

Reconciliation as Policy:  
Moving Beyond the Victim-Perpetrator Lens in the United Nations Secretariat and  
Member States

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## ABSTRACT

Recent events in a post 9/11 world and continued conflict in many parts of the world underscore the need for parties to break the cycle of violence and humiliation that otherwise may be perpetual. In our view, the increased call for United Nations reform such as in the Secretary General's report, "In Larger Freedom, Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All," requires new competencies to handle the high levels of conflict and emotions so prevalent at this time from the local to the global. A multilateral approach is needed to reconcile the divisions of society, as well as sharing power differently. This paper recommends that reconciliation be considered as a policy option under the oversight of the Good Offices of the Secretary General. It suggests training in Reconciliation Leadership™, a new approach to peace and development based on personal transformation, vocational service beyond self-interest, new competencies in conflict and emotional challenges, and decision making based on a "200-year present" (Boulding). As a result of the training, emerging and seasoned leaders in the Secretariat, international civil servants, and diplomats will improve their ability to share power, address, root causes of conflicts and underlying emotional imbalances. Trained leaders will also be invited to join a Global Mediation and Reconciliation Service (GMRS) that would help actualize General Assembly Resolution 39/11, "The peoples of our planet having a sacred right to peace." We present the previous success of reconciliation approaches, such as Ackerman's discussion of post-war relations between France and Germany, as well as current applications. Reconciliation Leadership™ has been taught in the United Nations since 1992 under the patronage of Anwarul K. Chowdhury, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. We also evoke Dag Hammarskjöld's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday year commemoration as a fitting occasion to further integrate this work into the United Nations.

## INTRODUCTION

In a 2004 meeting at the United Nations, Security Council members pledged to further examine the role of the UN in national reconciliation after war. One of the participants, UNDP Administrator, Mark Malloch Brown, indicated that "a safe and stable transfer to democracy is not possible unless the underlying causes of the conflict are resolved." He also warned that if underlying causes were not addressed, "deeper divisions could develop between the parties to the war." Bishop Desmond Tutu sent a statement to the participants, in which he urged nations to change their course away from retribution, through forgiveness. This significant meeting and the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates' Appeal for the Children of the World (which spurred the International Decade

for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World (2001-2010) motivate our suggestion that the UN urgently needs innovative approaches to conflict transformation.

In his report, “In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All,” the Secretary General recognizes that the challenges facing the UN today require new sets of competencies as well as a more diverse and gender-balanced staff. In response to his request that the General Assembly provide him the “authority and resources to pursue a one-time staff buyout so as to refresh and realign the staff to meet current needs,” Heads of State requested a detailed proposal regarding managerial reform and the improvement of personnel. We propose that more than management competencies are needed and that training in Reconciliation Leadership be offered for both new leaders as well as those in the current leadership who are receptive. More specifically, we suggest that the Secretariat, International Civil Servants, officials who implement the General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions as well as diplomats from member states be trained in Reconciliation Leadership™ to strengthen the UN's response to violent conflict. Trained leaders in peacebuilding and reconciliation would then be invited to join a Global Mediation and Reconciliation Service (GMRS) for the United Nations. The GMRS would offer facilitation services for peoples of post-conflict countries, to help in the rebuilding process by harnessing their experiences, wisdom, and their inherent conflict resolution abilities.

#### THE RELEVANCE OF DAG HAMMARSKJOLD

Dag Hammarskjöld believed the United Nations Meditation Room he built should be the center of the United Nations. He had a “close feeling about the spiritual”, and wrote: “we all have within us a center of stillness surrounded by silence. This house, dedicated to work and debate in the service of peace, should have one room dedicated to silence in the outward sense and stillness in the inner sense. It has been the aim to create in this small room a place where the doors may be open to the infinite lands of thought and prayer.” Yet today, the meditation room is hardly visited by those who are engaged in the work of responding to and mediating violent conflicts. Perhaps the resulting lack of access to silence and stillness, and what Hammarskjöld also termed “the noise that impinges on our imagination” can symbolize and help explain the slow rate at which conflicts are addressed, resolved, and healed.

