

Non multa, sed multum

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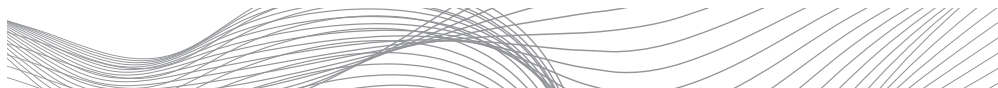
Global Edition

Océane Van Geluwe

US-SOVIET/RUSSIAN RELATIONS IN THE TIMES OF CRISES: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE ESALEN TRACK 1.5 DIPLOMACY



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At the height of the Cold War, a retreat center located in Big Sur, California, made a difference in US-Soviet relations. The Esalen Institute emerged as a counterculture aiming to develop human potential through the early psychedelic movement, religion, spirituality, travels, and seminars. In many respects, the Esalen Institute has built a reputation among the cultured and privileged spheres of Western societies and used its know-how to forge links across the Iron Curtain. This paper brings to the picture how some US-Soviet relations were initiated and maintained in times of crisis through Esalen Track 2 and Track 1.5 Diplomacy; it offers to explore the lessons learned and provide recommendations.

This occasional paper and other materials are available at:
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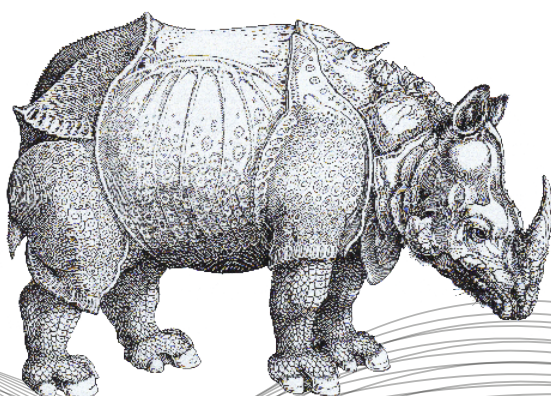
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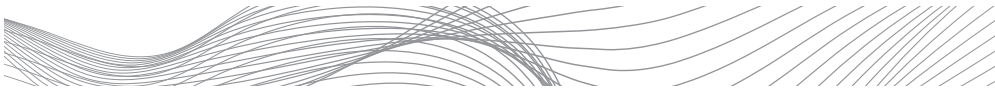
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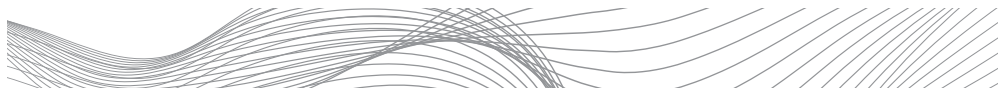
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Highlights

- Diplomacy expresses itself in every circle: Track 2 allows unofficial actors to engage in backstage diplomacy and constitutes an informal network that will guide official discussions toward a positive result through research, empathy, confidence building, and reputation.
- The Esalen Institute is a known example, although private, of how an unofficial actor can create a favorable environment for actors across domains, countries, cultures, and religions to discuss. Aiming Towards the Human Potential movement of the 1960s, Esalen was created as a spiritual retreat center focusing on Asian religions. In the 1980s, with the impulse of Dulce Murphy, the Russian-American Center (TRAC), recently renamed Track 2 An Institute for Citizen Diplomacy, was created. Workshops were organized, and discussions were facilitated.
- Joseph Montville, who was active in the Esalen Institute's sphere, coined the phrases Track 1 and Track 2 Diplomacy in *Foreign Policy According to Freud*, which appeared in *Foreign Policy*.
- The Esalen Institute got popular as one of the sponsors of Boris Yeltsin's first trip to the US in 1989. Characterized as an agitated visit, it is considered as the experience that *converted* Boris Yeltsin to capitalism and made him quit the communist party.
- Track 2 Diplomacy is the continuity of diplomacy when it is deemed difficult. Track 2 represents a safety valve during heightened tensions in an attempt to maintain a dialogue. When times allow it, Track 2 transforms into Track 1.5 forums to push further the confidence-building and diplomatic efforts in the hope for an official approach.



