



International Journal of Social Sciences & Cultural Studies (IJSSCS)

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 2 (2026)



PUBLISHED BY
E-PALLI PUBLISHERS, DELAWARE, USA

Deep Disagreement: From Toy Examples to Pragmatic Solutions

Vesel Memedi^{1*}

Article Information

Received: March 20, 2026

Accepted: May 24, 2026

Published: August 29, 2026

Keywords

Deep Disagreement, Great Attractor, Hinge Epistemology, Pragmatic Resolution, Trialogue

ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the ongoing problem of “Deep Disagreement.” These arguments are based on deep-rooted beliefs that are difficult to solve with normal reasoning. This study begins with Robert Fogelin’s idea that these disagreements lead to a standstill in arguments. It points out that simple philosophical examples show how these disagreements work but do not offer real solutions. By looking at real-world cases, such as the 2001 Macedonian conflict, this study suggests that we need to move from focusing on evidence to being more practical. The author introduces a new way to solve these disagreements called the “Great Attractor” and the “Trialogue.” This approach adds a third party to help guide the argument towards a common goal. The paper concludes that Deep Disagreement is due to the way arguments are structured, not because people are irrational. This suggests that solutions are possible by changing the structure of arguments to avoid deep-rooted conflicts.

INTRODUCTION

In 1985, Robert Fogelin introduced the concept of Deep Disagreement (DD), which continues to pose a significant challenge in contemporary philosophy and argumentation studies. Fogelin posited that certain disagreements are resistant to resolution through logical discourse. This notion has fundamentally altered our understanding of persistent conflict. Conventional methods for achieving consensus often prove ineffective when individuals or groups hold divergent foundational beliefs. However, this study highlights a critical gap: scholars predominantly rely on theoretical examples to elucidate DD, thereby neglecting practical solutions. The central argument is evident: while these examples enhance our comprehension of the nature of deep disagreements, they fail to provide tangible resolutions to the problem. Real-world disputes, which encompass historical, identity-related, and consequential dimensions, may offer insights into the resolution of such disagreements.

Philosophers frequently engage in discourse regarding the relative significance of abstract reasoning and empirical examples in their discipline. Some contend that philosophical progress is achieved through a meticulous analysis of concepts, often employing thought experiments to evoke intuition. Conversely, others assert that these methodologies fail to adequately represent the intricacies of real-world situations. For instance, Grba (2024) examined how Einstein utilized intuition in his thought experiments to enhance his comprehension of theoretical constructs. Philosophers often devise idealized scenarios wherein individuals dispute ostensibly straightforward issues, such as those in mathematics or science, to illustrate logical dilemmas (Borge & Serebrinsky, 2026). Nonetheless, certain critics question the extent to which these hypothetical scenarios

substantiate philosophical arguments. These examples do not encapsulate real-life conflicts, where issues of survival and identity are paramount and distinct rules are applicable. The 2001 conflict in Macedonia between the governmental forces and the ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army exemplified this divergence. This conflict was not merely about abstract ideas but also involved profound historical and power struggles. To comprehend such conflicts, it is imperative to transcend the theoretical frameworks and consider the political realities involved.

The main objective of this study is to clarify the crucial importance of using “real-world” examples to tackle the issue of DD. Although we acknowledge that “toy-like” examples have been valuable for many philosophers and argumentation theorists in recognizing and understanding the presence and structure of DD in specific discussions, they unfortunately do not aid in finding potential rational solutions to the phenomenon. Indeed, “toy-like” cases are beneficial for creating “experimental” conditions, which are essential for testing hypotheses under well-defined circumstances. However, they have not yet contributed to solving the problem of DD in the field. In this regard, we propose that “real-world” examples represent a significant advancement towards identifying and potentially discovering rational solutions to DD, especially pragmatic ones. We suggest that this approach might provide pragmatic solutions to the DD phenomenon, which are urgently needed in today’s polarized world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Robert Fogelin’s influential work was profoundly influenced by the later philosophical concepts of Ludwig Wittgenstein, especially those articulated in *On Certainty* (1969). In this text, Wittgenstein introduced the concept

¹ Dituria Foundation, Gostivar 1230, North Macedonia

* Corresponding author’s e-mail: Veselmemedi2@gmail.com

of “hinge” commitments, which serve as essential epistemic foundations for all reasoning but cannot be justified through rational argumentation. Wittgenstein argued that these hinges underpin “language games,” which are structured systems governed by rules that facilitate the creation of meaning and assessment of truth. Fogelin noted that when two people engage in a debate from fundamentally different hinges, they exist in linguistic worlds that cannot be reconciled (Marré, 2024). No amount of evidence or logical reasoning can bridge this gap, as evidence itself is interpreted through the very hinges that are disputed.

