices across social contexts. Unlike process tracing, Pouliot's practice tracing has a limited conception of causality. On one hand, practices produce social effects upon the world. On the other hand, practices are only meaningful in their intersubjectively negotiated contexts; otherwise, a practice that is widely understood in its context – such as diplomatic bracketing – removed from its context becomes devoid

of deeper meaning – such as using parentheses when writing a document (Pouliot, 2014). For this reason, Pouliot argues that "based on existing practical knowledge […] practitioners react to what a given set of actions *count as*" (p.242). Thus, to analyze even limited local social causality of practices, a researcher must interpret the social contexts in which practices are performed, and the practical logic which informs them. For Pouliot, causality is not the same as it is for positivist researchers: causality is meaningful *only* when it is local – it is only the competent performance by practitioners, their background, and the setting they are operating in, that makes practices meaningful and thus effect change upon the world. Thus, practice tracing is not intended to produce results that are generalizable across contexts. However, limited generalizations can be made based on the abstract categories generated through the process; Pouliot calls these *mechanisms*.

Pouliot (2014) suggests that meaning "has to be inferred from the close, interpretive study of the local interaction setting" (p.243). Practices should thus be studied from the perspective of the practitioner, although the researcher must be immersed enough in the subject matter to pick up on intersubjective meanings, but analytically distant enough to be able to interpret beyond the face value of what practitioners say and believe (Pouliot, 2014). As Pouliot does not prescribe a specific method of data analysis to be used for practice tracing, grounded theory methods have been chosen due to their fit with the philosophical assumptions and practical needs of this project (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Practice tracing and grounded theory have not yet been combined in the IPT literature, so this novel methodological combination will be one of the contributions of this project.

4.2. Case Selection: The "Where" and the "Who" of Track 2

At the high level, the regional case of the Asia-Pacific was chosen because it is both theoretically and practically important. Firstly, the existing work on Track 2 and regional and economic security in the Asia-Pacific suggests that this an important case with a unique instance of Track 2. Secondly, the high number of diverse Track 2 processes, including longstanding Track 2 institutions, means that the practice is well-developed in this area. A practical benefit of selecting an area with well-established Track 2 processes that participate in regional conversations is that a lot of information, including names of participants or documents produced during the process, is publicly

available online. While the study is not limited to highly institutionalized Track 2 processes, those who participate in larger scale processes and those who participate in smaller processes share the same networks. There are also both newcomer and seasoned Track 2 practitioners present within these networks, which is methodologically useful as it illuminates differences in participants' performances and backgrounds.[8] Based on Gerring's "Typology of Research Designs," this project is a small-C study of intrinsic importance (Gerring, 2017).

At the level of individuals and their networks, methodological choices were practical. Individuals invited to interview were chosen through a combination of personal contacts, cold-emailing experts in the field, and snowball sampling. As it is difficult for an outsider to gain access to Track 2 dialogues and practitioners are busy people, relying on local, personal contacts made practical sense. Additionally, potential interviewees were identified from the websites of think tanks and institutionalized Track 2 processes; from there, it was possible to access their networks through snowball sampling. Care was taken to recruit as diverse a range of participants as possible.

4.3. Data Collection: Sources, Sampling, and Interviews

4.3.1. Data Sources: Virtual Elite Interviews

The sources of data for this project are 18 elite interviews with practitioners of Track 2 diplomacy. The interviews were conducted in two cycles in 2020 and 20201; all but one were conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While ethnography and participant observation are considered to be the gold standard for studying practices, it is widely recognized in the IPT literature that access can be a significant challenge (Bueger, 2014; Pouliot, 2012, 2014). Neumann's *At Home with the Diplomats* (2012), chronicling the author's experience of working at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), is a notable example of using ethnography to study diplomacy in practice. However, Neumann's position as a contractor hired by the MFA gave him a level of trustworthiness and access that outsider scholars cannot replicate. Pouliot (2012) suggests that "when practices cannot be 'seen,' they may be 'talked about' through interviews" (p.49). Interviews provide information that is not apparent in

[8] The theoretical significance of the diversity of participants is developed in Chapter 3.

formulaic surveys, or even in published documents. Topics such as the actual or perceived extent of individual agency, or emotional reactions, can only be communicated by individuals themselves (Soss, 2014). Additionally, the performative aspect of an interview is itself data: especially in a semi-structured or unstructured interview, what an individual chooses to say (or not) can illuminate tacit knowledge and assumptions behind their actions. As Pouliot vividly puts it, “interviews are not pickaxes to mine the truth, but social relations in which a world is performed into being” (Pouliot, 2012, p.48).

Half of the interviewees were academics, and others came from various professional backgrounds such as government (including diplomats and ambassadors), think tanks, and other NGOs. The researcher was able to interview more Canadian participants than those from other countries in the Asia-Pacific region: two-thirds lived in Canada, while only one third lived abroad. Respondents tended to be older and overwhelmingly male, with only five participants being female. These characteristics were expected. As it is relatively easy to find academics’ contact information and research interests online, they were the easiest group to identify as Track 2 experts and subsequently recruit. As the researcher is Canadian, it was also easier to identify and contact other Canadians. Most people who get involved in Track 2 usually do so on the basis of their expertise or connections, so individuals who are more established in their career are expected. While disappointing, the gender gap was also not surprising.

It should be noted that interview data was triangulated with a small amount of virtual participant observation. Although the project was designed to include no participant observation, the 12th interviewee shared information about the 34th Asia Pacific Roundtable conference, which took place virtually in August of 2021. The researcher was able to take advantage of the virtual setting and free admission to attend one day of the conference, observe proceedings, and use this information to make adjustments to the remaining interviews and data interpretation. A brief account of the conference and results of participant observation is provided in Appendix A.

4.3.2. Snowball Sampling as a Recruitment Method

Snowball sampling was chosen as a recruitment method for practical reasons, as it is difficult to access Track 2 networks as an outsider. Approximately half of the 18 interview participants were recruited using snowball sampling. While some of the

similarities among participants can be explained by the population under study (i.e. individuals in the mid to late stages of their career tend to participate more in Track 2 than junior individuals), others may be explained by the nature of snowball sampling. At times, it was difficult to break out of a very small sub-network as interview participants mentioned the same names over and over during snowball sampling. Because snowball sampling carries this risk of getting stuck in an echo chamber, it was supplemented by cold-emailing Track 2 experts identified through organizational websites. Also, care was taken to ensure that participants were diverse in terms of age, gender, nationality, organizational affiliation and length of experience with Track 2 diplomacy, in order to maximize the potential for hearing diverse viewpoints.

Despite its flaws, snowball sampling was useful both for identifying contacts and for the interactive process. Noy (2008) suggests that snowball sampling not only allows a researcher to access knowledge, but can be knowledge in itself. He argues that "snowball sampling relies on and partakes in the *dynamics of natural and organic social networks*" (p.329; emphasis in original) and as such the very act of snowball sampling can reveal a lot about the individuals within networks, the roles they play, and their centrality within the network. In theoretical terms, snowball sampling is particularly useful for interpreting the social positions of interviewees. For example, "popular" contacts whose names get mentioned frequently by their colleagues likely occupy a high and central social position. Snowball sampling can be useful for accessing hidden networks (Noy, 2008). Certain individuals could only be accessed through a mutual connection, as their contact information was not accessible online. In this way, interviewees practiced gatekeeping by deciding if and when they would provide access to the researcher. Partaking in the social act of snowball sampling, therefore, is just as important as getting the contacts.

4.3.3. Drafting the Interview Questions

The minutiae of everyday Track 2 diplomacy can be used as a gateway to discussing how interviewees perform their Track 2 roles, how their practices are informed by their professional or organizational backgrounds, and how the setting shapes their performances. Interview questions covered participants' stories about specific Track 2 meetings and events, including attendees, locations, topics discussed, organizational processes, deliverables, and challenging moments; the socialization and

training that they experienced; diplomatic culture and norms in Track 2 settings; and subjective definitions of Track 2 diplomacy. The order of the questions was also particularly important.

The process of interviewing practitioners about their practice is highly reconstructive and depends on interpretation. Firstly, an idea of how and where something is performed must be reconstructed from the interviewee's account; descriptive anecdotes are useful for this purpose. Secondly, the tacit elements must be reconstructed as well: the social context and background knowledge need to be interpreted from the re-telling. While practices may be observed – or at least re-told – their logic cannot; thus, interpretation is crucial to reconstructing the context within which these practices are grounded (Pouliot, 2014). Pouliot suggests that it is fruitful to interpret where interviewees talk *from,* by interrogating the assumptions they make and questioning what tacit knowledge they must have in order to make these assumptions.

It was crucial to draft interview questions that allowed glimpses into the participants' practices and the tacit logic/knowledge behind them. Questions were designed to elicit stories and allow participants to recount what they did and thought about in certain situations. Based on Bourdieu's argument that consciously considering one's practices permanently changes them, because practices are supposed to be based on sub-conscious logic (Pouliot, 2014), interview questions did not make explicit the practice-tracing goal.

Practical logic is most visible when it meets a challenge: when a practice cannot go on automatically and the practitioner must change course (Bueger, 2014). Questions addressed these experiences by asking interviewees to reflect on their learning curve upon entering the Track 2 world, on general challenges they faced, and on the changes that the COVID-19 pandemic caused to their practice. Asking participants to remember what was surprising to them when they first got involved with Track 2, or reflect on how they learned to be a Track 2 practitioner, provided insight into the tacit, sub-conscious process of building practical knowledge. The timing of the interviews – as most were conducted one year into the COVID-19 pandemic – was also useful. Interviewees had had a year to change their practices, adapt to the online world, and reflect on these changes. Many provided concrete examples of how things had been before COVID-19, what exactly had changed, and how. The pandemic also challenged participants'

practices in similar ways, and this consistency helped differentiate context-specific challenges from general Track 2 diplomacy challenges. To gain insight into the intersubjective elements of practical logic, two questions addressed mentorship and training, and professional culture. The researcher also followed up on stories about norm-breaking, as they made apparent what is considered to be appropriate, or "normal" practice in contrast to what makes an abnormal practice.

Questions were asked in a specific order, starting with general questions that allowed interviewees to speak freely without being overly reflexive, to questions that required them to be more reflexive of themselves and their profession. Questions requiring more reflexivity were left until the end so that interviewees would not have too much opportunity to consciously reflect on the roots of their practices and obscure their practical logic with their own reflections. The question order was also a way to immediate check interviewees' instinctual answers against their more reflexive ones. Reflexivity could not be fully prevented, as the interviewee would have inevitably spent at least the length of the interview reflecting on their Track 2 diplomacy praxis. Allowing for explicit reflexivity at the end of the interview process took this reality into consideration. Interview questions were chosen from the list below.

Table 1: Scripted Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews

1. "Could you please describe your most recent involvement with Track 2 diplomacy?" Follow up questions included: "What kind of event/process was it? Who organized it and who participated? What happened at this event/process? How did you decide on this structure of event/process? What was produced at this event/process?"
2. A choice of: "Could you describe a day during this Track 2 process where you overcame an obstacle or challenge?" or "Could you describe a day during this Track 2 process where there was tension?"
3. Could you please describe any diplomatic training or mentorship you had?
4. A choice of: "Because you are also [fill in role: scholar/expert/etc.], when you participate in Track 2 diplomacy, what surprises you/what is different from your professional background?" or "As a Track 2 participant, how do you manage your identities different roles as both a [fill in role: scholar/expert/etc.] and Track 2 participant?"
5. "Could you tell me about an example of when a fellow Track 2 participant was behaving in a way that was not appropriate for the situation?" Later changed to: "How has COVID and the shift to online meetings changed the dynamic of Track 2 diplomacy?"
6. "When we talk about Track 1 diplomacy, we often talk about diplomatic culture. Do you find that there is a "Track 2 diplomacy" culture? What is this culture?"
7. "Based on your experiences, how would you define Track 2 diplomacy?"

4.3.4. Virtual Interviewing with Zoom

The first cycle of interviews took place in early 2020, where one unstructured interview was conducted in-person, and two semi-structured interviews were conducted using the Zoom videoconferencing platform. The second cycle took place in 2021, where one interview was conducted via phone call, and 14 were conducted via Zoom. Interviews generally took 30 to 45 minutes and were comprised of six to seven questions, time permitting. While interviews were based on the existing list of questions, the researcher often asked follow-up questions, skipped questions, or created new questions as appropriate based on time, rapport with participants, and the need to confirm or challenge interpretations as the project progressed.

The Zoom platform provided an unexpected fieldwork experience with particular benefits and challenges. Zoom was chosen due to its rising popularity at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and ease of use, although participants were always given the option to use another platform if they wished. On the side of benefits, Zoom interviews increased accessibility in terms of reducing cost and travel, and providing automated recording and transcription tools. Participants were very willing to engage in Zoom interviews, which was likely influenced by the ease of access[9] and the informal nature of the meeting. These findings are supported by emerging literature on Zoom interview methodologies (Oliffe et al., 2021). Technical problems, difficulties with building rapport, and the need to modify interview techniques presented challenges.

Several interviewing strategies were devised to respond to the particularities of the Zoom environment. Firstly, non-verbal methods of showing attention and encouragement were crucial, because the environment is already prone to disruptions and distractions. Verbal cues such as “hmm” or “oh!” often interrupted participants due to lag in connectivity. Instead, the researcher showed attentiveness by nodding, animated facial expressions, maintaining “eye contact” by looking directly at the camera, and visibly taking notes. Secondly, slower pacing was used to address communication difficulties. Technical problems, outside noise, people and animals in the participants’ homes, and even calls and emails caused distraction and impeded communication. To remedy these factors, the researcher took longer pauses before speaking, re-worded

[9] To join a Zoom call, a participant only needs to click on the URL provided.

questions, and summarized participant comments to make sure they were understood correctly.

The Zoom platform also changed the nature of the "field" in fieldwork (Howlett, 2021). On one hand, all fieldwork was conducted from the researcher's home in Canada, and the brief glimpses of participants' locations on Zoom showed their homes, rather than Track 2 settings. Participants were sometimes located in different countries and time zones, and very little of this context filtered into the interviews. On the other hand, the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic forced Track 2 activities to migrate online just as much as research activities.[10] In this sense, the interviews took place on the very same virtual "field" that participants were using for their Track 2 work.

4.4. Data Analysis: Coding with Grounded Theory Methods

Most practice theoretical texts offer little guidance on data analysis, rather focusing on sources of data and the processes of data collection (Bueger, 2014; Pouliot, 2012, 2014). In line with its practice tracing goal, this project uses grounded theory methods for data analysis, widely recognized as a systematic approach to interpretive analysis that allows the researcher to inductively generate a theory grounded within their data (Saldaña, 2016). Grounded theory is appropriate for researching social processes (Creswell & Poth, 2018a); as practices make up social processes, it is logical to use a grounded theory approach for the project at hand. The combination of practice tracing and grounded theory analysis in novel, and is a methodological contribution of this project.

