

THE CONCILIATORS GUILD

Developing a New Lingua Franca for Conflict Resolution

A workshop to help diplomats, mediators and policymakers become more effective by using a new lingua franca for politics and diplomacy

“This new paradigm is the perfect antidote to many dilemmas facing diplomats today. Much else has been tried and failed. It's time to meet people's needs before they fall into the hands of extremists.”

- Michael Bell, former Canadian Ambassador to Egypt, Israel and Jordan

“I can attest to the "Human Givens" approach. Unless "Givens" are listened to and respected, you cannot truly help others. That's more than half that battle, and it all relates to the "Given" that people crave such intangibles as dignity and respect. I believe this approach is universally applicable.”

- James Larocco, former Head of Multinational Forces of Observers, Sinai, and former American Ambassador to Kuwait

Introduction

DIPLOMACY AND GEOPOLITICS are hitting a dead-end. Science reveals that some of our basic assumptions, such as that we are primarily rational creatures, are either flawed or incomplete. Meanwhile, the international order grows ever more chaotic and less predictable.

It is our contention that many international conflicts remain unresolved because a missing piece in the equation – innate emotional needs and motivations – is not consciously or adeptly taken into consideration. Most diplomacy works around the edge of these problems, revealing a need to “up our game”, otherwise, tragically, future generations will suffer the consequences.

The Conciliators Guild is an initiative aimed at launching a long term education process to improve and refresh our politics by introducing this missing piece into international relations. It works closely with the “Human Givens Approach” to understanding human behaviour.

Its base line is that it is innate physical and emotional needs that motivate human behaviour. A shared knowledge of these innate needs – which are “givens” – provides a

route away from identity fixations and the drive for power or revenge, and sets the stage for greater cooperation going forward.¹

The contention is that people are operating at a basic level behind the complexities of politics, and that is what motivates behaviour. Grasping what those motivations are can help in managing their political and cultural expression.

This perspective can help negotiators interpret and manage political and international challenges more effectively because it provides a clear reference point - a new 'lingua franca' - whenever confusion or a logjam arise. It can also assist policymakers in perceiving a greater context and looking at policy development in fresh ways.

Objective & Benefits

This skills-based, three-day course is aimed at developing these ideas and investigating how they can inform the sphere of international relations and diplomacy. It will also focus on group behaviour, the role of the media and of culture and their effect on our politics. It is a practical workshop providing participants with hands on experience in developing policy and conducting international negotiations based on this new approach. The case studies presented emphasize the Middle East region because of the direct experience of some of the course facilitators. The applicability to other areas of the world and global issues will also be discussed.

What participants will gain from the event:

- A clear, in-depth understanding of the Human Givens approach and its applicability in international relations and conflict resolution
- Improved results in dealing with radicalization, policy development, and conflict resolution in these critical times
- The ability to better see through political and cultural assumptions towards the underlying emotional dynamics driving behaviour, so as to become more effective at finding peaceful ways to manage differences and conflicts
- Participation and membership in "The Conciliators Guild"

Methodology:

All sessions are composed of presentations by facilitators followed by questions and answers. Case studies will also be presented for participants to work through. An advisory service will be offered after the course in order to support the practitioner in using the ideas from the course to structure their work better, to perceive the underlying motivations at play, and to find new ways to motivate people towards reducing conflict.

¹ See appendix for further explanation of The Human Givens

Day One

9:00 - 10:30

Session I: Introduction to the Human Givens

The Human Givens approach arose out of a solid basis of fundamental research and ever-increasing scientific knowledge about human biology, behaviour and psychology. This was coupled with an interest in how best to put such knowledge to practise for the sake of both individuals and society in general. The approach derives from the understanding that innate needs, emotional and physical, have to be met well for anyone to flourish, and this is a prerequisite for avoiding conflict.

Emotions create distinctive psychobiological states in us and exist to make us take action of some kind. They mainly seek their fulfilment through the way we interact with other people and the environment. Consequently, when these needs are not met, nature ensures we suffer considerable distress — anxiety, anger, depression etc. — and our expression of distress, in whatever form it takes, impacts on those around us, sometimes violently.