Recent developments in modern academic discussions on this topic have enhanced hinge epistemology by introducing the concept of “epistemic vertigo,” which refers to the unsettling realization that our fundamental epistemic beliefs lack a rational basis (Pritchard, 2025). Pritchard argues that acknowledging these hinges with intellectual humility is epistemically suitable rather than viewing this as a deficiency. His perspective reinterprets the issue differently from Fogelin’s, suggesting that deep disagreement (DD) is not a failure of reasoning within a common framework but an encounter with the boundaries of reasoning itself. When faced with these hinges, further arguments merely reflect on themselves. Coliva (2015) expanded on this analysis with her “Moderationist” view, asserting that hinges are not irrational barriers but rather the foundational conditions necessary for rational thought (Pennycook *et al.*, 2026). This reinterpretation is vital for understanding why DD persists, even among rational individuals. Disagreement cannot be resolved through standard rational discourse methods because these methods assume the very hinges that are in question. As Chris Ranalli’s thorough analysis shows, pessimism about DD naturally emerges from certain interpretations of hinge epistemology, particularly those that see hinges as epistemically non-basic, ‘arational’ commitments that individuals or communities adopt without justification (Ranalli, 2018).

Wee (2025) argues that deep disagreements involve conflicts over “basic concepts,” which are essential to the process of reasoning. When individuals involved in a dispute adhere to fundamentally different paradigms for defining and organizing concepts, they cannot depend on shared evidence or universally accepted principles. Consequently, DDs go beyond mere factual disagreements that can be resolved through empirical investigation; instead, they represent clashes of paradigms in which the criteria for assessing evidence and reasoning are inherently distinct. Recent scholarship has shown that profound moral disagreements between theists and atheists, debates about the foundational principles of political systems, and disputes over fundamental human rights illustrate this paradigmatic structure (Noaparast, 2025). Indeed, the intensity of these disagreements arises not from a lack of factual knowledge but from the divergence of the “world-pictures” within which facts are constructed and interpreted.

Let us consider two examples that have been the focus of recent academic discussions. Wee (2025) delves into the notable conflicts concerning vaccines and affirmative action. In these cases, the individuals involved are not lacking information; instead, they interpret the data through different conceptual frameworks. Both a vaccine skeptic and an epidemiologist might recognize scientific evidence, yet they may fundamentally differ on which findings are significant and why they are significant. Similarly, debates about affirmative action often center not on the empirical evidence of discrimination but on varying interpretations of equality, merit, and procedural justice. Although scholars have used numerous other examples to demonstrate the presence of deep disagreements (DD), the scope of this research paper restricts us from addressing them all. Instead, we concentrate on recent academic advancements that show that DDs are not just issues of knowledge but are deeply tied to identity and group affiliation. Pritchard’s (2025) research on axiological hinge commitments - those that represent core values rather than mere factual assertions - has enhanced our understanding of the persistent nature of moral disagreements. When these hinges are axiological, dismissing another person’s hinge commitments can be seen as a rejection of their fundamental identity and moral significance. This insight helps explain why attempts to challenge a hinge with evidence or reasoning often lead to defensive reactions rather than thoughtful reflections.

The Philosophical Deadlock: Why “Toy-Like” Examples Fail

Philosophical thought experiments, often described as hypothetical situations designed to test intuitions about abstract concepts, have become essential tools in analytic philosophy. Grba (2024) exemplifies this by analyzing Einstein’s thought experiments, which clarified theoretical insights into relativity through imaginative scenarios (such as observers in moving reference frames) that, although not practically feasible, highlight the logical connections. Indeed, academic discussions on DD frequently utilize simplified scenarios, such as a student and professor arguing over a basic mathematical fact, two friends calculating different tips at a restaurant, or thought experiments aimed at clarifying the logical dynamics of disagreement (Ranalli, 2018). Richard Feldman’s famous restaurant scenario and David Christensen’s notable variations illustrate that even when all parties are equally rational and informed, disagreements can continue if they concern the criteria used to assess evidence (Ranalli & Lagewaard, 2022). These scenarios are undeniably important for understanding and structuring DD. By removing contextual complexities, they reveal the circular nature of fundamental disagreements.

However, Harto and Ahida (2025) contend that the Duhem-Quine thesis, for example, provides a persuasive theoretical foundation for why toy examples fail to yield authentic solutions. This thesis posits that no single piece of evidence can conclusively determine which of several

competing theories should be altered or rejected when faced with empirical discrepancies. Within the context of DD, this “underdetermination” is complete, as each side can refute any evidence offered by opponents by adjusting their supporting assumptions, resulting in an endless loop without resolution. William Alston’s (1986) analysis of epistemic circularity clarifies why this problem is unavoidable in DD. Although circularity is typically viewed as a logical error, it becomes an intrinsic structural characteristic when individuals attempt to defend their fundamental epistemic principles. Fumerton’s (1995) problem of criterion demonstrates that any attempt to validate one’s method for determining truth requires using that very method, thus assuming what needs to be proven (Melchior, 2024). This understanding does not suggest irrationality on anyone’s part; rather, it indicates the limit beyond which rational discourse cannot progress further.

