

From Deadlock to Trialogue: A Gravitational Solution to Deep Disagreements in North Macedonia

Vesel Memedi, PhD

Dituria Foundation Gostivar, 1230 North Macedonia

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ABSTRACT

This paper challenges Robert Fogelin's influential "impossibility thesis," which posits that "Deep Disagreements" are immune to rational resolution. While Fogelin views these deadlocks as terminal logical failures, this study proposes a structural solution by reconstructing argumentative discourse as a trialogue rather than a traditional dyadic exchange. Using the "Law on the Uses of Languages" in North Macedonia as a contemporary case study, the paper illustrates how ethnic identity and state sovereignty function as clashing tectonic plates, creating a strong "hinge" where rational evidence is swallowed by existential attachment. To bridge this gap, the author introduces the concept of the "Great Attractor," which is an external force possessing sufficient "gravitational force" to pull disputants out of their isolated orbits. The study concludes that resolution is achieved not by forcing one side to surrender its "truth," but through a rational collapse toward a higher "meta-framework." By shifting the focus from horizontal persuasion to vertical alignment with a legitimate third party, this paper argues that even the deepest social stalemates can be rationally managed, transforming potential systemic entropy into a shared orbit of survival.

Keywords: Deep Disagreement, Hinge Commitments, Law on the Uses of Languages, Trialogue, Great Attractor

INTRODUCTION

Despite the common belief that human beings have a great capacity to 'agree' on many issues, there is nothing wrong with people 'disagree' with each other. In fact, it would be strange for participants in a discussion to 'agree' with each other all the time. In this regard, disagreement plays a critical role in exploring, refining, and evaluating ideas. Rather than being something to avoid, disagreements can be a productive force that drives critical thinking, innovation, and the search for truth. In this sense, disagreements have advanced knowledge in many spheres of human life, and as a result, we have arrived at great advancements in human knowledge. However, the problem arises when this 'disagreement' becomes a "Deep Disagreement" (DD) that cannot be resolved through rational arguments. This was maintained by Robert Fogelin since 1985 in his canonical paper "*The logic of deep disagreement*," causing a shocking earthquake for argumentation theories, tremors of which are felt even today, 40 years after its first introduction.

According to Fogelin (1985), DD refers to situations in which two parties hold fundamentally different worldviews or assumptions, such that they cannot agree on even the most basic premises or rules of argumentation. In these disagreements, the parties' epistemic frameworks – their basic beliefs about what counts as evidence, reason, or logic – are so radically different that there is no common ground for productive dialogue. For Robert Fogelin (1985), the term DD is defined as a disagreement "generated by a clash of framework propositions" (1985, p. 8), "clash of underlying principles" (1985, p. 9), or a disagreement where the parties clash about "a whole system of mutually supporting propositions (and paradigms, models, styles of acting and thinking)." By the "underlying principles" Fogelin refers to what Putnam has called a clash of framework propositions (p. 8). Therefore, DD refers to a form of conflict in which the parties involved hold fundamentally incompatible frameworks or worldviews, making resolution through traditional means of argumentation or debate difficult, if not impossible. According to Fogelin, what causes these types of disagreements to remain recalcitrant are their sources – the framework propositions – that lie in the background (unmentioned). This

disagreement goes beyond differences in facts or logic and stems from deeply held values, beliefs, or presuppositions that guide each person's understanding of the world. In DD, the parties do not share enough common ground to engage in rational debate. Fogelin argues, keep on appearing even when normal criticisms have been answered. They are resistant to appeals to the facts. They are disagreements in which neither party can advance reasons as part of an argument that would make their opponent accept their position.

Besides Fogelin's (1985) characterization of the source of DD, many other scholars have provided slightly different conceptualizations of this unbridgeable difference—a hybrid account between Wittgensteinian “hinge commitments” and fundamental epistemic principles (for more, see Lavorerio, 2021; Ranalli, 2020, 2021). For instance, Pritchard (2011, 2021) describes the difference as being triggered by a Wittgensteinian “hinge commitment” that cannot be put up for discussion because it is the kind of epistemic entity that supports argumentative discussions in the first place (see Pritchard, 2021; Ranalli, 2020). Lynch and others describe the difference as being triggered by something called “fundamental epistemic principles” (Lynch, 2010, 2012; Matheson, 2021; Smith & Lynch, 2021). Shields (2021) put forward an alternative pragmatic account in which the source of a DD is a clash of “concepts” that play a constitutive role for the parties involved in the DD.

