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## GLOBAL LEARNING AND RELATIONAL DIPLOMACY

David Santulli, MA, CPA

### Abstract

Drawing upon lessons learned from peace builders on the island of Cyprus as well as from leaders in the fields of service-learning, experiential education, and leadership development, this article presents frameworks for both academics and practitioners alike which will be helpful not only in fulfilling their unique goals towards global learning and partnership development across an array of fields and disciplines, but also in bringing about a more peaceful, cohesive, and sustainable world.

**Keywords:** Service-learning; experiential education; leadership; global learning; partnership; Relational Diplomacy; civic engagement; Global Citizenship; international education; citizen diplomacy

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What does the history of the island of Cyprus have to do with global learning, partnership development, and cultural transformation? More than you might expect.

However, in order to make these connections, I am going to ask you to put on your seat belts and travel to this temperate island, the third largest in the Mediterranean Sea, 40 miles off the coast of Turkey, 60 miles off the coast of Lebanon, and more than 500 miles from the coast of mainland Greece. Fortunately for our trip, Cyprus has some of the mildest weather in the world, with an average annual temperature of 75 degrees Fahrenheit.

During graduate school at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, I had the privilege of visiting this isle and meeting with peace builders on both sides of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot conflict. The conflict in Cyprus is part of the larger strife which has existed between Greeks and Turks for centuries.

Over the millennia, every major empire has conquered the island, along with several minor ones. The island's population is approximately 80 percent Greek and slightly less than 20% Turkish (Hatay, 2007).

While conducting my research on the island, I discovered that the Greek and Turkish peace builders had made some innovative breakthroughs that could prove most useful to others interested not only in conflict resolution, but also in global learning and partnership development.

## **MODERN HISTORY OF CYPRUS**

Before we delve into these breakthroughs, I would like to review the most recent history of the island to provide additional context (Santulli, 2011). Cyprus gained independence from Great Britain in 1960 after Greek and Turkish communities reached an agreement on a constitution. This agreement importantly excluded the possibility of partition as well as union with Greece. Under this constitution, power-sharing arrangements were agreed upon which required that the vice-president of Cyprus and at least 30% of members of parliament be Turkish Cypriots. The first president elected was Archbishop Makarios, who had previously led the unification ("*enosis*") campaign with Greece. This campaign had been initiated in 1955 through a guerrilla war against British rule. In 1963, President Makarios began to propose constitutional changes that would abolish power-sharing arrangements. These proposed changes led to the eruption of intercommunal violence; in 1964, United Nations peacekeeping forces were sent to the island and remain until this day.

In 1974, a military junta in Greece supported a coup against President Makarios to bring about immediate unification with Greece. Within days of the coup, Turkish troops took over the northern third of the island to protect the Turkish community. There were thousands of casualties and explicit reports of atrocities, including torture and rape.

More than 200,000 Greek and Turkish Cypriots were forced to flee their homes. Religious shrines and cultural sites on both sides were ransacked and destroyed.

A UN-sponsored cease-fire was put in place, and Turkish troops were allowed to remain in the north. Makarios was reinstated as president. In 1975, the island was officially partitioned into Greek and Turkish territories and a UN-occupied buffer zone was created. This demarcation line was called ‘the green line,’ after the color of the ink used by the UN official to draw the border on a map.

In 1983, Turkish Cypriots declared themselves a separate state, called the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), under the presidency of Rauf Denktash. The UN refused to recognize this newly formed state and passed a resolution declaring it illegal and calling for its immediate cessation. Only Turkey recognizes the legitimacy of this state.

For nearly thirty years, the borders between the Republic of Cyprus and the TRNC were closed. No border crossings were allowed to the citizens of either side.

During this period, peace builders came together on multiple occasions in attempts to solve the conflict. Time and time again, the parties engaged in this conflict recounted the painful history of mutual atrocities and accomplished nothing more than to batter their heads together instead of finding a path to reconciliation. The conflict seemed completely intractable.

### **BREAKTHROUGH: A FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIPS**

It was not until the mid-1990s that the peace builders made a significant breakthrough. They decided to step outside of the conflict by focusing on areas of common interest among the people on both sides. Rather than confront the conflict head on as they had in the past, their goal became to build stronger relationships and rapport as a platform for tackling the more challenging issues. The peace builders formed what they called

bicommunal groups around areas of common interest such as music, dance, and poetry. Although these groups had no physical access to each other, they were able to use technology creatively to bring people together and foster exchange and engagement.