US-Soviet/Russian Relations in the Times of Crises: Lessons Learned from the Esalen Track 1.5 Diplomacy

Océane Van Geluwe

What is diplomacy if it is not, first, an art which, like all arts, requires talent above all? However, as everyone knows, talent is undoubtedly the greatest injustice crossing humanity because it is never distributed equally.

Diplomacy is a *savoir-être* – a way of being – it develops across innate gifts, dedication, and practice. To create a path in the wilderness, one should collect a rock daily to define a route with time and resort to a little imagination.

Despite diplomats' particular qualities, diplomacy contains its share of sciences and rituals, not in the singular but surely in its plural form. The knowledge to “lower[ing] customs duties between the different disciplines”¹. Today's attaché must simultaneously summon the diplomatic protocol and history, sociology, law, demography, economics, psychology, or nuclear physics!

Navigating diplomacy for strategic and sensitive topics like nuclear arms control becomes even more delicate.

It is safe to bet that George Bunn never felt prepared for his official function, no more than his Soviet homolog Roland Timerbaev when they had to negotiate nuclear safeguards. Nevertheless, the two became the architects of the the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Despite the antagonizing times of the Cold War, they built bridges during a hike in the nearby mountains of Geneva.

It is also safe to bet that current diplomats never felt prepared for the nonproliferation regime crisis and the demised relationship between Western societies and the Russian Federation, lately best represented by New START demise in February 2023².

There is no playbook, and the world has its share of success and challenge. Constantly evolving, it does not lend itself well to reproducing past practices. Diplomacy sometimes requires resorting to other means of which are most often favored within our own personal relations.

¹ Braudel F. *Écrits sur l'histoire*. Paris: Flammarion, 1969. P. 90.

² Mansoor S. For Decades, Treaties Helped Keep the World Safe From Nuclear War. That Era Is Over // Time. URL: <https://time.com/6257220/putin-new-start-nuclear-treaty-era-over/>

CHAPTER 1. DIPLOMACY BY OTHER MEANS: GETTING ON DIFFERENT TRACKS

While in the West, we like agencies and to classifying, diplomacy is also about bending the cultural barriers and thinking outside our own cultural box. It becomes even more critical when we share a different language box.

Diplomacy is traditionally understood as the conduct of interstate relations through negotiations and dialogue between official messengers appointed to represent their country's interests, also known as representatives³. It is by essence, polymorphic and engages different types of environments and participants⁴.

In 1981, Joseph Montville, at the time a US State Department employee, found himself engaged in an informal gathering at Esalen and coined the concept of Track 2 Diplomacy to illustrate the emerging non-governmental efforts toward diplomacy in the face of the impasse of US-Soviet relations. This concept would evolve and become known in International Relations academia as Multi-Track Diplomacy, a peace-making process, and interstate dialogue through a web of interconnected assets⁵.

Track 2 Diplomacy is understood as non-official actors collaborating between groups or nations in conflict, seeking to resolve disputes. It does not attempt to substitute to traditional channels of diplomacy, also known as Track 1 Diplomacy, but rather to complement them and offer backchannels when necessary.

When ambassadors are being called back from their duty station due to diplomatic relations turning hot, businesses, private citizens, education programs, activists, and religious groups, among others, perpetuate the link, even partially. They are the actors of Track 2 Diplomacy.

When the relations are merely disdainful, these actors create a favorable environment for state officials to meet in informal settings, known as Track 1.5 Diplomacy. It also refers to a situation where "official and non-official actors cooperate in conflict resolution"⁶. Some of the literature argues that this type of diplomacy is an "overt or covert interaction or negotiation, discretely sanctioned by one State leader, government, NGO or INGO to achieve mutually beneficial aims"⁷. This definition emphasizes that diplomats involved in negotiations have no authority in their own right to sign any agreement on behalf of those appointing them. As those actors

When the relations are merely disdainful, these actors create a favorable environment for state officials to meet in informal settings, known as Track 1.5 Diplomacy

³ Fisher R., Ury W. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981. – 200 p.

