

Reconfiguring Social Capital in the Making of Track II Diplomacy: A Case Study of the Taipei-Seoul Forum*

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Track II diplomacy is of specific strategic interest for Taiwan under the barriers of participation in international organizations and the formation of diplomatic ties with major powers. The Taipei-Seoul Forum/Seoul-Taipei Forum (TSF/STF), which was inaugurated in the early 1990s

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worked as an important example of how track II diplomacy can contribute to Taiwan's relations with South Korea based upon interpersonal relationships and links between think tanks on either side. This paper examines the development of TSF/STF to examine the opportunities for and constraints on track II diplomacy efforts to nurture bilateral relations between Taiwan and South Korea. Through the lens of social capital as an analytical framework, this paper portrays the unique process of interpersonal social networking that takes place through TSF/STF, which has managed to preserve a fragile bilateral relationship during a period of extreme difficulty.

KEYWORDS: track II diplomacy; social capital; Taipei-Seoul Forum/Seoul-Taipei Forum; think tank; Institute of International Relations (IIR).

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In the early 1960s, scholarly concerns about reinventing international politics gave rise to the argument that there was a need to develop more complicated cooperative models of diplomacy (Galtung & Holmboe, 1965, p. 104). Track II diplomacy is just one of the creative ventures designed to maintain or improve bilateral and multilateral relations that was developed in response to this need. Track II diplomacy is of special interest to epistemic communities and academics. The term was coined by the former American diplomat, Joseph Montville, and it refers to negotiation by non-state actors of issues that would normally fall into the official diplomatic sphere. Sometimes, the term is somewhat ambiguous because in several cases track II also includes officials that act in their private or personal capacities. In fact, this inclusion of track I actors (governmental officials) in the track II process represents a reconfiguration of the power structure of contemporary diplomacy (Sundararaman, 2008).

Track II diplomacy has three objectives. First, it was originally designed to prevent conflicts and preserve the peace in the spirit of preventive diplomacy (Evans, 2009; George, 2000). It functions as an immediate and efficient means of communication in cases where traditional diplomacy has failed and in situations where relations between two countries have become strained (Alzugaray, 2006; Kaye, 2007). Second, the rationale of track II diplomacy is to find a flexible way of dealing with sensitive subjects and controversial issues on “a path comfortable to all participants” (Ball, 2000, p. 34). Its aim is to forge consensus among all stakeholders

and to end disputes by developing empathy and mutual understanding during an informal “problem-solving workshop” (Lieberfeld, 2002, p. 356). Third, brainstorming in track II diplomacy can help establish a normative path for all governments and stakeholders in shaping common interests and developing a roadmap of cooperation in the future (Cowan & Arsenault, 2008).

We can see from the above that track II diplomacy is flexible and informal (Tan, 2005). It involves the cultivation of trust, the reconciliation of disagreements, and the establishment of consensus among stakeholders. It is, as Peter Jones (2015, p. 8) puts it, a process of “prenegotiation.” Not only is it a strategy for turning crises into opportunities, but it is also a means for constructing transnational epistemic communities. In Asia, where countries are vastly different in terms of their backgrounds and interests, the practice of track II diplomacy is particularly meaningful. Amitav Acharya (2011), for example, argues that the development of Asian regional institutions has benefitted from the ideas and input of epistemic communities and track II dialogues. For example, the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) is a track II diplomacy mechanism for the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and works as “a more structural regional process of a non-governmental nature” (Ball, 2000, p. 1). It has made a great contribution to the confidence-building process among Asian countries by feeding “regional confidence-building and security cooperation ideas and activities into official regional institutions and discussions” (Kaye, 2007, p. 14).

In view of the importance of track II diplomacy in international politics, as argued by Daniel Lieberfeld (2002, p. 355), it is surprising that little systematic evaluation has been carried out by epistemic communities on its origin, maintenance, and influences. Methodological challenges concerning the lack of in-depth involvement and long-term assessment may be the main constraints. Nevertheless, as the track II diplomacy mechanism matures, along with the development of interpersonal relationships, shared concerns, and the formation of a common consciousness, new breakthroughs should be achieved in the study of the mechanism. Meanwhile, we need to look at such aspects as institutional evolution and

the focus on new areas of common concern.

Track II diplomacy is of specific strategic interest for Taiwan because for several decades Taiwan has faced barriers to participation in international organizations and the formation of diplomatic ties with major countries (Li, 2006). A great deal of discussion has taken place within those epistemic communities concerned with track II diplomacy regarding Taiwan's participation in multilateral organizations. However, discussions have rarely focused on how track II can help Taiwan maintain bilateral relationships. The Taipei-Seoul Forum/Seoul-Taipei Forum (TSF/STF), which was inaugurated more than two decades ago, is an important example of how track II diplomacy can contribute to Taiwan's relations with another Asian country.¹ Through the development of interpersonal relationships and links between think tanks on either side, the relationship between Taiwan and South Korea has been practically reinforced.

Taipei-Seoul relations had stagnated for more than a decade before direct flights between Taiwan and South Korea were reinstated in 2004. Historically, Taiwan and South Korea have much in common, from their pre-World War I state-building, through the experience of Japanese occupation, and a strong anti-communist stance after World War II, to a more recent shared experience of political democratization and economic liberalization. However, the post-Cold War restructuring of power in East Asia drove the two sides apart. After Taipei and Seoul broke off diplomatic relations, the leading think tanks on the two sides, the Institute of International Relations (IIR) in Taiwan and the Seoul Forum for International Affairs (SFIA), managed to keep open a channel for diplomatic dialogue. Through a process of track II diplomacy, the two sides have been able to chart a course through the turbulent waters of Westphalian diplomacy. By means of intense social networking over several decades through the Taipei-Seoul Forum a fragile public diplomacy between Taiwan and South Korea has been developed.

¹This project was hosted alternately in Taipei and Seoul. When Taipei hosts the forum, it is called the "Taipei-Seoul Forum" (TSF), while in Seoul it is known as the "Seoul-Taipei Forum" (STF).