Furthermore, the limitations of “toy-like” examples become evident when their effectiveness in evaluating “evidentialism” is examined in this study. Evidentialism asserts that rational belief change should be based on evidence. In theoretical situations, evidentialism may appear feasible because of the minimal risks involved. However, significant real-world disagreements highlight the inadequacies of evidentialism as a comprehensive model for rational responses to such fundamental disagreements. According to Muasya *et al.* (2025), Stephan Lewandowsky’s study of “identity-protective cognition” demonstrates that people do not view disputed evidence as neutral. Instead, evidence is interpreted through mechanisms that protect personal beliefs and group identity. When climate scientists present data on global warming to communities whose identities and beliefs are closely tied to fossil fuel use, the information does not merely adjust existing probabilities within the Bayesian framework. Rather, as Lewandowsky shows, data is seen as a threat to one’s community, moral integrity, and way of life. The cognitive reaction is not “I need to change my beliefs” but rather “my group’s survival is at risk.” In such situations, evidentialism is not only inadequate but also counterproductive, as presenting evidence actually heightens defensiveness and division rather than fostering rational agreement.

The core problem is that these scenarios work well precisely because they are removed from the high-stakes nature that makes resolving real conflicts difficult to resolve. In cases such as deciding on restaurant tips, neither party’s identity, survival, nor community membership hinges on whether the correct amount is 15 or 16. However, in a real-world conflict such as the Macedonian crisis, the stakes are much higher. The identity of the ethnic Macedonian state is rooted in the belief that Macedonians formed a unified, ethnically defined nation with ancient origins. In contrast, the political survival of the ethnic Albanian minority depended on challenging this narrative and asserting their equal status as a constituent people. These were not minor factual disagreements but rather

fundamental disputes over who deserved full membership in this political community. In essence, all the examples provided here aim to explain and understand the existence of deep disagreement (DD), but they do not offer any solutions for resolving such incommensurable accounts of reasoning. In fact, “toy-like” examples are designed to achieve precisely that result: creating experimental-like conditions to identify and structure the presence of deep disagreement. However, to search for possible rational solutions, particularly pragmatic ones, we must shift to “world-like” examples. While philosophical puzzles might offer academically rational debates, they cannot provide solutions, especially pragmatic ones. Today, owing to the extremely polarized world in which we live, there is an urgent need to shift to “real-world” examples as soon as possible, particularly when addressing the issue of DD.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Although toy examples are useful for illustrating concepts through simplification, they inevitably leave out certain elements of real-world complexity, such as contextual pressures, stakeholder interests, institutional constraints, emotional factors, and the seriousness of the consequences. For example, the fundamental difference between simplified scenarios and real-world situations is captured in the “security dilemma,” a concept explained by political theorists. In simplified scenarios, agreeing with the opposing party’s conclusion does not pose a significant threat to either side. However, in real conflicts - especially those involving identity, territory, or existential security - adopting an opposing viewpoint endangers the very existence of one’s group. This is not a sign of paranoia or irrationality; rather, it is a clear acknowledgment of the stakes. The 2001 conflict in Macedonia illustrates this situation. For ethnic Macedonians, accepting the idea that Macedonia is a unitary state of Macedonians represented a strong sense of identity, territory, and existential security, highlighting the high stakes involved. In contrast, for ethnic Albanians, accepting the Macedonian majority’s vision of a unified, Slavic-Macedonian nation threatened their political survival within a state where they saw themselves as a constituent nation within the Macedonian borders. These were not just theoretical debates; they were zero-sum contests over state governance and the narrative that would define the nation’s identity.

In recent philosophical discussions, the use of case studies has become a key element in argument formation. Schmid *et al.* (2025), for example, delve into “ethical dilemmas” within migration policy, highlighting scenarios where moral values clash and seem irreconcilable. Instead of viewing these dilemmas as issues for ethics to solve, the authors argue that they hold “distinct epistemic value” in understanding policy. Specific instances reveal the interplay of moral values in ways that theoretical models cannot. Similarly, Misak’s pragmatist view suggests moving away from seeking absolute truth convergence, focusing instead on the significance of practical collaboration and shared decision-making (Harto and Ahida, 2025). This

marks a notable change in emphasis, where pragmatism asks, “How can we enable collective action despite our profound disagreements,” rather than questioning “how can we prove the other side wrong.” This shift is vital as it recognizes what simplified examples fail to show: in the sphere of real-world politics, endless debates are impractical. Decisions must be made, collective actions must be coordinated, and institutions must function efficiently.