4.4.1. Rationale for Combining Practice Tracing and Grounded Theory

The link between practice tracing and grounded theory is not evident; however, they are complementary approaches. Practice tracing foregrounds interpretation of the local context of practices, while grounded theory allows for theorization to be grounded in the data. Pouliot (2014) claims that there is no direct methodological link between data and theory. In this project, the direct link between data and theory lies in the grounded theory methods used to conduct data analysis. By rooting all theorization directly within

[10] Many participants mentioned that they were also using Zoom for their Track 2 activities.

the data, emerging categories and interpretations are never far from the data, even as theorization becomes more abstract (Corbin & Strauss, 2015b). Rancatore (2010) brings up a useful distinction between methodology, which he more closely aligns to epistemology, and method, which he treats pragmatically as a neutral tool. In the case of the current project, practice tracing should be considered the methodology, as it stems from an ontology of practices and an interpretive epistemology. Thus, tracing practices is the roadmap to answering the research question, while grounded theory methods are the tools for data analysis and theorization.

Corbin & Strauss (2015) define grounded theory as theory which is "grounded in" and developed directly from the data collected. The authors briefly explain why a researcher might use grounded theory analysis techniques for their project:

> The procedures enable researchers to examine topics and related behaviours from many different angles – thus enabling comprehensive explanations. […] The procedures can be used to uncover the beliefs and meanings that underlie action, to examine rational as well as nonrational aspects of behaviour, and to demonstrate how logic and emotion combine to influence how persons respond to events or handle problems through action and interaction. (p.11)

Based on this description, grounded theory analysis techniques are well-suited to the study of practices. As practices are nonrational and based on a "logic of practicality" (Pouliot, 2008), they might be misinterpreted or made invisible using other methods. Analyzing interview data with grounded theory techniques foregrounds the practitioner, their practices, and their reflections. Grounded theory methods also provide a clear avenue for reconstructing an actor's background knowledge, by means of interrogating the "beliefs and meanings that underlie action" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p.11). The process is immersive, inductive, and iterative, allowing the researcher to "convert messy patterns of practices into neat theoretical categories" (Pouliot, 2014, p.257). The exploratory nature of many grounded theory techniques allows for creative interpretation, while their dependence on the subject's voice ensures that practices are understood in their local and intersubjective context.

Furthermore, grounded theory analysis is compatible with "extending a substantive theory developed from a previous study" by allowing the researcher to bring in concepts and insights from elsewhere (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p.52). In this case, the practice tracing methodology provides direction for data analysis. The authors also

caution to avoid closing one's mind to the possibility that new theories emergent from the data may no longer fit with the initial theory. As theory should emerge from the data, it is crucial to develop concepts organically rather than forcing data into conceptual pigeonholes simply because they exist. Grounded theory methodology also contains built-in measures to prevent over-interpretation by the researcher: through techniques such as line-by-line initial coding and in-vivo coding, the researcher must stay true to the participants' voice (Charmaz, 2014).

4.4.2. Analysis In Three Cycles

Following the approaches developed by Corbin and Strauss (2015) and Charmaz (2014), analysis took place in three iterative cycles of qualitative coding. The first cycle of coding was highly open and exploratory, and was done for seven interviews. A combination of initial, in vivo, and process coding strategies was used. *Initial* codes were broadly descriptive, labelling key concepts and ideas in large blocks of text (Saldaña, 2016). They helped guide the researcher through the transcript and see the big picture. *In vivo* codes identified noteworthy words or phrases in the transcripts, specifically focusing on implicit meanings, jargon, or innovative phrasing (Charmaz, 2014). Examples of in vivo codes include: "the ASEAN way," "non-official capacity," and "talents of diplomacy." These terms allowed the researcher to see through practitioners' eyes and identify unspoken assumptions. In the case of Track 2, insider shorthand is also useful for tracking who shares certain insider meanings, and who does not. Finally, *process* codes labelled actions with gerunds, such as "inventing," "connecting" or "forbidding." Because processes are not static, they make connections with other codes to tell an emerging story. The purpose of first cycle coding was to generate concepts which would serve as the building blocks of theory.

Next, an axial coding strategy was used to group actions into practices, generate categories, assess their properties, and determine relationships in order to construct a new theory around the key or "axial" categories (Saldaña, 2016). The codes generated during the first cycle were themselves coded into categories, and new categories were developed as needed. This process was iterative, as data collection and analysis proceeded simultaneously, and was done for all 18 interviews. Analytic memos were used to record the researcher's thought process while testing out ideas for categories or themes, exploring connections between categories, or noting down questions. At this

stage, multiple categories reflecting competency, socialization, changing settings, and differences in professional background began to emerge.

Finally, the last step was integrating emerging categories and interpretations about their connections (Creswell & Poth, 2018a). The third cycle did not focus on coding but rather on synthesizing the ideas developed, and generating a limited, context-sensitive theoretical explanation of Track 2 in practice. At this stage, findings were synthesized into the three broad categories of setting, background, and performance, and the difference between diplomatic and non-diplomatic practices was drawn. Interpretations were tested against earlier categories, analytic memos, and even transcripts, to ensure that they were valid.

4.5. Methodological Limitations and Trade-Offs

Any methodological choices pose limitations, and several trade-offs were made through the course of this project. Limitations associated with interview data sources lead to issues of validity and reliability. Data sources that do not address the topic of study appropriately do not yield meaningful results. The pilot stage of this project confirmed that poorly written or communicated questions impact the validity of the data, as does an unstructured interview that veers too far off-course.[11] After redesigning the interview questions, interviews generated valid data because they addressed the topic of study and elicited precise responses. Thematic overlap between questions, as well as the opportunity for follow-ups, allowed the researcher to verify the validity of the data. As an interpretive project, it is important that the researcher's interpretation of the data also be valid, so interpretations were checked against available data as they were developed.

A biased or exaggerated interview also affects the reliability of data (Berry, 2002). In this case, it was less important for interviewees to be objective than it was to "use the interview for what it [was]" (Berry, 2002, p.680). Relying on a large number of interviews with diverse participants helped increase reliability, while questions about challenges and training allowed interviewees to self-critique (Berry, 2002). The researcher treated interviews themselves as performances, and reflected on why

[11] A description of the pilot project design, findings, and lessons learned can be found in Appendix B.

interviewees might be exaggerating at that moment. Pouliot's (2014) guidance to assess where practitioners talk *from* was useful here. As Track 2 practitioners, some interviewees may be prone to exaggerating their own or their organization's role and influence. Knowing that the content of their interview may get published, they might also have a vested interest in presenting Track 2 diplomacy in the best light possible, whether out of concern for the reputation of the practice, or future funding decisions from government. Depending on their relationship with their country's government, certain Track 2 practitioners may end up repeating official positions and talking points. They may also want to present themselves as competent, which makes it difficult to unpack tacit knowledge or processes of mentorship, learning and socialization.

Soss (2014) points out that while most critiques of the interpretive interview come from a positivist perspective, they also have limitations in interpretive research. Soss argues that "social processes of meaning-making" cannot be observed in interviews as they can through ethnography, which is supported by the consensus in IPT literature that ethnography and participant observation are the gold standard (Bueger, 2014; Neumann, 2012; Pouliot, 2012). A trade-off was made by choosing to use elite interviews as data sources: while elite interviews are a much more accessible data source than ethnographic research, they do not provide an unfiltered perspective on the phenomenon at hand, and do not provide a direct "look" at practices in action. It is also likely that when participants recount their Track 2 experiences in interviews, they leave out certain practices that are so self-evident that they are unnoticed. Participant observation would complement elite interviews by allowing the researcher to use their outsider status to notice these taken-for-granted practices being performed, and then inquire about these practices during interviews. Due to the circumstances surrounding COVID-19 and the closed-off nature of Track 2 processes, it was not possible to triangulate interviews with participant observation, except in a very limited way. A brief account of virtual participant observation, which was undertaken as a supplementary research activity, and its findings, is available in Appendix A.

Another limitation of the study is that interviews are not triangulated with document sources; this was both a methodological choice and a practical reality. While text sources can provide reliable, static representations of their writers' thoughts (Trachtenberg, 2006), there were challenges with using documents for this project. Documents put out by large organizations tend to become devoid of individual voices

(Neumann, 2012). While it is still possible to observe traces of practices within documents (Cornut & de Zamaróczy, 2020), there is a second problem to using document sources for this study. In order to treat documents as artefacts produced by Track 2 practitioners and triangulate them with interviews, it was necessary to interview participants who attended a specific Track 2 process and access the documents produced by that process. However, not every Track 2 process publishes documents; some are confidential and share information with governments directly. This approach was unsuccessfully attempted during the pilot project. It was concluded that the likelihood of accessing participants and documents from the same Track 2 process was very low, and it was decided that documents would not be used for this project.

Using semi-structured interviews had trade-offs as well. As this is an interpretive project based on tracing practices in their local context, a structured interview did not fit with the research goals (Soss, 2014), and was inappropriate for the purpose of interviewing elites (Aberbach & Rockman, 2002). On the other hand, while unstructured interviews may lead to broader data, limitations such as lack of trust, rapport, and understanding of the cultural context, could prevent any useful data from being gathered at all (Fontana & Frey, 2003). In the context of the current project, differences in organizational, professional and even national cultures between the researcher and the interviewees could lead to flawed and inaccurate interpretations. In the interest of getting interviewees to speak candidly and stay on track, semi-structured interviews were chosen as a middle ground: while structured enough to seek similar types of information from diverse perspectives, they were also open enough to be context sensitive. Having a preliminary interview script was also logistically convenient when interviewing prominent participants who did not manage their own calendars: a time estimation (30-45 minutes) and if required, the list of questions to be asked, could be easily provided to administrative assistants to reassure them of scheduling and privacy issues. By using a semi-structured approach, interviewees were able to elaborate on specific answers, and the researcher was able to freely follow up on interesting points without damaging the method.

Furthermore, the difference in power and social position led to challenges in interviewing. Given that the researcher, a female Masters student, interviewed participants who were typically older, male, and preeminent in the field, this difference in power led to led to interview responses that sounded rehearsed, or to the participant

attempting to steer the direction of the interview. During the interview process, these situations were difficult and intimidating to address, and sometimes led to overly long interviews or gathering irrelevant data. However, these tendencies by participants were interpreted as part of their performance as “Track 2 experts”. In fact, a rehearsed response is not surprising to see from a group of participants that frequently attends conferences and dialogues, and needs to have statements prepared. When participants veered off track into unrelated topics, the semi-structured nature of the interview was helpful in re-directing the conversation, and these challenges became easier to address as the researcher gained more experience. Similarly, the power difference between the researcher and the participants was also highlighted during the snowball sampling process, when some participants declined to share their contacts, and thereby kept their knowledge of and access to privileged networks private. In order to address this challenge, it was necessary to attempt snowball sampling with diverse participants, as well as supplement it with a cold-emailing approach.

Finally, the virtual platform also presented several limitations. Technological issues necessitated that a variety of concessions be made in terms of seeing or hearing participants, length of interview, or quality of transcript – what has been called “choppy purviews” (Oliffe et al., 2021). When much of the success of a semi-structured interview depends on building rapport with participants, this was difficult to achieve. Technical difficulties led to inorganic and sometimes awkward interactions. Additionally, distractions are not shared in the virtual environment. For example, when a participant’s phone rang or another person walked into the room, it was not immediately obvious to the researcher, which led to problems with communication and pacing. Unlike an in-person interview, when external distractions are experienced together and may even help build rapport, virtual interviews were negatively affected by separate experiences of distractions, which generally interrupted the flow of the interview. Finally, the “field” in fieldwork was significantly narrowed, leading the researcher to depend even more on participants’ stories, as observation was impossible. While virtual interviewing was used out of necessity due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is nevertheless important to note its limitations.

Chapter 5.

Analysis

This chapter discusses the findings of the research project through the framework of three emergent categories: setting, background, and performance. Along the way, a picture of Asia-Pacific Track 2 in practice is painted by highlighting which elements of practice are diplomatic, and which are uniquely "Track 2." First, setting is introduced as the stage on which Track 2 participants enacted practices. Second, background is discussed as the tacit knowledge that informs what practitioners do – it is their "logic of practicality." Third, the role of setting and background as shaping factors is traced to participants' performances. By understanding changes in intersubjective context – the setting and the background elements of practice – it becomes possible to understand variation in performance as well. Thus, the tension between "Track 2" and "diplomacy" is explained in practice. Before embarking on the analysis, a brief note on terminology is provided below:

Despite the wide variety of Track 2 processes in the Asia-Pacific region, participants generally distinguished two types of Track 2 diplomacy, separating them by their size, confidentiality level, and goal. Participants explained that one type of Track 2 – usually characterized by larger, more public meetings such as conferences – was for "promoting regional norms and promoting dialogue" (Interview 5). The other type of meeting – usually described as smaller, closed-door and confidential – was seen as more directly related to a specific policy problem and discussion of "issues of the day" (Interview 17) or conflict mediation (Interview 5). However, participants who primarily attended the larger, conference-type meetings still saw them as having long-term policy impacts, precisely because they were more open and public (Interview 4). Participants who participated in only one type of meeting even referred to the other type as something completely separate, while still recognizing both types as being under the umbrella of "Track 2" (Interview 5, 7). Additionally, despite great care taken by participants to differentiate between the many different "tracks" of diplomacy, their labels did not always align. Some processes that were called "Track 2" by some people were labelled "Track 1.5" by others. Some participants used still other labels like "Track 1.1" or "Track 2.5." Based on the processes described by interview participants, it is clear that

there are there are more than just two types of Track 2 diplomacy – or rather that Track 2 might look different depending on a multitude of factors, including size, confidentiality, and goals, but also setting, level of institutionalization, organizational institutional affiliation, level of Track 1 involvement, background of participants, meeting format, and other factors. For the purpose of this section, common elements between many diverse examples of Asia-Pacific Track 2 will be discussed as falling under the umbrella of "Track 2".

5.1. Settings of Track 2

The physical and virtual settings of Track 2 processes contribute to the performances of Track 2 practitioners, particularly in structuring activity by enabling and constraining options. The physical settings of Track 2 diplomacy processes vary widely. In the Asia-Pacific region, they range from large, "flagship" events, such as the Asia-Pacific Roundtable (Interview 15, 18) and multilateral processes with a formal structure like PECC (Interview 6, 7); to smaller, invitation-only workshops like CSCAP study groups, the ASEAN Regional Forum's (ARF) Experts and Eminent Persons group, and sector-specific discussion groups (Interview 10, 13, 14, 15, 16); to even smaller meetings that are explicitly designed to deal with immediate problems and/or conflict resolution (Interview 5, 15, 17). The number of participants, the geographical and architectural location, and the established norms and format of interactions vary widely among Track 2 events. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Track 2 diplomacy – like traditional diplomacy – meetings have had to move online, which has also dramatically affected participants' practices. In this section, the focus is on in-person Track 2 settings. However, an account of participant observation at the 34th Asia-Pacific Roundtable conference, which is focused on its virtual setting, can be found in Appendix A. Key observations from the conference include the highly restrictive nature of a structured setting, and the importance of having a distinct "space" (whether physical or virtual) for informal interaction.