The main purpose of this paper is to examine the opportunities for and constraints on track II diplomacy efforts to nurture bilateral relations through the case of the Taipei-Seoul Forum. Much of the literature on think tanks focuses on how they influence decision making on domestic or global policy. In this paper, we will look at the issue from a geopolitical perspective where state and non-state actors are working together to achieve a diplomatic breakthrough. It will provide a new account of track II diplomacy as a fusion of power and knowledge. By introducing the concept of social capital as an analytical framework, this paper focuses on the unique process of interpersonal social networking that takes place through TSF/STF, which has managed to preserve a fragile bilateral relationship during a period of extreme difficulty. Finally, the paper tries to identify the limits of track II diplomacy driven by think tanks under the constraints of Westphalian diplomacy.

Track II Diplomacy: Fusion of Knowledge and Power

As conflicts evolve, the ideas and methods of avoiding them also advance. In the words of Alexander L. George (2000), the epistemic communities need to develop new knowledge to deal with new conflicts in the post-Cold War era “before they erupt into large-scale violence.” Hence, track II diplomacy is a product of our era that enables the socialization process among stakeholders through dialogue and negotiation, and further functions to constrain potential confrontation among powers.

According to Dalia Dassa Kaye (2007), in order to succeed, track II diplomacy should proceed in at least three stages. The first stage consists of the socialization of the participating elites, who should be influential policy elites with access to policymakers and who should also be able to convey ideas to the public through the mass media. Governments are in favor of small groups of elites getting together to find alternative ways to facilitate cooperation. Functionally, exchanges among policy elites from different countries create opportunities for mutual understanding of threat perception in order to prevent misperception from happening. As a result

of this socialization process, in the second stage of track II diplomacy, elites from different countries understand each other better, and would therefore be more willing to introduce outside concepts or opinions to their domestic arenas. Typically, a discourse will be initiated and will filter into society. Ideally, from the elites' point of view, in the final stage, policy change will take place in line with the ideas and knowledge acquired through track II diplomacy. To Kaye, "these stages are not necessarily sequential, and feedback from later stages to earlier ones is possible" (Kaye, 2007, p. 21).

This paper focuses more on the first stage of track II diplomacy, examining how an organization like the TSF/STF can enable the socialization of participating elites. Practically speaking, it is not easy to track whether the socialization process does indeed contribute to policy change, which typically is brought about by a number of different factors. All we can do is assume that socialization does, in the end, facilitate policy change. The task here is to investigate the institution and mechanism of socialization within the TSF/STF.

For the socialization stage of track II to be successful, at least two important elements are required. The first is "solid collaboration among rival participants that [share] ideas and knowledge with each other." The familiarity of participants and the cultivation of mutual trust will facilitate the conversion of interpersonal social capital into mutual understanding among governments (Ball, 1994). Together, they will allow a fusion of knowledge and power embedded in a close-knit knowledge-policy networking process. Since participants are mostly policy elites with high-level official connections, their shared insights, ideas, and knowledge are more likely to feed into national policies or the international agenda (Cuhada, 2009).

The second element is the "institutionalization of the Track II channel" that allows this unofficial mechanism to be integrated into traditional diplomatic institutions (Kraft, 2000). New initiatives for informal or unofficial dialogue created by epistemic communities and think tanks become critical for decision makers. When relations between two countries are strained, informal inputs from track II meetings will serve as a solid reference for decision making on both sides. When it comes to multilateral settings,

the track II mechanism can be supportive of official diplomacy. For example, the Working Group of CSCAP (currently the Study Group) produced policy inputs and developed policy memoranda on certain issues for transmission to the ARF chair (Ball, 2000, p. 90; “CSCAP’s List of Proposals,” 2011). We can see from this that track II diplomacy is not merely “supplementary diplomacy.” Rather, its operation can facilitate official diplomacy.

Social Capital and Track II Diplomacy

Effective socialization requires more than just an institutionalized platform for policy elites to interact with one another. It also requires the gradual accumulation of social capital in order to increase the strength of the track II channel, or the channel will become nothing more than a talking shop. In this section we discuss the concept of social capital and its relationship with track II diplomacy and conclude with a discussion regarding its relationship with the TSF/STF.

Pierre Bourdieu systematically defined the concept of social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Portes, 1998). Social capital thus comprises both the network and the assets that may be mobilized through that network. For James Coleman, Robert Putnam, and Nan Lin the core notion of social capital embraces the consolidation of a specific social structure or the development of social networking—that is, the cultivation of norm, network, and trust (Coleman, 1988; Lin, 1999; Putnam, 2000). Moreover, it is also the driving force that activates or enables meaningful social action (Lin, 2002). The role of the social network is important in understanding social capital. The social network implies “relations” which can be elucidated in terms of classical sociological theories (Farr, 2004). It originates from networks of stakeholders, which are constructed via the activities, emotions, and interactions of actors. The social affinity displayed in this network accumulates to form important social resources (physical or psychological) beneficial to the actors, which may be em-

ployed to exercise influence when required. This is how social affinity can be transformed into social capital that can influence other parties.

Although this kind of conceptual understanding of social capital is important, the analytical framework proposed by Nahapiet and Ghoshal is more useful for connecting social capital to track II diplomacy. Nahapiet and Ghoshal propose three types of social capital. The first type, which is characterized as an “interpersonal network,” is termed *structural social capital* (SSC). SSC is framed as a social field, network, or mechanism that works as a platform for social interaction. The key component of SSC is the second type of social capital, *relational social capital* (RSC). This is where trust or affinity in interpersonal relations is built upon and accumulated. The third type of social capital is *cognitive social capital* (CSC), which can be acquired through discussions, negotiations, and interactions that generate shared ideas, resources, or symbolic systems, such as values or consensus, for the actors and stakeholders (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