Recent studies on polarization have revealed a process that, while closely associated with DD, has its own unique features. Thi Nguyen suggests that modern polarization functions through what are known as “epistemic bubbles” and “echo chambers.” Epistemic bubbles simply block external information due to structural or algorithmic isolation, whereas echo chambers actively and systematically discredit outside perspectives. Consequently, these constructs not only restrict access to various viewpoints but also foster distrust in institutions and experts traditionally seen as neutral authorities (Muasya *et al.*, 2025). By eroding trust in shared factual sources such as science, academia, and journalism, these informational environments effectively shatter objective reality. In such intensely polarized settings, DD is strategically used rather than being controlled. Political figures intentionally depict societal conflicts as completely unsolvable and existential, turning policy discussions into zero-sum cultural conflicts aimed at rallying their supporters and weakening their opponents.

Harto and Ahida (2025) contend that Michael Lynch’s exploration of modern threats to democratic institutions demonstrates how deep disagreement (DD) has evolved from an academic epistemology subject to a challenge ingrained within the constitutional framework itself. When differing interpretations of constitutional meaning become so deeply rooted that no neutral resolution method exists, the Constitution becomes a battleground for DD rather than a remedy. Similarly, Harto and Ahida (2025) note that Talisse and Aikin emphasize how partisan polarization has undermined the shared “epistemic universe” that once allowed Americans to engage in policy discussions while respecting democratic processes. They point out that today’s polarization is fundamentally distinct from past political disagreements, as it increasingly takes on the traits of DD - disputes not just over facts but over the standards for assessing those facts.

This analysis underscores an important distinction: although toy examples can effectively illustrate the logical structure of DD, they fall short of clarifying the political and social complexities that hinder the resolution of real-world conflicts or that might aid in finding solutions. Pragmatism offers a different perspective. Rather than questioning whether the core beliefs of the opposing side are rationally justifiable (which, by definition, they are not), pragmatism evaluates the possibility of coexistence and cooperation despite fundamentally opposing perspectives. Schmid *et al.* (2025) utilize pragmatist philosophy to

contend that policy disagreements often revolve around what can be described as pragmatic dilemmas: scenarios where multiple valid but conflicting values cannot all be satisfied. The solution is not to identify the “true” hierarchy of values but to create localized, contextual solutions that recognize trade-offs and aim for acceptable compromises.

Zinn and Schulz (2024) explore the ideas of rationalization, enchantment, and subjectivation in the realm of risk communication, highlighting that people employ a variety of reasoning methods. These methods go beyond logical, evidence-based thinking and encompass belief, intuition, and trust. To effectively address real-world disputes about risk, it is crucial to comprehend how individuals reason using these different approaches rather than merely improving their logical deliberation. Ghazal *et al.* (2023) provided empirical data showing that students’ reasoning on socio-scientific issues differs from their reasoning on purely scientific questions. In socio-scientific settings, reasoning becomes more emotional, integrates cultural and ethical factors, and follows different standards of evidence. This indicates that real-world scenarios marked by socio-scientific complexity reveal reasoning forms that abstract scientific examples might not expose. Moreover, David Zarefsky’s examination of the 2000 Bush v. Gore case illustrates this phenomenon. The conflict could not be definitively resolved through legal reasoning because of an irreconcilable clash between two core democratic principles: the need for finality and the demand for accuracy. Ultimately, the Supreme Court made a decision, not because it had found the objectively correct interpretation, but because the political system could not operate indefinitely under conditions of complete uncertainty. This decision was pragmatically necessary, even though it lacked epistemic justification.

In short, the connection between toy examples and case studies mirrors a broader link between formal models and qualitative research. Toy examples use controlled simplification by removing unnecessary details to focus on a particular conceptual issue. This method allows for a precise analysis, although it may appear artificial. Toy examples clarify what is conceptually possible and explain the principles underlying them. In contrast, case studies employ contextual saturation by retaining details considered essential for understanding how disagreements arise and can be resolved. This approach provides ecological validity but adds complexity that resists simple analyses. Case studies reveal which principles are most important, how they function in practice, and where theoretical frameworks may fail.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the fields of epistemology and argumentation theory, the traditional method for tackling DD has been to enhance dialogue by promoting better reasoning, more empathetic listening, and greater intellectual humility. Although these qualities are undoubtedly important, they fall short of addressing the fundamental logical structure

of the DD. When two parties possess conflicting foundational beliefs, no degree of attentive listening or logical reasoning can prevent them from becoming trapped in mutual incommensurability (Banda, 2025). This paper contends that resolution requires a structural change: the introduction of a third element that functions not between the opposing parties but above them, creating a new gravitational pull that aligns both parties toward a shared goal. We refer to this as the “Great Attractor” (GA) - an external force or common necessity of such significance that it makes continued focus on unsolvable disagreements secondary to the need for coordinated action.

