

Diplomacy and Psychology: Psychological Contributions to International Negotiations, Conflict Prevention, and World Peace

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Psychological science has the potential to contribute to international diplomacy, and thereby indirectly to the prevention of conflicts between and within states that may escalate to wars. In this introduction of the Special Issue on Diplomacy and Psychology, different varieties of diplomacy are first briefly introduced. Then follows an enumeration of areas of psychological research that show the greatest promise of being directly or indirectly relevant to diplomacy. These research areas include judgement and decision making in negotiations and social dilemmas, social justice, intergroup conflicts, and intercultural processes. An additional area is research on environmental policy making, whose important role needs to be better recognized in international diplomacy. Overviews are also given of the articles included in the Special Issue.

La psychologie scientifique peut apporter une contribution à la diplomatie internationale et prévenir ainsi indirectement les conflits à l'intérieur et entre les états qui pourraient dégénérer en guerres. Cette introduction au numéro spécial consacré à diplomatie et psychologie expose brièvement les différents types de diplomatie. Puis, elle énumère les domaines dans lesquels la recherche en psychologie est la plus prometteuse pour la diplomatie. Ces domaines de recherche comprennent le jugement et la prise de décision dans les négociations et les conflits sociaux, la justice sociale, les conflits entre groupes et les processus interculturels. Un autre domaine est la recherche sur la politique environnementale dont l'importance doit être mieux reconnue en diplomatie internationale. Cette introduction fournit aussi un aperçu des articles qui composent ce numéro spécial.

Today world peace is threatened by nuclear proliferation, weapons trading, international terrorism, ethno-political conflicts, genocide, and "ethnic cleansing," refugees, rogue states, environmental degradation, and the poverty and wealth gaps that plant the seeds for war. Particularly troubling is the changed nature of armed conflicts, which increasingly targets civilians (Garfield & Neugut, 1997; Wessells, 1998). At present, the dominant form of war is not combat between nations but intrastate wars fought between rival ethnic groups and characterized by brutality and horrible atrocities such as those evidenced in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the ethnic cleansing in Kosova, and the mass rapes in the former Yugoslavia. Each year since the end of the Cold War, there have been approximately 25–35 intrastate

conflicts (Wallensteen & Sollenburg, 1998). Thus war is increasingly societal and involves non-state actors. With regard to diplomacy employed for conflict prevention and management, this raises profound psychological issues of how to handle non-governmental actors, who gets to the negotiating table, and the perceived legitimacy of the representatives of the other side. It also points out the necessity of rebuilding the fabric of torn societies and of building peace not only through top-down approaches but also through efforts to transform and repair societal relationships (Kelman, 1997).

Diplomacy also faces significant opportunities. The shrinking world, coupled with the emergence of regional structures such as the European Union, offer considerable promise of strengthening economic, political,

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In order to honour the contributions to international diplomacy and world peace by Dag Hammarskjöld, a Swedish citizen and the second Secretary General of the United Nations, a Dag Hammarskjöld Memorial Seminar on Diplomacy and Psychology will be conducted at the XXVII International Congress of Psychology, to be held in Stockholm July 23–28, 2000. A planning conference took place at Håsselby Castle, Stockholm, August 27–30, 1998. The articles in this special issue are the result of the planning conference providing focal points for the keynote addresses and symposia in the Dag Hammarskjöld Memorial Seminar. Financial support for the planning conference was obtained from the Swedish Foreign Ministry and the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences. We thank the participating diplomats and peace and conflict researchers for comments during the conference which have been instrumental in improving the quality of the articles in this special issue. We also thank ambassador Mattias Mossberg for examining the accuracy of the description of diplomacy. The authors are of course solely responsible for any remaining errors.

and social interdependence between groups that have been in war frequently over the centuries. The “Velvet Revolution” in former Czechoslovakia, Baltic independence, and the historic changes in South Africa, all attest to the possibilities for peaceful change aided by effective diplomacy.

The purpose of this article is to set the context for the Special Issue on Diplomacy and Psychology by defining international diplomacy, examining how psychology may contribute, and providing an overview of the following articles.