On the occasion of the anniversary of Hammarskjöld's death, and just days before the World Trade Center attack, Secretary General Kofi Annan made the following statements. “His life and his death, his words and his actions, have done more to shape public expectations of the office and indeed of the Organization, than those of any other man or woman in its history. His wisdom and his modesty, his unimpeachable integrity and single-minded devotion to duty, have set a standard for all servants of the international community—and especially, of course, for his successors—which is simply impossible to live up to. There can be no better rule of thumb for a Secretary-General, as he approaches each new challenge or crisis, than to ask himself, ‘How would Hammarskjöld have handled this?...What is clear is that his core ideas remain highly relevant in this new international context. The challenge for us is to see how they can be adapted to take account of it.’

Jan Eliasson, the current president of the General Assembly, connects collaboration and the multilateral approach with Hammarskjöld's leadership style of making decisions with the spiritual in mind. As he stated on the panel to honor Dag Hammarskjöld's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, "You must have an inner life and an unfailing moral compass; we can't deal with issues today without the spiritual dimension. Dag Hammarskjöld represented that spiritual dimension... he had moral compass; tremendous responsibility to exercise it rightly. He represented member states in a wonderful way. He combines the best of civil service, Swedish neutrality, a passion for office and the United Nations Charter... On September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1961 the day after he died was my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, I decided to get a job at the UN because of his life and death.. In this time of uncertainty of our future, there is a question of whether there will be multilateralism or unilateralism—will we be together or alone? Pressure needs to be exercised on nations to work in solidarity."

As the Secretary-General has said, it is important to draw on the legacy of Dag Hammarskjöld at this juncture of United Nations history. The challenges the UN faces currently are daunting. These include achieving the Millennium Development Goals; ending terrorism; achieving UN reform; and addressing the ills of globalization. In addition, the fragility of the United Nations has become more manifest as one of its Security Council members, the United States, delivered a pre-emptive strike on another state without the sanction of the Security Council. The serious nature of that act is analogous to the end of the League of Nations when one of its members, Italy, attacked Ethiopia without the sanction of other members.

## RECONCILIATION LEADERSHIP

In her monograph "Towards a Global Spirituality" (1995), Dr. Patricia Mische, Lloyd Professor of International Law at Antioch University and President, Global Education Associates, identified a tragic lag in our development—a lag that is spiritual and systemic. She agrees with Dag Hammarskjöld when she says our search in life for God must be worked out in a global context in the midst of global crises and global community. Our spirituality "must be a global spirituality, to be in constant reflection to explore the relationship of the inner life of mind and spirit and the outer life of action and service."

Reconciliation Leadership™ is unique in its combination of the spiritual and the practical, and its attention to root causes of conflict. It is a leadership model based on an emerging and seasoned leader's special gifts, unique calling, practical idealism, as well as drawing on the political, moral, and psychological aspects of leadership needed for a post-September 11<sup>th</sup> world. It is based on a vocational approach to peace, and educates leaders about the use of elicitive listening and trust-building to harness the inherent goodness in each individual, group, and community. It also presumes that conflict is healthy—how one responds or reacts emotionally is either healthy or unhealthy leading to valuing or devaluing behavior. In order to address conflict and its underlying causes, leaders must be culturally sensitive and culturally humble; they must, as Boysatzis notes, go through a transformation in order to learn a competency. Building cultural competency--sensitivity, tact and kind regard with gender, culture, religious and ethnicity issues--is a key goal of the training.

Training in Reconciliation Leadership™ incorporates acknowledgement of the Sacred, of forgiveness and reconciliation. It extends beyond compromise as a conflict resolution strategy, or even a collaborative win-win ideal, in that it incorporates the importance of emotional re-balancing between parties in a conflict and the need to create a shared space in which such reconnection is possible. In their model (see Appendix), Victimhood and Aggression: Psychological Dynamics, The Center for Strategic and International Studies has shown two circles: the inner circle showing the cycle of victimhood while the outer circle shows the cycle of healing when an intervention takes place. Reconciliation Leadership™ provides an intervention in the cycle of violence and helps provide a way for the victim to mourn, express grief and accept loss (outer circle). Participants share power by addressing the victim/perpetrator cycle of violence in people and systems to re-humanize the enemy, be accountable for unconscious inner conflicts and allow people to share their gifts in safety, without being invalidated or denigrated in a respectful, full participatory process. The process allows a shared vision to emerge. People have new choices to forgive and negotiate solutions. With such a high level of emotions causing people to raise their voices, scream at, strike and even kill one another, following the Victimhood and Aggression: Psychological Dynamics line of thinking can be a useful way for participants to begin healing from alienating experiences, withdraw their projections and build relationships across divisions. Participants create ground rules for themselves that are primarily monitored by facilitators, but also by participants. A common experience brings people together naturally and emotions are contained and released.