In short, it is by meeting our physical and emotional needs that we survive and develop as individuals, families, collectives - and as a species. There is no doubt these needs are expressed in varying ways depending on cultural and historical context, and that the pathways for their political expression vary over time.

The Human Givens approach is a new organising idea that focuses on mutual needs satisfaction. When fully understood and absorbed, it can serve to help guide our perceptions and actions. The purpose of this session will also be to see how this takes place.

This session will also look at the work of Jim Penman, the author of “**Biohistory and the Decline of the West**”, in explaining how basic factors in sociobiology affect the rise and fall of civilizations. We will also look at how the rise of wealth and corruption have a corroding effect on society and can lead to conflict, domestically and internationally.

10:30 - 11:00 **Coffee Break**

11:00 - 12:30 **Session II: Case Studies from the Middle East**

This session looks at the Middle East and its politics as a setting where human needs are often not being met, with terrible consequences. It looks at how politics and diplomacy are failing in the region through the lens of Human Givens and provides practical case studies of how these motivations can further conflict or help resolve differences. Two cases are examined: Israel-Palestine and the Iran nuclear deal.

The interplay between human needs and other key factors, such as the role of larger context, “ripeness” in conflict resolution and political and cultural habits, will also be discussed.

A. Israel-Palestine: The Reasons for Intractability

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is understood in terms of rights and historical claims. Basic needs are often translated directly into political demands such as security arrangements, recognition of historical wrongs and restitution. Behind this “language” of politics lie innate needs and motivations. Can a new look at the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, through the lens of basic needs, help shed light or loosen up its apparent intractability?

The conflict will be looked at from the perspective that the “givens” of human nature cannot be gainsaid. We cannot avoid them any more than we can avoid breathing. Therefore, recognising this, and working to ensure that these innate needs are met, ought to supersede lesser efforts that derive from conditioning, grabbing power, ideologies and biases based on race, religion, territory, revenge, habit, wealth or any political system.

B. The Iran nuclear talks: An Example of Success?

The talks between world powers and Iran over the nuclear issue have borne fruit. Accommodations were found and the needs of both sides satisfied enough to permit agreement and a new political space between longstanding enemies. Unlike the question of Israel-Palestine, these negotiations offer a window of how addressing needs from the beginning of a process can lead to success in diplomacy.

This case study will look at how this process can be seen through the prism of Human Givens. How did each side begin the process through basic recognition of needs? How did that facilitate the negotiations? What does it mean for other international challenges? How does the agreement affect the greater context in the Middle East?

12:30 - 13:30 Lunch

13:30 - 15:00 Session III: Innate Human Needs and Violent Extremism

Violent extremism preoccupies people across the globe. The security response is the primary weapon in the hands of governments. Necessary as this may be in the short term, increased security does not address the fundamental issues: the causes behind this growing and dangerous trend.

Many, especially youth, are drawn to extremist groups to get some of their fundamental emotional needs met, if in a skewed and destructive fashion: status, connection to a community (belonging to a group), competence (being trained to fight and kill). However, the primary missing need may be the pursuit of greater meaning as expressed through these groups, including through “religious” ends. The pursuit of meaning propels these individuals blindly towards their goals at the expense of much around them.

The Human Givens paradigm is used to better understand this critical behaviour and begin the process of adjusting societal and political goals towards the mitigation of extremism. A look at extremist groups in various Middle Eastern countries will shed light on this issue, including the use of culture and heritage to propel them towards high emotion.

15:00 - 15:30 Coffee Break

15:30 - 17:00 Session IV: Case Study - Extremism in Syria

This session will explore the factors that drive and prevent individuals to join violent extremist groups in Syria today. We will look at how innate needs affect the circumstances of Syrian youth and refugees, their attitudes towards violent extremism, and what work is being done on the ground to mitigate this possibility.

This example will draw on primary data collected from Syria, Lebanon and Turkey as well as secondary data and literature. The following issues will be covered: a) setting the scene – armed groups and violent extremism (VE) in the Syrian context b) why do people choose to join VE groups? Does this differ depending on the group? i.e. should we understand participation in so-called VE groups differently from how we understand participation in any other organised violent or armed group? c) most people don't join VE groups. Why do people within the same context take different paths? What prevents people from engaging in violent groups d) does gender matter? What role does gender play in driving or preventing VE?

