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Cognitive Frames of Track Two Practitioners: How Do They Affect (Best) Practice?

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Abstract

This article explores the extent to which framing affects Track Two diplomacy practice and especially how the cognitive frames used by practitioners shape the design of their interventions. The framing effect is pervasive and shapes every type of action. Peacebuilding and Track Two work are no exception. Track Two practitioners often rely on frames as cognitive heuristics when they design their interventions. This article reports on the results of an online survey of 273 participants, using measures based on categories identified in two previous qualitative studies using the grounded theory approach. Four main frames used by practitioners are presented, along with examples from practice: psychologists, constructivists, capacity-builders, and realistic negotiators. Finally, the implications of being captive to the framing effect for Track Two practice are discussed. Steps are suggested towards making more deliberative and reflective context-specific decisions about interventions rather than "fast thinking" based on heuristics and bias.

Keywords

Track two negotiations – peacebuilding – practitioners – cognitive frames

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The effect of "fast" or "system one" thinking is ubiquitous in all aspects of life.[2] Recent studies show how the framing effect shapes every type of human behavior (Huhns et al. 2016). Framing effect is even pertinent to our daily physical actions such as reaching out for an object. If framing effect is such a pervasive phenomenon, then it would be naïve to think that people working on peacebuilding and conflict resolution interventions are immune to it. This article explores the extent to which framing influences Track Two diplomacy especially through the cognitive frames used by practitioners. Cognitive frames refer to how and why practitioners design Track Two (TT) interventions in a particular way. This article elaborates on how frames influence what we do as TT practitioners. The goal is to raise practitioners' awareness about how cognitive frames affect the design of activities and, as a result, reduce practitioners' biases. Such awareness is the first necessary step for reflective practice in TT diplomacy.

The article first discusses how frames operate and the most common frames used by TT practitioners, as identified in previous research (Çuhadar & Dayton 2012; Çuhadar & Punsmann 2012). I build upon these former studies and elaborate on cognitive frames with examples from TT practice. Next, I present findings from an online survey of TT practitioners focusing on cognitive frames. The article concludes with a discussion of the implications of these findings for TT (best) practice.

The scope of the findings in this article is limited to TT dialogues (that is, interactive conflict resolution workshops) at both the grassroots and elite levels. Interviews with practitioners represent a wide range of TT practice, described in Jones (2015: 23) as Track 1.5, "hard" Track Two, "soft" Track Two, and "people-to-people" or "multi-track diplomacy." In short, results relate to both "process-focused" and "outcome-focused" TT initiatives (Çuhadar & Dayton 2012). In this article, the term TT is used interchangeably with interactive conflict resolution and in its broadest sense: "A variety of non-governmental efforts carried out with representatives from all sides of the conflict in order to contribute to the de-escalation of the conflict (Çuhadar & Dayton 2011)." This definition covers both elite (Track One-and-a-Half and Track Two) and grassroots level (Track Three) initiatives, which have in common social contact and interaction between representatives of conflicting groups.

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Data and Method

In a previous study, Çuhadar and Dayton (2012) interviewed Israeli and Palestinian TT practitioners to understand how they diagnose, evaluate, and prescribe solutions to the conflict. Questionnaires included semi-structured questions concerning how practitioners understood and defined the particular conflict they work in, which aspect of this conflict they chose to focus on, what causes they saw at the heart of the conflict, and what kinds of activities and interventions they undertook as remedies to their diagnosis of the conflict. These interviews shed light on the perceptions of practitioners and how they interpreted the reality they worked in. In about 70 interviews (30 individual interviews and 40 in two focus group meetings) with TT practitioners, they identified four distinct "theories of practice" in the Israeli–Palestinian context (for more information on these theories of practice, see Çuhadar & Dayton 2012). These theories emerged from coding the interviews and focus group discussions with practitioners and identifying common and distinct categories.

The study was later replicated in a different context, this time with TT practitioners working on the Turkish–Armenian conflict using the same methodology and questionnaire (see Çuhadar & Punsmann 2012 for the results of this study). The second study suggested that very similar theories of practice were being used by TT practitioners in spite of the very different context. It was striking to observe the similarities in the way TT practitioners think about the conflict, design, and implement their interventions. TT practitioners repeatedly used the same theories of practice regardless of the differences in the nature of the conflict. With reference to these theories, practitioners diagnosed conflicts following a similar pattern, which in turn resulted in similar actions. Following these results from different conflict contexts, one can say that theories of practice operate as "cognitive frames." Labeling something as a cognitive frame rather than a "theory of practice" has different implications, which I elaborate further in the next section. This article argues that an in-depth exploration of cognitive frames is necessary, because framing a conflict overwhelmingly in a certain direction also groups practitioners together and sets them apart from others engaged in the same conflict in other ways. How we conduct Track Two processes is heavily influenced by how we interpret and define the particular conflict.

This article reports on results from an online survey that builds upon the two qualitative studies discussed above. The survey was inspired by the similarities in how TT practitioners thought and practiced across very different conflict contexts. Such similarities triggered the following questions: How prevalent

are these theories of practice among TT practitioners around the world? Can we think of these "theories of practice" as "cognitive frames"? If so, what are the implications for TT practice? And, what may be the source of such common frames?

