



Inclusion & Track Two • Spring 2021 Newsletter

What does it mean to be inclusive in peacemaking? Could Track Two serve as a driver for inclusion? Within the field of peacemaking, debate remains ongoing over contemporary understandings of inclusivity and what this means for peacemaking. Moreover, there are questions as to whether or not the pressures to meet inclusivity goals might have the effect of requiring actions that may be against the best interests of a dialogue.

The Ottawa Dialogue hopes that this brief newsletter feature will serve as a steppingstone in exploring both sides of this discussion and framing the ongoing debate on inclusivity in Track Two and mediation efforts more broadly.



About Ottawa Dialogue

Established in 2009, Ottawa Dialogue is a university-based organization that brings together research and action in the field of dialogue and mediation. Guided by the needs of the parties in conflict, Ottawa Dialogue develops and carries out quiet and long-term, dialogue-driven initiatives around the world. We create forums where parties can explore difficult issues in an analytical, problem-solving way to develop new paths forward. We then work with our partners to transfer these ideas to places where they can make a difference. As a complement to its field work, Ottawa Dialogue pursues a rich research agenda focused on conflict analysis, third party dialogue-based interventions, and best practices relating to “Track Two Diplomacy”.

Framing the Debate: What does it mean to be inclusive in peacemaking?

Key documents, such as the United Nations' [Guidance for Effective Mediation](#), the UNDPPA's [2009 Report on Enhancing Mediation and its Support Activities](#), and the 2018 World Bank & United Nations joint publication on [Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict](#), serve as prominent examples of a wider policy and practice shift towards the promotion of the inclusivity norm. A growing body of research in the field further illustrates the benefits of inclusivity in peace process. That being said, how is inclusivity currently understood by scholar-practitioners in the field of peacemaking? What challenges face the idea?

Within the field of peacemaking, debate remains ongoing over contemporary understandings of inclusivity, and whether or not the ambiguity of the term is effective or could actually negatively impact practitioners and those with whom they work. There is also some push-back from mediators on some levels, who wonder whether pressures to meet inclusivity goals might have the effect of requiring actions which are not in their conception of the best interests of a mediation effort at a given moment. The Ottawa Dialogue hopes that this brief newsletter feature will serve as a steppingstone in exploring both sides of this discussion and framing the ongoing debate on inclusivity in Track Two and mediation efforts more broadly.

In 2012, the United Nations put forth its document on [Guidance for Effective Mediation](#), calling on global mediators and conflict resolution practitioners to make their dialogue efforts more inclusive. The Guidance defines inclusivity as “the extent and manner in which the views and needs of conflict parties and other stakeholders are represented and integrated into the process and outcome of a mediation effort.” The [UNDPPA](#) further called upon mediators to include regional actors and organizations, as well as women and gender minorities.ⁱ These policy shifts are reflected in a wider research trend that examines and analyses the general inclusion of civil society, women, and other previously excluded actors (i.e., business figures and religious scholars) in dialogue and peacemaking efforts.

Of course, these are not entirely new issues for the field. Concepts such as “Multi-track Diplomacy”ⁱⁱ and “Circum-negotiation”ⁱⁱⁱ have been circulating for decades regarding the need for a peace process to be more broadly defined and not merely focus on discussion at the elite level. Perhaps what is new, aside from the degree to which attention is now focused on inclusivity, is the extent to which some of its proponents regard it as a goal in and of itself and a norm against which dialogues are to be judged. Whereas earlier authors saw the broadening of a peace process to include many tracks as a necessary goal, but still with a role for relatively exclusive and elite dialogues as part of the overall, this is becoming less fashionable in some quarters.

In our previous [newsletter](#), we [interviewed](#) Esra Çuhadar on her work on inclusivity, wherein she spoke of “meaningful inclusion,” explaining that an inclusive peace process does not merely include women and/or equity-seeking actors, rather, it actively includes them in the dialogue and decision-making process.

Indeed, practitioners and scholars have begun to confront and critically analyze the past exclusion and/or tokenization of minority participants in peacemaking processes. Tokenization is a common barrier to meaningful inclusion and occurs when a commonly excluded and/or marginalized group is invited to take part in a dialogue process, often in small numbers, and is not empowered to influence decision-making and/or be a part of dialogue.^{iv} Scholars studying tokenization note that it largely results in a coercion of

minority parties to conform to the viewpoints of a majority and undermines the inclusivity efforts of a peace process.