Day Two

9:00 - 10:30 Session V: Elephants, Hives & Opportunistic Monkeys: Group Belonging and Moral Codes

This session is based on the ground breaking work of social psychologist Jonathan Haidt, especially as depicted in his book "**The Righteous Mind - Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion**". Haidt's contention that "Intuitions come first, strategic reasoning comes second" is looked at from the perspective of group behaviour, human needs, and the implications on politics. Furthermore, we will look at his identification of six universal moral receptors that help define social codes and their impact on political choices. The need to belong to groups is essential for meeting people's needs, to develop cooperation between non-kin and for individuals to "lose themselves in something larger" (which Haidt calls "The Hive Switch"). This session is aimed at demonstrating how ignoring these basic drivers can cause poor decision-making and social difficulties.

10:30 - 11:00 Coffee Break

11:00 - 12:30 Session VI: How elephants can be hijacked: cult thinking and the global trend towards identity obsessions

This session looks at how these group dynamics can go wrong. Cultural habits are the prism through which political actors perceive the world, and communicate and manage their publics. Cultural connectivity is essential for stimulating useful communication and

actions for the common good; however, it can create blindspots and limit our ability to deal with those from another culture. Culture and morality "bind and blind".

Our limited cultural window impacts our capacity to come to agreement or cooperate. Cultural influences can therefore lead to miscommunication and "missed targets" in international relations and negotiations. It is necessary to step outside our conditioning to understand how and why ideologies are affirmed and heightened by the emotions generated by the hypnotic influences that are compelling people into common mass actions, such that they behave like a shoal of fish.

Furthermore, one of the effects of globalization is that groups adhere more to their traditional identities. Whether due to migration, global interaction or social diversity, we are increasingly mixing together and yet often reacting to this pressure by clinging more tightly to our group identity. Behind this is the natural yet dangerous human tendency to coalesce into "cults" of one sort or another. A cult involves unquestioned reliance on authority, devaluing outsiders and, overall, developing a diminished sense of realism in favour of the "in-group". In other words, "identity" can become highly exclusive and damaging. Humans will enter into groupthink and cult behaviour if there are no better choices available, and if their basic needs are not otherwise met.

By looking at specific cases from the Middle East, this session will see how meeting human needs in more balanced and constructive ways can lower the risk of cult behaviour developing and therefore diminish the likelihood of conflict between groups in any society. We will also examine how, even if it can never be completely eliminated, cult behaviour can be undermined.

1230 - 1330 Lunch

13:30 - 15:00 Session VII: The role group hypnosis plays in politics

The manipulation of masses, whether by subtle or grotesque means, is a critical factor in politics. Leaders and parties endow themselves with power by moving large groups to follow them; publics are often satisfied at some level by blindly doing so. Though as old as civilization itself, this type of manipulation needs to be better understood in an age of significant interaction between diverse groups, political unease and the effects of information technology.

Hypnosis is the word used to describe any artificial means of accessing the REM state (where attention is focused in the imaginative mind). When people select a particular possibility in the REM state, and focus attention on it, an emotion is generated, ready to fuel an action of some sort. That is why it is impossible to separate expectations from emotions.

High levels of emotional arousal prevent clear thought and shrink a person's ability to see a larger context, obviating the more open and reflective state of mind necessary for cooperation, and catalyzing political conflicts. It makes us less than human. Sometimes

without conscious knowledge, some leaders and public figures are generating hypnotic states that influence the thinking and behaviour of citizens, and coerce them into pursuing often-destructive ends.

The case of Hitler and modern parallels, including many leaders in the Middle East or in Western countries, will be used to demonstrate this key problem, and what kind of public education is required to minimize the deleterious effects at play today.

15:00 - 15:30 Coffee Break

15:30 - 17:00 Session VIII: The role of the media in distorting reality and aggravating our politics

Whether it is the 24 hour news cycle or social media, the role of the media has never been more key in affecting politics. Policy has become the servant of public information and “spin”, rather than the other way around. This session examines how the media affects politics and policy, and what steps can be taken to mitigate this dynamic.