The online survey follows the grounded theory methodology. Qualitative in-depth interview studies in different contexts led to the identification of the conceptual categories and cognitive frames, which were followed by a more deductive and close-ended survey to identify how frequently these frames are used by practitioners. The questions in the online survey were formulated inductively based on the previous in-depth or semi-structured interviews with TT practitioners operating at all levels (Track 1.5, Track Two, and Track Three). The purpose of the survey was to see how pervasive each frame was across different conflict contexts and whether frame reference changed with conflict/region. Overall, the survey generated 273 responses. It was administered in an online format and distributed in two ways: by personal e-mail invitations to TT/dialogue practitioners (more than 150 were invited) and by posting a web-based survey link on various peacebuilding networks such as the Peace and Collaborative Development Network, Black Sea Peacebuilding Forum, Middle East Peace NGOs Network, Cyprus Peacebuilding Forum, and European Peacebuilding Forum. Most of the questions used a standard 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). Some of the questions provided a "not applicable" option as well. Demographic information included age, gender, education background, income level, nationality, and region of work. A few of the questions followed an open-ended answer format. The survey questionnaire was pilot tested with three dialogue/Track Two experts and was sent to respondents after their feedback was incorporated.

Framing and Its Significance for Track Two Practice

Almost all human actions are subject to cognitive framing effects. Actions in the past can influence our actions in the present and actions planned for the future can influence present actions. People often act to settle in a familiar, comfortable, and easy-to-control position that maximizes cognitive efficiency (for reviews of this work and related work, see Kahneman 2011; Rosenbaum, Chapman, Weiss & van der Wel 2012; Rosenbaum, Herbort, van der Wel & Weiss 2014: 43). Kahneman (2011: 59–60) calls our inclination towards a comfortable and easy-to-control zone "cognitive ease."

This fundamental cognitive principle holds true for TT work. Certain frames become more *easily available* to practitioners, such as frames they repeatedly rely on in their practice or that they are trained in professionally, and constitute a "comfort zone" in TT practice. The practitioner feels at "cognitive ease" within that particular style of action. This cognitive inclination leads people to engage in "fast thinking" in Kahneman's terms, which refers to fast, automatic, and intuitive reactions and decisions taken without necessarily going through deliberate, conscious, and focused thinking and analysis. Certain ways of acting that are learned in the past, often in repeated actions, become more cognitively "available" or "accessible" to practitioners. As a result, the same frames are applied repetitively in different conflict contexts, which can be mirrored in activities designed intuitively and automatically based on *available* information rather than a conflict-grounded and evidence-based design. The opposite of automatic and intuitive action – slow thinking – requires a sophisticated and grounded conflict analysis, first paying attention to the conflict context, which is then followed by an intervention design addressing the specific needs in that particular context. However, cognitive shortcuts (frames) provide "easy-to-reach" templates for practitioners in the TT community and especially for funders. These templates, in the long run, turn into a comfort zone for the whole peacebuilding and TT field, designating the salient frames with easy access for future activities without much consideration of context-relevant intricacies.

Two different, yet interrelated, literatures have emerged on framing. One strand of research stems from Kahneman's work on cognitive frames. This line of research has developed since the 1970s with a special focus on cognitive biases, heuristics, and decision-making. Kahneman describes the framing effect simply as "the large changes of preferences that are caused by inconsequential variations in the wording of a problem" (2011: 272). Following Levin, Schneider and Gaeth (1998), we can define the framing effect as a "change in the way a task is carried out depending on how the task is presented." Framing theory has been applied to the study of foreign policy decisions within the international relations discipline, but has rarely been considered to understand peacebuilding practices.

The second strand of literature on framing, developed mainly in communication studies, treats framing as a communicative process focusing on the construction of meaning. Framing is again defined as organizing one's experience through a certain way of defining what is going on in a situation (Goffman 1974, as cited in Brummans, Putnam, Gray, Hanke, Lewicki & Wiethoff 2008: 26). Entman (1993: 52) suggested that frames essentially mean *selection* and

salience. For him, "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating context, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and or treatment recommendation for the item described." Thus, Entman suggests, frames diagnose, evaluate, and prescribe remedies. Through framing, various groups (for example, political parties, media, activist groups) try to influence how meaning is defined and how the rest of the situation unfolds (Brummans et al. 2008: 27). Framing categorizes certain people together and sets them apart from those who define the same conflict situation in a different way (Brummans et al. 2008: 26). Framing refers to using a particular "repertoire" of categories and labels to bracket and interpret an ongoing experience and inform action. In other words, framing is the communicative process through which people foreground and background certain aspects of experience and apply a set of categories and labels to develop "coherent story[ies] of what is going on" and make decisions about "what should be done given [those] unfolding stor[ies]" (Weick 1999: 40).

The framing effect has been explored by peace and conflict scholars to understand how disputants come to define and act upon conflicts. One example is Putnam and Holmer's (1992) suggestion that a conflict framing repertoire emerges when disputants develop a similar definition of what a conflict is about, how it should be managed, and what their role in the conflict is vis-à-vis the roles of others. A conflict repertoire is situation dependent (and situation defining), as well as (re)negotiable, and it becomes salient for a particular cluster of disputants (Brummans et al. 2008: 29). Once a particular conflict repertoire becomes salient, it shapes acceptable ways for disputants to manage conflicts.

How Do Cognitive Frames Affect Track Two Work?