⁴ Staats J., Walsh J., Tucci R. *A Primer on Multi-track Diplomacy: How Does it Work?* // United States Institute of Peace. 31 July 2019. URL: <https://www.usip.org/publications/2019/07/primer-multi-track-diplomacy-how-does-it-work>

⁵ What is Multi-Track Diplomacy? // Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy. URL: <https://imtdsite.wordpress.com/about/what-is-multi-track-diplomacy/>

⁶ Gelder M. *Meeting the Enemy, Becoming a Friend*. Boulder: Bauu Institute, 2006. – 152 p.

⁷ Schiller B.R. What is a track 1.5 Diplomat? // *Diplomat*. 3 August 2019. URL: <https://diplomatomagazine.eu/2019/08/03/what-is-a-track-1-5-diplomat/>



often act covertly, some refer to the Track 1.5 practice as the return of backstage diplomacy.

What is the most valuable in your perspective, Track 1.5 or Track 2?

In theory, Track 1.5 is the most useful, but in practice it is hard to generalize. Track 1.5 is a hybrid format, so it is by definition more delicate than either Track 1 or Track 2. For instance, for officials engaged in Track 1.5 it might be hard to deviate from the positions of their respective governments, but if they only articulate the *party line*, that does not help a lot to reach a compromise. Still, you can win big within this format. A lot depends on mutual trust and mutual respect; if you have both, you can produce miracles. Provided, of course, that there is an intention to solve the problem and not only to make your case in front of the opponent.

How much Track 1.5. is going on nowadays?

There is little to talk about nowadays. Due to the current crisis, there is less appetite to discuss, and we can call it some self-censorship on both sides. Nobody in DC wants to take the appeasement approach with Putin, and the same is true in Moscow with Biden.

From an interview with Dr. Kortunov,
Academic Director of the Russian
International Affairs Council (RIAC)⁸

At the height of the current crisis we are facing, we need to look back. Not necessarily to repeat or find the magic recipe but to understand and recognize that cutting all ties would be counterproductive to find a resolution. With the advent of the *other* antagonization, election intervention campaigns' claims, and great powers' ego-

⁸ Multi-Track Diplomacy: a series of interviews with Dr. Andrey Kortunov and Elena Sokova // PIR Center. 9 August 2023. URL: <https://pircenter.org/en/editions/multi-track-diplomacy-a-series-of-interviews-with-dr-andrey-kortunov-and-elena-sokova/>

flexing muscles, there is a need to advocate for hope.

As a young author, I already imagine the cynical smile of my readers in front of my naivety. While it is easy to hear “[W]e don’t negotiate with terrorists or criminals”, I would, however, argue that we are always someone else’s terrorist or criminal. There is no justice in war, as much as there is no peace without justice, and there is no justice without forgiveness.

Today we offer to look back to the story of a retreat center, a counterculture, and metaphysical research of the human potential that changed the course of history. Learn what some name the Esalen Institute’s *hot-tub diplomacy*⁹.

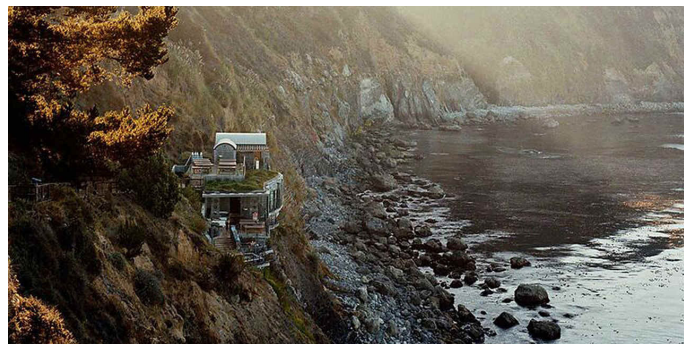
CHAPTER 2. ESALEN: MORE THAN A BATH

As the *New Yorker* press writes: “There are two kinds of people: those who know nothing about Esalen and those who purport to know everything about it”¹⁰. As a young graduate candidate, I would fit neither of the two.

The retreat institute has such an aura of exoticism and mysticism that in the finale episode of *Mad Men*, the creative director of the fictional Manhattan advertising firm Sterling Cooper, Don Draper, ended his journey at a picturesque California retreat, doing yoga. Regardless of any mention of the retreat’s name, many viewers named it the Esalen Institute. This is some soft power here.