In other words, in summing up what has been referred to until now with regard to the source of DD, we can infer the following characteristics: a) incommensurability of worldviews—the parties operate from different paradigms or worldviews, such as religious, ethical, or cultural frameworks, which makes it hard to even agree on the terms of the debate; b) lack of shared criteria for evaluation—there is no common basis for assessing arguments, such as facts, logical principles, or values. What counts as evidence or a valid argument to one side may not hold the same weight for the other; c) emotional and identity-based factors—DDs often involve issues tied to personal identity, morality, or deeply held convictions, which makes the disagreement not just intellectual but also emotional and existential; d) resistance to persuasion—because the disagreement touches on core beliefs, both sides may be resistant to changing their views, even in the face of contrary evidence or reasoning. A summary of these characteristics will be of great help later on when faced with the case study at hand in this paper.

To illustrate these conceptualizations, scholars provide many examples, especially in conflict situations, but not exclusively, in which things that would normally be taken for granted can suddenly become controversial. These are cases where parties to a conflict continue to challenge each other's positions regardless of the arguments presented. Contemporary moral conflicts are marked as such; given the differences in the cultural starting points and background assumptions of those involved, it appears dubious to think that participants in moral discourse could ever come close to substantive moral agreement on certain issues, no matter how much reasonableness and goodwill they bring to their discussions. These are conflicts concerning ethical or political issues such as positive discrimination, abortion, capital punishment, scientific and anti-scientific perspectives, “witnessing and heckling,” religious and political ideologies, climate change, and many other issues, where the disagreement is not just about facts but also about deeply held moral, religious, or political convictions that are based on different views of justice, authority, or the role of the state. There are many other moral or social topics that prevent the discussion from developing any further because each party claims to have strong arguments for the position they hold, and each party is not prepared to make any kind of concession to the other party.

If DDs can arise, what rational procedures can be used for their resolution? Fogelin made radical and shocking claims when he stated that there is nothing we can do to resolve such disagreements. Fogelin maintained that there is no way of adjudicating a clash of this kind because argument cannot play any role in resolving the disagreement since there is no shared background of beliefs and preferences. Joint procedures and common beliefs, a set of shared values, and commonly agreed-upon starting points for resolving disagreements must exist; however, these are nonexistent with regard to DDs. According to Fogelin (1985), we can insist that not every seemingly DD is indeed deep, and that even with DDs, people can argue well or badly. In the end, however, we should tell the truth: there are disagreements, sometimes on important issues, which by their nature are not subject to rational resolution (Fogelin, 1985, p. 11). If there are no common starting points between the parties engaged in a conflict, claim the proponents of this thesis, then from an argumentative perspective, it is a waste of time to talk to each other. This is because, as mentioned earlier, the resolution of DD is quite challenging because these conflicts arise from fundamentally different worldviews, values, or epistemologies. Traditional

forms of argumentation, such as evidence-based reasoning or logical persuasion, often fail because the parties do not share a common framework for evaluating their arguments.

In this paper, however, we will make an attempt to challenge Robert Fogelin's "impossibility" thesis by introducing a social and structural solution to the deadlock. While Fogelin looked at two people arguing and saw a dead end, we looked at the surrounding context to find a way out. We argue that even if two primary disputants cannot reach a rational resolution between themselves, the disagreement can still be "resolved" through the intervention of the "Great Attractor" (GA), provided that we reconstruct the discourse as a "trialogue." Even if the two opponents never agree, their arguments serve to provide a "total picture" for a neutral third party functioning as a GA, as long as it has a powerful "gravitational force" that pulls both sides to oscillate towards its orbit. We believe that particular third-party adjudicators, acting in the form of a GA, can bridge the gap that the original disputants cannot. By stepping outside the two clashing "hinge" beliefs, a "third party" can apply a different set of evaluative criteria to settle the dispute between the two parties. In this way, we get out of DD by recognizing that the goal of an argument is not to always convince the person we are fighting with; instead, we should aim to present our frameworks clearly so that a neutral third party or the wider community can evaluate the competing claims and reach a reasoned conclusion that allows society to move forward.

In short, by relying on the latest case study produced in North Macedonia regarding the "*Law on the uses of Languages*" (2019), characterized as a DD based on the definitions presented earlier by Fogelin and other scholars, an attempt will be made to demonstrate clearly that this particular example of DD can be resolved through a careful reconstruction of the argumentative discourse. In other words, we maintain that DDs can be resolved pragmatically, as long as we reconstruct argumentative discourses as a complex argumentative discourse of a "trialogue" instead of a "dialogue," through the introduction of a "third participant" acting in the form of a GA, to what would normally be a conversation between two people. As will be explained later, the GA will bring an additional perspective, which creates a more complex and multi-dimensional exchange of argumentation.