VARIETIES OF INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY

Diplomacy encompasses a wide array of tools for international conflict prevention and management, such as negotiation, mediation, facilitation, conciliation, pre-negotiation, good offices, and cooperative ventures. Broadly, international diplomacy may be defined as the use of peaceful means to prevent, settle, or resolve conflicts. Diplomacy is an extension of the political process, which between adversaries may involve strategies of deterrence and tactics of coercion and threat (George, 1996). Even in the United Nations, the charter of which calls for the pacific settlement of disputes, peacemaking efforts are not infrequently interconnected with peace-keeping and peace enforcement processes that include military actions (Otunnu & Doyle, 1998).

It is useful to distinguish between various categories of international diplomacy defined according to the stage of the conflict (Lund, 1996), each of which brings into play a different set of psychological factors (Rubin, Pruitt, & Kim, 1994). In times of relative peace, states engage in *peacetime diplomacy* that may involve negotiations to settle disputes, relatively open communications, trade, and collaboration on transnational problems. In contrast, crises or wars produce enormous tensions, pressures to use violence and to avoid image loss, and relational damage that can undermine constructive communication and negotiation. *Crisis diplomacy* focuses on conflict management and damage containment, and it frequently entails a mixture of coercive and positive tactics in a “carrots-and-sticks” approach. In between peacetime and crisis diplomacy is *preventive diplomacy*, which entails actions to prevent crises and the threat or use of force (Lund, 1996). Aiming to defuse conflicts, preventive diplomacy focuses on trouble spots or difficult issues which are escalating tensions that are below crisis threshold. Preventive diplomacy deserves priority over crisis diplomacy since it prevents destruction, maximizes savings of lives, reduces costs, opens a wider range of options, and avoids relational damage that plants the seed for future crises and wars.

A particularly important and psychologically relevant distinction is between public and non-public diplomacy. *Public diplomacy*, conducted typically by governmental representatives or appointees, is “on the record” and

attracts considerable media attention. Although public diplomacy is useful, it is limited in numerous respects. The public attention may mobilize political constituencies that oppose peace talks, limit the approaches taken, or stimulate backlash that undermines the peace process. Official diplomats are constrained in their exploration of peaceful options. In negotiations held in the context of political rivalry and careful balance of political power, parties may not make concessions or discuss a wide range of options to avoid appearance of weakness. In times of crisis, getting the parties to the negotiating table is itself a huge task, and states often refuse official negotiation or mediation. Furthermore, an official negotiation may address only a particular set of issues, when the broader task is to change hostile relationships, to resolve underlying conflicts, build civil society, and achieve reconciliation (Saunders, 1996). For these reasons, *non-public diplomacy* may be a useful or even necessary complement. It involves efforts such as citizen dialogues, scientific exchanges, and conflict resolution efforts by churches, non-governmental organizations, or business people (Diamond & McDonald, 1996; Montville, 1991). In addition, non-public diplomacy has helped set the stage for official negotiations and for official back-channel, secret meetings such as those which led to the 1993 Oslo Accords (Makovsky, 1996).

CONTRIBUTIONS OF PSYCHOLOGY

In this Special Issue we explore several contributions of established theory or facts that psychological science is capable of offering international diplomacy now and in the future. Before briefly reviewing these possible contributions, it should be noted that Tetlock and Goldgeier (this issue), in their opening article, argue that any approach that fails to consider psychological factors is incomprehensive. Although it is true that actors in world politics are tightly constrained by political and economic forces, there are strong reasons to doubt that, generally speaking, political decision making is flawless (Tetlock, 1999). Do not miscalculations, unjustified optimism, group loyalties, hindsight biases, and more of the same related processes constitute serious threats to rational decision making? In psychology much is known about these phenomena. The issue is whether and how this knowledge can be put to use.

Acknowledging the important role negotiation and mediation play in all forms of diplomacy, it is natural to start by considering psychological negotiation research (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992; Thompson, 1990). Negotiation is the process by which two or more parties try to resolve perceived incompatible goals without resorting to violence (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992). As illustrated in Fig. 1, psychological research focuses on the role of cognitive factors, individual and cultural characteristics, and motivational factors affecting judgements, actual negotiation behaviours (making offers, concessions, etc.), and outcomes of negotiations (Neale & Bazerman, 1991). Each party's behaviour in