All of us are reliant upon the media, the middlemen of information, to get much of our news about the outside world. But what we read, watch or hear on a daily basis, what we feel to be a reliable and comprehensive snapshot of “reality”, is merely the processed output of a worldwide machinery devoted to collecting and sifting mass amounts of information, and curating it for profit without other considerations, or, in some cases, for propaganda purposes.

Because news organizations are skewed in their motives and methodologies, and because humans are predisposed to simplify and caricature reality, our production and consumption of the news has a distorting effect on our picture of the world. Inaccuracies abound, as do misrepresentations and exaggerations. The selection of negative stories and the framing of issues in black-and-white terms can generate or amplify upheavals in societies that complicate political situations – or even create new problems.

This module will look at: how and why humans evolved to become highly attuned to news events and how media professionals exploit that; some of the aspects and approaches to the craft of news production that have a distorting effect; how media can emotionally arouse and have a hypnotic and conditioning effect on an audience; the wider impact of media on society, culture and politics; and what can possibly be done to mitigate this danger.

Day Three

**9:00 - 10:30 Session IX: How Human Givens can be applied in your
work - The RIGAAR Model**

The RIGAAR Model provides a structured process of dealing with international negotiations that implicitly takes into consideration the learning of the first two days. Its steps include: Building Rapport, Information Gathering, Goal Setting, Auditing Resources, Agreeing to Strategy, and, Rehearsing Success.

Although many diplomats and mediators incorporate these steps in their work, working through them explicitly will consolidate the knowledge absorbed during the previous sessions. A specific international challenge will be presented and participants will be asked to provide their input as we examine each step of RIGAAR.

10:30 - 11:00 Coffee Break

11:00 - 12:30 Session IX - Continued

12:30 - 13:30 Lunch

**13:30 - 15:30 Session X: Moving forward - The Conciliators Guild and
how Human Givens can serve as a new reference**

This concluding session will serve to articulate the gains from the workshop, and discuss how this paradigm can be applied more generally in the political world. The roundup will include how these new ideas relate to rights-based discourses as well as an often overriding factor: the raw pursuit of power. How do we penetrate political spheres and use and disseminate these ideas given the conventional assumptions today? Can we move forward politically and diplomatically without a sounder foundation in human reality? How do the ideas presented here contribute to a new political '*lingua franca*' that will facilitate cooperation?

The Facilitators

Ivan Tyrrell is Director of Strategy and a founding member of The Conciliators Guild. He is an author and the Director of Human Givens College. He is co-writer with Joseph Griffin of *Human Givens: A New Approach to Emotional Health and Clear Thinking* and *Godhead: The Brain's Big Bang* as well as other groundbreaking titles and monographs on mental health and psychotherapy.

John Bell is Director and a founding member of The Conciliators Guild. He is also the Director of the Middle East and Mediterranean Programme and the Eurasia Programme at The Toledo International Centre for Peace (CITpax). He is the former Middle East Director for "Search for Common Ground," a global conflict resolution NGO. He is also a former Canadian and U.N. diplomat who has served in Ottawa, Cairo, Beirut, Jerusalem and Gaza, and has over a quarter century of experience in diplomacy and mediation.

John Zada is Director of Communications and a founding member of The Conciliators Guild. He is a freelance writer, photographer and journalist with an interest in politics, psychology and culture. He is the author of *In the Valleys of The Noble Beyond*, Grove Press (2018). He has lived and travelled extensively in the Middle East and has produced work for the *Toronto Star*, *Globe & Mail*, *CBC.ca*, *Al Jazeera English*, *BBC online*, *Al Arabiya*, *Outpost*, *Explore*, *Maisonneuve*, *Los Angeles Review of Books* and *The National*.

Caroline Brooks is the Syria Programme Manager at the peace building organization, International Alert, where she manages programmes on youth leadership and resilience and child protection. She has worked in the Middle East for the past 8 years across multiple sectors, including international and non-governmental organizations, diplomatic entities, and corporations. Caroline is currently engaged in research on the drivers of recruitment to armed groups in Syria and is the co-author of 'Why Young Syrians Choose to Fight: Vulnerability and Resilience to Recruitment by Violent Extremist Groups in Syria' (2016) and author of 'Enhancing the Conflict Resilience of Young Syrians' (2017).