Entman suggests that frames highlight certain pieces of information and thereby elevate those pieces in salience (1993: 52–53). Salience means making a piece of information more accessible, noticeable, meaningful or memorable. The power of framing is that by making certain points more salient and accessible, one can highlight some parts of reality and omit other parts. What is included and highlighted with a frame, and what is omitted, has implications for TT interventions. Frames determine which issues will be considered as noteworthy and worthy of addressing in TT dialogues, what types of issue

will be acted upon, what types of activity will receive funding, who will be included in these activities and who will be excluded. As a result, certain aspects of conflicts will receive more attention and funding, whereas others will be omitted or neglected. Likewise, certain types of participants will receive more attention and will be frequently included in TT work, while others will be omitted and excluded. Certain types of TT approaches will be favored and funded, and others will be left aside.

Edelman (1993) argues that frames are a means of exerting power, because they impose selective description and omission of certain situations. Those aspects of reality that are left out of a particular frame are also outside the boundaries of accepted norms and principles of TT, and are hence not likely to be implemented on the ground or will lack the potential to influence policy. For example, in the Israeli–Palestinian context, interviews with TT practitioners showed that certain diagnoses of the conflict are accepted or internalized more than others among TT practitioners. The particular frame chosen to define the conflict influences the solution prescribed to it as well. In the in-depth interviews, most of the Israeli TT practitioners highlighted a conflict frame that emphasized social-psychological dynamics of the conflict, such as prejudice and negative inter-group attitudes in their diagnosis, whereas most of the Palestinian practitioners used a frame that pointed to structural inequalities and occupation as the issues at the heart of the conflict (Çuhadar & Dayton 2012: 165). When one looks at the TT activities funded in this context, most of them are inclined to support the first frame (funding people-to-people and peace education activities at the grassroots level) rather than peacebuilding activities supporting the second frame (Çuhadar & Dayton 2012).

On the other hand, practitioners may not be conscious about which frame they use to diagnose and prescribe, whether they make this choice intentionally or not, and the consequences of using that particular frame. As suggested by Kahneman, people often rely on frames as heuristics and "fast thinking" without being cognitively effortful in their decision-making. Hence, decisions about the design and funding of TT activities are likely to be the result of such unconscious bias, but can create and reinforce a systematic inequality and power asymmetry in the field of TT practice towards certain types of practitioners and activities. For instance, Çuhadar and Dayton (2011, 2012) discuss mismatch between the diagnoses/assessments provided by TT practitioners concerning the conflict, and the activities they choose to undertake. Furthermore, when asked about the connection between assessment and activities, there is not always a clear or logical justification.

Common Frames Used by Track Two Practitioners

Before presenting the results from the online survey, we first elaborate on the four frames identified in the previous qualitative research with TT practitioners (Çuhadar & Dayton 2012; Çuhadar & Punsmann 2012), which constitute the basis of the online survey.[3] The survey results are discussed with regard to how pervasive these frames are found to be among practitioners. Importantly, this article neither argues that these are the only frames used by TT practitioners nor that these frames are always used in a mutually exclusive manner. Some activities and practitioners use these frames in an integrated way combining two or more in their interventions, while others rely on a single frame to design their activities. However, it is still possible to differentiate these frames conceptually, such as by treating them as a cognitive map. The most common frames identified not only reflect but also shape how the practitioners view the conflict, what they see as the essence of the conflict, and what they think needs to be done to tackle it.

The current research project was initially planned to investigate which frames were used rather than how these frames were acquired and diffused. But similarities identified among practitioners across different conflict contexts generated additional questions for future exploration. These frames are most likely acquired through professional training, socialization with other professionals, and interactions with and directions from funders. Once a particular frame is internalized and comes to be accepted as a norm in the peace community, it is repeatedly applied in numerous conflicts by other practitioners and, in time, becomes a sort of "comfort zone" not only for the particular practitioner but perhaps also for the whole field. For example, if the conflict is framed as a result of conflicting meta-narratives, the TT intervention will be designed to target a change in these narratives. If the conflict is framed as a result of social-psychological dynamics, the dialogue initiative would focus on the inter-group dynamics and situationalist aspects of the conflict. Following are the most common frames identified in the in-depth studies, which were later explored further in the survey research with practitioners. These were widely used in dialogue workshops in a variety of conflict contexts. Future research is needed on how certain frames become accepted in the practitioner community and how they are diffused.

3 The description of the frames in this section relies heavily upon Cuhadar & Dayton (2012); and Cuhadar & Punsmann (2012).

The "Psychologist" Frame

This frame is used by practitioners who think psychological factors are the most important aspect of conflicts that need to be addressed. Their diagnosis of the conflict relies on various psychological dynamics, especially concerning inter-group relations and conflict such as prejudice, stereotyping, enemy images, dehumanization, distrust, existential fears, collective and competing victimhood, humiliation and honor/dignity, chosen traumas, and cognitive taboos. Conflicts are mainly evaluated with reference to these concepts, and prescriptions that follow this diagnosis advocate a range of psycho-political interventions.