This section shows that the settings for Track 2 events, meetings and conferences have many "diplomatic" features which they share with the settings of Track 1 diplomacy, as well as distinctly "Track 2" features which distinguish them from traditional diplomacy. Firstly, diplomatic culture – that is, the professional culture loosely shared by career diplomats – still sets expectations for Track 2 settings. Examples of the

influence of diplomatic culture include: seating arrangements, high levels of organization, and arranging hosting duties along national lines. Secondly, the “socializing spaces” in which unstructured interaction takes place are the same for both Track 1 diplomacy and Track 2. On the other hand, the institutional context of Track 2 events deeply impacts participants’ practices. As well, the structural aspects of Track 2 events are distinctly “Track 2”: formats synthesize components from diplomatic meetings and academic conferences, and Track 2 processes are usually extended, multi-day affairs.

5.1.1. The Diplomatic Dimension of Track 2 Settings

Influence of Diplomatic Culture on Track 2 Settings

Given that many Track 2 participants have come from diplomatic backgrounds, and given that diplomacy is explicit in the commonly-used term “Track 2 diplomacy,” it is unsurprising that diplomatic culture has shaped expectations for elements of setting, including seating arrangements, high levels of organization, and state-based views of geographical location. The norms and expectations of diplomatic culture are consciously considered and sub-consciously followed when organizing a Track 2 event. One interviewee reflected on the influence of diplomatic norms on the setting of a Track 2 event:

> [There] are diplomatic things involved, in the sense of the seating arrangement, the welcome dinner, the features. So the organization is as important, because you need to give your respect to the people that come to the meeting. And sometimes when you involve the United Nations, then of course, it's going to be a bit more ‘bureaucratic.’ (Interview 18)

Organizers of Track 2 processes consciously arrange the setting according to elements that are expected by Track 1 participants, such as thought-out seating arrangements and stately dinners. In the above example, the presence and prestige of the United Nations was explicitly taken into consideration when choosing material aspects of the setting.

Given that Track 2 processes are supposed to be opportunities for informal interaction, it is surprising that they can be as highly structured and organized as Track 1 meetings. Strict timelines are set out in advance and meetings are structured by pre-established agendas. This makes Track 2 meetings crowded affairs: in order to set up venues and uphold the highly organized structures, operational staff are needed

(Interview 2, 17, 18). As such, even small, closed-door meetings in the Asia-Pacific region may have as many as 15 people in the room (interview 17), which can be quite similar to Track 1 diplomatic meetings. Part of the reason for this high level of organization is funding requirements, but part seems to be the influence and conscious "mirroring" of Track 1 processes. Participants reflected that flagship Track 2 events often mirror regional Track 1 events in structure, scope, and even location, such as PECC mirroring APEC (Interview 6), or the APR mirroring the Shangri-La Dialogue (Interview 18).

Similar to Track 2 diplomacy, the geographical locations of Track 2 events are understood along state lines. Bilateral Track 2 events are hosted by each state in turn, and even some multilateral processes rotate countries (Interview 6). Care is taken to show respect by the careful selection of geographical location for meetings. While unsurprising in a Track 1 setting, this default to state lines is surprising in the Track 2 setting precisely because of the value that participants place on their independence from national positions and their home governments. Participants might even reject their national affiliations, claiming that these are unimportant at Track 2 processes (Interview 12). Interestingly, Track 2 practices can also take place in Track 1 settings. For example, some Track 2 participants who are explicitly invited might attend Track 1 events at the UN, or the Shangri-La Dialogue. In these cases, the official setting, designed by and for officials, becomes the stage for Track 2 practices (Interview 11, 13, 14).

Socializing Spaces in Track 2 and Track 1 Diplomacy

Many interviewees agreed that informal, unstructured interactions were just as, or even more important than structured ones (Interview 6, 9, 12, 14, 16, 18). This is a point of view shared both by participants who had extensive or predominant experience in the Track 1 world, and those who had come to Track 2 from other professional backgrounds. As in Track 1 diplomacy, unstructured interaction during Track 2 events takes place in socializing spaces: semi-private, informal locations apart from the conference rooms and meeting halls of the structured event.

These socializing spaces include corridors, restaurants, hotels, and airports. They allow participants to perform important practices of Track 2 diplomacy. For example, even though Track 2 meetings are supposed to be an opportunity to speak frankly without fear of attribution, some participants may still fear being recorded.

Literally taking someone aside for an informal side chat – to the corridor, for instance – assuages fears of recording (Interview 6) and gives speakers "plausible deniability" (Interview 12). These spaces also allow participants to approach one another and ask private or clarifying questions. As one participant explained: "I don't want to be anonymous to ask the question, I just don't want to ask it in front of 300 people" (Interview 14).

Additionally, physically moving from a structured space to an unstructured space allows participants to speak more candidly (Interview 9). Conversations may move from structured to unstructured settings quite easily during a Track 2 event, but adherence to roles and positions seems to be tied to physical location. Spaces such as restaurants are explicitly meant for socializing; they carry connotations of friendliness, trust, and informality. One interviewee reflected fondly on trust-building that can occur in such a setting:

> I remember sitting around in Taipei, after dinner over a lot of beer. And we're jabbing each other in the chest, and a very senior member of the executive is going "You're killing us! you're killing us!" You know, it gets down to that point where it becomes informal and friendly and you can let things out. But that's when you know that you've succeeded. (Interview 7)

Multiple participants agreed that it is the informal interactions that build long-term relationships, whether in Track 2 or official diplomacy (Interview 7, 9, 12, 18). One concluded: "that's what diplomacy is all about" (Interview 9).

Another participant reflected on the sheer number of socializing spaces where participants find themselves during a typical Track 2 workshop or conference:

> You are there for at least one day, sometimes two days, from nine to five. Breakfast starts at eight. Okay, you meet each other for breakfast – whether you want to sit at the same table is a different issue, but it's the same restaurant in the same hotel. Tea breaks, lunch, and there's also dinner. The dinner is a formal dinner. And if the host is very hospitable there are performances and things like that… you can go until 11pm! Okay, imagine it ends at 11pm: like it or not, I would be facing you for more than 12 hours. And you repeat that again the next month. And sometimes two times a month. […] Even at airports! We all have to come to airports. And sometimes we share the same taxis. And every chance – depending on our mood, whether we want to talk shop or talk about serious things – we will talk. And sometimes we just want to say, 'Let's not talk about business. Let's socialize.' (Interview 18)

Extensive socialization occurs during in-person Track 2 conferences. The frequency of opportunities for unstructured interaction in settings like hotels and restaurants allows participants to slowly build relationships over time. Like in Track 1 diplomacy, this type of relationship building is not equally accessible to all: only elites who are invited to these spaces, and can afford to attend, benefit (Interview 14).

It should be briefly noted that virtual settings are significant in this context because they do not allow a physical re-location to a socializing space. In the virtual environment, the only setting available is the formal setting, and it is often even more highly structured than in-person settings due to the affordances and limitations of the software being used. With the shift to single-setting, virtual workshops and conferences during the COVID-19 pandemic, some interview participants felt like the opportunity for unstructured free-flowing discussion had been lost (Interview 18), while others attempted to create their own virtual socializing spaces using email and private messages (Interview 13).

5.1.2. The 'Track 2' Dimension of Track 2 Settings

Variety: A Unique Feature of Track 2 Settings

Despite the similarities they share with diplomatic settings, the settings of Track 2 processes also have several unique features. Varied institutional context helps explain the diversity of Track 2 processes. As discussed earlier, Track 2 processes can look quite different from one another depending on their specific context.

Firstly, Track 2 processes are typically found in non-governmental institutional settings, and are influenced by this setting. Some events are hosted by large, institutionalized Track 2 organizations. For example, PECC and CSCAP have Charters, a Standing/Steering Committee, and a Secretariat (Interview 4). These organizations were founded on the basis of bringing together experts from diverse backgrounds for informal conversations on policy-relevant topics. While neither PECC nor CSCAP uses the term "Track 2" in their Charters, they both recognize that participants are acting in their "private capacity" (CSCAP, 1995; PECC, n.d.). In this case, the institutional context directly aligns with the goals of Track 2 diplomacy and is highly conducive to this practice. However, the two organizations do not have brick and mortar locations, or

dedicated staff; they are run by individuals with positions at other institutions, and are thus devoid of physical setting.

Other Track 2 initiatives are organized by think tanks, such as the annual Asia-Pacific Roundtable (APR), which is organized by the Institute for Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) of Malaysia (Interview 18). ISIS Malaysia describes itself as a "research organization," but it also hosts Track 2 events, acts as the Secretariat for CSCAP, and participates actively in Track 2 initiatives hosted by others (ISIS Malaysia, n.d.). ISIS Malaysia also has a physical location with its own research and operations staff. One interviewee reflected that the institutional setting of Track 2 events can influence the Track 2 process itself (Interview 13), and many other participants noted that the strongest cultural influences in their Track 2 work came from cultures in specific institutional settings, rather than national cultures (Interview 4, 11, 12). This was more applicable to institutions with a physical location, where individuals are able to frequently interact and form a culture. Habitual Track 2 participants come to expect these cultural immersions and adopt a "when in Rome" mentality when travelling to a new institutional setting, adapting to the norms of conduct and dress of the host institution (Interview 11).

However, host institutions do not necessarily need to be designed for Track 2 diplomacy – they can also be universities, where academics take on Track 2 diplomacy as part of their research agendas or service work. One participant explained the challenges of hosting Track 2 events in a university setting, where the Track 2 organizers' and participants' goal of maintaining a low profile may be incongruent with a university's goals of openness and transparency (Interview 5). This misalignment between the institutional setting and Track 2 can create a sense of insecurity within the process. Because the host institutions of Asia-Pacific Track 2 are so diverse, the processes themselves are equally diverse.

Structures of the Track 2 Setting

The structure of Track 2 meetings also has a unique impact on practice. Track 2 formats are blends of diplomatic and academic styles, and depending on a participants' professional background, this blend may be familiar to them, or seem strange. Track 2 events can be simple meetings, highly interactive workshops, or large conferences, and might include presentations, question and answer periods, or back and forth dialogue in large groups or smaller break out rooms. One participant described attending several

workshops where experts came together as one group to “debate and discuss” (Interview 15). Another preferred attending conferences with a “modified Davos style” armchair discussion, where speakers were limited to three-to-four-minute presentations, and the bulk of the time was allotted to moderated dialogue (Interview 11). A facilitator of a bilateral Track 2 process described one possibility for structuring meetings:

> So you gather as a full table, and outline in advance what the objectives were and where you want it to go and the outcomes you were hoping for, and then each group would break off and have their conversations. Usually it would be a two day type of process. You’d have a meeting in the beginning... I mean, the first time we met was really trying to set the stage for the whole thing, and then the second time we met, they had met virtually in many ways and talked over the phone and done different types of things. And actually the Chinese side, they came to visit. [...] So there’s different ways to manage it, but I would say, typically it’s a two-day meeting and people break out into different groups, and then they come back to the main table at the end. Because ultimately, in the case of our Track 2 process, we wanted a set of recommendations that would be useful to government, right?” (Interview 10)

The structure of Track 2 meetings impacts practice and even participants’ satisfaction with the process. In the example above, meetings were structured to elicit particular actions and contributions in particular settings: the full table was a site for reaching high-level understanding, while small groups were for engaging in deep dialogue.

Another interviewee also commented on the impact of structure, saying “the process is designed to produce exactly the kind of results it wants to produce” (Interview 13). One participant suggested that academic-style presentations, which give a lot of air time to an expert speaker and provide less opportunity for back and forth dialogue, are not as useful when trying to come up with policy-oriented solutions at Track 2 events (Interview 11). This critique was likely based on the participant’s policy-focused professional background. In general, the format of a given Track 2 event and its similarity to formats from a participant’s professional background correlated to whether they perceived it as successful. In Track 2 settings, diplomatic and non-diplomatic meeting formats are mixed and synthesized.

Finally, the extended nature of most Track 2 events is also unique because of the sheer amount of opportunity for interaction. Over a two-day workshop or conference, participants interact in structured settings and get dedicated time to socialize in the corridor or over refreshments. By working, eating, travelling and even living together,

they are able to form relationships (Interview 18). Since most Track 2 participants attend the same set of Track 2 processes, the repeated experience of spending time together in various parts of the world helps solidify networks.

All in all, the varied settings of Asia-Pacific Track 2 processes are both reminiscent of diplomatic settings and vastly different from them. Material and structural elements of the setting are shaped by diplomatic norms, naturally directing people to move in certain ways – whether to sit in an assigned seat or fly to another country. Socializing takes place in corridors and over dinners: the same sites where diplomacy takes place. The institutional context of Track 2 settings and the blended diplomatic and academic meeting formats also shape practices. However, not everyone performs their role as a "Track 2 participant" the same way, even in the same setting. Depending on their background, practitioners may feel at home with certain elements of the setting, and lost with others.

5.2. The Influence of Backgrounds on Track 2

Background is crucial to understanding Track 2 diplomacy in practice because Track 2 participants come to the field from diverse professions. All Track 2 participants, no matter their background, share a taken-for-granted belief which motivates them to gather in the first place: that diplomatic relations can be assisted by well-connected, knowledgeable individuals through non-diplomatic means. However, their motivation for actually attending a particular Track 2 meeting or event may differ depending on their background. Unlike diplomats who are usually trained and socialized in their respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs, some Track 2 participants have never been trained in diplomatic matters, and instead come from a career in academia, think tanks, or business. Nevertheless, they participate in Track 2 activities, bringing their non-diplomatic socialization and training with them. On the other hand, some Track 2 participants come directly from official positions: retired diplomats, military officers, and other government officials also participate in Track 2 diplomacy. These individuals have an interesting relationship with background because when they enter the Track 2 space, they are expected to act as individuals and independent thinkers, rather than state representatives.

The 18 interview participants provided a satisfactory cross-section of backgrounds and had experiences at a variety of Track 2 processes and events in the Asia-Pacific region. One broad group can be described as “participants with diplomatic backgrounds,” while the second group is “participants with non-diplomatic backgrounds,” which can be further subdivided into “academia” (including all current and former academics); and “think tanks/NGOs/other” (includes those who are or have been affiliated with think tanks, charitable non-profit organizations, the private sector, and other backgrounds). It should be noted that several interviewees had experiences in multiple careers and could be categorized into multiple professional backgrounds; thus their backgrounds reflect the sum of these experiences.

This section shows that the diplomatic and non-diplomatic groups of Track 2 practitioners have differing motivations, socialization and training, which affects their performance as “Track 2 practitioners” when they arrive in the Track 2 setting. First, motivations for participating in Track 2 are largely personal and value-based, except for the sub-groups of acting officials and think tank employees, for whom they are usually professional. Second, socialization in each group’s careers have led to each group continuing practices compatible with Track 2 diplomacy (independent thinking, policy relevant dialogue, culturally sensitive communication, general “diplomatic” behaviour) and consciously rejecting practices that conflict with Track 2. However, critiques made by interviewees towards their Track 2 colleagues from other professional backgrounds show that perceptions of competent behaviour stay partially rooted in their specific background knowledge. Third, the process of building competence is explored: while participants from diplomatic backgrounds tend to draw on their professional training and observation, those from other backgrounds rely more on informal mentorship.