In January 2022, I came to know Esalen due to its reputation after a final paper on Multi-Track Diplomacy in Foreign Security Policy on Nuclear Nonproliferation of the Russian Federation. Knowing that I would move to Monterey (CA) for my studies, my program director (*Academic Advisor of the Dual Degree M.A. Program Global Security, Nuclear Policy and WMD Nonproliferation (MGIMO-MIIS-PIR Center) – editor’s note*) and professor (*Professor of the Department of Applied International Analysis at MGIMO University, Founding Director of PIR Center – editor’s note*), Dr. Orlov, offered to explore the lessons learned from the Institute that will soon be only 45 miles South.

Esalen is located in Big Sur, California, driving down the famous Highway One winding from Monterey, passing Carmel by the Sea



Picture of the Esalen Institute

Source: www.visitcalifornia.com

⁹ Wilstein S. Laid-Back Summitry: ‘Hot Tub Diplomacy’ Takes the Chill off East-West Relations // Los Angeles Times. 15 February 1987. URL: <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1987-02-15-mn-3484-story.html>

¹⁰ Marantz A. Silicon Valley’s Crisis of Conscience: Where Big Tech goes to ask deep questions // The New Yorker. 19 August 2019. URL: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/08/26/silicon-valleys-crisis-of-conscience>



Hieronymus Bosch (around 1494-1505) *The Garden of Delights*. Full, as exposed at the Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain

Source: www.britannica.com

along the ocean mountainside view. A wild and impressive nature that can quickly regain its rights, your senses and perceptions are already responsive to it. Between the infamous Rocky Creek Bridge and Big Creek Bridge, you must turn right where a wooden board with white characters says, “Esalen Institute by Reservation only”. As Jeffrey John Kripal refers, it sets a tone of mystery, especially if you attempt to enter without reservation.

But it is not today’s story; if you are among the lucky ones to have a reservation, you will surely feel that your privacy is preserved. If you are part of the common mortals and curious on top of that, you would probably raise an eyebrow and wonder what is going on *down there*.

As a good member of Generation Z, I first surfed the internet for information. On the Esalen Institute website, we approach the first few paragraphs with how gifted and unique the land is and how people across domains and cultures came to live and love the land¹¹. The Esalen Institute is presented as “a non-profit alternative education center”. It was founded by Michael Murphy and Dick Price in 1962 and was the cradle of humanistic psychology and the human potential movement, in other words, a pillar of New Age ideas.

Scrolling down, a longer and more comprehensive history is offered to the reader’s curiosity via a link to Jeffrey John Kripal’s book *Esalen - America and the Religion of No Religion*¹². The inner French in me is even more confused. The Institute was first introduced to me through the stories of baths in the springs, nudist tans, or dialogues with the Esselen Tribe of Monterey County on land restitution on Spotify podcasts. Since when is religion involved?

My curiosity got the best of me. Four hundred sixty-two pages later, I have more questions than answers. But I will give you a taste of this complex history and identity from Jeffrey John Kripal’s book and the available archives.

2.1 The Counterculture, or the Research of the True Self and Spirituality

If you ever open the book, you will be greeted by *The Garden of Delights*, an oil painting on wood by the Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch from the fifteenth century. Structured in a triptych, we only see the central board. It remains very enigmatic and has been the subject of many esoteric interpretations in the past.

In his Esalen journal, John Heider states, “Categories are containers

¹¹ About Esalen // Esalen. URL: <https://www.esalen.org/about>

¹² Kripal J.J. *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. – 575 p.

for storing experience in symbolic form”. With this idea, one will remember the 1960s, an era of revolt and redefinition of the self in opposition to the dogma and apanage traditions. It is more than a term coined by John Milton Yinger in the 1982 *American Sociological Review*¹³; it was a way of life and a way of being. It could be compared to the French *soixante-huitard*¹⁴ period—a time of activism and student protest.

The Bay of San Francisco, where the US student unrest of the 1960s started, became the cradle of a *new humanism* that turned towards the quest to fulfill the individuals and their full potential. The profusion of *personal growth centers* defies all statistics, and San Francisco had no less than twenty institutes specialized in teaching Zen in the 1970s¹⁵. As such, Esalen emerged at the “center of a broad countercultural shift with respect to the American reception of the Asia religions”¹⁶.