Within this frame, activities are undertaken that envision end goals such as overcoming negative stereotypes and homogenous group images, delegitimization and dehumanization of the members of the out-group(s). These would be replaced by re-humanization of out-group members, instituting trust and empathy, and eliminating prejudice and bias. The prescriptions for solutions in this frame may rely on a variety of psychological processes related to cognitive, affective, and behavioral change. The often-preferred method is "social contact" that brings the representatives of adversarial groups together in an interactive and friendly environment to change the way each side thinks, feels, and acts toward the other. Social contact, according to this theory, is expected to trigger a cognitive and affective change process in individuals, and will result in the replacement of negative attitudes, feelings, and zero-sum understanding of the conflict. These new understandings will then, according to this frame, influence public opinion or be considered by people when they make decisions. For example, one dialogue practitioner described a program that brought Israeli and Palestinian teachers together to address enemy images and negative stereotypes in order to improve relations between the individuals from adversarial societies: "Teachers get a better knowledge about the history and politics and [each other's] communities. When teachers from both sides get together, they will know more about the other side from the emotional, personal, and professional level." Social contact and interaction between teachers from adversarial parties change how they see and feel about each other individually. The rationale for focusing on teachers is their eventual impact on a much larger group of people, their students.

This frame used by dialogue practitioners relies on a rigorous research program on prejudice reduction and social contact hypothesis. Social contact has long been advocated by social psychologists to decrease intergroup bias and prejudice (Pettigrew 1998). It is widely used as a tool to resolve or transform conflicts as well (Çuhadar & Dayton 2011). A vast body of social psychology literature describes the consequences and conditions of social contact. However,

despite this extensive literature, most of the practitioners using this frame did not elaborate on how and why the contact activity would result in positive individual change. Contact—that is, "when they get together and meet together"—is seen as the tool for change, but the psychological processes that are triggered by contact are not necessarily within the awareness or deliberate preference of the practitioners. This is one indication why these "theories of practice" are not simply theories, but should be seen as cognitive frames involving heuristics and "fast thinking." Overwhelmingly, most of the practitioners interviewed (35 out of 39) in the Israeli-Palestinian context and again most in the Turkish-Armenian context emphasized that psychological factors are at the heart of the conflict they work in, but without necessarily explaining how these dynamics operate in relation to the theoretical accumulation behind the theory.

The "Constructivist" Frame

The constructivist frame used by TT practitioners highlights the conflicting and competing (historical) conflict narratives at the core of the conflict. Practitioners who frame conflicts as such tend to work with conflict narratives. The objective of their work is defined as reframing the stakeholders' zero-sum views of the conflict into narratives that allow for mutual accommodation, compromise and cooperation.

Dialogue activities that take place within this frame aim to transform conflict narratives. They sometimes take place within joint groups of adversaries; other times, new conflict narratives are produced by a group of scholars in a dialogue initiative and then disseminated through the media. The goal is often to get individuals to rethink their existing views of the conflict and the other side either by challenging their existing beliefs or by showing them that an alternative and more constructive narrative is legitimate. An example of an activity reflecting this frame is the formation of an international news service by Search for Common Ground to distribute newspaper articles that emphasize constructive ways of managing the conflict or that describe ways to resolve it.[4] These articles are selected and then distributed in several languages to a wide range of readers. Thus, the service provides a constructive alternative to the mainstream zero-sum and blame-attributing narratives of the two sides. In a similar vein, another project brings together historians in an interactive dialogue environment to have them rewrite a common historical narrative about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict that focuses on human security aspects.

4 For more information on the initiative, see https://www.sfcg.org/Documents/CGNews_Writers_Guide_en.pdf.

One can again argue that this frame has become a cognitive heuristic for practitioners. When pressed to explain the actual causal mechanisms that would catalyze the changes they seek, most practitioners did not provide a satisfactory answer. For instance, they could not explain what kind of change was envisioned or how it would be realized after reframing narratives, under what conditions individuals change their existing beliefs and subscribe to a new narrative, or how cognitions about the conflict were defended or abandoned when contradicting pieces of information were presented by the newly articulated narrative. Instead, the conflict is diagnosed automatically in a particular way by those who use this frame as a shortcut without deliberative or reflective thinking related to the intervention, which may rely on assessment data or a rigorous theory of change.

The "Capacity-builder" Frame

The capacity-building frame addresses lack of conflict management skills and knowledge about the other side as the core of the essential diagnosis of conflict. By extension, for prescription, the capacity builder views education and training as the main tools for conflict de-escalation, and the acquisition of nonviolent conflict resolution skills as the remedy to violent destructive conflict. Trainings can be conducted in various areas, such as problem solving, negotiation and mediation skills and peace education. These trainings often touch upon topics related to human rights, diversity, citizenship and peacebuilding. The heuristic behind these activities is that people who acquire such skills make more informed and nonviolent decisions regarding conflict management. Similarly, peace education projects seek to prepare educational curricula devoid of prejudice and negative images and encourage perspective-taking. Often, the teachers from conflict parties are brought together for the joint preparation of new curricula and/or to be trained in how to use them.

This frame puts the empowerment of individuals (especially of youth, women, and other disadvantaged groups, such as refugees) at the forefront, hence as part of activities and dialogues equipping them with skills and knowledge. In addition to empowerment, attitude change is another frequently mentioned end goal in these types of initiatives. In either case, skills training and education are expected to enhance the capacity of individuals to undertake peaceful change. As such, the capacity-builder frame is seeking to create "change agents" within conflict communities.

An example of a project that adopts this approach is a special program that educates Jewish youth in the fifth and sixth grades in Arabic language and culture. Instruction is provided by Palestinian teachers. In addition to experiencing the curriculum, Israeli and Palestinian students also interact through

various social activities in which Arabic language is practiced. By participating in this dialogue program, Jewish students have the opportunity to be in contact with the "other" while also developing new language skills. Therefore, the project claims to contribute to the peaceful coexistence of members of the two cultures, and thus equips and empowers young people with new skills and knowledge. The project specifically targets fifth and sixth graders because they are believed to respond more positively to new information and are seen as having the capacity to transform.