As relationships strengthened, the peace builders began to take on the harder issues, and in the early 2000s they organized massive demonstrations on both sides of the conflict which influenced the Turkish Cypriot government to open up the green line on April 23, 2003. For the first time in decades, Turkish and Greek Cypriots were allowed to cross the borders. Peace builders who had never had the opportunity to meet each other embraced with tears in their eyes. They had not only formed strong relationships, but they had also developed partnerships in an effort to build peace across the conflict.

Tensions remain, and the countries are still disunited, but there is continued progress toward reconciliation. The efforts of the peace builders in Cyprus provide lessons for all who strive to strengthen global relationships and partnerships around the world, whether in zones of conflict or among everyday citizens.

## **RELATIONAL DIPLOMACY: THE BIRTH OF UNITED PLANET**

By observing these innovative practices on Cyprus, I developed the theory of Relational Diplomacy, which proposes that individual relationships are the building blocks for a more united planet, and that stronger relationships can be cultivated across borders by bringing people together around areas of common interest.

At United Planet, we utilize the principle of Relational Diplomacy in our work to address the problem statement within our organizational logic model (see Figure 1 at end of article) which states that a fragmented world is dysfunctional and unsustainable.

As an international nonprofit operating in 35 countries, our mission is to build a global network of leaders and volunteers to foster cross-cultural understanding and address shared global challenges, to unite the world in a community beyond borders. Our vision

of a united planet is a world in which all people understand, respect, and support one another.

As an organization, we unite students and professionals alike in cross-cultural and global exchanges around these common interests and shared passions, to address challenges in education, health, and the environment. We engage our communities in interactive and meaningful local, online, and international activities focusing on service, immersion, leadership, learning, collaboration, dialogue, and celebration. Success is measured by quantitative and qualitative evaluations of relationships cultivated, programs participated in, and communities served.

On a university level, we work with academic partners to engage students and faculty in both curricular and co-curricular programs in international learning such as faculty-led international service learning, internships, faculty seminars, and immersive service programs. United Planet works closely with our Academic Advisory Group, which consists of academic leaders and researchers in the fields of international service learning, experiential learning, and leadership development. Members include Dr. Susan Komives, who worked with the Higher Education Research Institute to develop the Social Change Model of Leadership Development; Dr. Mary King, co-author with Dr. Frederick Sweitzer of the seminal book *The Successful Internship*; Dr. Tim Stanton, Director Emeritus of Stanford University's Bing Overseas Studies Program in Cape Town, South Africa; and Dr. David Moore of the Gallatin School of Individualized Study at New York University.

Together with our Academic Advisory Group and with feedback from institutional partners around the world, United Planet has developed a holistic learning model called The Five Pillars of Global Citizenship (see Figure 2 at end of article). The five pillars are:

- Relational Diplomacy,
- Global Leadership,
- Global Understanding,

- Civic Engagement, and
- Academic and Professional Competence.

These pillars are perhaps more meaningfully expressed through active verbs:

- Connect (Relational Diplomacy),
- Lead (Global Leadership),
- Understand (Global Understanding),
- Engage (Civic Engagement), and
- Develop (Academic and Professional Competence).

These active pillars can be remembered with a useful mnemonic device: Global Citizens are CLUED in. They connect, lead, understand, engage, and develop.

At United Planet, we use this model as a litmus test for global citizenship, and design and assess our programs in terms of these essential pillars. Under each pillar, United Planet has established specific learning goals within the three dimensions of learning: Knowledge, Skills, and Values. These learning goals are achieved through an intentional blend of relevant methodologies, including readings, discussions, reflection, workshops, practice, and observation.

Relational Diplomacy, the United Planet Logic Model, and the Five Pillars of Global Citizenship provide a guideline for program design and assessment while addressing the broader challenges of our world. It is our hope that these frameworks will provide clues to both academics and practitioners alike as they strive to fulfill their unique goals in global learning and partnerships across an array of fields and disciplines. By connecting and developing students and faculty across cultures in intentional and reflective ways, we can truly build a more peaceful, cohesive, and sustainable world.

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David Santulli, MA, CPA, is *President and Founder* of United Planet, an international nonprofit based in Boston, Massachusetts, that works to build meaningful relationships among people of different backgrounds across borders in 35 countries. United Planet works closely with academic institutions, corporations, and nonprofits around the world to develop and implement programs and trainings. David is also the *Managing Director and Founder* of the Relational Diplomacy Institute (RDI), an independent and nonpartisan think tank that works to promote and research the best practices in Relational Diplomacy. David authored a book on his research with peace builders in Cyprus, *Relational Diplomacy, Innovations in Peacebuilding: A Case Study of Cyprus* (2011).