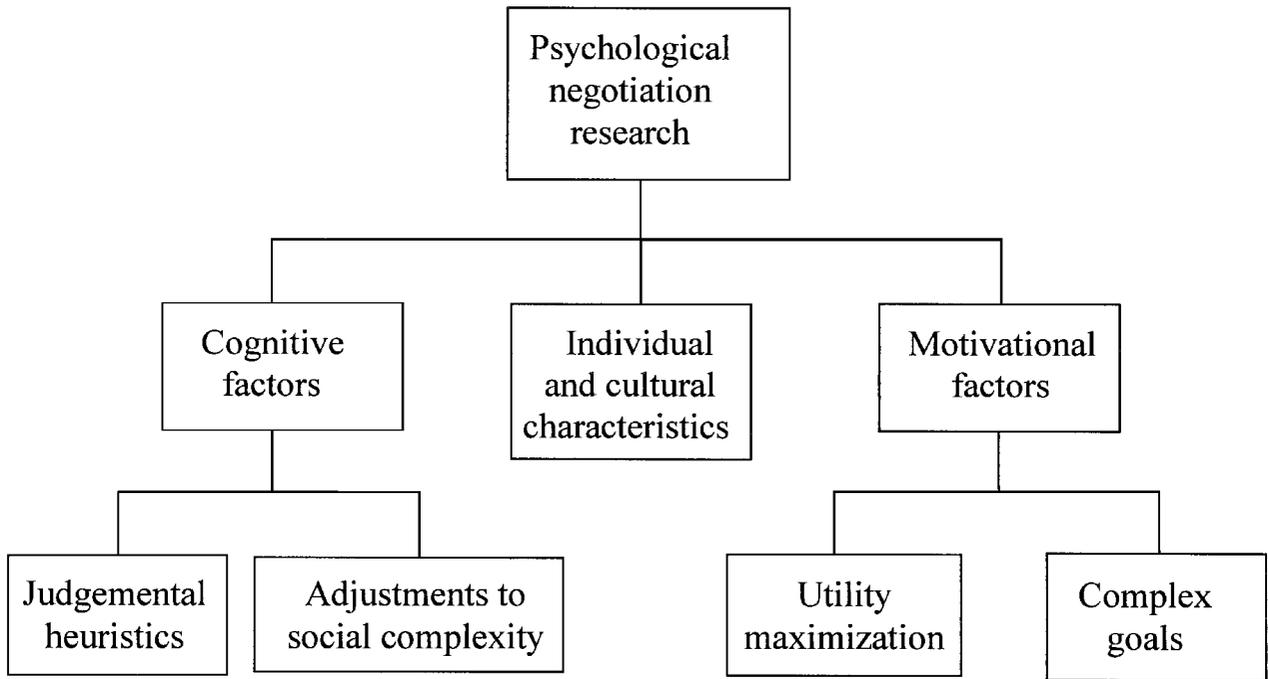


FIG. 1. Different foci of psychological negotiation research.

a negotiation is the outcome of choices based on judgements about the negotiation situation. Thus, judgement and decision making play important roles in negotiations. Unfortunately, abundant laboratory evidence indicates that these tasks are difficult to perform for lay people and experts alike (Dawes, 1998). Although some observed biases in judgement and decision making are corrected in real life, many clearly remain, not least in negotiations (Neale & Bazerman, 1991).

The theoretical focus on cognitive factors in negotiations draws on research on social cognition (Sherman, Judd, & Park, 1989), human information processing (Anderson, 1985), and decision making (Dawes, 1998). A cornerstone is Tversky and Kahneman's (1974) discoveries of heuristics that sometimes cause serious biases in judgement and decision making. Among these biases are availability, representativity, anchoring and adjustments, framing, and overconfidence. They have all been shown to play decisive roles in negotiations (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992; Neale & Bazerman, 1991; Thompson, 1990).

In addition to being prone to judgement biases, negotiators also face difficulties trying to cope with social complexity. These difficulties explain why negotiators frequently fail to reach a mutually beneficial agreement despite it being possible. The "fixed pie" bias, escalation, and ignorance of others' cognitions are examples of this (Neale & Bazerman, 1991; Rubin et al., 1994).

An additional research focus is the search for stable individual and cultural characteristics that systematically

affect the negotiation process and outcome. Experience has been shown to make negotiators more efficient but not to guarantee optimal outcomes (Neale & Bazerman, 1991). However, few if any other individual differences (e.g. power) have consistently been found to be important. More crucial for successful outcomes of diplomatic negotiation and mediation at an international level is probably negotiators' knowledge of how cultural differences hinder or enhance mediation and negotiation processes.