The "Realistic Conflict" Frame

This frame prioritizes the "realistic interest" as the core of the conflict, such as in resource conflicts and tangible conflicts of interest. This frame too, like the others, relies on a sound theoretical tradition in social sciences, which is somewhat reminiscent of Sherif's (1958) realistic group conflict theory and the functionalist theory (Groom & Taylor 1975). The frame relies on the shortcut thinking that realistic interests are at the heart of conflicts and you have to find practical (and preferably common) interests to bring the conflict parties together. Following the realistic group conflict theory, superordinate goals are seen as a remedy that can facilitate cooperation between conflicting groups. Superordinate goals are common goals that create interdependence between the parties, which without cooperation between them cannot be achieved.

The types of activities that are set in action by this frame include "functionalist" TT activities that use tangible development challenges and technical issues to bring the sides together to solve a common problem.[5] Typical projects focus on environmental or agricultural issues, health care, or urban planning challenges. In the Israeli-Palestinian context for instance, many have focused on technical cooperation to better manage water resources in the region (Çuhadar 2009). In the Turkish-Armenian context, the rehabilitation of the dysfunctional border was prioritized to bring parties together to work on a common interest. Several interventions were designed with this idea. One of them prioritized the renovation of a historic bridge over the Arax/Aras River that connect the two banks and the two countries. Another project aimed to form a joint venture bringing together cheese producers from Armenia, Georgia and Turkey, using the potential economic gains as an incentive. Practitioners hope that by solving a joint problem together, participants will develop a degree of trust and understanding that contributes to peacebuilding in the end. One of the practitioners interviewed summarized this thinking as

5 Functionalist TT was first used by Joe Montville to refer to TT activities that use practical common interests to bring parties together.

follows, "I got this idea that environment can serve as a bridge and working on environmental ideas together can help two communities work together and rather than just talking about relations, they will have a common goal."

Such TT activities usually have two goals: one goal often targets technical or functional cooperation, while another targets building trust and improving relationships between the parties as a side gain. For instance, an NGO educates youth groups in each community about the water situation in their own community and in the neighbor's community. In another program, people from neighboring adversarial communities are brought together to work on joint development projects that could improve the water situation in each community. In both cases, the professional identities, such as cheese makers, and technical backgrounds of participants, like water scientists, are used as starting points for the dialogue. Many claim that water is the ultimate peacebuilding resource because it is relevant to the daily lives of people, it can attract the interest of professionals who are concerned with the environment, and it is related to the conflict at the micro and macro level. As one practitioner said: "Water can be a bridge in dialogue instead of the reason for conflict. As it is a major issue in the conflict, it has to be discussed together. It can be a base for (regional) cooperation."

Another practitioner adds, "Each side is affected by the behavior of the other. [They need] clean water in sufficient quantities … Practically, if people learn to save water they understand that there can be enough for everyone, and there will be enough for everybody … The project enables each side to express their needs and concerns and helps them to develop an understanding of their incompatible interests and the common interests."

From one conflict context to another, the common realistic interest or superordinate goal used for dialogue changes: sometimes it is water as in the case of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, sometimes cheese production or historic/cultural artifacts' renovation as in the case of Turkish-Armenian projects. However, using a realistic interest that requires cooperation from both parties to be accomplished remains as the underpinning heuristic guiding this frame.

How Pervasive Are these Track Two Frames? Results from the Online Survey

One of the questions asked to practitioners in the survey, to understand the frames that shape their thinking and activities, concerned the objectives of their work. What are they trying to get at with their engagement? Do practitioners prefer to address the relationship between the conflict parties, that is, alter

perceptions, create empathy and develop bonds? Or are practitioners more inclined to reach tangible outcomes with their initiatives, that is, outcomes and results that can be used for negotiations for instance? Some of the frames discussed above can be considered as prioritizing relationships (for example, the psychologist), whereas others prioritize tangible outcomes (for example, realistic conflict frame).

Overall, when comparing the mean values, practitioners were more inclined to address the relationship dimension of conflicts (M=4.18, SD=0.69). This, to some extent, indicates that the "psychologist" frame is preferred to a higher degree than the realistic conflict frame, which is measured by tangible outcome-oriented work. Practitioners agreed slightly less on the importance of achieving concrete outcomes in their initiatives; however, this was still an important inclination though less so compared to the "relationship focus."

Another important finding from the survey is the positive and significant correlation between the "relationships as objectives" and "targeting community level" ($r=.54$, $p<0.01$). This means that most of the practitioners who choose to work with community-level participants (that is, Track Three or soft TT) tend to focus on relationships in their work. However, what is rather surprising is that those who aim to target tangible outcomes in their projects say that they work with both top-level and community-level people almost equally ($r=.34$, $p<0.01$ and $r=.33$, $p<.01$, respectively). This can be interpreted as meaning that people who work with a functionalist frame (that is, realistic conflict) include community-level people and policy people/elites equally in their work and do not weigh clear preference towards one of these groups. This is contrary to the common understanding in the peacebuilding community that practitioners who work with community-level participants usually hold dialogues for the sake of dialogues, focus on relations, and do not target specific tangible outcomes. This conclusion should be taken with a grain of salt however. In interviews with practitioners who work at the community level, they sometimes feel obliged to mention very specific outcomes, and even quantify them as measurable outputs, to make their grant applications more appealing. So, what is understood as a tangible outcome may depend on the type of the project and may be hard to predict from survey results. This could be an input into the negotiations, such as data and maps, or a house-building or bridge-renovation project, or building a water well, or even the number of young people receiving training. All of these could be articulated as outcome-focused concrete results of a project. Nevertheless, whatever the ultimate output may be, as part of shortcut thinking, practitioners are inclined to frame and present their work in terms of concrete measurable outputs. This could be due to a

deliberative act, such as concern to secure funding or it could be the result of cognitive heuristics.