We present the idea of the “Trialogue” as the procedural framework utilized by the Great Attractor. Unlike a conventional dialogue, which involves two parties trying to convince each other, a triologue includes a third entity - this could be a person, an organization, or a structural setup - that acts as an audience. Both parties must express their viewpoints in a manner that goes beyond their specific linguistic contexts (Banda, 2025). The third party is not required to remain absolutely neutral in the traditional sense, nor does it need to show equal empathy towards both sides. The crucial element is that its presence changes the interaction dynamics of the system. When those in disagreement realize that they must justify their positions not only to their opponents but also to an external observer or arbitrator, they cannot rely solely on insider language or arguments based on their fundamental assumptions. Instead, they are driven to articulate their core beliefs in a way that outsiders can understand, a process that, paradoxically, can uncover possibilities that pure dialogue cannot (Banchuk-Petrosova *et al.*, 2025).

The triologue framework offers an effective approach to addressing the polarization often seen in traditional two-party debates by shifting the focus from winning arguments to ensuring structural accountability in the debate. In typical confrontations between two opposing sides, discussions can become performative battles marked by logical fallacies and emotional manipulations. However, introducing an external arbiter or audience changes participants’ psychological motivations. Instead of relying on superficial rhetorical points that resonate only with their existing supporters, speakers must back their arguments with objective evidence and clear reasoning to gain approval from a neutral third party. This structural change ultimately redefines success; a successful triologue does not require either side to surrender or compromise their fundamental beliefs but fosters a foundation of mutual respect and intellectual honesty that supports democratic discourse.

The success of the GA-trialogue model hinges on collaborative interactions. The Great Attractor acts as a catalyst for resolving conflicts by rendering ongoing disputes financially unsustainable. The Trialogue offers the necessary structure to convert this motivation into concrete agreements. Without the GA, the Trialogue risks devolving into a mere procedural formality, where

participants engage without the necessary drive to move from rhetoric to meaningful compromise and action. However, without the Trialogue, the GA’s influence might heighten tensions, as parties could compete to dominate the attractor or block each other’s access to it (Banda, 2025). In this scenario, Elinor Ostrom’s groundbreaking work on tackling seemingly unsolvable common-pool resource issues highlights this dynamic relationship. Ostrom (1990) showed that solving such problems requires both structural mechanisms to adjust incentives and rule-based procedures to ensure fair participation. Similarly, the situation in DD demands both external pressure (the GA) and a procedural framework (the triologue) to be effective.

The 2001 conflict in Macedonia exemplifies this concept. The International Community, which includes the EU, NATO, and the USA, utilized the prospect of Euro-Atlantic integration to make ethnic conflict increasingly incompatible with the long-term goals of both parties involved. Simultaneously, international mediators facilitated a triologue involving Macedonian state negotiators, ethnic Albanian representatives, and international intermediaries, which eventually resulted in the Ohrid Framework Agreement. It is important to note that the OFA did not resolve the core disagreements between Macedonian and Albanian views of the state. Macedonians opposed the Albanian perspective of equal constituent peoples, while Albanians did not accept the Macedonian idea of ethnic unitary state. Instead, the agreement created a multilayered political structure that allowed these conflicting narratives to coexist within a broader framework aimed at European integration. As Ramsbotham (2010) suggests, when reaching a fundamental agreement is not possible, the solution is to establish a “strategic settlement” that allows parties to coordinate actions despite their differing interpretations. The possibility of joining Euro-Atlantic organizations has acted as a major driver of transformation in Macedonia. The chance to become part of the European Union and NATO offered strong motivation for both the Macedonian government and the ethnic Albanian minority to resolve their enduring disagreements over national identity and territorial claims. Both groups recognized that integration offered concrete advantages, such as security guarantees, economic growth, and access to Western institutions, which would be permanently lost if ethnic tensions persisted in the region. This situation encouraged a significant move away from the binary view of identity-based zero-sum conflicts.

Criteria for Identifying the Great Attractor

For the Great Attractor (GA) to function successfully, it is essential that all involved parties view it as genuinely attractive rather than as an external force imposed against their wishes. This creates a crucial condition: the GA must be seen as addressing interests that the parties themselves consider important, even if they have different interpretations of those interests (Banda,

2025). In Macedonia, the idea of joining the European Union was seen as advantageous by Macedonians, as it guaranteed the security of the Macedonian state, and by ethnic Albanians, as it offered protection under the rule of law and European human rights standards. The same attractor appealed to both groups, although for different reasons. This is vital because the GA does not need to be inherently attractive to everyone in the same way; it just needs to be appealing enough to motivate all parties to work together (Banchuk-Petrosova *et al.*, 2025). However, when external forces try to impose a GA that local parties do not genuinely see as beneficial, the effort fails. Many international interventions have been unsuccessful because external mediators assumed that economic growth, democratic changes, or other benefits would naturally persuade the parties to abandon their core commitments. However, if local parties do not view these benefits as more important than maintaining their core commitments, no amount of external pressure will result in lasting cooperation (Banda, 2025).