In his book *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (United States Institute of Peace, 1998), John Paul Lederach states as follows: “In dealing with the challenges posed by contemporary conflict, an important meeting point between realism and innovation is the idea of reconciliation. A fundamental question is how to create a catalyst for reconciliation and then sustain it in divided societies. He continues on to name three starting points. The first is relationship building as the focal point for understanding the whole system and for sustained dialogue within protracted conflict settings, engaging the sides of a conflict with each other. The second is encounter activities to express grief, loss and the anger that accompanies injustice. The third is innovative reconciliation techniques that exist outside the mainstream of international political traditions.

Indeed these were the key features of the reconciliation policy adopted by France and Germany in their post-war peace building process, as Ackermann describes. Again, the core elements are forgiveness, a mutual recognition about the need for resolution and an understanding by parties to a conflict that their socio-economic co-existence depends on it. In the Franco-German case, reconciliation served as a post-war reconstruction strategy that transformed long-standing adversaries into friends. For example, in addition to diplomats pursuing reconciliation, it was also a process and objective of many “track two” diplomatic efforts at the grassroots, societal level. Adults and youth pursued peace through cross-national dialogue and friendships established via schools, universities and non-governmental organizations. Several key faith-based and non-governmental organizations also provided opportunities for both parties to grieve together and listen to each other’s pain. Finally, a purposeful shift in the policy rhetoric also facilitated

reconciliation, with politicians from both countries as well as the United States emphasizing that Germany was no longer the enemy. These shifts helped to dismantle the psychological and cultural barriers to reconciliation.

A 1993 intervention in the United Nations system attempted to help members of the UN community move beyond their titles and roles for one day so that a common effort might be made for the plight of street children. In a six-month planning process of an Earth Summit follow up, celebration artists, strategic thinkers and Secretariat members produced a day-long event that combined the Public Peace Process (Saunders) with the Personal Peace Process (Swain) to create a Peacebuilding Process of Reconciliation to Develop Political Will™. This process of Peacebuilding creates a spirit of multilateralism and momentum for people to work for common good.

The Reconciliation Leadership™ model presented here is based on the latter intervention. It has been further developed and refined over Swain's fourteen years of experience working in the United Nations community, academia and non-governmental organizations. This model also provides insights and practical help for the inter-governmental negotiations regarding the Peacebuilding Commission, to be completed as one of the successful outcomes of the 2005 World Summit. The possibility of incorporating Reconciliation Leadership™ more widely, via the United Nations re-training programs, represents a unique opportunity.

The current model of leadership at the United Nations has features of elitism that do not tap the resources needed to resolve the complex issues of the human condition. For example, exclusionary political words like "high level" and "eminent persons," which are part of the organizational discourse, reflect a tendency to humiliate those lacking in power and status, rather than evoke the cooperative. In addition, current peacebuilding interventions are based on helping victims and capturing perpetrators, rather than providing a process to reconcile them to one another. Thus, there is a need to enlarge the framework to heal the cycle of violence, and to address the tacit norms that would help change the behaviors of Secretariat member from humiliation to respect. New methods of reconciliation training followed up by mentoring can develop new competencies applicable to personal, interpersonal, systemic and global competencies.