Surprisingly, people who prefer to work with community-level participants also prefer to keep their groups exclusive, that is, having the same people involved over a longer period of time ($r=.24$, $p<0.01$). On the other hand, the correlation between working with top political decision-makers and keeping the group exclusive at the same time turned out to be not significant. Even though elite-level work immediately triggers the image of exclusivity, where everything is kept secret and only a few people are involved, this result from the survey challenges this notion, because it suggests that grassroots/community-level work aims at exclusivity as well, whereas no systematic pattern for the relationship between exclusivity and elite-level work was detected.

The survey also shed light on the question of whether the objectives would differ across regions. Table 1 provides information about the intention to address relationships in TT work by regions. The chi-square analysis suggests there is a significant relationship between the practitioners' intention to address the relationship dimension of the conflict and their concentration in particular regions ($\chi^2 = 36.59$, $df = 16$, $p<0.01$). Practitioners working in African conflicts (91%), Southeast Asia (91%), and conflicts in the Indian continent (94%) have the highest intention to work with relationship-focused frames compared to the percentage of practitioners working in other regions. This could be interpreted as meaning that practitioners prioritizing activities building and improving relations are much more prominent in Africa than in other places.

On the other hand, Table 2 presents the intention of practitioners to work with tangible outcomes (that is, functionalist/realistic conflict frame) by regions. Here the relation turned out to be not significant ($\chi^2 = 16.05$, $df = 16$, $p=.45$), suggesting that no meaningful result can be derived from these types of practitioners and the regions or conflicts they work in.

Another result is concerned with the conflict phase. In the analysis focusing on whether it would matter for the practitioners or not, the chi-square statistics suggested no relation between the conflict phase and practitioners' use of a relationship-focused frame ($\chi^2 = 9.71$, $df = 14$, $p=0.78$) or a realistic interest/functionalist frame ($\chi^2 = 12.26$, $df = 14$, $p=0.59$). As a result of this finding, we cannot suggest, for instance, that violent conflict urges practitioners to focus on certain types of TT activities. What practitioners work on (relationships, concrete outcomes, or both) does not appear to be linked to a particular phase of the conflict. In fact, when asking practitioners about the conflict stage they work on, nearly half of those who provided an answer indicated that the conflict phase does not matter to them (41.7%). This means that practitioners see

TABLE 1 Percentage of practitioners indicating intention to address relationships primarily in their work (psychologist frame)

Relations	Middle East	Africa	Europe	Caucasus	North America	South America	Indian Continent	Southeast Asia	Multiple regions	Total
High	17	31	19	5	16	5	16	21	22	152
	56.7%	91.2%	65.5%	83.3%	72.7%	62.5%	94.1%	91.3%	73.3%	76.5%
Total	30	34	29	6	22	8	17	23	30	199

Note: Valid n=199, missing observations: 74, N=273
High intention of practitioners to address relationships in TT activities.

TABLE 2 Percentage of practitioners indicating intention to achieve tangible interests in their work (functionalist frame)

Tangible outcomes	Middle East	Africa	Europe	Caucasus	North America	South America	Indian Continent	Southeast Asia	Multiple	Total
High	8	17	7	3	9	1	6	11	9	71
	26.7%	51.5%	29.5%	50%	40.9%	12.5%	35.3%	47.8%	30%	36.2%
Total	30	33	27	6	22	8	17	23	30	196

Note: Valid n=196, missing: 77, N=273
High intention of the practitioner to address tangible interests in their TT initiatives.

TABLE 3 Frequency of frames preferred by TT practitioners in their activities

	Challenge Stereotypes	Practical Skills	Simply Get Together	Develop Shared Story	Process of Healing	Resolve Daily Problems
N	181	167	91	119	132	117

specific frames as irrelevant to a particular conflict phase. Regardless of the frame, TT practitioners' work tends to take place mostly during the negotiations and the implementation phases. Very few practitioners are engaged in preventive work or work during escalation. This can be interpreted as another form of cognitive heuristic, where practitioners do not deliberately and reflectively design activities according to the phase of the conflict, but rather use the same frame automatically regardless of the phase, relying on heuristics.

Aside from the two abovementioned generic measures addressing a relationship focus and outcome focus—roughly corresponding to the "psychologist"

and "functionalist/realistic conflict" frames—the survey also asked more specific questions elaborating on the practitioners' preference for different frames. Respondents were asked which of the given six statements would characterize their work the best.[6] Respondents were allowed to pick more than one option for this question. Of the choices provided, challenge stereotypes (emphasizing cognitive aspects) and process of healing (emphasizing emotional aspects) were seen as indicators of the psychologist frame; develop/construct a shared story as an indicator of the constructivist frame; practical skills as an indicator of the capacity-builder frame; and resolving daily problems as an item used to predict the realistic conflict frame. Simply getting together was placed as a control item, which does not capture a specific frame, but indicates "dialogue" as a method in general without a clear purpose or theory of change in mind. It also measures the extent to which an unspecific category is seen as preferable. Table 3 reports the frequency of responses falling under each frame.