By linking these three types of social capital to the study of track II diplomacy, we can see that SSC institutionalizes the network and the mechanism of track II diplomacy, RSC facilitates the accumulation and strengthening of trust and interpersonal relations among the participants and actors, and CSC forges the consensus and shared benefits. In the track II diplomacy case of the TSF/STF, we associate SSC with a platform that facilitates the fusion of knowledge and power among quasi-official participants. A sustained platform like the TSF/STF is intended to foster interpersonal affinity and strengthen track II diplomacy. At this point, it is important to understand the role of RSC, which is concerned with stakeholders’ or actors’ professional backgrounds, common interests, shared cognition, and shared beliefs. The fusion of knowledge policy and personal social capital connectivity can be facilitated when RSC is higher. Finally, an examination of CSC is useful in observing the connection between personal interactions and consensus-building among participants. It helps us understand how a country’s national interests can be made to fit in with or harmonize with the international agenda through track II diplomacy. In a nutshell, a study on the accumulation of social capital in the TSF/STF requires us to look at all three dimensions: (1) the formation of the forum

itself and its features, (2) interpersonal networking and its underlying implications, and (3) the development of shared ideas and mutual understanding. Taken together, these three dimensions determine the amount of social capital accumulated by this epistemic community.

It is important to note that we are not trying to decide whether the TSF/STF is playing an important role in improving Taipei-Seoul bilateral relations. The main purpose of this paper is to investigate whether the TSF/STF has facilitated the accumulation of social capital in the three dimensions mentioned above, which we can only assume would have a positive influence on track II diplomacy. However, should we find evidence that the TSF/STF has indeed resulted in a salient accumulation of SSC, RSC, and CSC, we can conclude that the forum has played such a role. In the next section, we provide empirical evidence regarding how TSF/STF has generated social capital.

Taipei-Seoul Forum: A Case Study of Track II Diplomacy

In this section, we present empirical evidence regarding how the Taipei-Seoul Forum has generated social capital, thereby contributing to Taiwan's track II diplomacy with South Korea. The empirical data include conference proceedings, minutes of meetings, correspondence between conference conveners, interviews, participatory observation, and our personal experience as conveners since the third TSF/STF in 1992. With reference to this material, we demonstrate in the following section how the TSF/STF has constructed an inter-institutional network (i.e., SSC), deepened interpersonal ties between the epistemic communities in Taiwan and Korea (i.e., RSC), and shaped the emerging competitive linkages that have developed into common interests (CSC).

ROC-ROK Relations and the Origin of SSC

Relations between the Republic of China (ROC) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) have gone through three stages, namely, the pre-Cold War,

Cold War, and post-Cold War stages. On April 13, 1919, with the formation of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea and its subsequent recognition by the Republic of China, the leaders of two young nationalist governments entered the first stage of their bilateral relationship. Having established a provisional government, Korea was able to make a concerted effort toward independence from Japan. The unique affiliation between the two regimes was strong and steady throughout the World War II era. In 1943, towards the end of the war, the Republic of China participated in the Cairo Conference alongside the United States and the Soviet Union. In the resulting Cairo Declaration, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek expressed his strong support for an independent Korea, free from Japanese colonial rule. The Korean independence movement had, in fact, received sympathetic support from Sun Yat-sen as early as 1919-20, and in 1933 Chiang Kai-shek had met with the leader of the Korean Independence Party, Kim Ku, and pledged support for his independence movement. However, Sun had advocated the recovery of Korea as well as Taiwan in order to establish an effective line of national defense. Notwithstanding this kind of thinking, during the war Chiang was determined to fight for Korean independence and this became the official policy of his party, the Kuomintang (KMT) (So, 2003, p. 76).

After the Korean War, Seoul needed to manage its relations with Pyongyang while Taipei was faced with a military threat from Beijing. The two anti-communist states experienced several decades of brotherhood in the prevailing bipolar system of international relations. However, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Eastern Bloc states joined the Western capitalist economy, opened up their markets, and started to participate in global chains of production. The communist regime in China also embraced a program of market reform that has yielded rapid economic growth. Taipei and Seoul now had to learn how to co-exist with an emerging China that no longer presented a clear military threat and whose economy had become more attractive.

In this post-Cold War era, as China transformed itself into a global economic powerhouse, the long-standing friendship and alliance between the ROC and the ROK became fragile. Against this historical and geo-

political background, in 1989 the Seoul Forum for International Affairs (SFIA) proposed that the two sides hold the first TSF/STF in Kyongju in 1989.² This came at a time when South Korea was exploring better and deeper diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. Professor Dalchoong Kim, who was chair of the SFIA, addressed his proposal to Tamkang University in Taipei. The two institutions held the first TSF/STF in Seoul in 1989, and the second was hosted by the Asia and World Institute in Taipei in 1990. On the eve of the rupture of diplomatic relations between Taipei and Seoul in 1992, the Institute of International Relations (IIR) at National Chengchi University (NCCU), under the directorship of Professor Bih-Jaw Lin and Professor Chi Su, took over the Taiwan side for the third TSF/STF.

Around the same time, the process of diplomatic normalization between Seoul and Beijing reached a turning point when Seoul's improved relations with Moscow and Tokyo's attempts to establish diplomatic relations with Pyongyang made it easier for Beijing to improve relations with Seoul (Ahn, 1990). On September 17, 1991, the PRC withdrew its objection to South Korea's membership of the United Nations. In return, President Roh Tae Woo shifted diplomatic recognition from the ROC to the PRC and confiscated the ROC embassy in Seoul, transferring it to the PRC on August 23, 1992. The ROK government's behavior was regarded as ill-mannered by the Taiwanese people. In return, Taipei terminated direct commercial flights to Seoul, and for the next twelve years, only charter flights operated between the two cities. The lack of scheduled flights caused a drop in the number of tourists from the Republic of China to South Korea from 420,000 in 1992 to 200,000 in 1993; this was followed by a modest increase to 360,000 by 2003. The feeling of betrayal has prevailed ever since in Taiwanese society. In addition to the breaking off of diplomatic ties, sub-state level exchanges were also disrupted. Since 1980, the ROC's Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Unification of the ROK had

²According to Dalchoong Kim, during the 1990s and 2000s, there were only three occasions (in 1991, 1998, and 2001) when the SFIA failed to hold the forum, mainly due to financial constraints. See Kim (2011).

been conducting “track 1.5 diplomacy,” which involved the IIR and the Korea Institute for National Unification (the Ministry of Unification’s think tank) coordinating exchanges on issues of common interest. In 1986, however, Sogon University took over on the Korean side, which symbolized a downgrading of the track 1.5 diplomacy as the ROK’s representative was a purely academic body. After the ROK broke off diplomatic relations with the ROC, this relationship between IIR and Sogon University was also interrupted.