APPENDIX

The Human Givens Approach

THE APPROACH derives from the universal law of all living organisms: that, to survive, each living thing must continually maintain and rebuild itself by taking in appropriate nourishment from the environment. The existence and survival of all forms of life depend on this process. The specific needs of each species are genetically programmed in so that every member of each species has innate knowledge of what nutriment it must look for in the environment if it is to fulfil its potential. And when its innate needs are met well by the environment it flourishes.

We all experience this innate knowledge as *feelings*: we *feel* hungry, we *feel* thirsty; we *feel* tired, we *feel* threatened, and so on. These feelings are universal 'givens' – part of the operating system that drives us to survive by seeking the appropriate nourishment from the environment so as to ensure, not only our physical growth, but also our mental, spiritual and emotional health. Whenever a need is met a fulfilling pattern-match takes place as the need is satisfied and we are rewarded with 'good' feelings.

None of us can escape this universal law and, ideally, we should take account of its truth in everything we do. We should recognise that these are the motivations of all parties in any dispute. Every policy and plan should be underpinned by this principle because it ensures fair and wholesome management of human affairs. The Human Givens approach asserts that all human beings are born with and the recognition that we are all striving to get these needs met in whatever ways the environment and culture we are raised in allows us to.

The prime purpose of government, including its diplomatic arm, ought therefore be ensuring that the innate physical and emotional needs of the people it serves are met well.

It follows that the quality of leaders at all levels is paramount. It is on the quality of politicians and civil servants individually, not their policies, that our attention should be focused on first. Great leaders should have the spare capacity to work disinterestedly for the whole community, be able to self-reflect and have sufficient humility to draw upon the expertise of others. If individuals are sufficiently advanced and wise enough to be in tune with reality, they will harmonise easily with what needs to be done, as happens in any successful business enterprise that benefits all involved in it; customers, suppliers, staff, owners and the wider society.

Our current problem is one of an abundance of unsound, even mad, people in positions of power: parasitic accretions on the body politic made possible by the universal climate of corruption. These are the individuals and groups preventing the emotional needs of millions from being met in balanced ways and thereby driving many either into the hands of fundamentalist cults or terrorist groups, or, in order to survive, get sucked into the kleptocratic community.

Our innate motivations

Our given physical needs are fairly obvious: as animals we need air to breathe, water to drink, nutritious food and sufficient sleep. These are the paramount because when they

are not met we quickly die. In addition we also need the freedom to stimulate our senses and exercise our muscles. We instinctively seek sufficient and secure shelter where we can grow and reproduce ourselves and bring up our young.

Although physical nutrition takes priority – because without air, food, water we would quickly die – human emotional needs, although more subtle, are also critical to our wellbeing and it follows that we need to understand what emotional nutriment nature has determined that people need.

Emotional nutrition include the needs for:

- **Security** – safe territory: an environment that enables us to lead our lives without experiencing excessive or undue fear and allows us to develop fully.
- **Autonomy** – a reasonable degree of control over what happens around and to us. Exercising volition gives us a form of feedback from the universe that we exist.
- **Attention** – receiving it from others, but also giving it: good quality attention fuels the development of each individual, family and culture.
- **Emotional connection to others** – friendship, close relationships, intimacy.
- **Connection to the wider community** – being part of social groupings beyond our immediate family (we are a social animal).
- **Status** – a sense that we are accepted by, and valued in, the various social groups we belong to.
- **Privacy** – time and space enough to quietly reflect on and consolidate our experiences.
- **A sense of our own competence and achievements** – which ensures we feel confident and have sufficient self-esteem.
- **Meaning** – which comes from being stretched in what we do and how we think. Meaning makes suffering tolerable. It is through ‘stretching’ ourselves mentally or physically – by service to others, learning new skills or being connected to ideas or philosophies bigger than ourselves – that our lives feel purposeful and full of meaning.