5.2.1. Influence of Diplomatic Backgrounds on Track 2 Practices

Priorities and Motivations for Participating in Track 2

Track 2 actors can be motivated to participate in these processes for various personal and professional reasons; depending on their professional backgrounds, their priorities during the Track 2 process may also differ. The individuals in the category “participants with diplomatic backgrounds” include ex-diplomats and ambassadors, as well as those who worked for foreign affairs ministries. Participants who are also

government officials (from this point referred to as “Track 1 participants”) attend Track 2 events as part of their jobs; they are unique in the Track 2 environment in this respect, as most Track 2 participants do so in addition to their “day jobs” (Interview 2). Other individuals with diplomatic backgrounds – including retired ambassadors, high-ranking military and navy officers, or senior public servants – take on Track 2 work as a passion project.

Acting government officials usually attend Track 2 events in their “private capacity,” that is, representing themselves rather than their government. Somewhat paradoxically, their priorities at Track 2 events include gathering information to report back, reiterating official positions, and taking part in politically sensitive discussions (Interview 9, 12, 16, 18). However, multiple interviewees highlighted that Track 1 participants who participate in Track 2 fora must believe in the overall goal or need for the discussions at hand (Interview 13, 17, 18). Unlike diplomatic summits, participation in Track 2 processes is not strictly necessary for governments, and sending Track 1 participants to these events implies an openness towards dialogue regardless of what is actually said. Track 1 participants may be personally motivated to join Track 2 discussions to informally float new ideas in an environment where there is no fear of attribution (Interview 18). Nevertheless, they must remain cautious to not misrepresent their governments’ views (Interview 18).

Retired officials often have similar motivations for participating: due to their connections, they are able to share information with government, and due to their subject matter knowledge, they can contribute substantively to policy conversations. While they technically have greater freedom to speak independently than acting officials, their extensive socialization might lead them to agree with their governments’ positions and approaches anyway (Interview 18).

Socialization and Training Before and During Track 2

Socialization and training occurs at all stages in an individual’s career, and thus can be sub-divided into two broad categories: socialization and training before an individual joined Track 2 (thus becoming part of their existing background and practical logic), and socialization and training during Track 2 diplomacy (thus reinforcing or challenging their practical logic, and adding to their background). Socialization for those coming from diplomatic backgrounds is unique because it is often explicitly diplomatic. A

diplomatic background might inform participants' Track 2 practices by exposing them to international relations matters, whether by working on national security or treaty negotiations, or by holding diplomatic and ambassadorial roles. Many of those coming from diplomatic backgrounds cited their professional experience as training for the Track 2 world (Interview 9, 10, 11, 14). One participant acknowledged that when they left their public service job, they brought this wealth of diplomatic knowledge with them to the Track 2 setting (Interview 7).

Diplomatic experience not only taught participants concrete skills, such as concise speaking, familiarity with protocols, and cultural competence, but also informed their conduct to be generally "diplomatic" – insider shorthand for someone who is tactful, responsible, and strategic (Interview 11, 14). The effects of this training and socialization even bleeds into procedural aspects of Track 2:

> so much of Track 1 is procedural. It's 'let's read this line and make sure every word of it is agreed.' That really shouldn't be what folks like us are doing, and we should be thinking of it more creatively and having open discussion. But I think, unfortunately you do get that from some of the former officials. (Interview 11)

This participant reflected that, at times, those coming from Track 1 backgrounds are so strongly socialized that there is an expectation for the Track 2 space and actors to adhere to traditional diplomatic norms. Another interviewee perceived themselves as a "safe bet" for their government to send to Track 2 events due to their knowledge of what counts as appropriate diplomatic behaviour (Interview 14). Moreover, a background in Track 1 leads to socialization into governmental goals and approaches: "if you are a person who's working within Global Affairs Canada, your perspective is always going to be driven by what is happening within the organization, and the organization's approach to doing different things" (Interview 10).

Despite their diplomatic backgrounds, some interviewees still felt that they were "thrown into" the Track 2 world and had to learn on the job (Interview 7, 11). Like those coming from other backgrounds, they learned through observation and following the leads of more experienced practitioners. One interviewee recalled getting through their learning curve at Track 2 fora the same way that they did in their Track 1 career:

> What you do, is you land in a job and you learn by osmosis. Pick up, you know, what everyone knows… you watch and see. One of the first rules of

> diplomacy is that you'd never be the first to do anything. Leadership is not a good thing; you follow suit. And that gets you through your learning curve and then you're more free to actually, sort of play in that game. (Interview 7)

By observing and picking up "what everyone knows," this participant was able to access the tacit, intersubjective context of the Track 2 field, and thereby build competency as a Track 2 practitioner, which is different than competency as an academic or diplomat.

Influence of Diplomatic Background on Performance of Track 2

Like other Track 2 participants, those coming from a Track 1 professional background carried over certain practices and challenged others. Unsurprisingly, acting officials often repeat their governments' positions, despite the widely agreed-upon norm that Track 2 participants must be present in their private capacity (Interview 9, 11, 12). One interviewee, coming from a non-diplomatic background, found that even retired officials will often repeat their government's position due to extensive socialization and fear of social repercussions: "Even retired officials, diplomats, or senior officials, they have been socialized for 30-40 years on these views. It's hard for them to change overnight. And if they change overnight, they're burning bridges with their peers." (Interview 18). While these practices are expected, they were critiqued by participants as inappropriate and damaging to the purpose of the Track 2 dialogue (Interview 12, 16). The general reaction among participants from non-diplomatic backgrounds tended to be eye-rolling and frustrated acceptance: "[i]f you've heard this before, just wait for them to finish […] it's just what they do. It's something they have to do." (Interview 12). In this case, the link between professional background and performance as a state representative was seen as inevitable.

At the same time, acting officials are aware of the differences in intersubjective understanding between their professional background and the Track 2 world. Some participate less in discussion at Track 2 events, recognizing that repeating government views is not viewed favourably by others, or recognizing that their relationship with other participants is more useful than their official position (Interview 3, 12).

Track 2 is also an environment where differences in social position are highlighted and obscured. For those with diplomatic backgrounds, it is often very senior acting officials, or eminent retired officials, who participate in Track 2 events (Interview

15). Conversely, the seniority of subject matter experts (academics, think tank employees, or private industry) is not as relevant (Interview 11). This mixture of social positions in the Track 2 setting leads to interactions between very senior and junior professionals from different fields. Two interviewees noted that the seniority and socialization of some participants sometimes leads to "grandstanding," which is generally perceived as inappropriate in the Track 2 setting (Interview 12, 16). Grandstanding practices might come from a desire to raise or reinforce one's social position in the field. At the same time, another participant explained that while they personally felt junior and inexperienced in comparison to their colleagues, the Track 2 field was relatively equal and allowed them to contribute fully (Interview 11). They compared this to a previous experience in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which they noted was much more unequal.

5.2.2. Influence of Non-Diplomatic Backgrounds on Track 2 Practices

Priorities and Motivations for Participating in Track 2

Those coming from academic, think tank, or other non-government backgrounds are generally motivated to attend Track 2 processes to provide expertise and new ideas (Interview 10, 13, 17). The motivation for academics to join Track 2 may be a perceived or actual "call to serve" by their country's government (Interview 13, 18), or it may be a personal desire to build an understanding of their counterparts' views (Interview 16). Some who join Track 2 at the request of their home governments perceive their activities to be adding value to the government's existing diplomatic efforts, and describe their contributions as sharing ideas that the government supports, but cannot be associated with for political reasons (Interview 8, 13), and bringing ideas and information back to their home governments (Interview 18). At the same time, many academics highly prioritize independent thinking, and accept that their contributions in Track 2 processes might disagree with their governments' views (Interview 9, 11, 13, 14). There is a clear tension between independent thinking, which is valued in academia, and the sharing of national positions, which is expected in a diplomatic forum. One participant with multiple backgrounds explains this tension:

> "Whether I believe it or not, I have to convey the [country's] position. I might also have to defend the [country's] position. As an academic, you don't do that. You say, "I have to be objective because I disagree." Imagine if you're

> the only [citizen of country] there and then you disagree with your government's position. They'll say, "What!?" So, as the name implies, it's Track 2 *diplomacy*. Although I'm not a diplomat, the people attending the Track 2 diplomacy are wearing some kind of diplomatic hat." (Interview 18)

Another key influence of Track 2 participants' career backgrounds is whether their participation in Track 2 is part of their day jobs, or something they do on the side. Certain think tanks, such as ISIS Malaysia or the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Indonesia, and other NGOs, such as the Ottawa Dialogue in Canada or the Sasakawa Peace Foundation in Japan, are in the business of Track 2 diplomacy, and their staff are paid to participate. While seeking funding is a universal reality for NGOs involved with Track 2 work, having room set aside in the budget to pay for salaries and travel expenses is significant. However, nearly all academics and private sector participants, as well as certain individuals from think tanks (depending on the specific think tank's mandate and funding structure) have a "day job" that takes priority. In these cases, it is up to participants themselves to seek funding for attending Track 2 processes.

Many interviewees with an academic background spoke about their experiences with fitting Track 2 activities into spare time (Interview 2, 17, 18) and the professional sacrifices that they make, including publishing less frequently and facing obstacles with teaching when having to travel to Track 2 meetings (Interview 5, 13, 14, 18). While some participants mentioned that it was beneficial when their Track 2 activities aligned with their research interests, they recognized that the norms of non-attribution within Track 2 processes and policy-influencing goals were completely incompatible with the academic goals of transparency and publication (Interview 13, 14). Their career goals were separate from, and sometimes actively hindered by their Track 2 goals. For academic participants, the chief motivation for participating in Track 2 was generally a personal desire to share expertise, influence the policy process, and make a positive difference.

Due to the differences among think tanks, non-profit organizations and the private industry, the motivations for Track 2 participation among individuals from these backgrounds differed greatly. Some think tanks are government-controlled; others may be affiliated with government through funding only, while still others are completely independent (Interview 11, 15, 18). As such, their Track 2 practices also vary greatly, with some participants strongly rejecting the "parroting" of government talking points,

and others accepting it as a given (Interview 11). Depending on the culture and affiliations of the think tank in question, some participants take part in Track 2 diplomacy because it is part of their job description, and some because of their research or personal interests (Interview 11, 15). One participant also noted a generational difference within the Southeast Asian think tank network: while older participants were motivated to participate in regional Track 2 by a "crusade"-like goal to influence regional policy dialogues – particularly those who had been at the forefront of establishing these processes – younger individuals viewed their participation more pragmatically, as part of their professional priorities (Interview 18).

Track 2 diplomacy participants coming from non-profit organizations share with academics the motivation to influence policy and get tangible results. Particularly if the non-profit's goals are activist in nature, Track 2 diplomacy offers one avenue to get the ear of government, so to speak (Interview 14). Their priority at Track 2 events is to get their activist message across, and to "share the platform" by also representing like-minded organizations that may not have the funds, connections or social standing to access these events (Interview 14). Their motivation for participating in Track 2 is that this is the only avenue for non-officials to speak to officials and influence policy. Their priority at Track 2 processes is to undertake activities such as mediation, humanitarian aid and relief, or the sharing of ideas (Interview 5, 8). Finally, participants from private industry take part in Track 2 because they are recruited as subject-matter experts by the organizers of the process, and because they wish to represent their business association at a relevant event (Interview 10).

Socialization and Training Before and During Track 2

Most interview participants from non-diplomatic careers said that when they were new to Track 2, they did not receive formal training on how to do Track 2 diplomacy, but rather learned on the job. However, depending on their former experience, this transition differed greatly. Some participants, after observing their counterparts from diplomatic careers, noted that the effects of diplomatic socialization were tangible and different from their own (Interview 12, 13). It follows that the socialization of those from non-diplomatic careers, while perhaps more diverse, is no less impactful on their performance of Track 2 diplomacy.

The training of those coming from an academic background differs significantly from diplomatic training; however, academics still perceive a shared socialization within their profession or epistemic community (Interview 13, 14). Academics contribute subject matter expertise (Interview 11) and an “analytical mindset” to the Track 2 process (Interview 18), but are on their own to develop other skills such as cross-cultural competence and networking (Interview 10, 14, 16). All of these skills and experiences are attractive to governments when recruiting academics to participate in Track 2 processes (Interview 10, 14). Unlike those coming from government backgrounds, however, academics receive no formal diplomatic training and rely on self-education, observation, and mentorship to develop competency in the Track 2 diplomacy setting. Throughout this learning curve, certain norms and ideas of competency are challenged by the norms and expectations of Track 2. There is more emphasis on having dialogue rather than presenting research, and on policy rather than theory (Interview 11, 18). As well, different writing styles and different written outputs are expected: instead of producing well-researched academic articles, academics who become Track 2 participants are expected to write op-eds for widespread audiences, or contribute to memos that may not get published at all (Interview 14, 15, 18). Furthermore, academics tend to get frustrated by diplomatic practices, such as emphasis on procedure or the inability to deviate from government views (Interview 11, 13, 16).

Socialization and training vary most widely among participants from think tanks, NGOs, and other backgrounds. Differences in the culture of various think tanks lead to different norms and perceptions of what is appropriate (Interview 11, 12). Socialization for think tank participants may take place through both formal association with influential Track 1 bodies – such as ASEAN – or through informally socializing with other staff (Interview 15). The skills needed by think tank participants to perform competently at Track 2 events are largely the same as those needed for others: substantive knowledge of the issues, effective communication, and cross-cultural skills (Interview 10, 14). Experience at think tanks and other NGOs provides some of this training (Interview 14), but participants tend to describe the process as “learning on the job” (Interview 8, 18).

Meanwhile, those coming from a private industry background generally have a completely different socialization, share few norms with the diplomatic and the Track 2 worlds, and receive no training before attending Track 2 events. Because of this difference, some private industry individuals may inadvertently challenge norms by

performing Track 2 practices “incompetently.” For example, when private industry individuals fail to speak to the issue on the agenda, or use sensitive language, they inadvertently challenge norms of appropriate behaviour and language. One participant recalled an instance when a business professional was not aware of ASEAN norms of non-intervention, and used language which inadvertently challenged these norms (Interview 12). This behaviour was recognized as inappropriate and was gently corrected by others at the meeting who shared intersubjective knowledge about what is considered appropriate practice.