The conservative attitude of the SFIA brought TSF/STF to the brink of extinction also. Despite the troubled relationship between the two sides, however, Taipei tried to secure an unofficial channel of communication with the ROK’s conservative government. Some people in the ROK also realized that there was a need for dialogue. On the Taiwan side, the then foreign minister, Frederick Chien, continued to offer his ministry’s support for the TSF/STF which enabled it to become a semi-official platform once again after 1992. The ROC Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued to finance the forums, which may be seen as an indication of their special role in facilitating bilateral relations between the ROC and the ROK. On the Korean side, Dalchoong Kim of the SFIA went to great lengths to ensure that the ROK continued to participate in the forum on the eve of the diplomatic break-off (Kim, 2011). Before 1992, the TSF/STF dialogue was focused on assessments of emerging regional trends and issues in the post-Cold War era, changing domestic politics, as well as cross-Strait relations and South Korea’s policy towards the North. After diplomatic relations were broken off, the forum focused on how to rebuild and institutionalize bilateral relations (Kim, 2011). The institutionalization of the TSF/STF therefore provided a stable platform on which the two sides could discuss and deliberate sensitive issues that could not be dealt with through official channels. After 1992, the forum was the only platform for discussions between the academic, political, and business communities on the two sides. As was stated in the final report of the fifteenth TSF, entitled “New Direction in Korea-Taiwan Relationship,”

[both Taipei and Seoul agree that] this Forum is a unique one in its long-term networking among academia, government officials, politicians, business sector

and journalists. We all actually construct a very important transnational institution that will serve as a solid ground for better intellectual and personal interaction between our peoples as well as governments. (Poong, 2006)

Although the forum was hosted by non-official academic institutions on the two sides, most of the panelists and participants were either former or serving high-level officials responsible for national security, or they had private connections with top-level officials. Their presence at the TSF/STF allowed the two governments to communicate indirectly in order to resolve misunderstandings and produce mutual benefits. The fact that the TSF/STF was held alternately in Taipei and Seoul allowed quasi-official exchanges that resulted in the accumulation of SSC within this platform. The Korean side made use of this SSC to achieve the resumption of direct flights between Taiwan and South Korea in 2004. On September 1, 2004, an aviation agreement was signed between the two countries' unofficial representative offices in Taipei and Seoul which allowed aircraft from each side to enter the other's airspace. This permitted the resumption of direct scheduled flights and also allowed flights from South Korea to Southeast Asia to fly over the island of Taiwan instead of detouring over mainland China or the Philippines. Analysts estimated this would save South Korean airlines 33 billion South Korean won (US\$29 million at 2004 exchange rates) in fuel costs and other fees.

Prior to this breakthrough, the forum had facilitated years of continuous dialogue involving the academic, business, and public sectors. Representatives of international airlines based in the two countries were often invited to join the forum. For example, a top-level manager at Korean Air, Woodong Park, joined the ROK delegation to the tenth TSF in Taipei in November 2000. The social capital accumulated in this way helped to resolve disputes, find common ground, and produce policy recommendations that were later submitted to the respective governments. At almost all the concluding sessions since the first TSF/STF in 1989, the importance of producing policy recommendations for governments was emphasized. These efforts were deemed crucial at a time when official channels were closed. To celebrate the resumption of direct flights, in 2005 the SFIA delegation to the TSF included a number of distinguished individuals, such as the head of the delegation, Han Sung-Joo, a former foreign

minister, and Kim Kyung-Won, a former secretary-general to the ROK president. Their program in Taipei that year included an official visit to the secretary-general of the ROC's National Security Council. This visit was considered to represent the highest level of track II diplomacy since diplomatic relations were broken off. After the dialogue, the director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Asia-Pacific Division, Song-huann Lin, publicly recognized the contribution of the TSF to substantializing ROC-ROK relations and track II interactions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MOFA], 2005).

In addition to the resumption of direct flights, Seoul's agreement in 2012 to allow direct flights between Gimpo International Airport and Taipei Songshan Airport was also regarded as a diplomatic breakthrough made possible by the efforts of TSF/STF panelists from both sides. During the twentieth TSF/STF, held in Taipei just after the resumption of Gimpo-Songshan flights, the ROC Ministry of Foreign Affairs granted Dalchoong Kim a special honor, awarded by Vice President Vincent Siew (蕭萬長), in recognition of his efforts toward the resumption of direct flights and his contribution to bilateral relations through the TSF/STF.

The Practice of RSC: Interpersonal and Institutional Networking

In addition to its structural and institutional functions, the TSF/STF also facilitates the practice of interpersonal and institutional networking, which contributes to the accumulation of RSC. The TSF/STF has allowed its participants to enter into stable and close collaboration, which has formed the foundation of mutual trust. Close interpersonal affinities within the network have enriched the role and function of the TSF/STF as RSC-reinforced track II diplomacy for both the ROC and the ROK. For example, the former ROC foreign minister, Frederick Chien, hosted Dalchoong Kim in Taipei in 1965 when Kim was a graduate student at National Chengchi University on an ROC government scholarship. To some extent, the TSF/STF was sustained by the personal relationship between Kim and Chien. The SFIA's networking capacity, plus a transnational interpersonal network dating back almost three decades, consolidated the viability of the

TSF/STF from that time onwards.³ Dr. Yu-ming Shaw (邵玉銘) twice served as director of the Institute of International Relations and between his two terms he was director-general of the Government Information Office. During his presentation to the seventeenth STF, Shaw, who had been a key figure in the forum from the outset, revealed that he enjoyed a special friendship with Dalchoong Kim:

The first time I really engaged with Korea was through our dear friend Kim Dalchoong at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in the US, where we were classmates as well as close friends. As we were both in need of cash, we also became fellow workers at a fabulous private, Jewish social club. He was a manager and I was a bartender. (Shaw, 2008)

While he was a student at NCCU, Kim was a classmate of Vincent Siew. As the TSF/STF moved forward, Siew served in succession as Minister of Economic Affairs, head of the Council for Economic Planning and Development, and chairman of the Mainland Affairs Council, eventually becoming Premier and then Vice President of the ROC. While serving as vice president, Siew was invited in 2011 to give a keynote speech at the twentieth TSF entitled “Toward East Asian Economic Integration: An Indispensable Taiwan.”