The “why” of inclusivity opens up further debate, with the benefits of inclusivity in peacemaking being another rich realm of scholarly literature. The fields of political psychology and neuroscience have expanded rapidly in the past decade, with empirical studies now arguing for the psychological benefits to inclusivity in processes^v. Indeed, most literature points to an understanding that meaningful inclusion of women, civil society and non-elites, leads to a peace process that often more accurately reflects the needs of a society^{vi}, and increases legitimacy of a dialogue effort. Hirblinger and Landau^{vii} describe this output as “transforming relationships.”

Once again, however, many of these studies do not address the issue of when and where it may be necessary and legitimate for relatively elite dialogues to continue to be carried on, but within a broader and more inclusive overall peace process. Elite actors tend to have unique political traction and affiliations that allow them to influence policymaking and high-level political decision making in a spoken or unspoken capacity. Moreover, facilitators are often tasked with accommodating calls for greater inclusion in a conflict-sensitive and context-specific manner, but without guidance as to how to maintain the elite levels of dialogue. Nor has there been serious attention paid to the question of how the various levels should best interact. Though it is perhaps unfashionable to say so, there are still times when elites need to go off and quietly talk to each other in conflict situations.

Track Two as a Driver for Inclusion?

With an understanding of current debates surrounding inclusivity, is there an area for Track Two to contribute, shape or redefine this discourse? What are current Track Two scholars and practitioners doing in the realm of inclusivity?

Track Two is an increasingly broadly defined area of peacemaking activity. Beginning in the 1960s as a set of relatively small and quiet dialogues involving “influential” participants, the field has now broadened to include several levels of activity. At these broader levels, it includes, by definition, a wide range of actors that would traditionally be excluded from Track One peacemaking. While the definition has evolved from theorist to theorist over the past sixty years or so, Track Two typically includes dialogue between influential figures of opposing backgrounds, whether this be influential non-state actors, or state actors acting in an unofficial capacity, facilitated by an impartial third-party.^{viii} Track Three, and arguably additional tracks, include grassroots activists and community groups.^{ix} As pointed out in the Ottawa Dialogue’s February 2021 Policy Brief,^x the question of increased inclusion efforts, particularly inclusion of civil society and minority genders, and how these efforts affect more traditional Track Two efforts is a growing point of discussion within the field of Track Two.

As noted above, gender inclusion efforts have been problematized by feminist and other critical scholars who have pointed out historical trends of tokenization and/or a general lack of meaningful inclusion.^{xi} There have been recent discussions, however, on the possibilities of incorporating gender equality workshops within peace processes, involving representatives of women’s groups, and a push for third-party mediators to increase women’s representation on their facilitation teams.^{xii}

More broadly, the area of “training” and “capacity-building” in dialogue and negotiation techniques is a method of fostering more inclusive peace processes. At its best, such activities can help to give those

elements of society who are excluded from a dialogue process because they lack the experience to take part the tools to participate more effectively.^{xiii}

Other authors, including Susan Allen,^{xiv} interviewed herein, discusses the role of local ownership in Track Two, wherein local actors, including non-elites can be given increased control and agenda-setting powers in a peace negotiation.

Incorporating faith leaders and/or mediation sessions led by faith-based professionals has received traction within the realm of Track Two and Multi-Track peacebuilding research. Many scholars have begun to look at tradition- & faith-oriented insider mediators (TFIMs)^{xv} and the inclusion of religious personnel as social thought-leaders in mediation sessions.^{xvi}

Generally speaking, scholarly attention has been increasingly focussed on creating inclusive Track Two processes and overcoming resistance to inclusion and gatekeeping on the part of local actors, while also holding facilitators accountable for a lack of accountable representation.^{xvii} This is laudable, but sometimes fails to recognise that real peace must include dialogues on many levels, and some dialogue may fall outside of the framework of inclusivity (ex. elite dialogues may still hold an important role). Finding ways to hold these dialogues, where necessary, while also striving to make sure that overall peace processes are more broadly inclusive is a challenging task for the field.

There is also increased attention being paid to the place (or lack thereof) of facilitators in instilling norms within a peace dialogue.^{xviii} This is laudable. Again, however, at its more extreme reaches, this approach carries to risk of making an unofficial process into something that is more about creating a vehicle for the promotion or advocacy of certain norms, rather than about providing a space for those in conflict to come together and “problem solve” on multiple levels. Those problem-solving discussions may well result in decisions on the part of many of those in conflict that their societies need to develop in certain ways and embrace certain norms as part of their way out of the conflict. But to what extent should the dialogue be about advocating that outcome as its own central goal?