Interviewees coming from non-diplomatic backgrounds relied on observation and informal mentorship to become competent Track 2 practitioners. Many participated in a limited capacity, or observed only, at the beginning of their Track 2 involvement (Interview 11, 12, 16, 17). After learning, participants would gradually feel more competent and increased their participation (Interview 11, 12). Often a more experienced participant would informally mentor a newcomer by taking them to Track 2 events and making introductions (Interview 11, 13, 16, 18). One experienced participant who comes from an academic background explained how they mentored junior participants:

> [Y]ou're sitting at the table and you notice somebody who you haven't seen before, especially a younger participant. You make an effort to introduce yourself. Or if you have a younger person with you, as I've had, I would make an effort to introduce him or her to persons I thought it would be useful for them to know and to know about. And so that goes on during the coffee breaks and the lunches, and that's an informal socialization process, which I think is really quite important. (Interview 16)

Despite the fact that organizations, particularly think tanks, are motivated to seek new participants (Interview 8), there are financial barriers to training newcomers (Interview 18), as well as gatekeeping that occurs when existing members of the Track 2 network do not want to welcome new members due to a desire to keep the process small and exclusive (Interview 5, 17). These challenges have placed the onus on experienced individuals to socialize newcomers, and have led some participants to critique Track 2 as being overly dependent on individuals (Interview 15, 18).

Influence of Background on Performance of Track 2 Diplomacy

Background influences Track 2 participants’ motivations, priorities, and perceptions of competency, which in turns shapes their performance. Track 2 diplomacy

in general is relatively flexible in its definitions of competency: rule breaking, for the most part, seems to be met with patient explanations or eye-rolling (Interview 11, 12). Additionally, new definitions of competent practice are developed intersubjectively in the Track 2 setting through processes of mentorship and socialization. Individuals who participate in Track 2 processes come from a large variety of backgrounds, and even within the broad categorizations that participants use to refer to themselves – "Track 1," "academics" or "experts" – there is much variation. Those coming from non-diplomatic, non-academic backgrounds are particularly diverse, as well as those who have had experience in multiple sectors.

Academics bring certain elements of their professional background into the Track 2 space while consciously rejecting others. Many participants agreed that academics tend to think and share ideas more independently during Track 2 meetings than their counterparts who come from Track 1 careers (Interview 9, 11, 13, 14). Interviewees who have an academic background acknowledged their relative freedom to do so: as employees of universities, they do not need to fear professional repercussions when disagreeing with the government view (Interview 13, 14). They tend to see this freedom of thinking as being closely aligned to the idea-generating goals of Track 2 diplomacy, and thus beneficial and appropriate to the process. However, academic Track 2 participants were critiqued by other interviewees for focusing on theory over concrete policy ideas, which suggests that academics' practices were influenced by their professional background (Interview 11, 18). One interviewee explained that some individuals deliberately depart from their professional practices: "some people attending may be academics, but when they come to Track 2, once they are there, they cannot behave 100% like academics" (Interview 18). In order to perform Track 2 diplomacy competently in the Track 2 setting, academics have to reject certain practices (such as writing to publish academic articles), because the associated markers of success (such as improving the body of knowledge) have also changed (Interview 14, 18). In the example above, the marker of success is policy improvement, and thus the associated practice is writing op-eds, and other outputs that are designed to be read by policymakers. In Track 2 processes that produce a memo or set of recommendations, academics have to make further professional sacrifices, as the resulting document will not be attributed to them.

Finally, those from non-diplomatic and non-academic backgrounds also have their own ideas of professional competence which shapes their practice. For some, their professional backgrounds give them necessary diplomatic skills like communication and cross-cultural competence, which allow them to more-easily grasp intersubjective meanings in the Track 2 field, and help them perform competently (Interview 14). Others are left unprepared for Track 2: their professional backgrounds lead them unable to interpret the intersubjective context of Track 2 in order to adjust their practice (Interview 12). By performing competently as business leaders, for example, their performance is interpreted as incompetent in the Track 2 setting. Nevertheless, individuals from think tank, NGO and private industry backgrounds continue to participate successfully in Track 2 diplomacy and impact policy and public discourse (Interview 10, 18).

By bumping up against critiques or feelings of incompetency, participants' practical logics not longer work and thus become explicit. In learning how and when to modify their behaviour, they develop a new practical logic and a sense of what it means to be competent in context. Most importantly, it should be noted that diplomatic participants do not solely perform diplomatic practices, and non-diplomatic participants do not solely perform non-diplomatic practices. The uniqueness of the Track 2 environment is that while each participant brings the practical logics developed in their careers, competent Track 2 performance is re-negotiated intersubjectively in the new context by all participants.

5.3. Performances of Track 2

This section shows that the performance of Track 2 diplomacy by the 18 individuals interviewed for this project includes both diplomatic and non-diplomatic elements unique to Track 2. This comparison rests on the importation of traditional diplomatic practices from Track 1, and non-diplomatic practices from other backgrounds, into the Track 2 realm. Here, actors confront part of their existing background knowledge as certain practices become awkward, inappropriate or impossible. Their performances are shaped by the setting(s) in which Track 2 takes place, by the parts of their background knowledge which remain unchallenged and therefore tacit, by conscious reflection on moments when they did get challenged, and by the intersubjective knowledge that is created among Track 2 participants as a group.

This section first illustrates some quintessentially diplomatic performances by Track 2 practitioners. These include both embodied and discursive practices, including representing a state, negotiating and finding common ground, being practical, and seeking to persuade. Then, this section describes the non-diplomatic practices of Track 2 participants. These include being an independent thinker, speaking candidly and embracing debate, and focusing on ideas over practicalities.

5.3.1. Performances of "Diplomacy": How Track 2 is Diplomatic

A variety of diplomatic practices are present in Track 2: representing a state, negotiating and finding common ground, being practical, and seeking to persuade. Through embodied and discursive means, Track 2 participants *perform as* diplomats without actually being diplomats. Participant' performances include using typical diplomatic vocabulary and speech patterns, and going through the physical motions of diplomacy.

It was apparent during the interviews that Track 2 practitioners simultaneously embody their home countries, their organizations, and themselves as individuals. When referring to groups of individuals from a single country at a Track 2 forum, many interviewees performed the embodiment of countries that occurs in a diplomatic setting, referring to individuals by their countries, and vice-versa. When speaking about their own actions during Track 2 meetings or conferences, interviewees often used the words "I" and "we" interchangeably, to denote their individuality as an independent actor and their belonging to a larger organization, as well as to their national delegation. For example, one interviewee began a story about creating a new Track 2 forum by stating, "I created the [name of the] forum," but finished this story with "[the organization], we felt that it was a good idea to try and create a back channel" (Interview 4). This individual had occupied a senior leadership position within their organization, and in telling this story, simultaneously spoke as an individual and as a representative of the organization. Although Track 2 places value on individual experts' contributions to the discussion, when recounting stories about their Track 2 experiences, many interviewees would still use country placeholders to refer to one or more participants: "I can't think of an initiative in recent times that the United States and China have both supported at the same time, and in the same way" (Interview 3) and "We had Malaysia and New Zealand lead this thing" (Interview 6). In a setting that claims to emphasize the independence of the

individual, this speech pattern imported from the Track 1 world was interpreted as diplomatic performance.

Track 2 actors also used vocabulary typical of Track 1 diplomacy. One interviewee described a Track 2 interaction thus:

> We used to do shuttle diplomacy across the table. I would go talk to the Americans, and then tell them what the Chinese wanted, then go over to the Chinese: 'okay, here's how you can handle the American position,' you know, 'this is a red line for them,' you know, blah blah, and go back to the Americans: 'the Chinese are willing to go here, well you know what they really need sort of,' and then go back and tell the Chinese. This was very, very interesting (Interview 7).

The terms "shuttle diplomacy" and "red line" are expected in a diplomatic context during processes of mediation or negotiation. This suggests that the participant has mirrored not only the embodied performances of diplomats who engage in "shuttle diplomacy," but also the language used to describe these performances. In retelling this encounter, they referred to Track 2 practitioners from the United States and China as "the Americans" and "the Chinese," metaphorical language that is common in the Track 1 setting but unexpected in the Track 2 setting, where participants are supposed to act in their private capacities. The participant's physical movement also mirrored a traditional Track 1 setting: attending meetings, negotiating, and literally walking back and forth to act as a middle broker helped facilitate an agreement between opposing parties. In short, this individual performed the role of a diplomat. While the identity of the participant in this case would categorize the interaction as "Track 2," the practices are nearly identical to Track 1.

Other examples of language seemingly lifted from traditional diplomacy include the names given to formal roles and structures in Track 2 fora. For example, PECC uses "Co-Chair" and "general conference," mirroring their Track 1 counterparts at APEC, as well as the concept of "national delegations." Some interviewees drew direct comparisons between Track 1 and Track 2 diplomacy in practice. One participant acknowledged that Track 2 is similar to "quiet diplomacy," where governments might publicly reject proposals based on their foreign policy positions, but be more open to them privately (Interview 6). Another participant labelled this "backroom diplomacy" (Interview 4). Participants used the phrase "doing Track 2 diplomacy" to mean

“performing as a diplomat,” as they referred to practices such as mediation, negotiation, and compromise (Interview 5).

Some discursive practices of Track 2 participants also seemed to be imported from Track 1. For example, two interviewees who had never been diplomats themselves were careful to avoid sharing confidential information and avoid misinterpretation, a concern that is front of mind for traditional diplomats, who must be very careful with their speech (Interviews 2, 4). Similarly, some participants consciously adopted the discursive practices of Track 1 to navigate political sensitivities. For example, one participant explained: “We use a term – as you do in APEC – ‘economies’ rather than ‘countries’” (Interview 6). Although participants claimed that the Track 2 setting allowed them to speak without being constrained or controlled by government, it was evident that they had to navigate these constraints. They situated themselves within a state-based international system and performed as diplomats by mimicking embodied and discursive practices of diplomacy.

The line between the Track 1 and Track 2 worlds often seems blurred, particularly when interviewees described acting government officials attending informal Track 2 fora in their “private capacity,” or conversely, attending Track 1 meetings themselves. One participant explained: “when I go to that [well-known Track 1 forum] meeting, I’m there as an observer, but I have an opportunity to have what we call corridor conversations. I’m able to talk to the foreign minister of Russia, I talk to the foreign minister of China, I talk to the foreign minister of whatever, or the trade minister” (Interview 6). Through informal interaction, Track 2 participants can briefly perform the role of diplomats and get direct access to powerful officials. The fact that both parties understand the significance of corridor conversations supports the idea that there is a large amount of intersubjective understanding between the Track 1 and Track 2 worlds, though not one hundred percent.

In some cases, these lines around who is doing a particular task is used to a country’s advantage, particularly when they are limited by their foreign policy positions. One participant who occupies a high-level position in an Asian non-profit organization references their country’s alliance with the US and the limitations that this imposes on them publicly: “So, [our government] cannot do anything beyond what [our government] agreed to do […] although we understand that there are a lot of issues, particularly in

Asia, that we can and should [engage with]" (Interview 8). This participant describes the process of officially representing an NGO and unofficially representing their country: while their government publicly assigns all agency to the NGO as an independent actor, their Track 2 work is interpreted by other countries as government-led (Interview 8).

In some ways, Track 2 mirrors Track 1 diplomacy because of its goals to serve government in almost the same way. Governments may initiate Track 2 processes to have sensitive conversations out of the public eye, to test drive new ideas, or to learn information. Governments may also provide funds for conferences and meetings, suggest (or demand) discussion topics, and consume Track 2 outputs, the same way that they would do for their diplomatic staff. It is no surprise that, despite assurances that Track 2 participants act in their "private capacity," many interviewees perform the role of diplomats. This was particularly noteworthy for those who had never had a diplomatic role, yet still referred to themselves or their colleagues as representatives of their country (Interview 11, 12, 13, 14). Those who had previously been diplomats used explicitly diplomatic terminology to refer to themselves and their practices, such as "delegation" (Interview 6), "representing your country" (Interview 7), "our side" (Interview 10) and "representatives" (Interview 12).

Sometimes, Track 2 participants also perform a diplomatic role when they give recommendations to government. This can be done publicly or privately, similar to the results of Track 1 summits or meetings, which can be either entirely or partially confidential, or published widely. One participant recalled producing a publishable report that recounted most of a Track 2 discussion, and a covering memo containing specific policy advice, which was confidential (Interview 7). In this case, the participant had to put themselves in a diplomat's shoes by deciding what was to be confidential, and what kind of advice to give. Another participant described the pragmatic process of drafting recommendations: because the aim was to have them be accepted by government, drafters had to engage in self-censorship to only include ideas that were "reasonable" (Interview 10). This trade-off between visionary ideas and practical choices is another typical diplomatic practice.

One participant, reflecting that Track 2 settings allow for freer discussion, concluded: "you know, I think the 'talents of diplomacy,' whether it's government or whether it's in a Track 2, are the same" (Interview 6). They explained that while Track 2

participants may have greater freedom to discuss issues, the mechanics by which they discuss, negotiate and come to agreements is quite similar to the practices of Track 1:

> 6: You know, I have very strong views on negotiation – other people have different views on negotiation – but it's very much looking at all of the issues and putting yourself in the shoes of the person that you're talking to, to see why are they coming from where they're coming, and trying to devise solutions that are not win-lose solutions […] It may not be the best solution, but something that has some practicability. […]
>
> Researcher: [The delegations at the Track 2 forum under discussion] were more closely linked to their governments. So I guess in that case, they were more constrained by what would be acceptable policy?
>
> 6: Well that was almost like government. [laughs] Even in government, you know, the hours that I spent negotiating communications and negotiating positions… in some ways it wasn't really all that much different. So, yeah, I mean you end up with the same kind of constraints. (Interview 6)

Based on this anecdote, it is evident that the participant was performing the same role when they were in government and when they were in a Track 2 setting. This is not a critique on their competence or a claim that those who come from a diplomatic background will always act as diplomats. In fact, it is a commentary on the fact that certain diplomatic practices are logical and appropriate in the Track 2 setting.

As well, challenges in the Track 1 sphere often affect work in the Track 2 sphere. Even though Track 2 work is supposed to be unconstrained by politics and is an opportunity to work past political barriers, the challenges posed by international relations are unavoidable and push participants to act as diplomats. One participant described a situation in a bilateral Track 2 process where political turmoil between the respective countries affected both the agreements in the Track 2 process itself, as well as the ability to share the agreed-upon recommendations with government:

> Well, the big challenge was the political relationship. […] Again, when you're in a Track 2 situation you're in on a government-to-government basis. You're, you know, you have government positions on one side and government positions on another, you've got different stakeholders. So your typical challenge is to try and get consensus around different ideas. (Interview 10)

While there may be perception of Track 1 diplomacy as being much more constrained than Track 2, at the same time, many participants acknowledged the practical similarities of both Tracks. When asked what surprised them the most when they first got involved

with Track 2 diplomacy, many participants with diplomatic experience answered that nothing really surprised them (Interview 6, 7, 9).