The bonds between these key figures helped the forum develop, and they continued to cultivate deeper friendships in the course of the TSF/STF dialogues and discussions. In a letter to Dr. Hwei-luan Poong (彭慧鸞), convener of the fourteenth TSF held in Taipei, the Korean side mentioned the importance of the “social function” of their trip to Taipei, requesting, if possible, “to meet our old friends . . . who are not able to take part in our sessions, on different occasions such as the welcoming reception, breakfast, luncheon or dinner meetings.”⁴

Having recognized the importance of the TSF/STF’s social networking function, it would be relevant to find out who the participants in this network are and who they represent. If the participants share a background

³Remark by Dalchoong Kim.

⁴A letter written from the Korean side to Dr. Poong on November 3, 2005.

in officialdom, then the forum's quasi-official social networking function would contribute to track II diplomacy. On the ROC side, the IIR has been the key institutional player in the TSF/STF since 1992. The institute was established in 1953 to provide intelligence and carry out research in international affairs with a special focus on the Soviet Union and Communist China. The IIR was always regarded as a government think tank, and before it was integrated into NCCU in 1996, its directors were appointed by the highest level of the government. Former directors of the IIR all went on to serve in the cabinet as, for example, minister of education, vice minister of foreign affairs, director-general of the Government Information Office, and deputy secretary-general of the National Security Council. Several of the institute's research fellows served as top-level officials responsible for national security and external affairs, on such bodies as the National Security Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Mainland Affairs Council. This unique organizational background allowed the IIR to perform as a quasi-official diplomatic channel, similar to the TSF/STF. Since 2006, the IIR delegation to the STF has always been headed by a former foreign minister, a sure sign that efforts are being made to reinforce the forum's track II diplomacy role.

Table 1 lists the key players of the TSF/STF on the Taipei side from 1993 to 2013. During their period of participation in the forum, all of them were serving or future key officials in national security or Korean affairs. Some of them headed the ROC delegation to the STF in Seoul. None of these heads of delegation was just an academic; they were all high-ranking officials. For example, Eugene Y. H. Chien (簡又新), who was foreign minister between 2002 and 2004, led the ROC delegation to the fifteenth STF in 2006; former foreign minister Fredrick Chien led the ROC team at the seventeenth and twenty-first STFs; and Chien-Jen Chen (程建人), a former foreign minister and prominent ambassador, was head of the delegation at the nineteenth STF. Fredrick Chien's participation in the seventeenth STF in 2008 was seen as symbolic because Chien had been foreign minister when the ROK broke off diplomatic relations with Taipei in 1992 and had been given a difficult time for seemingly forgiving the ROK for its betrayal (Chiang, 2008). The occasion of the seventeenth STF

Table 1
Official Background of Key Taipei Delegates Attending the Seoul-Taipei Forum (1993-2013)

Taipei Panelist	Personal background	Government Officials	National Assembly/ Legislative Yuan	Foreign Service
1. Chang, Parris H. C.	NSC		✓	
2. Chao, Chien-min	MAC			
3. Chen, Chien-jen	(Formerly) MOFA		✓	✓
4. Chien, Eugene Y. H.	(Formerly) MOFA/MOE/MOTC			✓
5. Chien, Fredrick Fu	(Formerly) MOFA/Control Yuan			✓
6. Chou, Hsi-wei	Taipei county magistrate		✓	
7. Chu, Eric Li-luan	(Later) Taoyuan county magistrate		✓	
8. Ho, Szu-yin	(Later) NSC			
9. Hong, Chi-chang	(Later) NSC			
10. Liao, Kuang-sheng	(Later) NSC		✓	
11. Lin, Chiu-shan	Control Yuan (member)		✓	
12. Lin, Bih-jaw	(Later) NSC			
13. Lin, Cheng-yi	(Formerly) NSC			
14. Lin, Chen-wei	(Later) NSC			
15. Lin, Wen-cheng	(Formerly) NSC			
16. Lin, Yu-fang			✓	
17. Shaw, Yu-ming	(Later) GIO			
18. Schive, Chi	CEPD			
19. Tseng, Chery H. J.	CEPD			
20. Tung, Chen-yuan	(Later) MAC			
21. Tsai, Ing-wen	(Later) MAC			
22. Wong, Ming-hsien	NSC			
23. Wu, An-chia	(Later) MAC			
24. Wu, Joseph Jau-shieh	(Later) MAC			✓
25. Yang, Philip	NSC/(Later) GIO			

Note. Compiled by the authors.

*Later/Former(ly) indicates delegates who formerly held the official post or were subsequently appointed to it.