Deep Disagreement in the context of the "*Law on the Uses of Languages*"

Before discussing the case study at hand, we must mention that the debate on DD has shifted from the theoretical to the more urgent: is DD merely a philosophical curiosity, or is it the defining characteristic of our modern social and political lives? This is important to understand because many scholars believe that DD is only a philosophical issue, hence they bring in various "toy-like" examples to illustrate the presence of DD (Feldman 2007, Christensen, 2007), but on the other hand we have many other scholars who claim that today the stakes have never been higher for the DD in our daily lives, hence they bring in "world-like" examples to illustrate the presence of DD (Ranalli 2020; Lynch 2010; Shields 2021). In this sense, scholars who study DD either use specific examples to illustrate how two rational people can look at the same world and reach fundamentally different, irreconcilable conclusions or "real-world" examples from our social world to illustrate what they mean by the term DD and whether there is a solution to such situations. These examples often center on clashes of "foundational" beliefs, where no amount of new evidence seems to move the hassle. In fact, scholars today are no longer just asking what DD is, but whether it has moved out of the ivory tower and into our daily interactions, creating a world where common ground feels increasingly out of reach. Of course, the question of which examples are more "important" in this regard depends entirely on our aim of whether we want to define the problem or solve it. Scholars remain divided on this, but most modern argumentation theorists lean towards "real-world" examples as being more vital for finding actual solutions.

Without a doubt, the "real-world" examples reveal the messy process of how we clash and whether resolution is even possible. These complex cases not only help us define DD but also highlight the desperate need for a rational solution. If DD is a lived reality, then we are forced to move beyond traditional logic and search for entirely new toolkits to navigate the foundational stalemates in which we find ourselves. Therefore, in this study, we not only used a "real-world" case to demonstrate the presence of DD but also to demonstrate that they are indispensable for finding rational solutions to DD. We believe that "real-world" examples provide the ladder necessary to climb out of the DD. By oscillating toward real-world scenarios, we resist the purely pessimistic view of DD as a dead end. Therefore, in this paper, we use a "real-world" example in the form of the "*Law on*

the Uses of Languages,” adopted in 2018 and enacted in 2019, which represents a critical juncture in North Macedonia’s post-2001 political evolution. Through this law, the language spoken by 20% of the population in North Macedonia (the Albanian language), in addition to the official state Macedonian language, became an official language in the country. While intended to finalize the normative spirit of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA), which came out of the 2001 conflict in Macedonia between governmental Macedonian forces and Albanian armed groups, it has instead become a centerpiece of what this paper defines as a DD. The friction surrounding the law is not merely a technical dispute over linguistics or administration, but rather a clash of foundational “hinges” that define the state’s identity and the status of its constituent communities.

The impasse between Albanians and Macedonians regarding the “*Law on the Uses of Languages*” is rooted in distinct and mutually exclusive frameworks. They are not just arguing about a law but rather standing on different tectonic plates. First, the Albanian opposition, represented by the “DUI framework” maintains a powerful “existential” or “sacred” hinge position towards this particular law. For the Democratic Union for Integration and much of the Albanian electorate, the law is a “sacred pillar of peace.” They view linguistic equality as the ultimate proof of political existence and a non-negotiable achievement of the 2001 conflict. Any attempt to review or “change” the law via the Constitutional Court is perceived as an existential threat to the status of the ethnic Albanian community. On the other hand, we have the “Macedonian framework” that maintains a strong “unitary” hinge that this law has on challenging the unitary character of the state. Many Macedonian political parties and citizens view the state through the lens of traditional unitary sovereignty. Their hinge belief is that a stable state requires a single primary linguistic pillar; thus, they perceive the law’s expansion as an infringement on the Macedonian identity of the country.

In this paper, we use the Macedonian context to explain that when a topic carries such massive emotional and existential weight, it stops being a “disagreement” about a law and starts being a conflict over “forms of life.” In a standard disagreement, the weight is in the evidence, whereas in a DD, the weight is in the attachment that it carries. In this regard, for many in the Albanian community, the “*Law on the Uses of Languages*” is not just administrative; rather, it is a symbol of dignity, recognition, and the right to belong. Because this emotional weight is so high, it creates a “distorted” space where any criticism of the law is perceived as an attack on the community’s identity. When language and ethnicity are fused, the disagreement is no longer about a policy, but rather it is about “existence.” In our framework, therefore, this is the ultimate DD because the “hinges” or the “foundational principles” are tied to identity. If you change the hinge, you change your identity. For the Albanian opposition, in this specific case, “lowering the weight” of the language law feels like “weakening” their own ethnicity. In this scenario, therefore, the “Law” itself is not a tool; rather, it is a border. Any retreat is considered ethnic erasure. As for Macedonians, the “weight” is equally high because they often view the expansion of the law as an infringement of their ethnic definition of the state.