According to William Zartman (1989), conflicts become open to resolution when they hit a “mutually hurting stalemate.” At this pivotal juncture, the accumulated impact of the conflict - manifested through human losses, resource exhaustion, and missed opportunities - becomes so overwhelming that both sides realize that their only option besides negotiation is mutual disaster, not triumph. This urgent necessity turns the theoretical dilemma of DD into a real crisis that demands resolution (William *et al.*, 2025). In true survival situations, such as wars, ethnic strife, pandemics, or other catastrophic threats, the luxury of demanding a foundational agreement vanishes. Opposing sides must work together immediately or face destruction. This practical urgency does not intellectually resolve DD; instead, it makes DD irrelevant to immediate survival needs. Once the immediate crisis is over, previous disagreements may re-emerge. Therefore, a lasting solution requires not only existential urgency but also structural arrangements, like the trialogue, that sustain incentives for cooperation even after the acute crisis has passed.

For the trialogue to function smoothly, it is crucial for both parties to build a basic level of trust, ensuring that the third party is not seen as simply siding with their opponent. Building trust is especially difficult in situations where the parties already perceive each other as existential threats. International mediators face challenges because local disputants often view them with suspicion, seeing them as agents of a hostile international system, representatives of the strong against the weak, or advocates of foreign values (Banda, 2025). However, without this trust, the third party might become what could be termed an “epistemic repulsive force.” Instead of encouraging cooperative engagement, the external mediator might unintentionally cause the parties to dig deeper into their respective stances, united only in their opposition to foreign intervention. This problem has affected several international peace initiatives. The

involvement of external mediators, intended as a GA, is instead seen as a threat, leading disputants to band together against what they perceive as a common external foe (Sonia, 2022).

Susskind and Cruikshank (1987) emphasize in their research on consensus building that the absence of a neutral base can lead to the collapse of a dispute resolution framework, potentially making external intervention detrimental. This prompts the question: When can external mediators be seen as legitimate rather than threatening? This question is one of the most complex challenges in conflict resolution theories. Nonetheless, historical evidence suggests that mediators are most effective when they are viewed as having enough authority to enforce agreements while being restricted by boundaries that prevent them from imposing solutions that undermine the core interests of both parties (Rehák, 2011).

World-Like Examples and the Pragmatic Solution

The 2001 conflict in Macedonia, which involved the Macedonian government and the ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army (NLA), exemplified significant discord in a real-world scenario. For the Macedonian state and the Slavic-Macedonian majority, the dominant belief was that Macedonia was a unified nation-state with an ancient Macedonian heritage, singular national identity, and cohesive political community. Any territorial or political concessions to ethnic minorities were seen as threats to this foundational narrative and, consequently, to the state’s legitimacy itself. In contrast, the ethnic Albanian minority held a fundamentally opposing belief that Macedonians were just one ethnic group among several and that Albanians were an equal “constituent people” entitled to political power, territorial autonomy, and the preservation of their cultural identity. Accepting the Macedonian narrative would mean acknowledging the perpetual subordination of Albanian interests to the Macedonian majority. These disagreements were not about minor details but concerned the essence of the political community, its history, and rightful membership. Despite considerable evidence, disagreements persisted without resolution. This scenario illustrates DD at its core: conflicting foundational beliefs that hinder the creation of common epistemic standards (Munir, 2020). The conflict was not resolved by directly addressing the disagreement but by moving beyond it. The Great Attractor - the potential for Euro-Atlantic integration - offered both parties reasons to divert their attention from the unsolvable issue of national identity to a common goal. The Trialogue - structured negotiations facilitated by the International Community and aimed at the Ohrid Framework Agreement - provided a platform for both sides to coordinate actions despite their fundamentally opposing views. Importantly, the OFA did not require either side to abandon their core beliefs or interests. The agreement acknowledged both the “civic state” model, which appeals to Macedonian nationalists, and the idea

of constituent peoples, which resonates with Albanian communal values. It did not resolve whether these frameworks were metaphysically compatible; instead, it incorporated them into a larger political framework that focused on European integration. This marks a significant shift from the evidentialism of the toy-example method to the pragmatism of addressing real world conflicts.

The framework outlined in this study sheds light on current challenges, such as political polarization, which is viewed as a form of DD that has been both institutionalized and weaponized. Thi Nguyen differentiates between epistemic bubbles and echo chambers, emphasizing the contrast between simple disagreement and pathological DD (Harto & Ahida, 2025). Echo chambers deliberately cultivate distrust towards external expertise and viewpoints, turning disagreement from an intellectual debate into a threat to group identity. When political leaders intentionally employ DD - claiming that their opponents are not just wrong but are driven by fundamentally different values and irreconcilable disagreements - they accomplish two things: first, they shift the conflict's focus from policy disagreements to identity conflicts, making compromises seem like betrayal. Second, they erode the legitimacy of institutions (courts, universities, media) that could otherwise serve as neutral third parties in a trialogue, thereby hindering the structural mechanisms that could aid in resolution (Stopford, 2020).