Esalen was defined by the *spirits of its two founders*¹⁷: Dick Price and Michael Murphy. Not that the two had the same vision, and they agreed on everything. According to Kripal, the advent of Esalen lay precisely in their “differences and the distinct interpersonal and institutional ways they found to balance these, to keep them in productive tension, and to generate institutional creativity out of their respective energies and tensions”¹⁸.

It was in September 1962 that the first official Esalen seminar took place: “A seminar series exploring recent developments in psychology, psychical research, and work with the *mind-opening drugs*”¹⁹.

The 1960s decade was a burgeoning period for the Institute. A real boom that gathered characters like James Pike, Fritz Perls, and Abe Maslow. The Institute created itself a reputation for gathering its decade’s revolutionary and brilliant minds.



Dick Price and Michael
Murphy (from left to right)

Source: www.esalen.org

2.2 The Age of Reason and Diplomatic Activism

The late 1970s and early 1980s represent the *time of maturation*²⁰ for the Esalen Institute and its community. Murphy and Price settled into complementary careers in this period. While Michael Murphy managed his writing and research career in San Francisco and the Bay area, where Esalen had been open

¹³ Yinger J.M. *Countercultures: The Promise and the Peril of a World Turned Upside Down*. New York: Free Press, 1982. – 384 p.

¹⁴ Someone who took part in, or supported, or is the same age as the former student protesters during the civil unrest and widespread strikes in France in May 1968.

¹⁵ Jouët J. Des Américains à la recherche d’eux-mêmes // *Le Monde*. 17 juin 1974. URL: https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1974/06/17/des-americains-a-la-recherche-d-eux-memes_2542870_1819218.html

¹⁶ Kripal J.J. *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion*. P. 30.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 106. Figure 7. The second and third pages of the first quadrifold brochure set out the original triple mission statement. September 1962.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 358.



somehow, his wife, Dulce Murphy, headed up a Russian outreach program. In contrast, Dick had never left the immediate Esalen area. Despite being often behind the scenes, he played a crucial role in Esalen's daily life. Meanwhile, his wife, Christine, was also a key player in Esalen's social scene and an effective Gestalt²¹ practitioner²².

Dick Price more or less ran Esalen when Murphy moved off the land until his sudden death in 1985. As such, the Esalen of Big Sur of this period was shaped after the image of Dick Price.

Most workshop participants were women (and still are). Women would sit on the Board (and still do). Dulce Murphy coordinated high-level political and cultural exchanges for decades as part of a citizen diplomacy movement filled with powerful and influential women. The Russian-American Center, also called TRAC, or Soviet-American Exchange Program, was recently called *Track 2: An Institute for Citizen Diplomacy*²³.

In the 1980s, the Esalen Institute had the visit of several Soviet and American officials, to the extent that rumors emerged that the members were operating a CIA or KGB front²⁴.

Nevertheless, Esalen, at the very least, was giving the Soviets a welcome contact with the US. This contact paved the way for Boris Yeltsin's visit to the US in 1989, a visit sponsored and financed by the Esalen Institute among fifteen organizations, including the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations and the CFR²⁵.

Yeltsin's aides had approached a young Russian activist named Gennady Alfarenko and informed him that Yeltsin wanted to come to the United States with the help of private sponsorship. Alfarenko called Jim Garrison, the executive director of Esalen's Soviet-American Exchange Program at the time and asked if Esalen wanted to host the trip. Garrison flew to Moscow and met with Yeltsin in his mayor's office to discuss the matter.

Garrison described Yeltsin's Esalen-sponsored trip to the United States to Kripal as "an epic of very turbulent proportions"²⁶. Michael and Dulce Murphy initially doubted that sponsoring Yeltsin would be wise due to his "dark passion for overthrowing Gorbachev"²⁷. Esalen was particularly fond of Gorbachev and his principles. In light of these facts, many questioned whether sponsoring the man who was Gorbachev's political enemy was a good idea.