Therefore, according to Fogelin’s original criteria defined earlier in this paper, the discussion on the “*Law on the Uses of Languages*” is a textbook example of DD. As explained earlier, a disagreement becomes “deep” when the shared background between parties is nonexistent. In the case just explained above, the conflict of DUI and the Macedonian party on the issue of the “Law,” fits Fogelin’s definition perfectly. In this situation, we have a clear absence of shared “framework propositions” on the issue. In this case, there is no shared truth on the matter at hand because one side defines the “Law” as a “sacred pillar,” whereas the other party sees it as a clash for the “unitary” character of the country. As both parties do not share a starting point for the discussion, they are shouting at each other from different parallel universes. At the same time, here we have a clear case of an “immunity” for producing rational arguments. As mentioned earlier, one of the characteristics of DD is that it is resistant to reason. As it is already known, in DD, the parties use the evidence only to reinforce their own hinge, therefore, all the arguments brought forward by both parties with regard to the “Law” in question, it brings absolutely no practical effect for the resolution of the issue. In other words, not only is there no “truth” in this case, but that this “truth” is becoming a “black hole” that swallows any rational data that might be produced by both parties. Moreover, we have a clear case of a clash of “forms of life” on both sides of the case. As explained earlier, Fogelin argued that DDs are not just about facts but about different ways of living and being. In this sense, when ethnicity and language are fused, the “form of life” of Albanian and Macedonian people is perceived as being in direct competition. In such situations, there is no “logic” or “argument” that can mediate between two different identities that play a strong emotional connection for both sides of the spectrum.

The Great Attractor as a solution to the *Law on the Uses of Languages*

As mentioned above, there is no doubt that the public is paralyzed, and all the leaders representing the above-mentioned groups are trapped in their own orbits. If this is the case, then we are siding with Fogelin's pessimism that there is no place for rational argumentation in situations of DD nature. Here we are seeing a system where the "conditions for argument" have collapsed since the more arguments and facts the parties in a discussion produce, the more we get stuck. In this paper, however, we propose a different approach that is coming as an outside force represented by the "Great Attractor" (GA), that is pulling forces towards its orbit to create the common ground that Fogelin says is missing. Therefore, we reconceptualize DDs as "trialogues" rather than simple dialogues. We argue that by introducing a "third-party" intervention into an otherwise deadlocked debate, a new dynamic is created. In this sense, we describe the "third party" as possessing a powerful "gravitational force" that acts upon the disagreeing parties. This force is so significant that it "attracts" to oscillate towards its orbit all participants in the discussion, causing them to "collapse" toward this central influence.

To ground our conversation in the academic rigor that we have highlighted so far, we must look deeply at the need for the shift of DD from a logical puzzle, as seen by Fogelin, to a social and political reality. We believe that DDs are not rare or impossible; rather, they are very real and, hopefully, very possible. They are a natural result of diverse cultural and epistemic backgrounds, and we believe that they are resolvable, at least pragmatically. Because of this, we should not give up and call them "irrational;"; instead, we need a better argumentative reconstruction. In other words, to resolve the stalemate of DD, we introduce the notion of GA, a term adapted from astrophysics and political and social theory. In astrophysics, the "Great Attractor" is a gravitational force so immense that it pulls entire galaxies toward its center; similarly, in the context of DD, it represents an external force - either tangible or abstract - that exerts a "gravitational" pull on opposing worldviews. This attractor functions by creating a new center of gravity that transcends the local "hinge" commitments of disputants. Whether it manifests as a shared existential threat, a common pragmatic goal, or a transcendent value, the GA does not attempt to settle disagreement through logical proof. Instead, it bypasses the incommensurability of the parties' paradigms by pulling them into a shared orbit, where the necessity of reacting to an external force supersedes the drive to maintain foundational isolation.

By shifting from a two-party conflict to a three-party "trialogue," the structural deadlock of the disagreement is broken, allowing for a rational resolution where one was previously thought to be impossible. In fact, complex multiparty discussions, as opposed to simple two-party encounters, as maintained by Aakhus and Lewinski (2017), are a familiar and ordinary argumentative phenomenon, but have been largely ignored by many argumentation theorists. While such multiparty and multiposition discussions are characteristic of a large class of argumentative activities, especially deliberative ones, in argumentation theory, they are typically analyzed and evaluated with the help of dialectical models. Such models theorize argumentation as a dyadic exchange between two and only two parties, the protagonist and antagonist or proponent and opponent, who take up only two basic positions, pro and con or agreement and doubt (Van Eemeren et al., 1993). In other words, we maintain that it is precisely this kind of reconstruction that poses the biggest problems for discourses on the nature of the DD. Reconstructing discourse as a dyadic exchange when dealing with discourses of a DD nature creates the biggest impediment to their "rational" resolution because they miss important aspects of argumentative polylogues (Aakhus & Lewinski, 2017).