**NSC = MOST = Ministry of Science and Technology; MAC = Mainland Affairs Council; MOFA = Ministry of Foreign Affairs; MOE = Ministry of the Environment; MOTC = Ministry of Transportation and Communications; GIO = Government Information Office.

was the first time in thirty years that Chien had set foot in the ROK. A declassified telegram from the Taipei Mission in Korea (駐韓國代表處) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately after the end of the seventeenth STF noted that “because of Fredrick Chien’s high prestige, his deep connection with the ROK and the fact that most delegates from Taipei are highly esteemed officials and scholars, the delegation from Taipei this year received a high degree of attention from the Korean side” (telegram, 2008). Indeed, the Koreans invited Hong-koo Lee (李洪九), a former prime minister of the ROK, to deliver the opening remarks at the seventeenth STF, and arranged a breakfast session with another former prime minister, Duck-soo Han (韓德洙). Chien acknowledged the success of the seventeenth STF in facilitating exchanges at the highest level between the two sides over the previous twenty years. On November 4, 2008, immediately after the forum, Dalchoong Kim wrote a letter of appreciation to Chien saying,

I believe we all enjoyed every session of the meeting, which was full of substance and well conducted, as well as the social functions where we renewed our old friendships and made new friends. Most of all, I must tell you that your participation was the highlight of the conference. . . . We also want to work together to respond to challenges. . . . the Taipei-Seoul Forum has served these objectives and contributed a lot to them. (personal communication)

In addition to the forum itself, a lot of side-meetings were arranged privately. The two sides often organized informal breakfast meetings with cabinet members or official visits to ruling party headquarters. In those meetings with a wide range of government or nongovernmental bodies for the purpose of influencing the policies and actions of the other side’s government, the IIR and SFIA were reinforcing RSC through institutional networking and interpersonal relations. For example, one telegram mentions that a high-level national security official from Taipei had secured a private fifteen-minute meeting with his counterpart from Seoul. Breakfast sessions also facilitated high-level dialogue. For example, at the seventeenth STF, the ROK side invited the incumbent principal secretary to the president for national security strategy, Tae-Hyo Kim, to meet the ROC delegation over breakfast. At this meeting, Kim mentioned that considering the increase in

bilateral exchanges between Taiwan and South Korea, including tourism and investment, the ROK government could not tilt too far towards China. In his opinion, the Blue House should engage both Taipei and Beijing simultaneously in a more balanced way. We can see from this evidence that both the formal and informal meetings made possible through TSF/STF provided ideal opportunities for dialogue between key figures on the two sides. In this way, the forum has enabled the gradual accumulation of social capital to the benefit of track II diplomacy.

The ROK delegations included high-level government officials, distinguished scholars (potential candidates for government posts), members of parliament, and diplomats (see Table 2). For example, Lee Hong-koo, who was the chairman of the board of the SFIA, served as prime minister of the ROK in 1994-95 and was also chairman of the New Korea Party. The SFIA became a talent pool for conservative governments of South Korea. Another declassified telegram sent by the Taipei Mission in Korea to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs contains the following assessment of the SFIA's contribution to the eighteenth TSF held in Taipei:

The SFIA researches and participates in international affairs and is very influential in shaping the ROK's foreign policy. . . . The fact that the TSF has long been an important channel for bilateral dialogue, combined with the SFIA's strong influence on the ROK's foreign policy, means that the eighteenth TSF in Taipei deserves the ROC government's serious attention. (telegram, 2009)

Both the IIR and SFIA had close links to their respective governments, which made them potential candidates for public diplomacy. The relationship between these two institutions provided a good channel for the accumulation of SSC. Both the IIR and SFIA were not just academic institutions, but were also assigned a hidden agenda of track II or track 1.5 diplomatic missions. The driving force behind the development of the TSF/STF is interpersonal linkages. In 1994, when the ROK-ROC bilateral relationship was at a critical turning point, two former graduate students of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, the director of IIR Yu-ming Shaw and Dalchoong Kim, program chair of SFIA, met in Taipei to reminisce about their time at the Fletcher School back in the 1960s and to discuss how they could keep the TSF/STF alive. It is believed that the

Table 2
Official Background of Key Seoul Delegates Attending the Taipei-Seoul Forum (1993-2011)

Personal background	Government Official	Legislature Member	Foreign Service
Korean Panelist			
1. Ahn Byung-joon		✓	
2. Ahn Choong-Yong	(Former) President, KIEP		
3. Bark Taeho	(Later) MOFAT		✓
4. Chung Chong Wook	(Former) National Security Advisor		✓
5. Chung, Eui-yong		✓	
6. Choi Kang (coordinator of TSF/STF)			✓
7. Hahm Chaibong (coordinator of TSF/STF)			
8. Han, Chul-Soo			✓
9. Han Sung-Joo	(Formerly) MOFA		✓
10. Hyun Hong-choo	(Formerly) MOL	✓	✓
11. Hyun, Oh-Seok	(Formerly) MOFE		✓
12. Jung Ku-hyun	Advisor to government		
13. Kim Dalchoong (initiator of TSF/STF)			
14. Kim Jin-Hyun	(Formerly) MOST		
15. Kim Kihwan	(Formerly) MOTI		✓
16. Kim Kyung-Won	(Former) Chief of Staff to President		✓
17. Kim Myung Ja	(Formerly) MOE		
18. Kim Woosang			✓
19. Lee Dong-Bok		✓	
20. Sun, Joun-yung	(Formerly) MOFAT		✓
21. Paik Jin-Hyun	(Later) Judge of the ITLOS		✓
22. Yoo Se-Hee	(Formerly) ACMOFA		
23. Yoo Jang-Hee	(Formerly) FPAC	✓	

Note. Compiled by the authors.

*Later/Former(ly) indicates delegates who formerly held the official post or were subsequently appointed to it.

**KIEP = Korean Institute for Economic Planning; MOFAT = Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade; MOFA = Ministry of Foreign Affairs; MOL = Ministry of Legislation; MOFE = Ministry of Finance and Economy; MOST = Ministry of Science and Technology; MOTI = Ministry of Trade and Industry; MOE = Ministry of the Environment; ITLOS = International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea; ACMOFA = Advisory Committee to MOFA; FPAC = Foreign Policy Advisory Council.

friendship between Yu and Kim was key to the two institutes agreeing on long-term collaboration by means of more institutionalized think-tank diplomacy.

The accumulation of transnational social capital is very important. In the case of the TSF/STF, this includes local and transnational networks and the activation of those networks to influence policy. The extent to which the TSF/STF network can be mobilized to bring about policy change is very important for the future of track II diplomacy.