Finally, sociability is as crucial to Track 2 participants as it is to traditional diplomats. Forming relationships, socializing outside of the formal conference setting and building trust is paramount to having successful diplomatic relationships (Interview 6). Track 2 participants performed diplomacy in corridors, restaurants, and after hours For example, multiple participants described the opportunities to have unstructured, informal discussion during mealtimes, in the corridor, and after hours – often in a secondary setting like a bar – helped both establish deeper relationships and achieve progress on discussions (Interview 6, 7). Long-term relationships were particularly important to being a successful Track 2 participant (Interview 15, 17, 18). One interviewee even brought up examples of certain well-respected Track 2 Elders participating in the activities until their deaths (Interview 15). Benefits of strong, long-term relationships include being able to overcome governmental constraints by speaking candidly in private (Interview 18), maintaining contacts who change jobs (Interview 12), and building an easy dynamic of communication (Interview 15).

5.3.2. Performances of "Track 2": How Track 2 is Unique

For one interviewee, the difference between Track 1 and Track 2 is also one of its challenges: "one of the biggest challenges with Track 2 diplomacy, of course, is because you're not bearing the burden of implementation of it, you may be a little bit more radical in your thinking. Which is probably good" (Interview 6). Somewhat paradoxically, Track 2 is populated by individuals from diplomatic and non-diplomatic professional backgrounds. As each participant brings their unique practical logic to the Track 2 setting, they deposit some of that knowledge sediment in the minds of others. As the process of building practical knowledge is fluid and ongoing, the intersubjective context of Track 2 gets renegotiated and reinforced over time. It is during this transplant of practices, where some practices are carried over successfully and others are challenged, that the phenomenon of Track 2 emerges. When Track 2 participants *perform as* Track 2 practitioners, they focus on generating ideas over practicalities, and they strive for independence by speaking freely in their "private capacity".

Part of the appeal of the initial appeal of Track 2 diplomacy was its potential for generating new ideas and solutions to policy problems. Here, participants of all backgrounds drew comparisons between the relative lack of vision of government, and the creativity of Track 2 processes. Participants used language such as “radical” (Interview 6) and “outside the box” (Interview 13) to describe their own ideas, but acknowledged that it was not wholly accepted by government audience, or was considered too “outside the box” (Interview 13). Other participants critique this focus on outside the box ideas, whether because they were overly theoretical and not helpful for addressing specific problems (Interview 18), or because they had a sense that such ideas would be outright rejected by government, leading nowhere (Interview 10). The practice of self-censorship, discussed in the earlier section, was used by participants to ensure that their ideas were well received.

In order to make valuable contributions to the idea-generating goals of Track 2, participants found it necessary to speak freely and candidly with one another. Particularly for academics and researchers, their identity was tied up with their practice of speaking and thinking freely. Some of these participants wanted to be recognized for their role in providing expertise, rather than supporting government (Interview 11, 12). Others embraced debate as a mode of freely exchanging ideas (Interview 15, 18). Participants from non-profit organizations with an activist goal also needed to speak candidly, in order to criticize harmful government policies (Interview 14). For these participants, speaking freely and representing a government (however unofficially), were wholly incompatible. As one interviewee described the purpose of Track 2: “the point is to not be diplomatic” (Interview 17). However, participants from diplomatic backgrounds were able to speak semi-freely by attending meetings in their “private capacity.”

Because the goal of Track 2 processes is to generate new ideas, independent thinking is highly valued. In particular, academics and experts from think tanks strive to perform competently as researchers, scholars, and independent thinkers. Multiple interviewees agreed that norms of Track 2 diplomacy encourage hearing opposing points of view and developing new ideas (Interview 10, 12, 13, 15, 18). However, the realities of institutional affiliations and funding arrangements presented a challenge for some participants to be true independent thinkers. One interviewee reflected on the challenges of this funding arrangement: “it’s very difficult for some experts to be involved in these settings, and actually be candid and speak from their own perspective and not

the perspective of a government that they rely on for funding or that they rely on for even their own position" (Interview 13). To overcome this challenge and still perform as an independent thinker, some government-affiliated participants would claim to be present in their "private capacity."

Attending meetings in one's "private capacity" refers to a practice where government-affiliated participants enter a Track 2 space while wearing the "hat" of a private citizen, rather than a representative of government. By explicitly acknowledging their role as "an official acting in their private capacity," the person dons their "independent civilian" hat rather than their "government official" hat. The performative element of private capacity was explained as government officials "really trying to put on a different persona" (Interview 4). How effectively a person performed the donning of the "private capacity" hat was determined by other participants. Individuals who were perceived to be regurgitating official talking points were not viewed as serious contributors to the discussion, but rather as just doing their day jobs (interview 11, 12, 16). These presentations were viewed as performances with no purpose: "if you've heard this before, just wait for him to finish" (Interview 12). Certain countries had reputations of sending Track 2 participants that were perceived to be too closely affiliated with government (Interview 9, 10, 11, 16). In this case, tacit assumptions were made clear. Regardless of affiliation, competent Track 2 performances had to have a believable level of independent thinking.

Another participant claimed that acting in one's private capacity as more nuanced than simply being an independent thinker or following the party line. When participants holding government positions participated in Track 2 meetings, they would explicitly state when they were acting in their private capacities: "to a certain extent, others will at times be willing to give their personal opinions, where they were quite clearly stating 'my personal opinion'" (Interview 16). This practice was more common in circumstances where conversation was not tied to a defined, or national interest. For example, Track 2 participants from China were always affiliated with their government, even if their job was at a think tank. Unsurprisingly, they only shared the "official line" on matters related to Taiwan and the South China Sea, but did speak candidly on other, less politicized, matters (Interview 16).

Additionally, even though performing in one's private capacity seems incongruent with repeating government positions, interviewees acknowledged that a Track 2 participant may still support their government's perspective because they genuinely believe it (Interview 12, 16, 18). In practice, the difference between incompetently performing private capacity and competently performing as an independent thinker could be seen in the framing of one's views: "A person could be still representing what they see as their country's perspective because that's what he or she believed in. But, they weren't necessarily saying 'my government says that' or 'I can't depart from X.'" (Interview 16). Particularly to interviewees who came from non-diplomatic backgrounds, independent thinking was considered a core of Track 2 diplomacy and was not sacrificed just to repeat national positions (Interview 13, 18).

Chapter 6.

Discussion

In practice, Track 2 diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific is a messy array of diverse actors in various settings, trying to be competent in a role that most were not trained for. By stepping away from the messy empirical data and looking only at the broader categories, one way to describe Track 2 diplomacy is through its synergy of diplomatic and non-diplomatic practices. By abstracting away from the varied local contexts of Track 2 diplomacy, it is possible to observe the co-creation of shared practical knowledge in real time. This analysis does not try to mirror the messy empirical reality of Track 2 diplomacy. Instead, the purpose of this discussion is to draw new analytical connections and conclusions about this set of practices that are relatively under-theorized, but are important for their contributions and challenges to the study of diplomacy as a whole.

Despite the many links between Track 1 and Track 2 diplomacy in terms of actors, their practices, funding, and mutual goals, participants in Track 2 processes often seem to have a love-hate relationship with traditional diplomacy. While the set of practices known as “Track 2 diplomacy” may have been born out of traditional diplomacy, the activity has grown apart from its roots. A number of non-diplomatic practices set “Track 2” apart from “diplomacy”. The perception among interview participants is that the official level often paints Track 2 activities as something useful but not crucial to the actual practice of diplomacy. It is just another “channel” of diplomacy that complements the most important – official – channel. However, participants deeply believe in their capacity to add value by assisting governments, sharing expertise and generating new ideas, and forming strong networks. At the same time, Track 2 participants are aware that they often depend on government for funding and for relevance, which is reflected in their practices. They strive to address policy topics of interest to government in order to ensure that their recommendations will be received and sink a lot of time and energy into translating their dialogues to Track 1.

This study has shown that there are three theoretical categories for understanding Asia-Pacific Track 2 diplomacy in practice. This chapter discusses the

uniqueness of the setting, background and performance of Track 2 practice, as well as the contributions made by the three dimensions of diplomatic practice. Finally, this chapter explains that by looking at Track 2 diplomacy as a collection of diplomatic and undiplomatic practices, with built-in mechanisms to move between them, it is possible to theorize Track 2 in a new way.

6.1. What is Unique about Track 2 Settings, Background and Performances?

The emphasis that many interviewees put on individual Track 2 processes, rather on the practice of diplomacy, supports the interpretation that Track 2 diplomacy in practice is not just "diplomacy plus". Asking about "Track 2 diplomacy" at times seemed inaccurate, as participants would affirm the uniqueness of their particular "Track" while rejecting the concept of diplomacy completely. As one participant claimed of their Track 2 activities: "[t]he point is to not be diplomatic" (Interview 17). Often, participants would verbally reinforce the dichotomy between Track 1 and Track 2 as completely distinct practices, with differing activities performed by differing actors. At the same time, their stories highlighted the deep interlinkages and symbioses between the many different "Tracks" of diplomacy. The words "Track 2" were used as shorthand for many things: for processes (sustained, organized connection involving ongoing research and discussion, as well as meetings), for individual events (workshops, conferences, or meetings), for dialogue and idea-generating conversations, for unconstrained/candid speech, and more. Participants' painting of traditional diplomacy as a negative and obstructing practice performed by other people, while at the same time keeping many of the diplomatic actors, practices, and even settings, suggests that they have tried to improve on diplomacy by creating something new.

Track 2 settings are unique due to their diversity, the importance of institutional context, and the influence of the academic and business worlds. When compared to traditional diplomacy, Track 2 settings are much more diverse: they can be hotels, think tank or university facilities; they can be in the same location as relevant Track 1 processes, or they can be completely separate. Track 2 processes can be funded by governments, think tanks, donors, or participants themselves. All of these factors affect the visual and practical aspects of Track 2 settings. Because of this diversity, interview participants largely saw that host institutions have a greater impact on "Track 2 culture"

than other factors, such as host country or religious culture. Two Track 2 processes taking place in the same region of the world, or even the same country, may look and feel different depending on the institutional culture of their organizers.

As well, the meetings, workshops and conferences which make up the structured parts of a Track 2 process are unique due to their synergizing of elements from the diplomatic, academic, and business worlds. Arranging lecture-style presentations or action-oriented teams of technical experts may seem strange in a diplomatic context. However, it is expected in a Track 2 context, which relies on the combination of many different practices to creatively generate new ideas.

What is most unique about backgrounds within Track 2 diplomacy is that the Track 2 context illuminates different professional backgrounds and processes of socialization, whereas Track 1 diplomacy can somewhat obscure their differences. Tacit practical knowledge becomes visible when it butts up against something new or unexpected; because Track 2 is no one's main occupation, some element is frequently new to its practitioners. Track 2 settings are where backgrounds from diverse people collide on purpose: dialogue with participants from different sectors is the perceived benefit of doing Track 2 diplomacy, after all. At the same time, participants tend to be the same types of people: retired officials (and less commonly, acting officials), academics and technical experts, as well as leaders of businesses and NGOs. These individuals bring their own personal backgrounds to the Track 2 setting, a certain amount of shared professional background with other participants from the same profession, as well as some shared intersubjective context about Track 2 that they acquired from observation or mentorship. While generally practical logics are invisible and tacit, the challenges they face in a new context renders them visible.

In the Track 2 setting, practitioners are forced to confront what is natural to them versus what is expected in the Track 2 setting through these layers of background knowledge. This confrontation may lead to a reconsideration of their own self-image and their Track 2 praxis as they seek to develop competency in the Track 2 setting. For some, there may be little challenge to their background knowledge, and thus little change to their practices. For others, the learning curve may be steep, and they may be forced to greatly adjust their performance, rendering their background very visible. At the same time, these layers of personal and professional backgrounds do not exist in a

vacuum, but rather in the context of institutional and national culture. Participants' comfort and familiarity with cultural differences, as well as their position in the Track 2 network, also make up part of the background knowledge that informs their performance.

Track 2 practitioners consciously and unconsciously reject some norms of traditional diplomacy. This rejection is made evident by their performances during Track 2 processes as individuals in their private capacity, and independent thinkers unchained from the "constraints" of government (Interview 6). In their descriptions of their work, interviewees strove to differentiate themselves as much as possible from diplomats. This was made particularly obvious in multiple stories of officials who attended Track 2 or Track 1.5 events supposedly in their "private capacities" and failed to act independently. Their performances as officials, rather than as independent thinkers, were generally met with frustration, eye-rolling, and disappointment. At the same time, Track 2 participants value connections to the official level in order to remain relevant and receive funding, which creates a tension between being government-affiliated and being independent.

At its core, diplomacy is about a human representing and embodying a state (Sending et al., 2015). This embodiment happens in Track 2 as well, but it is rocky and relies on successful performances that can shift from "diplomat" to "independent thinker" and back. It is a shared intersubjective truth that Track 2 participants will commit to acting in their private capacity. Whether this can be successfully done or whether it is a convenient myth is irrelevant – the fact that the words "private capacity" are repeated and held up as an ideal in Track 2 reflects a goal of rejecting the diplomatic norm of representing something bigger than oneself. At the same, in order to maintain at least a hope that their ideas will reach and be used by policymakers, participants must still embody their states and act as diplomats. For example, they must do so when negotiating the language of a set of recommendations to come out of a given process, sharing information about their country's stance on a matter, or taking findings back to their governments. For some this shift is easy to make, but others are reluctant to let go of their self-image as independent experts. However, Track 2 often treat one another as representatives anyway, due the state-based international system and the convenience of diplomatic phrasing.

6.2. How Do Diplomatic Settings, Background and Performances Influence Track 2 in Practice?

Despite their uniqueness, Track 2 settings still have diplomatic features which are reminiscent of traditional diplomacy in two ways: diplomatic culture still influences and sets structural and material expectations for meetings, and the socializing sites are the same in both Track 2 and Track 1 diplomacy. For practical reasons, Track 2 processes often mirror the formats and locations of Track 1 meetings: it is easier to hold relevant discussions, speak with officials, and share recommendations when these features are aligned. Less practical is the tendency to arrange Track 2 meetings along national lines – for instance, by seating “delegations” together, or by alternating between two countries when hosting meetings. As much as individual participants may want to maintain their identities as independent experts, the nature of a state-centric world means that certain diplomatic norms are inescapable.

Furthermore, both diplomatic and Track 2 processes see value in setting aside time for unstructured socializing and informal discussion. During Track 2 processes, balance is achieved through scheduling multi-day workshops and conferences, with built-in time (scheduled speeches, discussion sessions, meals, and break time) and space (pre-arranged hotels, restaurants, and meeting rooms). Interestingly, Track 2 is already supposed to be the informal alternative to traditional diplomacy. Yet, the importance of unstructured interaction within the Track 2 setting suggests that in order to be fruitful, discussions must be not only informal, but also unstructured, and crucially, un-attributable.