This observation suggests that an alternative policy strategy is feasible. If institutions such as courts, universities, and the media maintain their reputation as neutral bodies - viewed as neither favoring any political group nor opposing core values - they can play a crucial role in promoting civic cooperation. To achieve this, these institutions need to intentionally foster what Pritchard refers to as "intellectual humility" and what might be called "epistemic pluralism" - the recognition that people with fundamentally different viewpoints can still provide valuable insights and that peaceful coexistence requires systems that honor this diversity (Ranalli, 2018).

Modern conflicts that merge DD with identity politics present significant obstacles (Deni *et al.*, 2025). When disputes encompass not only factual or moral aspects but also the fundamental identity and dignity of groups, the stakes become existential. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Kashmiri conflict, Macedonian conflict, Rohingya crisis, and discussions about immigration and cultural identity in Europe all illustrate the framework of DD, yet with increased urgency owing to the consequences for national identity, religious communities, and group survival (Khan *et al.*, 2024). In such situations, simplistic analyses can be deceptive. No hypothetical scenario can truly reflect the reality of a group feeling that its existence is under existential threat or its historical grievances are unforgivable. A pragmatic approach provides a more valuable perspective than abstract epistemological analysis: it recognizes that these disagreements cannot be resolved through improved reasoning alone while affirming that coexistence remains possible (Khotmul &

Putra, 2025).

Progress hinges on the creation of what is known as a Great Attractor - a compelling necessity or goal that can redirect attention from deep-rooted foundational disputes to effective cooperation. In some scenarios, this attractor might appear as an environmental crisis, such as climate change or resource scarcity; in others, it could be fueled by economic expansion; and in different cases, it might pertain to the credibility of institutions or global standing (Schäfer *et al.*, 2026). The exact form of the attractor is less important than its perceived validity and breadth of impact.

CONCLUSION

This study begins by distinguishing between toy-like examples, which clarify the logical structure of Deep Disagreement (DD) without providing solutions, and world-like scenarios, which demonstrate that resolution can be achieved through structural intervention rather than by transforming arguments. The main argument is that Deep Disagreement does not stem from a lack of individual rationality but from an absence of argumentative structure. When disputants encounter hinges - those fundamental commitments that cannot be rationally justified - further argumentation only leads to circular repetition. Attempts to offer stronger evidence, more precise logic, or greater empathetic listening fail to close the gap because evidence, logic, and empathy inherently assume the very hinges that are being disputed. The traditional epistemological response to this deadlock has been pessimism: once the hinges are reached, resolution becomes impossible (Borge & Serebrinsky, 2026).

We dismiss this bleak perspective. Achieving resolution goes beyond merely settling a disagreement; it involves transcending it through structural strategies. The Great Attractor diverts the attention of opposing parties from the unsolvable conflict by introducing a shared necessity of such magnitude that the core disagreement becomes almost secondary. The Trialogue establishes a framework that facilitates coordinated actions between both parties despite their differing perspectives, as the presence of a third party imposes constraints that transform the practical dynamics of their interaction. This framework significantly impacts areas beyond academic epistemology. In a time characterized by rising polarization, escalating identity-based conflicts, and increasing epistemic divides, it is insightful to understand that DD is not a psychological shortcoming or moral lapse but rather a structural element of certain disputes. This perspective suggests that addressing these challenges requires not the betterment of individuals (making them less biased, more humble, or more rational) but the improvement of institutions - systems that recognize irreconcilable disagreements while still enabling cooperative endeavors (Saltelli *et al.*, 2023).

The shift from dialogue to trialogue, from seeking consensus to aiming for organized coexistence, and from

evidentialism to pragmatism does not represent a break from reason but a progression in our comprehension of its function in human interactions. Reason transcends merely convincing others of their mistakes. It involves the capacity to coordinate joint efforts despite significant disagreements, create institutions that embrace differing perspectives, and lead ourselves and others toward futures worth building together, even when there is no agreement on the importance of those futures (Muriuki, 2022).