According to Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), SSC depends on the network of people an individual knows and can draw upon for information or assistance.⁵ RSC “describes the kind of personal relationships people have developed with each other through a history of interactions” (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), and often encompasses the resulting trust and associability that grows over time (Leana & Van Buren, 1999). CSC “refers to those resources providing shared representations, interpretations, and systems of meaning among parties,” something which has also been described as shared goals and shared norms and values that build up through relationships over time (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005). In our case, the TSF/STF has sustained SSC and reinforced RSC. In particular, the forum has facilitated the maintenance of strong personal ties among its organizers and participants.

Thanks to the friendship between Dalchoong Kim and Yu-ming Shaw, who had been classmates at the Fletcher School and colleagues working in a Harvard Square club after school, and that between Kim and Frederick Chien, the TSF/STF received strong support from both sides and was able to contribute to diplomatic relations between Taipei and Seoul. Interestingly, in Taiwan both major party presidential candidates for 2016 had once participated in the forum in 1999. Now, decades later, when the two countries are economic competitors and politically and socially divided, personal relations among key participants in the forum are essential for the reestablishment of trust and reciprocity.

⁵For example, important indicators of structural social capital are the number of ties a person has, who the ties are with, and how strong the ties are, see Burt (1992).

CSC and the Development of Common Interests

Unlike SSC and RSC that emphasize the importance of institutions and networking in the accumulation of social capital, CSC is associated with the creation of common interests. When the TSF/STF was first established in 1989, the main concern for both sides was how to deal with the communist threat, and this was the main theme of the first meeting. Over the years since then, the agenda of the forum has been shaped and re-shaped by the structural changes resulting from the end of the Cold War and the urgent need for both countries to respond to common challenges. This transformation process has taken time. Despite the fact that they are both democracies and liberal economies, Taiwan and South Korea are competitors struggling to survive in a turbulent global marketplace. With this in mind, the TSF/STF set up task forces to study contemporary issues with the aim of establishing common interests. For example, the seventeenth STF in Seoul in 2008 decided to establish a special working group to study global financial crises and how the two governments could coordinate their reaction to them. Politically, Seoul needs to deal with Pyongyang just as Taipei needs to deal with Beijing. That is why the monitoring of bilateral tension between Beijing and Taipei and between Pyongyang and Seoul has been an indispensable part of the forum. This issue has always been one of the most hotly-debated topics at TSF/STF meetings.

The agenda of the forum has usually been proposed by the host in consultation with the other side. Typically, there are five sessions on the main theme, with one final session dealing with bilateral relations. Over the last twenty-one meetings, the main areas of interest were regional security, economic integration, and domestic politics. In addition, the hosting side has been privileged to designate an agenda item of special concern. For example, cross-Strait relations and the rise of China have attracted the attention of the Taiwan side and the South Korean side, respectively.

East Asian security has always been a topic of vital concern at the meetings. Taiwan is situated in the middle of the sea lane that connects Northeast and Southeast Asia. It acts as a pivot between China and United States, while South Korea has to deal with the United States and China in

order to manage the threat from the North. Historically and strategically, both Taipei and Seoul hold pivotal roles in East Asian regional security, and the security of sea lanes is a major common interest between them, despite the fact that they no longer have formal diplomatic relations with each other.

The TSF/STF also keeps an eye on events further afield in order to allow its participants to enhance their background knowledge through intellectual exchange with other members of the epistemic community and policy practitioners. For instance, the issue of “divided nations” was included in the agenda of the first forum in 1989, at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the issue of “unification” was highlighted in 1997 to coincide with the handover of Hong Kong to China. Moreover, the meetings have looked at domestic political developments from a comparative perspective before or after presidential elections in the two countries. Political issues aside, discussion of economic affairs focused mainly on regional cooperation at the time of the Asian financial crisis, and on global governance on the eve of the G20 in Seoul. Energy and climate change were seen as areas of security-related common interest worthy of further collaboration. Where bilateral relations are concerned, panelists have contributed their knowledge to enhance relations between the two sides, proposing a “soft partnership” to promote economic and social cooperation. Agreement was reached that the two sides should explore joint action to promote the public good in such areas as preventing climate change, securing freedom of navigation, and fighting disease and natural disasters.

Since 2004, TSF/STF meetings have had a clear theme with four main topics: democratization, regional security, common challenges, and common opportunities. This list of topics was tweaked each year in response to the rapidly changing regional situation or events in various Asian countries (see Table 3). We find that since 2004, 45.6% of the sessions have focused on regional issues such as the rise of China, the U.S. pivot toward Asia, geopolitical conflicts, and East Asian integration, while 54.4% could be categorized as dealing with bilateral issues such as political democratization in Taiwan and South Korea, economic development in the two countries, and issues surrounding the unification of divided countries.

These regional issues reflect common concerns in Taiwan and South

Table 3
Main Themes of TSF/STF (1989-2013)