In other words, for something to be defined as a GA, it must meet three conditions. First, it should be separated from the main beliefs people argue. Second, it must be important enough to make people want to work together. Third, everyone must agree that it is unavoidable. This makes a GA different from "common ground" or "consensus" because it is more practical. Unlike agreeing on evidence, a GA does not require people to change their beliefs or opinions. Instead, it helps them think about what they need to do together to achieve their goals. For example, two groups might disagree about a political system but agree to avoid a civil war. Avoiding collapse is a GA because it does not come from either side's beliefs; it is urgent, and everyone sees it as necessary to keep living together. A GA is not about finding "truth," but about finding a way to work together when things are tough. We must add here that a GA does not function in isolation, but it works as part and parcel together with the "Triialogue" structure. This is because, while the GA provides motivation, it does not organize communication. For this, we need a second method called the triialogue structure. A triialogue is not merely a

conversation with a “third” person. In a regular dyadic exchange disagreement, each person tries to convince the other party. However, in a trialogue, each person speaks to a third-party audience. This audience has different views on both sides of the issue. Therefore, this change had two main effects on the results. First, it requires “translation.” As Wittgenstein (1969) noted, reasoning is part of a “language game.” When speaking to someone who does not share our views, we must use terms that everyone understands. Arguments based solely on personal beliefs, such as religious texts or biased expertise, lose their power unless explained in more common terms. Second, it changes the goal of the argument itself. The aim is not to make the other person agree but to show that our position can be defended. This matches the ideas of thinkers such as Walton (2007), who stressed the role of dialogue structure in achieving rational results.

However, we must reiterate that neither mechanism works well independently. A GA without a trialogue might turn into a force or simply follow rules. A trialogue without a GA might remain a process with no agreement. However, together, they create a new way of thinking about the world. The GA enables us to work together under certain conditions. The trialogue makes us explain our actions in a way that everyone can understand. This mix allows for “epistemic cooperation” without the need to agree on everything. This implies that people can collaborate even if they do not agree on everything. However, it is important to understand the limitations of this model. The GA-trialogue framework does not solve DD by making everyone agree on the truth. Pritchard (2015) was correct in stating that some beliefs do not change easily. Instead, the model suggests that DDs can be less of a problem when outside limits are set, and talking helps change what people aim to achieve.

This raises the question of whether this framework hides disagreements rather than fixing them. The answer is partly affirmative. However, this is not a problem but rather a feature. In situations where agreement on the truth is not possible, the goal is not to agree on the truth but to work together. Another concern is that GAs might be used as tools of power instead of being used fairly. This risk is real. For a GA to be fair, everyone must see it as necessary, not forced by one side of the conflict. If this does not happen, the model turns into control instead of cooperation. DD does not render rational interactions impossible. Instead, it shows a flaw in two-party argument models that focus on persuasion. The GA-trialogue model adds a shared practical limit outside the disagreement and a communication structure aimed at public justification. This helps to move from deadlock to coordinated action in the future. It does not guarantee agreement but challenges the idea that DD always leads to a standstill.

In order to understand how we use the GA concept, it is helpful to look at the structural change that we propose with regard to the case study mentioned earlier on the “*Law on the Uses of the Languages*.” In a standard DD, we have a dualistic tug-of-war, where neither side has the force to move the other. In such a situation, therefore, we argue that this is not necessarily a failure of reason, but rather a failure of geometry. When two people are in a DD, they are “locked” in a symmetrical battle of foundational principles. The Albanian and Macedonian sides are stuck in a horizontal loop, constantly rejecting each other’s “starting points” or background beliefs on the issue at hand. Of course, critics might say that the above-mentioned example “is not a DD, but just a political fight,” however our response is that this disagreement on the “language” deals with the “identity” of one nation, hence it becomes part and parcel of their “hinge” of the real world, as does for the other party since it clashes with their own “hinge” of the “unitary character of the state. As defined earlier, the “identity” of one group of people, or in this case, of an entire nation, creates a powerful “hinge” that people are not willing to surrender, no matter what. Therefore, in the world of “hinges” the GA acts as a “meta-framework;” a gravitational mass that curves the space of the argument. It simply introduces a new objective or a “Third Principle” that is even more fundamental than clashing hinges. In this way, it provides a reason to talk that does not require one side to admit that their foundational “truth” is wrong. For the world of “identity” and “incommensurable values” that we live in, the GA acts as a “stabilizing force.” Instead of the parties pushing against each other, they are both pulled toward a common exterior point, reducing the friction between them.

In our application of the theory, the GA can take several forms depending on the context of the disagreement. It can take on the role of “judges” or “mediators,” mediators. In legal or formal conflict resolution, these are considered classic GAs. They provide procedural gravity that both parties are bound to respect. At other times, it might take the role of the “idealized audience.” In this sense, the GA is not a person but a normative ideal. In such situations, disputants might “collapse” their disagreement by appealing to what a “rational, objective observer” would conclude. At some other time, the GA might take the form of the “international bodies.” In