Most of the participants felt their work is best described as challenging stereotypes, an indicator of the psychologist frame. In fact, when considered together with the option, "process of healing," these two notions surpass all others by far. Hence, the "psychologist" frame, either highlighting cognitive aspects such as stereotypes or affective aspects such as healing, is the frame most alluded to by practitioners. This result is completely in line with the findings from the previous qualitative interview studies. After the psychologist frame, the second most frequently mentioned frame is the "capacity builder," highlighting the development of skills and empowerment of conflict parties.

Since multiple answers were possible, how many people overall identified with frames related to relationships between the conflict parties was analyzed. This includes "Challenge Stereotypes," "Simply Get Together," and "Process of Healing," as opposed to the outcome-focused frames ("Practical Skills" and "Resolve Daily Problems"). Fewer participants agreed to the statements belonging in the outcome category. However, it could also be argued that most practitioners did not seem to have a clear-cut, mutually exclusive perception

6 The following options were provided to practitioners. These categories were derived from previous qualitative research conducted by Cuhadar and Dayton (2012) and Cuhadar and Punsmann (2012). 1) Challenge Stereotypes: To challenge people's stereotypes and attitudes about the other party and how they think about the conflict; 2) Practical Skills: To have people acquire practical skills (e.g. negotiation, mediation, non-violent problem solving); 3) Simply Get Together: To simply have people get together; 4) Develop Shared Story: To challenge their existing story about the conflict and to help both sides to develop a shared story; 5) Process of Healing: To trigger a change in their emotions towards each other and bring about a process of healing; and 6) Resolve Daily Problems: To bring people together to resolve their daily practical problems (e.g. housing, water supply, other infrastructural problems).

TABLE 4 Relationship frames and the frequency of working with influential elites and decision-makers

	High-level political Low	**High-level political High**	**Total**
Relationship frames	136	82	218
Outcome frames	119	71	190
	Grassroots Low	**Grassroots High**	
Relationship frames	57	161	218
Outcome frames	45	145	190

of what underlying assumptions guide their work. Very few marked only one of these statements; most marked more than one option.

The survey results also suggest that practitioners who *do not* work with influential elites and decision-makers identify more with relationship-oriented frames. Likewise, people who say they work *a lot* with political decision-makers do not connect their work to relationship-oriented frames. Out of 218 practitioners who work with relationship-focused frames, 136 of them reported that they do not work with high-level influential participants. Similarly, looking at the results concerned with the extent that practitioners work with grassroots participants, there is a clear tendency for relationship frames (out of 218 respondents, 161 of them said they work with grassroots-level people when they work with relationship-focused frames). Table 4 below summarizes the number of respondents who work with relationship-focused frames and their tendency to work with high-level participants (Track 1.5 and Track Two type participants), as well as grassroots-level participants (Track Three or people-to-people).

These findings confirm Lederach (1997) and others: working with grassroots-level participants is more common in relationship-oriented frames such as in psycho-social dialogues mentioned by Lederach. As far as the frequency of working with high-level vs. grassroots participants in outcome-focused frames is concerned (that is, skills and functionalism), it can be said that people who identify with an outcome frame tend to spend less time with high-level participants and more time with grassroots-level participants. Practitioners using skills and functionalist frames tend to work more with grassroots people than with elites. Therefore, in either case, the tendency to work with grassroots-level

participants is much higher than working with higher-level participants. This is expected for a number of reasons. First of all, the number of grassroots-level initiatives is much higher than the number of high-level Track 1.5 type activities. Second, some outcome-focused projects involve community development and most skills trainings are offered at the community level. Third, Track 1.5 and 2 activities are not only more limited in number but also more confidential and away from the public eye. Hence, those who responded to the survey are likely to be biased towards those working with grassroots-level participants.

Another reason for people who define their work within outcome-focused frames also spending more time working with grassroots leaders may be that, in the analysis, skills training was included in this category. A separate analysis of skills and functionalist frames may render different results as there are many training and capacity building workshops conducted with grassroots-level participants. In fact, additional analysis is needed with each frame separately assessed. However, what is clear is that a strict dichotomy when it comes to which frame is associated clearly with what level of the society is not possible in practice from the survey results, even though this is often suggested in theory. Indeed, especially when it comes to identifying with a particular TT frame, teaching practical skills and working on common interests, such as housing or sanitation, may appear more relevant at the grassroots and community level. This might explain why practitioners who prefer outcome-centered frames also work a lot with grassroots participants.

Discussion and Ideas for Future Research

People have a tendency to economize cognitive resources and as a result often rely on heuristics (mental shortcuts) while acquiring and processing information. Frames are a type of mental shortcut that people use and that leads them to take intuitive actions without necessarily engaging in deliberative action. The way an option is framed affects what is chosen (Tversky & Kahneman 1986). Mental shortcuts captured by cognitive framing reflect fast thinking, which is the kind used to make quick, automatic or unconscious decisions that frequently result in bias (Kahnemann 2011). As such, certain frames established within the TT field lead practitioners to think in a certain direction and design TT interventions automatically relying more on fast thinking rather than on deliberative and reflective practice. As such, they become serious obstacles to a bias-free TT practice. Based on the research findings, we suggest some preliminary ideas with regard to three questions: How do practitioners become

captive to the framing effect? How do frames affect practice? What steps may be taken to reduce bias set by the framing effect among TT practitioners?