Successful graduates of the Reconciliation Leadership program are eligible to participate in a GMRS to offer internationalist perspectives rather than *real politic* perspectives, to contribute to the new Peacebuilding Commission led by Tanzania and Denmark. Thus, by changing standards of blameful behavior and increasing the practice of reconciliation, reconciliation will also help to inform policy initiatives and eventually itself become a policy option. The mission of the GMRS is to create environments in which coexistence, a world safe for difference, is a minimum standard. Restoration and reconciliation are larger standards. In this context, leaders and peacemakers are mentored to address the cycle of violence in a larger framework than victim or perpetrator. The GMRS achieves this mission by providing consultation, mediation, conciliation and training services for leaders ready to work on building strategic, cross-sectoral alliances to address these issues in an elicitive (not prescriptive) way.

## CONCLUSION

The case for reform of Secretariat members behavior is based on UNESCO's mission to educate that war begins in the minds of men (and women) as well as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World (2001-2010). The theory and practice of Reconciliation Leaders™ illustrate how a group of people who come from all the world's nations can build trust in a safe environment, owning their special gifts and calling as a foundation upon which to be accountable for their own cycle of violence—tendency to denigrate, compete, use the expert model or their title as an excuse to control or abuse others, project unconscious gender, culture, religious biases in a world body whose charter is peace. Peace is often the last thing found in such a culture.

The Seville Statement on Violence says that peace is possible and that wars can be ended. It concludes that we are not condemned to war and violence because of our biology. Instead, it is possible for us to end war and the suffering it causes. We cannot do it by working alone, but only by working together. However it makes a big difference whether or not each one of us believes that we can do it. Otherwise, we may not even try. War was invented in ancient times, and in the same way we can invent peace in our time. It is up to each of us to do our part.

Reconciliation Leaders™ offer a response to the Seville Statement challenge and lead by example, with a philosophy of life that confirms vocational calling to international facilitation for global challenges. Personal, systemic and global competencies for non-violent responses are used to offer assistance and support the participants themselves to manage their local and/or global challenge; they are accountable and responsible, providing leadership to end the cycle of violence and humiliation.

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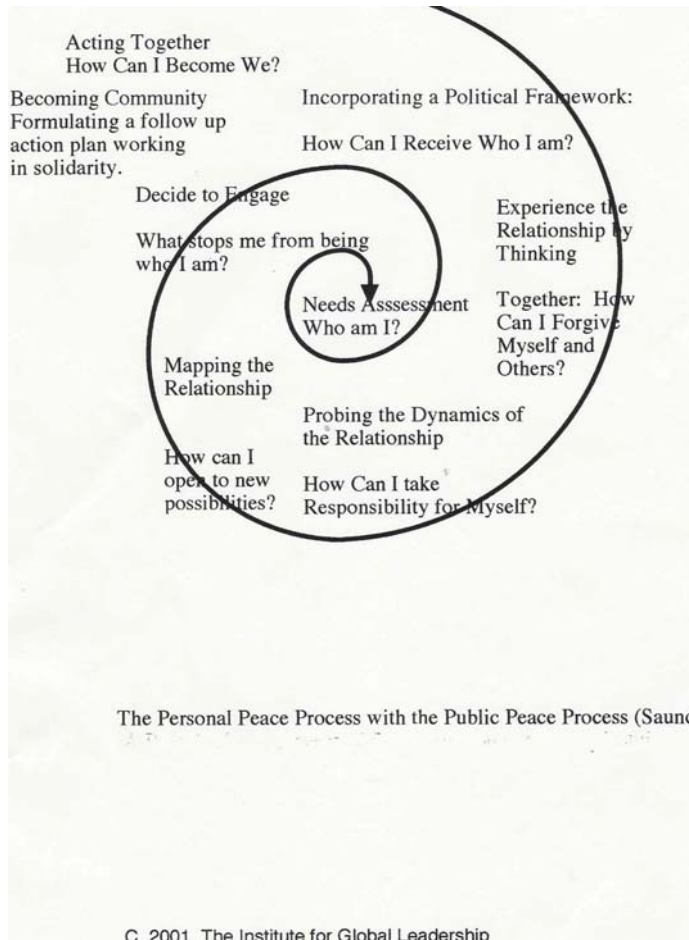
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Appendices:

Steele: Victimhood and Aggression: Psychological Dimensions

Assefa (adapted by Swain): The Spectrum of Conflict Handling Mechanisms.