deep political disagreements, such as ethnic or territorial conflicts, organizations like the USA, UN, or the European Union are often positioned as GAs to pull the parties away from their binary deadlock. Moreover, in today's world, in fact, the GA is less about a specific personality and more about a "functional role." If it has the necessary "mass" – meaning it carries enough shared legitimacy to exert influence – it can pull the parties out of their ideological silos. In this way, the GA acts as a celestial body, so to say, that captures both sides into a shared orbit. In this way, we are faced with the "weight" of data, especially in some technical DDs, where a massive and undeniable dataset can act as a GA. Even if parties have different underlying values, the pure "mass" of the evidence forces them to orbit a shared set of facts. At other times, we might be faced with "survival" or "crisis," where an external threat, such as a pandemic or environmental collapse, might become the GA. The urgency of the threat creates a gravitational force that makes previous "deep" philosophical differences seem light and movable. In short, regardless of the form that it might take, the GA must have a strong "mass." We suggest that the "force" of a GA is proportional to its credibility. For example, in physics, the more massive an object, the stronger its gravity. In argumentation, the more credibility and legitimacy the GA possesses, the "heavier" their influence, making it harder for disputing parties to resist the pull toward a shared resolution.

If we apply our model to the stalemate on the "*Law on the Uses of the Languages*," we can see why a simple dialogue between the two camps fails. To achieve a "collapse" toward resolution, an entity with significant "gravitational mass" must intervene. Therefore, there are some potential GA that might be applied to play the assigned role. One of them might be the "Venice Commission." As an international legal authority, its opinions often act as GA. Both sides may disagree, but they find it difficult to resist the "gravitational pull" of a specialized international body. Another GA in this particular context might be played by the "European Union." The "path to Brussels" acts as a powerful orbital force. If the EU sets a specific standard or requirement regarding the law, both the Albanian and Macedonian sides might "collapse" toward that middle ground to avoid being blamed for stalling the country's integration. At the same time, another potential GA might be the "Constitutional Court." By definition, while currently a source of friction, our model suggests that if the Constitutional Court can maintain its "mass," its final ruling *could* serve as the point of gravity that forces the two camps into a shared orbit, even if they are not fully satisfied with the outcome.

However, we have to consider here that this particular GA might create a risk of "repulsion." The challenge in North Macedonia is that the Constitutional Court is often perceived by one side or the other as being "captured" or biased. According to our model, if the GA, in this case the Constitutional Court loses its neutrality, it loses its "mass." Instead of pulling the parties together, its decisions act as a "repellant," pushing the camps further apart and deepening their disagreement. The same might be said about the Venice Commission, since it cannot play the role of a GA because of the friction it creates, at least for one of the parties. This is exactly where our theory meets the harsh reality of political friction. In other words, in order for an entity to function as a GA in our model, its "gravitational pull" depends entirely on shared legitimacy. If the Albanian opposition perceives the Venice Commission as biased or influenced by a specific ethnic group, in this case Macedonians, the Commission loses its "mass" in their eyes. Moreover, even if the Venice Commission is not been influenced by the Macedonians, the skepticism of the Albanian opposition might stem from a classic DD problem regarding "institutions vs. identity." In this sense, the "institutional" logic is that the Venice Commission evaluates laws based on European legal standards and institutional capacity (e.g., their 2019/2020 warning that the above mentioned law might be "too costly" or "too heavy" for the judiciary). In contrast, the Albanian opposition logic is that the law is an existential achievement tied to the "identity" stemming from the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the International Agreement signed after the 2001 conflict.

From this perspective, any technical or legalistic "interpretation" by the Commission is not just a legal opinion but rather a political rollback influenced by ethnic Macedonian interests. Faced with this situation, there is no other way here but to search for an even larger "Attractor" with more mass. The parties might look for an entity or body further away in the "political galaxy," such as the USA or EU. Historically, in North Macedonian politics, the USA has often acted as the "Ultimate GA" because it has been seen as an external superpower with no local ethnic stake. Its intervention often provides the gravitational force needed to break a deadlock when European or local institutions fail to do so. Simultaneously, if the pressure comes directly from the highest level of the EU as a condition for membership, the "gravitational pull" of EU accession might pull both sides to oscillate towards its orbit because of its "gravitational force" on equal terms for all parties. Finally, there is a

possibility to search for a “meta-GA” that requires a “new social contract.” In our theoretical work, the ultimate resolution to a DD is not a person at all, as explained earlier, but a reconstruction of the “hinges” themselves. This would involve an entity, perhaps a collection of international and local intellectuals that, create a “new language of agreement.” As a result, instead of arguing over the law, they move to a higher plane of “shared sovereignty” or “institutional stability” which renders the original disagreement obsolete.

However, having in mind that the USA and the EU today are losing their gravitational pull because their current focus is elsewhere, then we are faced with a situation known as “gravitational decay.” When external powers are distracted by larger global crises, the local “friction” between both camps gains more relative mass, making the disagreement feel inescapable. In such a situation, if we look for a GA that is outside of the current political framework, we have to move toward entities that are not tied to diplomacy or statecraft, but to universal forces. In such a situation, an “existential” GA tied to the “survival” might play a strong “gravitational force” for all the parties engaged in DD. When political frameworks fail, the “force of the stomach” often takes over the political process. Then, gravity may be a severe, looming economic collapse. In this situation, instead of searching for a “common friend” GA, probably the best thing would be to search for a “common enemy” GA. Here, we are not talking about a person, but a crisis that ignores ethnic lines, such as a massive environmental disaster or a fundamental shift in the global energy market, that renders the current debate a luxury they can no longer afford.