Research on motivational factors in negotiation focuses on how aspirations, goals, and interests affect the negotiation process and outcome. According to an approach grounded in economic game theory (e.g. Roth, 1995), aspirations vary along a single utility dimension so that the goals for negotiators are to maximize utility. Another theoretical approach that has received empirical support differs from the first in recognizing that the goal of negotiators does not need to be unidimensional, and maximization of one own's utility does not need to be a primary goal (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992). Other psychological research provides partial answers to the question of why negotiators narrowly focus on their own instead of mutual interests. This also touches on the role played by justice. This role is clearly important in different phases of negotiations and mediations. However, what do negotiators perceive as just? Extensive psychological research may be drawn on in answering this question.

The probability of conflicts between groups is larger when the groups represent cultures, or subcultures within

a dominant culture, which are very different, that is, culturally distant. Important expressions of cultural distance are differences in language, social structure, religion, standard of living, and attitudes and values (Triandis, 1994). Psychological research reveals how culture is transmitted to and fostered in members across the life span. Furthermore, the way in which culture influences how people perceive, select, interpret, and act upon information in the environment is beginning to be understood. Psychological research can also tell what are culturally sanctioned behaviours.

Allocation of material resources such as land and water frequently lead to international conflicts. How such conflicts are resolved is a concern to all. Do conflict solutions only benefit the conflicting parties' mutual interests, or do they also take into account interests of other nations and future generations? What constraints does this impose on diplomatic mediation? Psychological research addresses the question of how much and why citizens are concerned about the environment (Stern, 1992). Hopefully, findings of this research will be fed into the discussion of what are important issues in peace negotiations.

OVERVIEW

Negotiation

An important area of psychological research on negotiation focuses on cultural barriers to successful negotiation outcomes, and on ways in which these barriers can be overcome. As explained in the article by Brett (this issue), culture encompasses the values and norms shared by members of a group. Among other things, the shared values and norms direct group members' attention to what is important. They also define what is appropriate behaviour. Cultural differences are found for three key factors that are important for successful negotiation outcomes: emphasis on information sharing, available means of searching for information, and motivation to search for information.

Yet, just because negotiators are from different cultures, it does not necessarily follow that their negotiation strategies will clash, making the negotiation process more difficult and the outcome suboptimal. As pointed out in a following article by Carnevale and Choi (this issue), culture can also play a *positive* role in the mediation of international disputes. Mediation here refers to a third-party intervention in a negotiation, which does not infringe on the negotiators' freedom to make their own decisions. Research shows that cultural connections to one or both parties in a conflict can provide access, acceptability, and influence in mediation. Furthermore, if the mediator acts in a fair, even-handed manner he or she can be very effective despite, or perhaps because of, being culturally closer to one party.

Human Interdependence and Decision Making

It is a common observation that unresolved conflicts between self-interest and mutual interests may stall negotiations. Psychological research on social dilemmas (Dawes, 1980) focuses directly on factors that influence how such conflicts are resolved. Social dilemmas are situations in which individuals have an incentive to make a decision that, when made by all or most individuals, leads to a worse outcome for all than would otherwise be the case. The payoff structure in a social dilemma is identical to that in the prisoner's dilemma game (Luce & Raiffa, 1957), which game theorists have used to analyze, among other things, interstate conflicts. In their article, Dawes and Messick (this issue) provide several everyday examples of social dilemmas. (A lot more examples can be found in Ostrom, 1990.) Their psychological analysis leads to some suggested solutions which can possibly be applied both in negotiations between states as well as in understanding intrastate conflicts. A key to the solution is to create group identity among individuals. It is, however, a two-edged sword since conflicts between groups are in general more difficult to resolve. An instant hostility between groups arise in experiments (e.g. Bornstein, 1992) when members randomly assigned to an in-group are rewarded for benefiting this group rather than an out-group. It is essential—and sometimes possible—to create a superordinate group identity.

Social Justice

People believe it is fair if they receive an outcome that they are entitled to depending on who they are or what they have done. What role does the procedure to reach this outcome play? In his article Tyler (this issue) concludes that people are willing to accept outcomes if they are the result of a fair decision process, that is, if the procedure to determine the outcomes is fair. Features characterizing fair procedures include participation in the resolution process, neutrality of the authorities, trustworthiness of the authorities, and treatment with dignity and respect. However, there are also limits to the effectiveness of fair procedures due to culture and group identification. Despite these limits, Tyler stresses that the message from psychological research is optimistic. In fact, it may be possible to bridge differences in interests and values through the use of fair decision-making procedures.