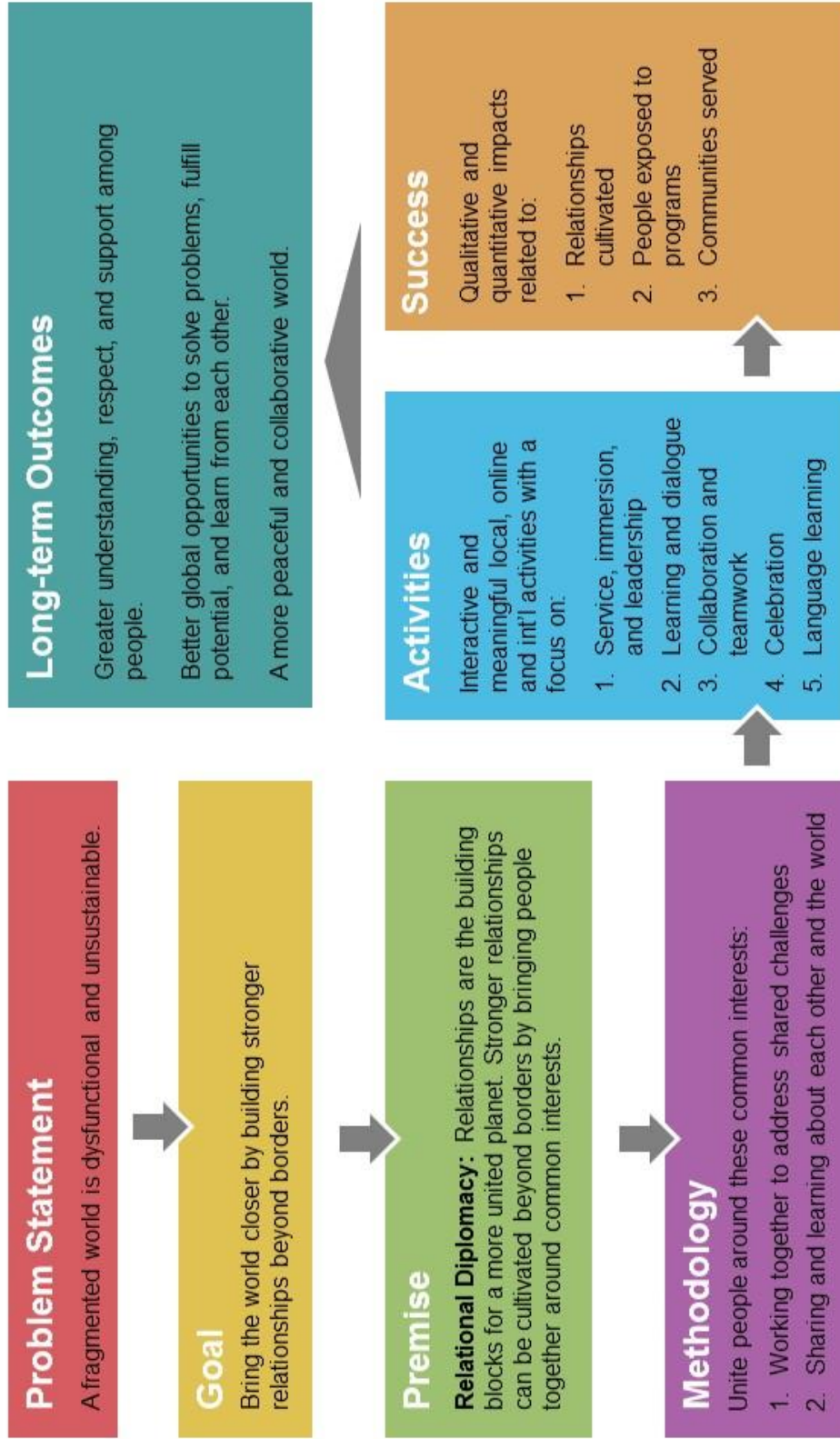
David lived in Tokyo, Japan for nine years as the *Founder and CEO* of a global trading company. He holds a *Master's of International Affairs* from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, an *Executive Non-Profit Management Certificate (PMNO)* from Harvard Business School/Harvard Kennedy School, attended St. Louis University's *International Business and Spanish Language* program in Madrid, Spain, and graduated *Magna Cum Laude* from Loyola University Maryland. David has served as *teacher* in U.S. public schools and as a *CPA and financial consultant* for PricewaterhouseCoopers. David's nonprofit work and travels have taken him to more than 100 countries.

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Figure 1. United Planet Logic Model.

# United Planet Logic Model



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Figure 2. The Five Pillars of Global Citizenship.



Note: Knowledge (K), Values (V), and Skills (S) Learning dimension goals will be achieved through an intentional blend of relevant methodologies, such as readings, discussions, reflection, workshops, practice, observation, reflection, etc.

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