The visit took place on September 9–17 and was widely covered in the US media. Allegedly, Yeltsin insisted on visiting a grocery store in Houston. Following the folklore, he was converted to capitalism

²¹ Early twentieth century in Austria and Germany, a school of psychology emerges as a theory of perception. Gestalt means a configuration in German or how things are put together to form a whole object.

²² Ibid., p. 359.

²³ Track Two: an Institute for Citizen Diplomacy. URL: <https://www.trackii.com/>

²⁴ Esalen's Hot-Tub Diplomacy. Central Intelligence Agency, 1983. Declassified and re-leased through the CIA's CREST database on August 24th, 2017.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 392.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 393.

²⁷ Ibid.

at this mega grocery store where he would leave that store furious at the lies of Soviet propaganda, return to Moscow, quit the Party, and help lead a revolution that would eventually help topple Soviet Communism. Many consider this trip to have been decisive in defining the future Russian President's ideology.

In 1989, Boris Yeltsin's visit to America did not end Esalen's influence on US-Soviet relations.

Through the citizen diplomacy of Jim Garrison, Mikhail Gorbachev also came within Esalen's orbit. A few months after leaving his position as a foreign minister at Esalen in the summer of 1991, Garrison joined the International Foreign Policy Association with Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze and US Secretary of State George Shultz, whose mission was to mobilize large amounts of aid for Soviet children.

A few years later, Garrison managed to convince Gorbachev to visit the United States, be hosted by Ronald Reagan and George Shultz, and establish the Gorbachev Foundation/USA to promote nonviolence and global peacemaking.

Esalen's political role has a broader interpretation. As the meetings with the Soviets developed in the Big Sur site in the late 1980s, the Esalen figure and career diplomat Joe Montville was convinced that the Gorbachev administration was taking some of Esalen's ideological suggestions from alleged confidential conversations²⁸. He started to notice that some ideas would sometimes later be addressed by Gorbachev in his public speeches. During the first Gorbachev Foundation symposium, Montville asked Gorbachev about his theory. Kripal tells us in his book that "Gorbachev simply smiled as he pointed to the ceiling in the traditional Russian sign of "you were bugged"²⁹.

According to the legend, these are the most successful and outlandish achievements of the Esalen Institute in Track 1.5 Diplomacy. However, many citizen diplomats or negotiators in their everyday citizens' costumes have contributed and continue to contribute to Track 2 efforts between the US and Russia.

The Esalen Institute was a complex actor who aimed at solving and contributing to complex issues and questions, and it found a way to contribute through its Track 2 initiative. The institute has served as a Track 2 and, later, Track 1.5 platform for the diplomatic effort first between the US and the Soviet relations, then between the Abrahamic religions, and now offering a channel in the "Russian-Ukraine Conflict" through its institute for citizen diplomacy. This story is more than the controversies and bath stories under the Californian sun³⁰.

Garrison managed to convince Gorbachev to visit the United States, be hosted by Ronald Reagan and George Shultz, and establish the Gorbachev Foundation/USA to promote nonviolence and global peacemaking

²⁸ Ibid., p. 398.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ The Russia-Ukraine Conflict // Track Two: An Institute for Citizen Diplomacy, 2022. URL: <https://www.trackii.com/russia-ukraine-conflict-2022>



What would be the window of opportunity from your perspective?



Elena Sokova, VCDNP

Source: www.vcdnp.org

There are very few remaining Track 2 dialogues between the US and Russian non-governmental experts. Despite the desperate in my view needs for dialogue, unfortunately I do not have much optimism for the resumption of Track 2 meetings. I have even less optimism for Track 1.5 meeting and direct government-to-government interaction.

It will take time for parties to realize that dialogue is necessary, and Track 2 meetings followed by Track 1.5 meetings will resume.

In the meantime, non-governmental experts should focus on developing new proposals, approaches, and ideas for these future dialogue meetings; they need to re-assess the concepts and approaches in arms control and other critical areas, particularly in the post-conflict era. Academia and think tanks play a special role in this process as generators of these new ideas and approaches that are later picked up by governments.