These debates are critical to the field. The Ottawa Dialogue hopes to contribute to this scholarship and help to frame this debate, particularly in terms of considerations as to how smaller and quieter dialogues can take place alongside and in support of the broader goal of more inclusive peace processes as a whole. Ultimately, however, as an organisation devoted to action as well as research, we seek to develop an approach to inclusive peace processes which recognizes the challenges and pitfalls of incorporating the advocacy of norms into this work.

Endnotes

ⁱ See: United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. *Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women*. 2000. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>

ⁱⁱ Louise Diamond & J.W. McDonald. "Multi-track diplomacy: A systems approach to peace." West Hartford CT: Kumarian Press. 1996.

ⁱⁱⁱ Harold H. Saunders. "Prenegotiation and Circumnegotiation: Arenas of the Peace Process." In Crocker, C., Hampson, F., and P. Aall, (eds.), *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*. Washington DC: United States of Peace. 2001.

^{iv} Alexis Henshaw et. al. "Understanding women at war: a mixed-methods exploration of leadership in non-state armed groups. *Small Wars & insurgencies*. 2019. <https://www.tandfonline-com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/doi/full/10.1080/09592318.2019.1649829>

^v See: Esra Çuhadar. "Understanding Resistance to Inclusive Peace Processes." *United States Institute for Peace*. March 23 2020. Also: Ethan Kross, Marc G. Berman, Walter Mischel, Edward E. Smith, and Tor D. Wager, "Social Rejection Shares Somatosensory Representations with Physical Pain," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 108, no. 15 (2011): 6270–75.

^{vi} Esra Çuhadar. "Understanding Resistance to Inclusive Peace Processes." *United States Institute for Peace*. March 23 2020. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/03/understanding-resistance-inclusive-peace-processes>

^{vii} Andreas Hirblinger & Dana Landau. "Daring to Differ? Strategies of Inclusion in Peacemaking." *Security Dialogue*. January 31 2020. <https://journals-sagepub-com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/doi/full/10.1177/0967010619893227>

^{viii} Peter Jones, "Track Two Diplomacy in Theory and Practice," *Stanford University Press*. September 2nd, 2015.

^{ix} Ibidem.

^x Julia Palmiano Federer, "Is There a New Track Two? Taking Stock of Unofficial Diplomacy and Peacemaking," *Ottawa Dialogue Policy Brief*. February 2021. https://ottawadialogue.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Policy-Brief-1-Palmiano-Federer_FINAL.pdf

^{xi} See: Alexis Henshaw et. al. "Understanding women at war: a mixed-methods exploration of leadership in non-state armed groups. *Small Wars & insurgencies*. 2019. Also: Toni Haastrup. "Creating Cinderella? The Unintended Consequences of the Women Peace and Security Agenda for EU's Mediation Architecture", *International Negotiation* 23, 2 (2018): 218-237.

^{xii} See: Verveer, Melanne and Dayal, Anjali. "Women are the key to peace." *Foreign Policy*. 2018. Also: Karin Aggestam, K., & Ann Towns. "The gender turn in diplomacy: a new research agenda." *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 21(1), 9-28. 2018.

^{xiii} Natalie F. Hudson. "En-Gendering UN Peacekeeping Operations." *International Journal* 60, no. 3. (2005): 785-807. Also:

^{xiv} Susan H. Allen "Evolving Best Practices: Engaging the Strengths of Both External and Local Peacebuilders in Track Two Dialogues through Local Ownership". *International Negotiation* 26.1. 2020. 67-84.

^{xv} Mir Mubashir & Luxshi Vimalarajah, "Tradition- & Faith-Oriented Insider Mediators (TFIMs) as Crucial Actors in Conflict Transformation." *The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers*. 2016. http://frantic.s3.amazonaws.com/kua-peacemakers/2016/11/TFIM_FullReport_final.pdf

^{xvi} Antti Pentikäinen. “Reforming UN mediation through inclusion of traditional peacemakers.” *Development Dialogue*. 2015. <https://peacemakersnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Reforming-UN-mediation.pdf>

^{xvii} See: Esra Çuhadar. “Understanding Resistance to Inclusive Peace Processes.” *United States Institute for Peace*. March 23 2020. Also: Franzisca Zanker, “Legitimate Representation: Civil Society Actors in Peace Negotiations Revisited,” *International Negotiation* 19, no. 1 (2014): 62–88.

^{xviii} Sara Hellmüller, Julia Palmiano Federer, Jamie Pring. “Are Mediators Norm Entrepreneurs?” *Swiss Peace*. March 2017.

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