REFERENCES

- Alston, W. P. (1986). Epistemic Circularity. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 47 (1), 1-30.
- Banchuk-Petrosova, O. S. O., & Dobkina, K. (2025). Mediation and arbitration in international negotiations: The role of third parties in conflict resolution. *Society and Security*, 6(12), 14-19. [https://doi.org/10.26642/sas-2025-6\(12\)-14-19](https://doi.org/10.26642/sas-2025-6(12)-14-19)
- Banda, J. H. K. (2025). The politics of mediation: Analyzing the influence of international actors on domestic conflict resolution and state sovereignty. *Journal of Political Science and International Relations Studies*, 2(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.61784/jpsr3006>
- Borge, B., & Serebrinsky, D. (2025). Deep and deeper disagreements in metaphysics of science. *Análisis Filosófico*, 45(Special Issue), 947-975. <https://doi.org/10.36446/af.e1298>
- Coliva, A. (2015). *Extended rationality*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Deni, A., Wance, M., & Muhtar, M. (2025). Moderated identity politics: Muslim voters and religious depolarization in North Maluku's 2024 gubernatorial election. *Jurnal Wacana Politik*, 10(3), 302-312. <https://doi.org/10.24198/jwp.v10i3.63113>
- Fogelin, R. (1985). The logic of deep disagreement. *Informal logic*. Vol 7: 1-7.
- Fumerton, R. (1995). *Metaepistemology and skepticism*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Harto, B., & Ahida, R. (2025). Scientific neutrality in the age of artificial intelligence: A critical analysis of the value-free ideal. *El-Rusyd*, 10(2), 179-190. <https://doi.org/10.58485/elrusyd.v10i2.486>
- Khan, Z. A., Haq, R., Malik, F., & Shinwari, J. U. R. (2024). Kashmir at the crossroads: Analyzing third-party mediation and the India-Pakistan rivalry. *Quantic Journal of Social Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.55737/qjss.558722578>
- Khotmul, F., & Putra, A. (2025). Stakeholder roles in strengthening religious moderation: A case study of socio-religious conflict in Mesangkok Village, Gerung Subdistrict, West Lombok Regency. *Journal of Nabdhlatul Ulama Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.35672/jnus.v6i1.68-85>
- Marré, T. (2024). Thomas Kuhn's quasi-fideism. *Heythrop Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/heyj.14369>
- Melchior, G. (2024). The methodologically flawed discussion about deep disagreement. *Episteme*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2024.2>
- Muasya, M. N., Wangai, J. K., & Makokha, K. O. (2025). Epistemic justification of Kuhn's structures of scientific development. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*. <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/25jun745>
- Munir, S. (2020). *Historical analysis, multi-dimensional realities and emerging frameworks: International mediation, efficacy, key challenges and state-building in Yemen's fragile civil conflict*. <https://doi.org/10.31237/osf.io/m6p5d>
- Muriuki, C. (2022). Conflict management and conflict resolution. *Journal of Developing Country Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.47604/jdcs.1716>
- Noaparast, Z. B. (2025). On deep moral disagreement between theists and atheists. *Wittgenstein-Studien*, 16(1), 227-244. <https://doi.org/10.1515/witt-2025-0010>
- Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge University Press.
- Pennycook, P., Tòrres, J., & Silva, M. (2026). "Eu sou homem" é uma certeza-dobradiça? Sobre gênero, antifundacionalismo, e a possibilidade de mudança de uma Weltbild. *Argumentos - Revista de Filosofia*, 17(2), 167-186. <https://doi.org/10.36517/arf.v17i2.95347>
- Pritchard, D. (2025). *Axiological hinge commitments*. Synthese. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-024-04898-0>
- Ramsbotham, O. (2010). *Transforming Violent Conflict: Radical Disagreement, Dialogue, and Strategic Linguistic Elaboration*. Routledge.
- Ranalli, C. (2018). *Deep disagreement and hinge epistemology*. Synthese. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-018-01956-2>
- Ranalli, C., & Lagewaard, T. (2022). Deep disagreement (part 2): *Epistemology of deep disagreement*. Philosophy Compass. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12887>
- Rehák, V. (2011). Mediation as a tool for conflict resolution. *Czech Journal of International Relations*. <https://doi.org/10.32422/cjir.384>
- Saltelli, A., et al. (2023). Impact assessment culture in the European Union. Time for something new? *Environmental Science & Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2023.02.005>
- Schäfer, L., et al. (2026). *Associations between inclusivity norms and tolerance, contact, and cooperation amid polarization: Evidence from 12 European countries*. PNAS Nexus. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pnasnexus/pgag087>
- Dey, S. (2022). Analysing the Sri Lankan civil war through the lens of conflict resolution theory. *Stosunki Międzynarodowe – International Relations*, 2(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.12688/stomiedintrelat.17410.1>
- Stopford, R. (2020). *Threshold concepts and certainty: A critical analysis of "troublesomeness."* Higher Education. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00628-w>
- Susskind, L. & Cruikshank, J. (1987). *Breaking the Impasse: Consensual approaches to resolving public disputes*. Basic Books.
- William, A., Ndikum, N. C., & Mengjo, L. K. (2025). External interference and conflict management:

The case of the Anglophone conflict in the North-West and South-West regions. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*. <https://doi.org/10.47772/ijriss.2025.90400477>

Zartman, W. (1989). *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.