The Personal Peace Process with the Global Peace Process (Saunders adapted by Swain)



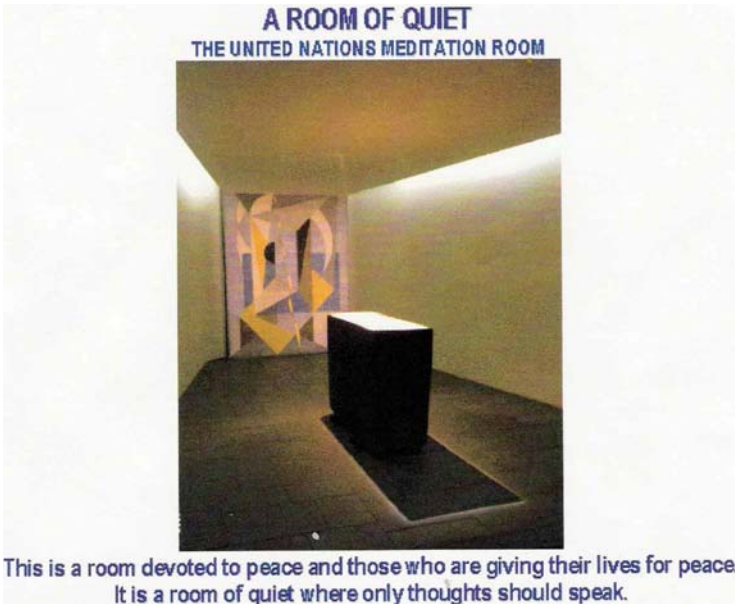
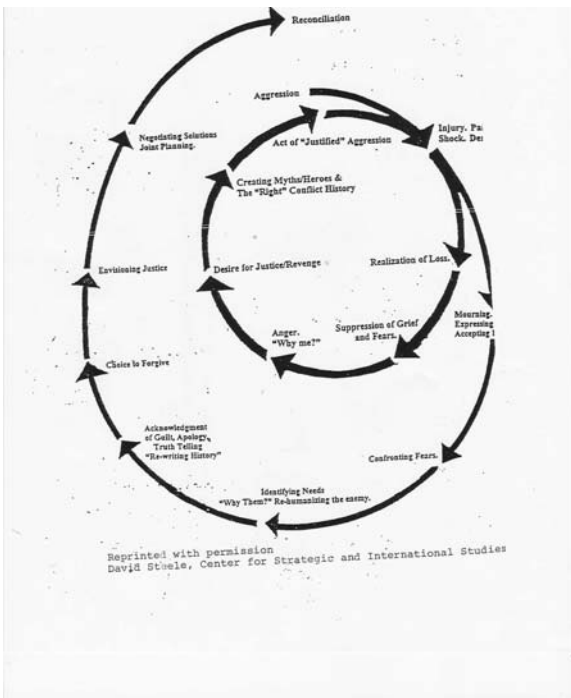
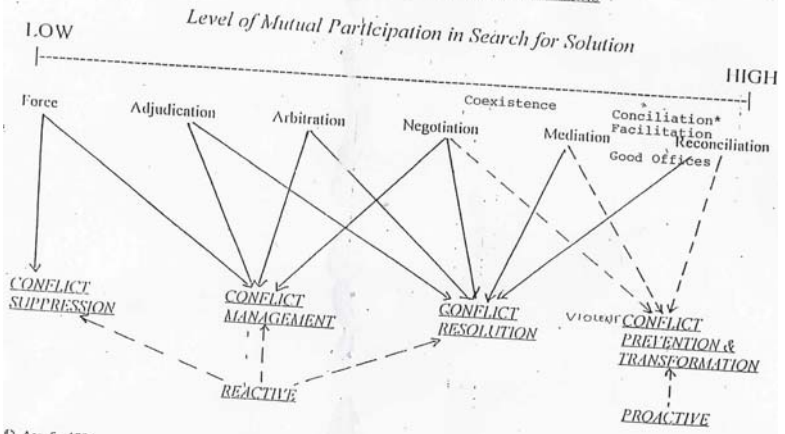


Figure A  
Spectrum of Conflict Handling Mechanisms



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