From an interview with Elena Sokova,
Executive Director of the Vienna Center for
Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP)³¹

³¹ Multi-Track Diplomacy: a series of interviews with Dr. Andrey Kortunov and Elena Sokova // PIR Center. 9 August 2023. URL: <https://pircenter.org/en/editions/multi-track-diplomacy-a-series-of-interviews-with-dr-andrey-kortunov-and-elena-sokova/>

CONCLUSION: TRACK 2, A LAUNCHING PAD IN TIMES OF CRISES?

The study of US-Soviet and US-Russian relations in times of crises through the lens of Esalen's Institute Track 2, which took the shape of Track 1.5 Diplomacy, has provided valuable insights and lessons learned. These diplomatic initiatives have proven effective channels for dialogue, negotiation, and conflict resolution between the US and Russia during the Cold War era and beyond.

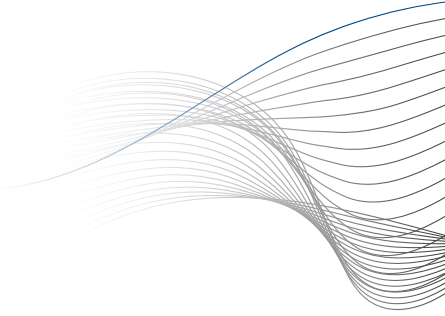
One key lesson learned is the importance of non-official, unofficial, and non-traditional channels of communication in times of crises. Track 2 and Track 1.5 Diplomacy, facilitated by organizations like the Esalen Institute, have provided a platform for discreet and confidential dialogue between US and Russian representatives outside of formal government-to-government channels. These informal dialogues have fostered trust, built relationships, and facilitated creative problem-solving approaches to complex issues such as disarmament, which may not have been possible through official channels alone.

Another lesson learned is the significance of people-to-people exchanges and cultural understanding in shaping US-Soviet and, nowadays, US-Russian relations. Esalen's Institute, known for its focus on personal growth and psychological and spiritual well-being, has provided a unique platform for individuals from the US and Russia to engage in deep, meaningful discussions and exchanges beyond politics and ideology. These interactions have helped to bridge cultural gaps, foster mutual understanding, and humanize the other, which has been critical in building trust and creating a conducive environment for diplomacy.

Furthermore, the study has highlighted the importance of continuity and perseverance in negotiations efforts; despite the ups and downs in US-Russian relations over the years, initiatives like Track 2 and, when possible, Track 1.5 Diplomacy have continued to play a vital role in maintaining open lines of communication and sustaining engagement, even during times of heightened tensions and crises. This underscores the importance of long-term commitment, patience, and resilience in conciliatory endeavors, especially in challenging geopolitical contexts.

This brings us to question whether there is a way to theorize the emergence of Track 2 Diplomacy and Track 1.5 Diplomacy. Track 2 Diplomacy often takes increased importance when tensions emerge in international relations. Dr. Kortunov mentioned that it was "fashionable after the Korean airlines crashed in 1983", and it lost its appeal later. The late 1980s coincided with the intensification of Track 2 activities and involved state officials on their basis, thus turning into Track 1.5.

During times of heightened tension, official Track 1 Diplomacy, which involves government-to-government interactions, faces



Track 2 and Track 1.5 Diplomacy, facilitated by organizations like the Esalen Institute, have provided a platform for discreet and confidential dialogue between US and Russian representatives outside of formal government-to-government channels



obstacles such as diplomatic deadlock, concrete orders to restrain communication, or lack of trust between parties, making progress difficult. In such situations, Track 2 Diplomacy can play a critical role in bridging the gap, facilitating communication and understanding between conflicting parties, and allowing cultural understanding.

When tensions emerge, Track 2 Diplomacy can step in to create channels of communication that may not be available through formal channels. Track 2 initiatives, led by non-state actors such as think tanks, academics, civil society organizations, or influential individuals, provide a neutral platform for informal dialogues, negotiations, and backchannel talks. These unofficial channels allow parties to engage in candid discussions, explore potential solutions, and build more flexible and confidential trust than formal diplomatic settings. Track 2 Diplomacy can also foster people-to-people exchanges, cultural interactions, and grassroots initiatives that can promote mutual understanding and generate support for conflict resolution efforts.