As for the first question, each frame sets certain benchmarks about how a practitioner should diagnose/assess the conflict, and how he/she should act upon the conflict, such as what kinds of activities are needed to address it. Once the conflict is framed in a certain way, the activities are designed based on intuitive fast thinking rather than an evidence-based intervention design that carefully considers and evaluates whether the intervention is a good match with the needs of the conflict context. Practitioners in the field often carry out tasks depending on how the task is framed initially. If they think that psychological aspects of a conflict are the most crucial, they will design their activities addressing these aspects. However, this may be at the expense of other interpretations of the conflict, especially given the limited funding sources for TT activities. Framing can group certain practitioners together and can set them apart from other practitioners. In so doing, it may create a biased preference for a specific set of practitioners or TT practice and omit or delegitimize others. For instance, as both interview data and survey results suggest, TT practice is heavily dominated by the "psychologist" frame. This means that our community has a strong inclination, bias, to see conflicts from this perspective. This will automatically result in favoring interventions and activities that prioritize such dynamics, both in theory and practice. Yet, some people on the ground would contradict that these dynamics constitute the most important and urgent need to be addressed. For example, recent research focusing on identifying the everyday indicators of peace is very informative in this sense.[7] Some of the indicators mentioned by the local people as indicators of a peaceful community (for example, adequate lighting in the streets and the ability to go out at night) may be completely different from what is seen as the priority in the head of a TT practitioner guided by a specific frame. Such bias also creates a favored "theoretical approach" while sidelining others. For instance, recent scholarship has been critical of the conflict resolution practice and theory for ignoring the structural aspects of conflicts (Rubenstein 2017). In sum, designing interventions based on mental shortcuts set in motion by cognitive frames could become an obstacle to more context-appropriate interventions, paying attention to the needs as defined by the locals. It could also preclude the development of scholarship that does not fit within the confines of the dominant frame. Frames lead practitioners towards bias about the diagnosis and the remedy of a conflict.

7 See Firchow (2018) for more on everyday indicators of peace.

Second, by generating automatic and simple reasoning based on simple cues, rather than on complex thinking, frames create an environment where the complexity of the conflict environment is forfeited. In such circumstances, simplistic interventions may be repeated over and over again, missing the complexity of the conflict situation. This may involve the risk of designing interventions that do not necessarily match the needs of the complex conflict context. For instance, in spite of the existing research on the particular needs of each conflict stage, it is very telling that about half of the practitioners who responded to the survey think the conflict stage is irrelevant to what they do and how they conduct their activities. This implies that they rely mostly on the frame they internalized and intuitively design their interventions. In this sense, being captive of a frame and relying on it as a shortcut not only limits more grounded, evidence-based conflict intervention design, but also is a potential obstacle to reflective practice.

This brings us to the question of how practitioners become captives of these mental shortcuts. A frame may be acquired through professional training or through past practice experience. Once a particular frame is internalized, it is repeatedly applied to numerous conflicts by the practitioner and in time becomes the comfort zone for that particular practitioner. When it is diffused as a benchmark and adopted by a community, it also becomes the benchmark for the donors and is promoted and reproduced by them for the whole field of practice. If the conflict is framed in terms of conflicting meta-narratives, the TT intervention will target a change in narratives. If the conflict is framed in terms of social-psychological dynamics, the TT initiative will focus on the relationship and attitudinal aspects of the conflict. These in time become ready templates for practitioners that are promoted by donors and then, after some time, are adopted automatically by practitioners in a local context without much assessment and questioning, to increase their chances of funding. When asked why they decided to carry out a certain activity, several interviewees suggested, "because the donor usually funds those types of activities." As the survey results indicate, in TT practice there are clearly several highly preferred frames. The frames identified in these studies also create groupings of practitioners around certain commonalities. To what extent they interact with and complement each other or remain in separate islands should be the subject of future inquiry. Also, future research should look into the processes of knowledge transfer and how specific frames become dominant over time.

Lastly, what can be done to overcome the risk of such bias in TT practice? First, we should make reflective practice a part of any training for practitioners. In teaching reflective practice, time should be set aside for understanding our own bias and encouraging open and critical thinking. Second, as many

others have suggested in our field, a solid conflict assessment is crucial before designing any intervention, such that the practitioner gives pause to consider the unique needs of the conflict context before jumping ahead and designing a copied intervention following a set frame. Third, those who adopt the frames discussed here should also educate themselves about the profound theoretical and philosophical background these frames rest upon. Each frame discussed in this article relies on years of social science research. Practitioners should be more informed about the implications of their choices, should treat them as research results that can be modified with time, and update themselves about new research developing in these areas. This will help them make more informed decisions, rather than those based on heuristics that potentially constitute bias and simplistic designs. In short, practitioners should engage in "slow thinking" and strive to design original and more conflict-specific interventions.

Finally, a few suggestions concerning future research can be extended. Additional work is needed to connect the frames identified to how they are used as ready-made templates for TT work, alongside the institutional processes such as funding through which they become shortcuts in the field. Current research did not inquire about how practitioners acquired each frame, how they react when they are challenged to use a different approach or how flexible they are in adopting different approaches.

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