Moreover, another possibility might be the “demographic” exodus of the youth from both camps, in which it creates some kind of a “force” with a powerful “gravitational mass.” This might create a shared existential threat that is “heavier” than the language dispute itself. In this case, it forces the two camps to orbit a shared goal of demographic preservation, and in this way the DD on the *“Law on the Uses of Languages”* becomes obsolete: In fact, the demographic collapse, for example, is not just a “real” GA, but rather it is the only one currently possessing enough intrinsic mass to challenge the “absolute truths” of the political elite. While the DUI and Macedonian parties fight over the language of the state, the people of the state are physically disappearing. In our terms, this creates a bigger problem that makes the original disagreement look like an argument over the arrangement of chairs on a sinking ship. According to our “Dialogue” model, the “demographic GA” that is building up its “attraction force” on its own cannot be distracted since it has already created a momentum. It is a constant, a local pressure, which affects the daily lives of every citizen, and in due time will cause severe consequences not only for both parties that are stuck in DD, but for the entire country as well. If a hospital in Tetovo or Bitola closes because all the doctors moved to Germany, the “absolute truth” of which language is on the sign becomes secondary to the fact that the building is empty of doctors and patients. This GA forces the leaders to stop the “theatre” because they are running out of actors and an audience. Our theory suggests that this crisis could become the “common enemy” needed to build a new hinge. If the Albanian and the Macedonian political parties can no longer promise “dignity” through language because the youth are leaving in search of “dignity” through jobs, they are forced to shift their orbit. In this sense, demographic collapse is the only force with enough “gravity” to pull the leaders out of their orbits.

In our metaphorical language, if the parties are not pulled into a shared orbit, they might either drift into a “cold” stalemate or undergo a violent “collision.” In this sense then, there are two directions: either resolution or entropy. If the consequences of a stalemate are for instance, economic collapse, civil unrest, or total international isolation, then they become heavy enough to even create a “negative GA.” The parties are not pulled together because they *want* to agree, but because the “vacuum of the abyss” behind them is more terrifying than the compromise in front of them. This is a type of survival-based resolution. The severity of the consequences forces a “hinge shift,” where “preserving the peace” or “saving the economy” becomes the new foundational principle that overrides the language dispute. The second direction is a “systemic fragmentation” or “entropy.” If internal friction is stronger than the fear of consequences, the system breaks. Instead of a GA pulling them in, we get “centrifugal force,” where both camps spin further away from each other. This is not a collapse toward the middle ground but a collapse of the shared political space itself. This leads to “parallelism” - where each camp creates its own “reality,” its own institutions, and its own “laws,” effectively living in two different galaxies within the same state’s borders.

Characteristics of the “Great Attractor”

While our model might be interesting in solving DD, the biggest challenge remains: Who gets to be the “Great Attractor?” If Party A and Party B cannot agree on a set of facts, they often struggle to agree on who is an “objective” GA to lead them out of the hassle. In our framework, the GA is not just any bystander, but rather they must possess specific “gravitational” qualities to effectively pull two deadlocked parties toward a resolution. Because a DD was defined by a lack of shared foundational principles, the GA must function as a common denominator that transcends the local biases of the disputants. Therefore, according to our “trialogue” model, a GA qualifies based on certain pillars that are crucial for functioning as a powerful “gravitational force.” Therefore, the first characteristic that might be identified as having the ‘power’ to get both parties out of DD is the characteristic of an “attractor.” When reconstructing the discourse, the analyst must look for gravitational force that is pulling both parties in a discourse towards some “force” that is present in the text that we are identifying as a “GA force.” The parties or the argumentative text are shaped by the force of this particular “attractor”, therefore our job as an analyst is to search deep inside the text in identifying the gravitational pull of this powerful “attractor” attractor. Once this particular “attractor” has been identified, then the reconstruction of discourses of DD nature must be designed according to the new shaping of the discourse caused by the gravitational force of this particular “attractor”.