	Year/Location	Main Theme
1.	1989/Seoul	N/A
2.	1990/Taipei	N/A
3.	1992/Seoul	N/A, discussion on communist regimes and Northeast Asian regional issues
4.	1993/Taipei	N/A, discussion on strategic, economic issues in East Asia, domestic political and economic developments in the ROC and ROK, and the future of bilateral relations
5.	1994/Seoul	N/A, discussion on domestic political and economic developments; regional political, strategic, and economic issues; and bilateral exchange and cooperation
6.	1995/Taipei	N/A, discussion on regional security in East Asia, regional trade developments in East Asia, domestic political and economic development, Mainland China and North Korea, and the roles of the ROC and the ROK in global affairs
7.	1996/Seoul	N/A, discussion on Korea and the Korean Peninsula, Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait, and the Taiwan-Korea relationship in the changing East Asian order
8.	1997/Taipei	N/A, discussion on regional security in East Asia, regional economic cooperation in East Asia, domestic political development, the issue of unification in transitional countries
9.	1999/Seoul	N/A, discussion on regional security issues in Northeast Asia, the regional financial crisis and economic recovery, elections and domestic political developments, and Korea-Taiwan bilateral relations
10.	2000/Taipei	N/A, discussion on security issues in East Asia, financial reform and regional development, democratic institutions and domestic politics, and Taiwan-Korea bilateral relations
11.	2002/Seoul	N/A, discussion on domestic politics, South-North Korean and cross-Strait relations, international and economic relations in Northeast Asia, and ROK-ROC bilateral relations
12.	2003/Taipei	N/A, discussion on security issues in East Asia, economic issues in East Asia, trade relations between Taiwan and South Korea, and bilateral relations between Taiwan and South Korea
13.	2004/Seoul	Democratization and Regional Security
14.	2005/Taipei	Regional Security and Development
15.	2006/Seoul	New Directions in Korea-Taiwan Relationship
16.	2007/Taipei	Democracy and Regional Development in Asia
17.	2008/Seoul	Opportunities for Cooperation and Development
18.	2009/Taipei	Regional and Non-traditional Security of East Asia: Challenge and Cooperation
19.	2010/Seoul	Toward a New Era of Cooperation
20.	2011/Taipei	The Making of the East Asia Community: R.O.C and R.O.K.
21.	2013/Seoul	New Framework for Peace and Prosperity in East Asia

Note. Compiled by the authors.

Korea, and the process of discussion, negotiation, and interaction among the epistemic communities on both sides has generated consensus and shared interests that have helped in the accumulation of cognitive social capital. As Dalchoong Kim has put it,

In these respects, the Taipei-Seoul Forum will continuously serve as a dialogue channel in search of bilateral cooperation where we can compare our notes on issues of mutual concern, such as the inter-Korean and cross-Strait relations, regional security architectures, regional economic integration, energy and climate change, nuclear safety and security, and sustainable economic development. (Kim, 2011)

In recent years, general discussion at the forum has focused on East Asian regional integration in terms of free trade agreements and regional security dynamics, this being an issue of particular interest for participants from both Taiwan and South Korea. Deliberation among the participants always begins with “comparing notes” and then moves on to finding “feasible solutions.”

When it comes to bilateral issues, discussion and deliberation among the participants usually emphasizes the importance of a “mutual learning process.” For example, in recent years, the South Korean delegates have been eager to learn from Taiwan’s successful experience in promoting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and in peaceful and positive engagement with China. Both issues are of strategic importance for state-building in South Korea. By comparing notes and sharing ideas on both regional and domestic topics, participants try to accommodate diverse interests of Taipei and Seoul. TSF/STF serves as a track II diplomacy platform that facilitates direct dialogue among government officials, policy practitioners, scholars, and key think tanks in Taiwan and South Korea. The accumulation of CSC achieved by the forum will hopefully reinvigorate bilateral relations between Taiwan and Korea.

Conclusion

The purpose of track II diplomacy is to maintain and improve bilateral

and multilateral relations. Through interpersonal networks and institutional links, a specific epistemic community is constructed whose aim is to foster shared values and norms, and realize common interests. This paper has investigated the contribution of the TSF/STF to the accumulation of SSC, RSC and CSC which has enabled the forum to have a positive influence on track II diplomacy.

The TSF/STF has been able to mobilize its SSC to carry out track II diplomacy between Seoul and Taipei, obviating formal involvement by the state on either side. The IIR, the hosting party in Taiwan, was created by the ROC government to serve as a core advisory body in the areas of Chinese mainland and international affairs. The SFIA was created to be a source of knowledge and personnel for a conservative government. The strong links between the two think tanks and their governments made them obvious candidates for track II diplomacy after the diplomatic break-off.

The structure of the delegations on the two sides has been crucial to the accumulation of RSC. We also find that most of the Korean panelists with government backgrounds attended the TSF on multiple occasions, whereas Taiwan panelists with similar backgrounds attended the STF only once. This has to do with the different functions of the IIR and SFIA. Unlike the SFIA, which acts solely as a think tank, the IIR has two roles to play when it organizes international conferences. On the one hand, it has to maintain a policy network in order to fulfill its role as a diplomatic actor; on the other hand, it is evaluated according to different criteria. Networking matters more for the academic community than it does for the policy community. As a result, the inclusive structure of the Taipei delegation means that it acts as a less intensive policy network when fulfilling its function as a diplomatic actor. The bias towards officials in the SFIA delegation gives it a more exclusive structure. This difference in the make-up of the two delegations does interfere to some extent with the TSF/STF's ability to act as a transnational network. Thanks to the RSC it has accumulated through strong personal commitments, the TSF/STF has managed to survive for the last two decades in a realist Westphalian environment. It has done this by creating a policy-driven social network that somehow makes up for the lack of any formal diplomatic ties between Seoul and Taipei.

The intensive discussions on pressing regional issues that have taken place within the TSF/STF framework have facilitated the process of “mutual reminding” between Taiwan and South Korea, while the debates on bilateral issues reinforce the process of “mutual learning.” These processes incrementally generate shared ideas and common interests, not only between the think tanks involved, but between the two countries as well.

However, some challenges lie ahead for the forum. The ROC government’s reduced emphasis on think tanks, as well as the IIR’s new focus on academic bipartisanship since its organizational reform, has brought the TSF/STF to a cross-roads between knowledge and power. One critical challenge for the TSF/STF is the need to carry out institutional adjustments to allow inclusive participation by a younger generation of scholars and officials in social and intellectual networking. This will serve as part of the effort to break through the barriers erected by Westphalian state-centered diplomacy. In that way, there will always be an opportunity for the younger generation to nurture bilateral relations within a revamped Taipei-Seoul Forum based on the solid foundation laid by their mentors.

With comprehensive transnational networking among the younger generation, Taipei and Seoul may augment their existing SSC with a new agenda for enhancing RSC through trust and reciprocity. The future task of the forum will be to look beyond the maintenance of SSC and RSC and to work on accumulating CSC by formulating policy recommendations and identifying ways of serving the common good as well as dealing with the common threats facing both countries.

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