When people with diverse backgrounds meet at Track 2 events, they collectively bring their own personal contexts to make meaning of what they are doing and why. Sometimes these contexts are shared, but other times they may cause tension. The presence of participants with diplomatic background benefits and frustrates other participants. Sometimes, it is beneficial to have members who fully understand the intersubjective context of official diplomacy and can facilitate communication across “tracks.” Other times, participants from other careers feel that diplomatic backgrounds cause people to become too rigid and set in their ways – the precise critique they level at Track 1 diplomacy as a whole. However, through extensive socialization within Track 2 networks, achieved through attending the same events, spending unstructured time

together, and mentorship, Track 2 participants co-create a new mutual understanding of what “Track 2 diplomacy” means and what it means to practice Track 2 competently. Through the process of adjusting practical logics and background knowledge, a new conceptualization of Track 2 emerges which is the best of the diplomatic and non-diplomatic worlds.

Although Track 2 diplomacy is varied and messy, core groups of network members hold together this intersubjective knowledge. By its nature, intersubjective practical knowledge is difficult to put into words precisely because it is tacit. Even asking about practical knowledge may change it irreparably (Pouliot, 2012). Nevertheless, this does not mean that it is weak or undefined. One interviewee jokingly claimed: “nobody knows what [Track 2] is” (Interview 12). Yet, when prompted, they quickly explained that practitioners do know what it is, and that it is just academics who are unclear on the matter. Another participant reflected on the insider meanings that are developed within the Track 2 community. For example, the labelling of various meetings as “Track 2” or “Track 1.5” is often subtextual. One interviewee explained:

> Okay, so it’s not like this particular meeting will necessarily be branded clearly as being within this kind of Track or that kind of Track, but people will know and it’s going to be documented somewhere. Like we know that CSCAP is a Track 2 process. Whether Track 2 was even mentioned during [reference to an event] … I don’t think it was. Maybe it was, I have no idea. But still it’s kind of known. (Interview 13)

This response forced the interview participant to be extremely reflexive about the tacit assumptions which allow them to tell Track 2 apart from other processes. Although they were not able to put it into words, they can likely recognize Track 2 processes based on the shared understandings within their practical knowledge: they know what constitutes competent Track 2 practice, and thus they can recognize it when it is performed by others. In the Asia-Pacific region, Track 2 diplomacy takes a multitude of forms, and may therefore seem undefinable. However, that does not mean it is not real. The intersubjective knowledge of what it means to “do” Track 2 diplomacy correctly is strong enough to challenge newcomers. More transient participants who are not socialized in Track 2 networks may commit errors which are recognized and corrected by those who are aware.

Close connections between Track 2 processes and government might suggest that Track 2 is merely a tool or an offshoot of traditional diplomacy. Track 2 processes are often initiated and funded by governments. Even in the most liberal settings, where Track 2 participants are able to speak freely, this funding relationship creates a "particular dynamic" of push and pull where participants are never truly independent (Interview 16). It is also not uncommon for former – or even acting – officials to participate in Track 2 processes. Sometimes these are called "Track 1.5," but other times they retain the "Track 2" title, showing that naming is more a discursive practice rather than a reflection of real difference. Though participants from Track 1 backgrounds come to Track 2 processes in their private capacities, their government connections are impossible to ignore. This entangled relationship is seen as a key component of Track 2, as it is what guarantees a "pipeline" to Track 1 and a listening ear at the official end for the policy advice that comes out of the Track 2 incubator (Interview 4). However, there is a still tension that exists between traditional diplomacy and Track 2 diplomacy, and a mutual sense of superiority. This tension is evidenced by the way that practices of Track 2 are both diplomatic and non-diplomatic.

6.3. "Best of Both Worlds": Diplomatic and Non-Diplomatic Practice in Track 2

Despite the fact that Track 2 diplomacy participants import their practices from their career backgrounds, the ongoing rejection of certain practices and continued learning in the new setting suggests the existence of a distinct "Track 2 practice" which is intersubjectively understood by Track 2 practitioners. While Track 2 might be expected to be very close to Track 1 diplomacy in practice, the influence of unique settings and diverse backgrounds suggest that it is in fact a synthesis of a large variety of professional practices. Further evidence for synthesis can be seen in the simultaneously diplomatic and non-diplomatic performances of Track 2 participants. If the diplomatic/non-diplomatic divide were as clear cut as labelling Track 1 "official" and Track 2 "unofficial," there would be no overlap in the practices of practitioners from different backgrounds. Those coming from diplomatic backgrounds would be expected to perform as diplomats, and those coming from non-diplomatic backgrounds would be expected to perform as academics, business leaders, as so on. However, it is clear from

the performance analysis that all Track 2 participants perform *both* diplomatic and non-diplomatic practices, no matter what background they come from.

All Track 2 participants experience a transitional period as they learn to become competent in the new setting. As new members learn from more experienced members, they collectively form a new intersubjective understanding of their roles, goals, and what counts as competent performance. The Track 2 setting allows mingling of different types of individuals: junior and senior, various professions and cultures, officials and non-officials, experts in different areas, and even various members of a domestic national network (Interview 11, 12, 15, 18). As a group, Track 2 participants have a love-hate relationship with diplomacy: they strive to differentiate themselves and their work, and focus on traditional diplomacy's shortfalls to do so.

However, norms and expectations associated with the word "diplomacy" and the sticky nature of practices means that Track 2 has been so immersed in diplomacy that it impossible to escape its influence. There are practical reasons for why Track 2 cannot become too distant from traditional diplomacy: funding, policy relevance, and a need for a listening ear at the official level all contribute to the tension between the desire to be independent and the connection to government. One interview participant used the term "best of both worlds" when discussing Track 2 and Track 1.5 versus Track 1 diplomacy (Interview 13). In practice, the uniqueness of Track 2 settings and the diversity of its participants' backgrounds are synergized with the influences of traditional diplomacy, leading to performances that are uniquely "Track 2." Therefore, Track 2 is the best of the diplomatic and non-diplomatic worlds. The effectiveness of Track 2 comes from this synergy, where actors' diplomatic and non-diplomatic performances contribute to official diplomacy without being a part of it.

Diplomatic and non-diplomatic elements are combined in practice through role-switching mechanisms such as the wearing of "hats," private capacity, and physical movements from formal locations to informal ones. Combining diplomatic and non-diplomatic practices creates tension for Track 2 practitioners, particularly for those who feel that diplomatic practice is incompatible with their identity as scholars. However, the practice of explicitly changing "hats" allows Track 2 participants to move from a representative role to an independent thinker role, and vice versa. This is most obvious in the context of government officials attending events in their private capacity, but it can

also be seen when non-diplomatic participants inadvertently perform a diplomatic role by representing their state, or negotiating with counterparts from other countries. As well, changing settings allows practitioners to navigate the tension by giving them an opportunity to step out of a diplomatic role into a layperson role. These three practices can be grouped into a mechanism titled “role switching,” to help explain how Track 2 participants in the Asia-Pacific navigate the tension between diplomatic and non-diplomatic practices.

In answer to the question, “what is Track 2 diplomacy in practice?” it is now evident that it is a distinct collection of diplomatic and non-diplomatic practices located within a unique context. The context is one co-created and shared by participants through the process of coming together and performing the role of competent Track 2 practitioners. It is distinct from the shared context of official diplomacy, or the various other contexts that participants come from. Because of its dual nature, Track 2 exists in a permanent state of tension. Practitioners develop tools to mediate this tension when appropriate, but they also use it when it is necessary to be more diplomatic, or more independent. While there is no perfect solution to the challenges posed by interrogating one’s practices in an unfamiliar setting, and frustrations abound, Track 2 practitioners in the Asia-Pacific region have largely settled on a flexible dynamic which allows the process to go ahead.

Chapter 7.

Conclusion

"Track 2 diplomacy" is a messy thing. Academic literature on Track 2 is heavily focused on praxis and lacks analytical distance, with most of it being contributed by practitioners themselves. Non-academic literature on Track 2 is policy-focused and does not spend time on explaining what Track 2 is; that is tacitly understood among practitioners and the audiences they hope to reach. Indeed, there are almost no set characteristics that a Track 2 process *must* have, though there are characteristics that may describe an ideal Track 2 process. Yet, Track 2 processes are still distinctly recognizable as "Track 2." The diplomatic studies, IR, and IPT literatures have largely neglected the topic. Yet, investigating the case of Track 2 in the Asia-Pacific seems like a natural next step for these fields, as it brings together diplomatic and non-diplomatic actors performing diplomatic and non-diplomatic practices, which makes visible the tacit practical knowledge that might otherwise be hidden.

This project makes empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions to the literature. The empirical case presented in this project is based on 18 elite interviews with diverse individuals from Asia-Pacific Track 2 networks. It is important as it complements regional Track 2 literature from the early 2000s, providing an up-to-date analysis of various Track 2 processes and practitioner networks. As well, it provides a practice-based analysis of a (quasi-)diplomatic phenomenon in the region, helping to close the gap between the largely practitioner-focused Track 2 and diplomatic studies literatures, and the theoretical IR and IPT literatures.

Furthermore, this project makes a theoretical contribution to the IPT literature. Although IPT scholars have shown that background and performance are key theoretical concepts to understanding diplomacy in practice, this study goes further by equally focusing on the concept of setting and drawing a limited theoretical conclusion about the interplay of these three elements of practice in the context of Asia-Pacific Track 2. It is hoped that by understanding one case of Track 2 in practice, there could be more dialogue between the mutually-distant regional building and conflict resolution bodies of Track 2 literature. Instead of getting caught up in conceptual confusion about sub-

categories of diplomatic “Tracks,” practices provide a common language to discuss Track 2 from varying theoretical approaches.

Finally, the novel combination of practice tracing and grounded theory analysis makes a methodological contribution to the IPT literature. By applying grounded theory methods to a practice tracing approach, it was possible to trace the practices of interview participants through their intersubjective contexts. This methodology is significant because it offers another way to make visible the tacit practical knowledge which informs practices. Practical logic and background knowledge are both invisible and tacit, because they exist in the subconsciousness of a practitioner’s mind (Pouliot, 2008, 2012). It has been suggested that they can be accessed by interrogating practices in moment of crisis, as these present a challenge to established ways of doing things, and force participants to reflect consciously on what they are used to doing (Bueger, 2014). This project provides an illustrative example of Bueger’s approach, as the act of coming into the unfamiliar Track 2 environment forces participants to confront their established practices. The diversity of practitioners’ career backgrounds is methodologically useful, since certain tacit assumptions about the meaning and purpose of practices may not be shared among all participants. Thus, this case makes visible the hidden knowledge and meanings associated with practice.

7.1. Limitations and Trade-Offs

The project posed several limitations in terms of case, methodology, and interpretation, and several trade-offs were made. Firstly, the scope of the case study was both far reaching and limited. In the vein of key works on regional Track 2 (Ball et al., 2006; Job, 2003; Kerr, 1994), a region-wide case was selected. The Asia-Pacific had already been identified as a region of interest, and casting the net wide in terms of participant recruitment allowed for diverse perspectives, instead of solely focusing on sources in the researcher’s local area. As well, a heterogenous selection of Track 2 processes allowed for comparisons to be made during analysis and interpretation. However, given the size of the area under study, depth was traded for breadth. To counter this issue, interviews were not treated as representative of national views, or specific Track 2 institutions; instead, country of origin was only noted to understand which Track 2 institutions were local to a person’s area, and to ensure a diversity of

views. Diverse views helped increase both validity and reliability of the data, and also counteract the risk of an echo chamber posed by snowball sampling.

Data sources used for this project were exclusively semi-structured elite interviews. Semi-structured interviews pose a risk to the reliability and validity of data due to the possibility of biased or exaggerating participants, or off-topic conversations (Berry, 2002). While triangulation with other sources, such as documents or participant observation, would have been helpful for triangulating the data, challenges during the pilot stage showed that accessing documents was impossible within the scope of this project, while participant observation was impossible due to the COVID-19 pandemic and closed nature of Track 2 networks. However, a limited opportunity for participant observation presented itself during a virtual Track 2 conference, leading to a small amount of triangulation. Examples of triangulation can be found in Appendix A.

Using snowball sampling and zoom interviewing during data collection also posed challenges and limitations. While snowball sampling is useful for accessing hidden networks (Noy, 2008), it also poses the risk of getting caught in an echo chamber. Another limitation is the risk that initial interviewees are not well-connected in their networks, making it challenging to access other contacts. A trade-off was made by using snowball sampling for recruiting half of the interview participants. While this limited the potential of exploring networks more fully, it also enabled the researcher to avoid echo chambers and specifically seek out diverse participants. A large and necessary trade-off was also made by using Zoom for conducting interviews. Significant gains in accessibility – including lack of cost, simple interface, and ease of recording – were traded for communication difficulties due to technical problems and distractions.

Finally, practice tracing presented an important limitation. It is incredibly difficult to reconstruct tacit knowledge, as this relies on the researcher's own interpretation. Given that participants are unable to reflect on and speak about their own background without irreparable changing their tacit practical logics, gathering data on these topics presented the first challenge. Interview questions about what participants found surprising or challenges upon entering the Track 2 world attempted to access this information. However, sometimes a lack of rapport led to participants not feeling comfortable answering these questions, or they would simply state that nothing

surprised them. In these cases, the researcher had to interpret why nothing surprised them in the context of their existing careers and training.

Any process of interpretation carries a risk of developing unreliable interpretations of the data by deviating too far from participants' experiences or imposing ill-fitting theoretical categories on the data. In the current project, this risk was exacerbated due to the lack of alternative data sources, and the researcher's status as an outsider to the field of Track 2. To counteract this challenge, grounded theory methods were used during practice tracing in order to generate analytical categories that were anchored within the data. Existing interpretations were repeatedly checked against new data in an iterative analysis process, which continued until theoretical saturation was reached (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). As well, the researcher was able to check working interpretations by asking subsequent interviewees to correct their understanding of how something worked – while being careful to only share the researcher's own interpretations, and not break confidentiality. While grounded theory was chosen because of its epistemological and methodological fit with practice tracing, an unexpected bonus was the large amount of detailed methodological guidance available (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018b; Kelle, 2007; Saldaña, 2016; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012).

Corbin & Strauss (2015) acknowledge the influence of professional and experiential knowledge during the research process, concluding that it can both inform the researcher's analysis and blind them to certain interpretations. It may be difficult to see a phenomenon through the eyes of interviewees when coming to the research process with preconceived notions. In this case, the researcher's distance from the activities of Track 2 diplomacy and from the networks both provided an "experience-distant" perspective of the field (Pouliot, 2008, p.284). The researcher did not have to grapple with preconceived notions from their professional background. The trade-off was that a relative unfamiliarity with the practices of Track 2 diplomacy led the researcher to ask irrelevant unscripted questions during interviews, caused a slow start to the interview process in general, and made for a more difficult time gaining trust and access to networks.

However, more reflexivity was needed in cases where the researcher interviewed other academics. In these cases, the researcher, as a graduate student, came from a

middle ground of already being familiar with terminology, common academic practices, and the contexts in which academics generally work. While this led to greater rapport during interviews, the researcher needed to take higher care to view academics as Track 2 practitioners first and foremost, and to take the data for what it was. The act of studying academics also led to mutual reflexivity, as academics were aware that they were the object of study and at the same time, shared their own interpretations of the data they provided. Some academics shared their academic work on relevant topics, falling back into their academic roles. One interviewee directly acknowledged reflexivity, commenting that the interview process was forcing them to think about their Track 2 activities from a different perspective.

