

베트남의 Track 2 외교 경험: 북한에의 함의

How Vietnam Participated in and Benefited from Regional Track II Dialogues: Implications for North Korea

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[편집자 註] 동남아는 다자주의 전통의 빈곤에도 불구하고 단시일 내 다자안보협력을 성공시킨 모범적인 지역이다. 동남아의 다자안보협력이 성공한 중요한 요인으로 활발한 Track 2 외교를 들 수 있다. 동남아 Track 2 외교의 경험을 공유하고 동북아 다자안보협력에 주는 함의를 알아보하고자 “Track 2 외교와 다자안보협력” 시리즈를 기획하였다. 이 시리즈를 통하여 동남아 주요국가의 Track 2 외교 경험이 JPI PeaceNet 독자들과 공유될 수 있기를 기대한다. 공동편집자: Carolina Hernandez (ISDS Philippines) 한인택 (JPI)

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Informal Diplomacy through think tanks and academia, often referred to as Track II Diplomacy in South East Asia, is relatively new in Vietnam. “Diplomacy” has traditionally been a highly centralised activity only conducted by dedicated government agency. Track II Diplomacy only started since the “Doi moi” (Renovation) that opened up the country in the late 1980s, and gained greater strength and acceptance since Vietnam joined ASEAN, and hence, its formal and informal mechanisms. With deeper and multi-faceted regional integration, greater diversification of “actors” in foreign relations, “comprehensive diplomacy” gradually became a necessity and a foreign policy guideline. The “Track II” was then officially recognised as an indispensable channel for Vietnam to interact with the world, with increasingly important contribution.

It took a while at the beginning for Vietnam to align itself with regional Track II Diplomatic practices. Thinking and speaking “out of the box”, i.e. not repeating or echoing the official lines, was often perceived as a challenge. The Vietnam Institute for International Relations (now Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam), the leading Track II Diplomacy agency in Vietnam is a formal institution under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with their senior experts and scholars still serving as, or just retired from, the “Track I”. Under such structural setup, it was impossible for them not to be influenced by their government official positions. In those early days, there was some impression around the older ASEAN's members that Vietnam lacked “candour” in Track 2 participation. Nor was the Vietnamese government fully attentive to the informal regional processes at the time when it was still

making an effort to integrate to the broad range of official mechanisms and activities. Vietnam devoted more attention and interests to those activities with more immediate and concrete impacts. Participating on Track 2 processes were, therefore, more a political effort towards ASEAN's integration rather than a decision made based on merit. It was a tough time for the Track 2 Vietnamese scholars to build confidence both among their regional peers and their domestic colleagues at home.

Things changed rapidly as Vietnam became more confident in ASEAN and regional affairs, when Vietnam exhibited greater resolve for proactive regional integration. Vietnamese scholars participated in the process more academically. The informal, off the record nature of the meetings did help immensely. Their Track I affiliation and links kept them informed of official activities without imposing too much constrain to their mind freedom. With more confident participation, Vietnam started realising the importance of the Track II and paid greater attention and investment on it. Many senior Ambassadors and former Vice Ministers for Foreign Affairs joined the Track II processes and were frequently dispatched to Track II events. Reports from the Track II interested senior leadership not only from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but also from a broader and higher policy makers. Vietnam started taking up responsibility in Track II mechanisms, such as Co-chairing the CSCAP process on Weapon of Mass Destructions, and even initiated CSCAP study groups such as the CSCAP Study Group on Water Security. Starting from 2008, Vietnam has initiated an annual International Workshop on the South China Sea, gathering the most prominent researchers on the related topics. This series of Workshop have become the leading regional forum on the South China Sea issue. In 2011, Vietnam hosted the General Conference of CSCAP, a landmark Track II event of the Asia-Pacific that is held only every two years, marking Vietnam's maturity in Track II Diplomacy.

Track II Diplomacy has proven to provide a huge amount of knowledge that helped Vietnam make more informed foreign policy decisions. As the national focal point for Track II Diplomacy, the DAV - Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (formerly the Institute for International relations) manages Track II activities and serves as the link between Track II and Track I. The DAV shares the knowledge it has learnt to enhance the perspectives and awareness of the most relevant government agencies. The DAV also shared its knowledge and experiences through a network and contacts of expert countrywide, thus contributed to the national consensus building process. The DAV disseminates its knowledge through various local and regional seminars, and through articles published in popular media. Two most important channels through which the DAV influenced policies were direct participation in policy formulation discussions, and through presenting special reports with recommendations to relevant government agency, most typically the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The DAV also raised Vietnamese views and explained Vietnamese government interests and positions on critical issues,

such as the South China Sea and water security in the Mekong river. The process helps build confidence and raise regional awareness on those issues.

As regional Track II Diplomacy expands in scope and depth, so do the challenges facing the Track II community, the DAV included. Human capacity is the most immediate challenge, as most Track II agencies in the region struggle to have the appropriate human capital to fully participate and benefit from the regional discussions on a broader range of topics. From weapon of mass destructions to climate change to water security etc., these specific topics require true experts in the fields. On the other hand, some regional issues are inter-disciplinary and call for good inter-agencies coordination, such as the issues in the South China Sea. Networking and the ability to draw resources and expertise from other think tanks and government agencies is another challenge to the DAV. Financial deficiency also decapitates, since many Track II agencies are self-funded or only partly funded by the government.

Vietnam experiences on Track II process in South East Asia could be used to engage Pyongyang. Building initial confidence is critically important, therefore early attempt should stay on “easy” topics in very informal and off the record settings. Broader participation from North Korea might shorten the ice breaking process and greater confidence in Pyongyang on Track II diplomacy, therefore North Koreans invited to Track II events should be diversified rather than concentrated on a few “dedicated” North Koreans diplomats. Lastly, Pyongyang should be assisted financially to cover participation costs.

A once divided South East Asia is now turning into an integrated Community, and Track II diplomacy have always been at the fore front. Let us hope the same for North East Asia.

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