Most armed conflicts in today's world are not wars between nations but rather intra-state conflicts, conflicts within national boundaries. In 1987, for example, only four of the world's major armed conflicts were cross-border wars; 32 of the 36 major armed conflicts fought in 1987 were civil wars or intra-state wars of independence.

The United Nations Charter prohibits UN intervention in conflicts within national boundaries, and there is currently no other international, intergovernmental organization authorized to intervene in intra-state conflicts. Efforts by individual governments to offer political assistance have typically been rejected by the parties involved in such conflicts. Various UN agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have been able to provide economic and humanitarian assistance in such conflicts, but only with the approval of the governments currently in power. Unfortunately, most forms of economic and humanitarian aid generally do little or nothing to resolve the root causes of these conflicts.

"Track One" (government-to-government) diplomatic efforts have also usually failed to resolve the root causes of these conflicts. Settlements based upon Track One diplomatic efforts typically fall apart when the balance of power in these conflicts changes. Because of the failures of Track One diplomacy, the author argues that Track Two or "citizen diplomacy" should be developed as an alternative tool for addressing the root causes of intra-state conflicts. The author characterizes Track One diplomacy as a power-based, formal, and often rigid form of official interaction between instructed representatives of sovereign nations. He characterizes Track Two diplomacy as a nongovernmental, informal, and unofficial form of conflict resolution between citizen groups which is aimed at de-escalating conflict by reducing anger, fear, and tension and by improving communication.
and mutual understanding.

The author argues that Track Two diplomatic efforts should not be thought of as a replacement for Track One efforts, but rather as an indispensable preparation for and adjunct to them. Ideally, Track Two diplomatic efforts should pave the way for Track One negotiations and agreements by encouraging Track One official diplomats to recognize and utilize crucial information and insights obtained by Track Two citizen diplomats.

The concept of Track Two diplomacy has been growing rapidly over the past two decades, especially in the United States. Because of the diversity of Track Two diplomatic efforts, Track Two diplomacy has been further subdivided into four tracks called Track Two, Track Three, Track Four, and Track Five. Together, these five tracks are now commonly referred to as "Multi-Track Diplomacy."

The author gives the following definitions of each of these five tracks:

- "Track One: Official government-to-government diplomatic interaction;
- "Track Two: Unofficial, non-governmental, analytical, policy-oriented, problem-solving efforts by skilled, educated, experienced and informed private citizens interacting with other private citizens;
- "Track Three: Businessman-to-businessman, private sector, free-enterprise, multinational corporation interactions;
- "Track Four: Citizen-to-citizen exchange programs of all kinds, such as scientific, cultural, academic, educational, student, film, music, art, sports, and youth exchanges, to name a few;
- "Track Five: Media-to-media based efforts designed to expose and educate large segments of the population in conflict to the philosophy, ideas, culture and needs of the other national, society, or ethnic group with whom they are in conflict."

The author says that, ideally, each track should take full advantage of the expertise, experience, and resources of the tracks below and above it, and that all five tracks should work together in order to build up a strong enough power base to have a significant influence on Track One diplomatic efforts. He also says that the tracks closest to Track One will generally have the greatest impact on Track One.

The author provides a number of specific examples of Track Two, Three, Four, and Five diplomatic efforts on pages 205 - 215 of this chapter, with a focus on how these separate but parallel efforts have led to steady improvements in U.S.-Soviet relations and the end of the Cold War.
One example of Track Two diplomacy is the Dartmouth Conference, which was instituted in 1959 when U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower asked Norman Cousins to arrange to get private U.S. and Soviet citizens together to discuss U.S.-Soviet relations. These meetings, initially held at Dartmouth College in October of 1960, were continued on a regular basis for more than 29 years, leading to improved U.S.-Soviet communication and understanding on a wide variety of issues.

One example of Track Three diplomacy is that of American business executive Arm and Hammer who played an important role in improving U.S.-Soviet relations by encouraging trade between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union during the Cold War era. One example of Track Four diplomacy is the Fulbright Program, established by an act of the U.S. Congress in 1946, which has made it possible for thousands of U.S. scholars to live and do research abroad and for thousands of foreign scholars to live and do research in the U.S.

One example of Track Five diplomacy is a 30-episode set of five-minute public service television documentaries, produced by the CNN television network in 1989, which explored the concept of multi-track diplomacy by focusing on various national and international conflicts and presenting a number of possible approaches to resolving or alleviating these conflicts.

The author points out that Track Two diplomacy is a difficult and sophisticated process which requires high levels commitment, preparation, and skill. He offers the following four-phase set of guidelines for newcomers to this process who are seriously considering becoming involved in third-party efforts to de-escalate particular sectarian or ethnic conflicts. He notes that they are also applicable to Tracks Three, Four, and Five.

Phase 1 - Exploration of Subject & Self - Become knowledgeable about the fields of multi-track diplomacy and conflict resolution by reading and talking to authors and practitioners. Study intercultural communications and understand your own and others' biases. Be aware of the possibilities and limitations of these fields. Become familiar with the literature on conflict management, conflict resolution, consensus, and the art and science of negotiation at national and international levels. Know the characteristics of a good facilitator: compassion, patience, humility, good faith, the ability to set aside personal agendas, self-knowledge, and appropriate qualifications (integrity, intelligence, and expertise and experience in related fields).

Phase 2 - Analysis & Involvement - Consider the following points in analyzing the conflict and planning your involvement in it. It's best to focus on one particular conflict rather than many.
Communicate in advance with other third parties involved in the conflict. Acquire a thorough knowledge of the history of the conflict. Develop a written plan which includes goals and methods. Make it clear to all that you are acting in a nonofficial role. Obtain some form of institutional support such as a university, foundation, or NGO. Try to ensure equality of status between yourself and your counterparts in the country in which you will be working. Don't impose your own agenda for solving the conflict upon either the parties to the conflict or other intermediaries. Don't intervene if you cannot sustain a sincere commitment over time. Make your initial approach to the conflicting parties at a time when there is a lull in the conflict.

Phase 3 - Follow-through - Attend carefully to the following specific activities. Contact the parties to the conflict and obtain their consent to your involvement. Ensure your personal safety by checking in with and obtaining briefings from your own country's embassy in the country you are visiting. Don't make any promises you can't keep. Ensure the confidentiality of all interactions with conflicting parties by refraining from making any unilateral and/or unapproved communications to the media.

Phase 4 - Disengagement & Aftermath - Be aware of post-involvement concerns such as possible re-entry problems due to a hostile political climate, appropriate follow-up communications with your government, conflict-of-interest problems arising from the costs of your involvement, and the sensitive nature of Track One-Track Two relationships.

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