7.2. Directions for Future Study

Based on the findings of the current study, as well as limitations faced, two directions for future study have been identified. The first is to further develop the theory of setting, background and performance in Asia-Pacific Track 2 diplomacy by focusing more deeply on two or three specific processes, and using participant observation methods, supplemented by elite interviewing. Participant observation would provide a direct look at the physical settings of Track 2 processes and witness performances in action. Since participant observation allows the researcher to be both “experience-distant” and “experience-near” to the practices under study, it is useful for understanding practices in their local context while maintaining analytical distance (Pouliot, 2008). Participant observation would be used to uncover new practices and refine the three categories, while targeted elite interviews would enable the researcher to check their interpretation against participants’ impressions. Multiple sources from different methods would help increase the validity of the data and interpretations, ultimately leading to a stronger theory. The project would focus on two or three cases only, in order to foreground depth instead of breadth. Participant observation of two or three multi-day processes would provide full immersion in the local context, as well as access to the participants. Since it is difficult for an outsider to get invited to Track 2 events, the goal of two or three cases would be reasonable under present circumstances.

The second direction for future study would be to trace Track 2 practices through document analysis, using several documents released by a single Track 2 process over time, and if possible, supplemented by interviews. The current project had originally

been designed with document analysis in mind, but documents were dropped as sources due to practical challenges during the pilot stage. However, the results of the current project confirmed that documents would be useful for tracing practices, as several practices unique to Track 2 revolve around writing collectively, self-censorship, and making compromises. Additionally, the researcher has since learned of other Track 2 organizations and even individual participants who may keep archives, and might be willing to release older documents for the purpose of research.

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Appendix A.

Participant Observation at the Virtual Asia-Pacific Roundtable Conference

Although the project was designed to include only elite interviews as sources of data, the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic provided a surprising opportunity to engage a in a limited amount of participant observation. The 13th interview participant shared the website of the 34th Asia-Pacific Roundtable (APR), a high profile, annual Track 2 conference, which was taking place virtually due to COVID-19. The APR is hosted yearly by the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia, a think tank located in Kuala Lumpur. The theme in 2021 was "disruption redux" and the event included opening remarks by leaders of ISIS Malaysia, the ASEAN-Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), and the World Health Organization, as well as three panel sessions, and closing remarks by the Chinese Ambassador to Malaysia ("43th Asia-Pacific Roundtable," n.d.). The purpose for attending the APR was two-fold: to try and observe elements of setting and performance in order to triangulate interview data, and to experience a Track 2 event first-hand to better understand how the process works.

The researcher attended one day of the virtual APR, which was held on an online platform created specifically for the conference. The virtual setting greatly increased accessibility in terms of finances. The researcher was able to attend the conference for free. Had it been held as an in-person conference, it would typically cost $1200 USD (approximately $1500 CAD) to attend (Interview 18), not including airfare from Vancouver to Kuala Lumpur, which would generally be another $1200 CAD, and involve upwards of 18 hours total travel time. In this case, the researcher was able to register for the conference through its website and attend virtually.

The conference was relatively structured, with 35 minutes allotted to opening remarks and one hour for each session, with 5-minute breaks in between and a 30-minute speech by the Ambassador to close. Topics of panel sessions included: "The Pandemic and Global Realignment," "The Social and Political Costs of the Pandemic in Southeast Asia," and "Digital Sovereignty: Contesting Ideas, Singular Objectives" ("43th

Asia-Pacific Roundtable," n.d.). Panel discussants tended to be academics, analysts, and research fellows at think tanks.

A great deal of effort was made by conference organizers to recreate certain ephemeral aspects of an in-person conference on the online platform: participants had access to a networking room where they could "chat" with other participants who happened to be online; they could visit information booths of conference sponsors and organizers and leave a virtual "business card," and they could ask questions after presentations. The website of the conference was designed to look like a conference centre: the homepage looked like a spacious, modern lobby complete with plants and glass fixtures; the networking room looked like a lounge with couches and a fireplace, while the presentation room looked like a theatre, with presenters' videos appearing on stage, and participants' questions – enabled through a third-party app called Slido – appearing on a board beside the stage.

Nevertheless, it was difficult to approximate the ease of interactions in an in-person meeting. For example, presenters and moderators could see all questions that audience members submitted via Slido at the same time and could therefore select the questions they wanted to answer. In person, questions would come as a surprise. Audience members had no opportunity to comment on presentations beyond submitting a question or responding to the occasional poll. These limitations reflected the frustrations of one interviewee with the online environment: "It's a lot more formal and structured. And so the sort of informal kinds of spontaneous exchanges that I think is an important part of Track 2 events, tend not to come up as much. So they tend to be more like presentations and lectures" (Interview 12). Informal interaction was also limited by the online environment, even with the virtual networking room being available. The networking room depended on conference attendees being present and online in order to chat, but there was no way to call someone to the room. It was also impossible to make introductions or have three or more people in a discussion, because all interactions took place through a one-on-one chat box. Although the researcher attended alone, had they been with a colleague or mentor, it would have been impossible for the natural introduction dynamic to occur. These difficulties were echoed by an interview participant who mourned the loss of informal interaction in the virtual setting:

> Yeah, the formal part of the meeting is important, right? You have the agenda, you focus on discussions… But it is the before, the non-formal sessions, like the tea breaks and the breakfasts. And also after our meetings. You know, a few people say, “Hey, let’s go out for drinks!” and have a talk. And that's where the candid news comes in. (Interview 18)

While effort was made by conference organizers to provide virtual settings for informal interaction, it could not replace in-person interaction. In the Track 1 diplomacy world, the limitations of the online setting have also been documented, particularly in terms of limiting the sociability of interactions (Kuus, 2021).

Observing the conference helped to triangulate data about the importance of setting in shaping participants’ practices. While most of the observation was about the specifics of the online environment, general conclusions about the constraining effects of structure and the importance of having distinct spaces for formal and informal interaction ended up reaffirming findings emerging from interview data. It was also easy to observe how institutional context can have an effect on Track 2 processes. Visual cues such as the logos of the host institutions, the speeches by institutional leaders, and even emphasis on the Southeast Asian context during panel discussions were helpful for understanding how institutional culture filters into practices. These observations were used to support the development of the “setting” category and its relationship to practice.

Appendix B.

Pilot Project: Challenges and Lessons

This project began with a pilot, conducted as part of the course POL 803: Qualitative Research Methods taught by Dr. Clare McGovern in early 2020. Data collection during pilot project included three interviews with Canadian experts on Track 2 diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as finding two publicly available documents released by CSCAP, a well-known Track 2 organization in the region. Data analysis used grounded theory techniques, although it was not completed due to the small sample size. The pilot project provided various lessons on methodology and study design, which were used to adjust the main study. As well, the three interviews conducted during the pilot are considered to be the first round of interviews for the main study and were re-analyzed accordingly.

The three interviews consisted of one unstructured consultation which was conducted in-person, and two semi-structured interviews conducted via Zoom. Interview invitees were identified based on the relevance of their professional and academic careers. The two semi-structured interviews were modelled after the in-depth, practice-centred interview outlined by Soss (2014). However, rather than using the unstructured format Soss suggests, a semi-structured interview script was developed to keep the interview on-task, based off of experiences with the unstructured interview. The interview script began with general questions about the interviewee's participation in Track 2 processes and focused mundane topics such as the nature of preparation, what Track 2 meetings look like, and how they are scheduled. In the second half of the interview, participants were asked about their involvement with other organizations, other actors involved in Track 2, and their opinion on how Track 2 in Canada has changed over time. Some topics were developed based on the conversation in the unstructured consultation, while others were taken from methodological literature on the study of practices in international relations (Pouliot, 2012, 2014).

The pilot project also attempted to triangulate interview findings with two documents published by CSCAP in 2019. One document is an introductory article from the annual Regional Security Outlook published by CSCAP which discusses the ASEAN

Regional Forum from a security perspective (CSCAP, 2019). The second is the most recent memo published by CSCAP, which makes recommendations for the ASEAN Regional Forum to implement in the future. Both documents were chosen based on their availability and relatively recent publication dates, as well as on the relevance of topics covered.

Data analysis for the pilot project followed grounded theory methods, where field notes from the unstructured interview, the transcript from the first semi-structured interview, and the two documents were qualitatively coded using NVIVO software. The third interview was not included in the data analysis during the pilot project due to COVID-19 related delays. However, all three interviews were used as data for the main study and re-coded accordingly. During the pilot project, first cycle coding consisted of open coding, to track the substantive issues discussed; in vivo coding, to identify key phrases describing practices in participants' own words; and process coding, to identify practices. The two documents were additionally coded using magnitude coding in order to assess how much room substantive issues were given in each document, although these codes yielded unsatisfactory results (Saldaña, 2016). Over 90 codes were generated through first cycle coding. During second cycle coding, an axial coding approach was used to categorize the codes and determine conceptual "axes," or the central phenomena around which the other categories revolved (Saldaña, 2016). As the amount of data analyzed during the pilot was very limited, theorization stopped after generating four axial codes.

During axial coding, four conceptual "axes" emerged. First, processes including collaborating, communicating and meeting were gathered under a single category of "cooperatively coming together." Second, all challenges to Track 2 diplomacy, whether internal or external to the process, were grouped under "challenges". Third, the concept of "generating output" was determined to be crucial to the three interviewees, as the goal of Track 2 diplomacy (regardless of ultimate effectiveness) was seen to be the production of a tangible output, such as a memo or other document. Output was deemed important for measuring success of Track 2 diplomacy processes. The concept of output also helped inform data analysis during the main study, in interrogating whether interview participants use particular practices for particular outcomes (including but not limited to tangible outputs). Fourth, a theme of "seeking a role" emerged – not just for

Canada as a participant in Track 2 processes, but for Track 2 diplomacy as a whole; the relevance and purpose of Track 2 activities were questioned by interviewees.

Several ideas generated during the pilot project were useful for refining the main study. As per grounded theory conventions, analytic memos were used to draw connections between codes, identify potential axes, and draft explanatory narratives (Charmaz, 2014). One analytic memo explains importance of output:

> The actors come together (various levels of government may be involved). They engage in cooperative activities that are intended to produce an output and address or solve issues, challenges, and policy problems – they may also create challenges and problems of their own. A successful meeting always results in an output, which is ideally a report useful to policy.

The idea of output appeared in multiple analytic memos. Participants' focus on outputs (such as tangible, immediate documents) rather than outcomes (longer-term changes to external conditions) led to refocusing interview questions for the second round of interviews to ask about what is produced at Track 2 processes.

The concept of role-seeking generated during axial coding was also compelling, and drove the reformulation of the research question for the main study. As a result, interview questions and data analysis during the second round of interviews also focused more heavily on participants' backgrounds, motivations, and socialization. Although the amount of data for the pilot project was limited and generated a limited number of codes, the emerging codes were helpful in identifying and naming some practices of Track 2 participants. Data analysis conducted during the second round of interviews was thus more focused, as new data and new codes could be compared to existing codes. As grounded theory methodology required that data collection and analysis should be iterative, it was acceptable that some coding was already done prior to the second round of interviews.

The pilot project was also useful in presenting several practical and methodological challenges, which were addressed in the main study. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant challenge was identifying and recruiting interview participants. Due to the very specific expertise required for this project, snowball sampling was indented to be used. Consequently, a major hurdle was getting the initial contacts to agree to an interview. Having begun with three potential interviewees, only

two interviews were conducted in time. The interview participants' busy travel schedules, combined with the uncertainty of the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, led to drastically delayed timelines. In light of these challenges, two changes were made to the main study: the timeline of recruitment and interviews was adjusted to increase flexibility (sometimes scheduling interviews a month out), and the interview platform was changed to Zoom videoconferencing to increase flexibility.

The challenges and benefits of conducting online interviews also led to changes being made to the main study. It was extremely difficult to implement advice from the literature for conducting an in-depth interview and building a personal connection with interviewees (Soss, 2014). Relying on nonverbal cues such as body language or hand gestures became difficult or impossible on Zoom, and vocables were equally challenging. Verbal interjections such as "uh-huh" or "oh" were useful during the in-person interview for showing attentiveness and encouraging the speaker. However, due to the lag on Zoom they often became accidental interruptions, which caused the participant to pause and broke the flow of the interview. Additionally, these interjections were picked up by Zoom's recording software, sometimes drowning out what the interview participant was saying and leading to gaps in the transcript. In light of these challenges, interviewing techniques were adjusted for the second round of interviews, utilizing only silent cues such as nodding, visibly taking notes, or leaving longer pauses before speaking. The Zoom platform also offered unexpected benefits, such as the ability to simultaneously record audio and video, as well as to enable auto-transcription. Both of these features were utilized with the consent of participants during the second round of interviews.

Finally, data analysis challenging for multiple reasons. Firstly, given that the first interview was intended to be a consultation, the session was not recorded. As such, the data consisted of brief field notes and an extensive memo written right after the meeting. There will always be doubt as to the reliability of these notes, as memory is never fully accurate. Given that the field notes were used as a data source in the main project as well, a transcript would have been invaluable.

Secondly, magnitude coding the two documents was not fruitful, and due to practical difficulties and the lack of useful data generated during the pilot project, document analysis was removed from the main study. The goal of using magnitude

coding had been to uncover practices of agenda-setting and prioritization at Track 2 processes by investigating how much document space is allotted to various issues. However, magnitude coding proved unhelpful as it did not reveal anything new about the documents, with “security” and “multilateral fora” being the most highly prioritized issues in both documents. Given that both documents were written at the same time and cover similar topics, these results were unsurprising. Substantive findings could have informed interview questions in the main study, particularly regarding specific practices such as drafting and editing, brainstorming, agenda-setting and prioritization. Particularly in fora where face-saving and consensus decision-making are highly prioritized and disagreements do not play out publicly, this technique might have been useful in linking practices to outcomes. However, lack of access to document sources in general made document analysis too difficult to include in the main study.

It is an unfortunate reality that memos and other documents generated by Track 2 processes are published online sporadically; thus, it is difficult to gather all memos relating to a single process, or even assemble a selection of thematically similar memos. As well, due to the sometimes-secretive nature of Track 2 diplomacy, it is usually impossible to identify the actors involved in the writing of memos and other outputs. During the pilot project, none of the three interview participants were involved in the drafting of the two documents being analyzed, and thus could not comment on them. Likewise, when participants described Track 2 processes and the resulting outputs that they *had* been involved with, these were usually not publicly accessible. Document analysis remains a promising avenue for practice tracing, however, and could be pursued in future studies if the researcher is given greater access to documents and is able to identify the individuals involved in their production.

Overall, the pilot project was an invaluable contribution to the main study. Preliminary results helped refine the direction of research, informed interview questions, and provided a framework for data analysis. Additionally, practical and methodological challenges faced during the pilot led to methodological changes being made to the main study, including moving to Zoom interviews, adjusting interview technique, and removing document analysis from the study.