We could consider that Track 2 serves as a safety valve during heightened tension, providing an alternative forum for parties to express grievances, vent frustrations, and seek resolution. This can help prevent conflicts from escalating into more dangerous levels of confrontation or violence. Track 2 initiatives, through their research, also facilitate confidence-building measures, such as track-level dialogues, workshops, simulations, or joint projects, that can contribute to reducing mistrust, managing risks, and creating conditions conducive to formal negotiations.

However, Track 2 Diplomacy is not a substitute for official Track 1 Diplomacy, which remains the primary channel for resolving conflicts and disputes. Track 1.5 thus becomes interesting as a gateway from unofficial discussions to Track 1 negotiations and agreements between recognized governments or international organizations and holds the authority to make binding decisions. Nevertheless, Track 2 and Track 1.5 Diplomacy seem to complement and support Track 1 efforts by creating a favorable environment for negotiations, generating creative ideas, building trust, and generating momentum for official diplomatic processes.

For example, individuals or groups who have been involved in Track 2 initiatives can be invited to participate in formal negotiations as experts, advisors, or facilitators. Their insights, ideas, and networks can enrich the formal negotiation process and contribute to developing more inclusive and sustainable agreements.

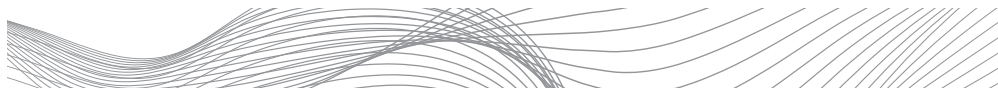
Therefore, Track 1.5 represents a window of opportunity that opens for formal negotiations or at least domestic discussions backstage on what is being discussed outside.

This theorization of Track 2 Diplomacy sublimating into Track 1.5 Diplomacy posits that Track 2 Diplomacy becomes more important when tensions emerge internationally and then transitions into Track 1.5 efforts when the window of opportunity for formal nego-

tiations opens, integrating non-state actors into official processes. By leveraging the strengths of both Track 1 and Track 2 approaches, states and international organizations can enhance their negotiation efforts and increase the prospects for successful conflict resolution.

The Esalen Institute is an example among many (VCDNP, PIR Center, James Martin Center for Non-Proliferation Studies) demonstrating the value of non-official channels, people-to-people exchanges, and continuity in shaping constructive and productive relations between the United States and Russia. These lessons can inform future diplomatic endeavors and contribute to fostering peaceful relations between nations in times of crises.

As such, the strength of those who founded Esalen and the organizations contributing to the Multi-Track Diplomacy is to recognize that the problem is not the players but the game itself. And the old rules must go. ■



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The authors and editors of the series welcome comments, questions and suggestions, which readers can email: inform@pircenter.org.

REBUILDING THE RUSSIAN-AMERICAN DIALOGUE ON GLOBAL SECURITY

This occasional paper was made within the framework of the project *Rebuilding the Russian-American Dialogue on Global Security*, which is part of the *Nuclear Nonproliferation & Russia Program*.

Russian-American dialogue on global security issues has been among PIR Center's priorities for many years. With the current deteriorating state of bilateral relations, the importance of such dialogue between the two countries has been growing over the past few years, a trend that will likely remain valid for many years ahead.

ORAL HISTORY OF NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION: VOICES FROM RUSSIA

This occasional paper was also made within the framework of the project *Oral History of Nuclear Nonproliferation: Voices from Russia*, which is part of the *Nuclear Nonproliferation & Russia Program*.

Since the advent of the atomic bomb, the USSR and then Russia have assumed special responsibility for the creation and maintenance of the nuclear nonproliferation regime. This responsibility fell on the shoulders of Soviet and then Russian diplomats, military and nuclear scientists, who stubbornly and consistently solved the difficult and often contradictory task of reducing the nuclear threat while maintaining the security of their own country. Their work is a matter of pride for many generations of Russians, an example of professionalism for novice international specialists. Much of what they could share can *not be put on paper*, which means that sooner or later it will be lost. Therefore, one of the main goals of the project is to preserve the memory on the roles of Soviet and Russian specialists in the field of nonproliferation and arms control as a national legacy.

The project also has a more pragmatic goal – dispelling myths and creating a more correct idea of the role of Russia and the USSR in the creation and preservation of the nonproliferation and arms control regimes.