Secondly, a GA must possess an “epistemic or moral authority.” In other words, a GA must be recognized by both parties as possessing a higher level of expertise, wisdom, or moral standing on the subject at hand. If Party A respects the GA but Party B does not, the GA lacks the “mass” to pull Party B, and the symmetry remains unbroken. Of course, these elements of “epistemic authority” will depend on the GA, but if the situation requires such kind of “expertise” or “authority” then both parties might collapse towards the gravitational force of the GA. For an external entity to function as a true attractor, it must possess a “gravitational mass” that is recognized as valid by the internal systems of both disputants. If a force is perceived merely as a “hostile external pressure” rather than a “transcendent objective,” it may actually trigger a repulsive force, entrenching the parties further into their respective hinges, a phenomenon often seen in failed international interventions. In the Macedonian context, the GA of the USA and Euro-Atlantic integration might succeed because it offers a future that both parties, despite their deep domestic differences, perceive as an existential necessity. In short, for the “Attractor” to work, both disputants must recognize the GA as an epistemic or moral authority.

Thirdly, the GA must possess “neutrality.” Their qualification depends on being perceived as impartial. If the GA is seen as an ally of Party A, Party B will experience “repulsion” rather than “attraction,” viewing the intervention as biased, rather than a rational collapse toward truth. Perceived impartiality ensures that neither party feels that the third party is biased toward the other. This is crucial because DDs often involve suspicion, mistrust, and the belief that the other party’s worldview is inherently wrong or invalid. This is important because if the third party is seen as biased, one or both disputants may reject their involvement and disengage from the process. The GA’s perceived bias or support can alter how other participants frame their arguments, emphasizing points that resonate with the GA’s perspective. In our earlier example, if the Albanian opposition views the Venice Commission not as a neutral arbiter but as an extension of their opponent’s framework, the Commission ceases to be an Attractor. As a result of this, instead of pulling the two camps together, the Commission’s involvement creates repulsion. The Albanian opposition moves further away from the proposed resolution because they see the “gravity” as being rigged.

Fourth, the efficacy of the GA is fundamentally tied to what we identify as the “survival urge” – the pragmatic realization by both parties that the cost of maintaining a DD has become existentially prohibitive. When a conflict reaches a level of total stagnation, the “hinge” commitments that once provided security begin to threaten the very survival of the system they were meant to protect. This creates a state of high-pressure necessity where the disputants are no longer searching for a “correct” logical answer but for a ‘viable’ way out. The GA succeeds by offering this exit; its gravitational pull is amplified by the parties’ own desperation to escape the entropic dead zone of the impasse. In this sense, the attractor acts as a survival mechanism that bridges the gap between incommensurable worldviews, transforming the move toward resolution from a matter of intellectual concession to a necessary act of self-preservation.

Finally, the GA must have the “ability to reframe” (the meta-perspective). A GA qualifies by their ability to move the conversation from the object level to the meta-level. They must identify the underlying “clash of frameworks” and propose a third framework that encompasses the valid concerns of both sides. The Third Party or the GA must establish a procedural background that both parties accept. Because DD occurs because there are no shared rules for evidence or logic, the “Attractor” provides a new, external set of rules that governs the interaction. This party does not necessarily take a side; rather, it provides a new set of criteria or a “meta-perspective” that both A and B can respect. As both parties move toward the Third Party’s position or framework, the distance between A and B naturally shrinks.

In short, we must clarify that these characteristics are not universal and cannot be set up a priori. The criteria depend on the particular case studies being analyzed and evaluated. What is important and ever-present is the “gravitational force” that an “attractor” must have for both parties stuck in a DD. The “attraction force” determines which GA can play the assigned role explained above. It is the job of the analyst to identify this particular “force” and work it out in order to be identified by the parties themselves of its “pulling force” and yielding to its higher gravity.

CONCLUSION

The persistent deadlock over the “*Law on the Uses of Languages*” in North Macedonia serves as an agonizing empirical validation of Robert Fogelin’s “deep disagreement.” When the foundational “hinges” of political actors - be they the existential sanctity of the Albanian opposition represented by DUI or the unitary legalism of Macedonian parties - are fundamentally at odds, the internal machinery of rational dialogue inevitably breaks down. In such a “non-normal” context, more evidence and debate do not lead to consensus; they only deepen the entrenchment of the disputants. However, this paper proposes a way out of Fogelin’s pessimism through the introduction of the “Great Attractor” and the “Trialogue” structure. By reconstructing the dispute from a binary dialogue into a triologue, we demonstrate that resolution is possible when an external entity with sufficient “gravitational mass” intervenes in the dispute. Whether this force is institutional (the USA or EU), legal (the Venice Commission), or existential (demographic collapse), it functions by forcing a “rational collapse” of competing frameworks into a shared orbit of survival and functionality.

In conclusion, the resolution of the “*Law on the Uses of Languages*” will not come from one side “winning” the argument. It will come from a collective yielding to a higher gravity, be it the promise of the USA, EU integration, or the necessity of national survival. North Macedonia’s choice remains clear: embrace the pull of the Great Attractor toward a shared orbit or continue drifting toward the event horizon of systemic collapse. Of course, this was possible only if the “Great Attractor” possesses the necessary characteristics to pull us outside this systemic collapse, such as legitimacy, attraction force, neutrality, existentiality, and ability to reframe the meta-perspective.

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