In their companion article Mikula and Wenzel (this issue) present a theoretical framework that provides in-depth understanding of the implications of justice and injustice for the emergence, course, and resolution of social conflicts. They argue that justice norms are means to avoid or limit conflicts. However, justice norms may sometimes fuel conflicts or cause escalation when people

perceive that they have been treated in an unfair way or when there are disagreements about which justice norms should be applicable.

Intergroup Processes

The point of departure for Hewstone and Greenland (this issue) in their article is the social identity theory originally proposed by Tajfel (e.g. Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). According to this theory, people tend to define themselves with reference to their group memberships, and positive comparisons (differences perceived as favouring the own group—the in-group) give them a satisfactory social identity whereas negative comparisons (differences perceived as favouring another group—the out-group) lead to an unsatisfactory social identity. The power of social categorization is most convincingly demonstrated in the minimal groups paradigm. Here, participants are allocated to either of two groups by chance, and the only way they can obtain a positive social identity is by identifying with the group to which they have been randomly selected. Thus, in distributing rewards, for example, people may give higher rewards to an unknown in-group member than to an unknown out-group member in order to maintain a positive comparison. It was noted earlier (Dawes & Messick, this issue) that group or social identity plays an important role in social dilemmas, that is, in conflicts between self-interest and mutual interests. More generally, social identity theory helps to make understandable many conflicts that appear to lack an objective basis. The theory construes such conflicts as attempts to establish, maintain, and defend group members' positive social identities. Other factors may also operate isolated from or in conjunction with social identity. One such factor is the history of real and perceived mutual transgressions.

Hewstone and Greenland (this issue) propose two major types of intervention to reduce intergroup hostility and intergroup conflict, one based on bringing about positive and cooperative contacts between members of previously hostile groups, and the other based on changing the structure of people's social categorizations. As to the first type of intervention, there is today extensive evidence indicating that contacts between members of different groups improve intergroup relations. However, there must be some favourable conditions for this type of intervention to work—for example, that the contact is between members of equal status in the two groups, and that the situation makes possible a contact on more than a superficial basis. The second type of intervention, changing social categorization, can be achieved by different means. Three approaches are identified: *decategorization*, which seeks to eliminate social categorization by providing differentiated and personalized information; *recategorization*, inspired by social identity theory, that seeks to reduce intergroup bias by transforming members' perceptions

of group boundaries from “us” and “them” to “we”; and *cross-categorization*, also influenced by social identity theory, which attempts to minimize multiple converging social categorizations. As the authors point out, these interventions reduce or change the salience of the existing social categorizations in a complementary way. Thus, successful interventions would most likely integrate the various perspectives.

Intercultural Processes

Different cultures develop their own formal and informal ways of managing conflicts. In his article, Triandis (this issue) reviews research that increases our understanding of negotiation and mediation between parties with different cultural backgrounds. A basic requirement is that communication between members of different cultures is learned and practised. Starting with an attempt to specify the degree of dissimilarity or distance between cultures, Triandis identifies different stages in the development of adequate communication. When members of a culture encounter members of another culture, they are seldom aware of their mutual misconceptions. In fact, they take for granted that the others think the way they do (the stage of *unconscious incompetence*). After unsuccessful communication attempts they may at best realize their misunderstanding without being able to specify it in further detail (the stage of *conscious incompetence*). If mutually motivated to obtain access to the other culture's norms and codes, the stage of *conscious competence* may eventually be reached. After numerous communication attempts leading to the development of culturally appropriate ways to communicate with members of the foreign culture, the negotiators enter a final, productive stage of *unconscious competence* where communication runs smoothly, adequately, and with very little effort.

Environmental Policy Making

Conflicts between two states or groups within states frequently threaten common resources. A thorough analysis of environmental problems, partly the consequences of international conflicts, is provided in the article by Vlek (this issue). Vlek also discusses societal and individual determinants of these problems. Solutions require international agreements. Negotiations of such agreements need to be informed by interdisciplinary research. Vlek makes several important points concerning what psychology can contribute today as well as in the future.

Examples of psychological research that contributes to the solution of environmental problems are described in the article by Montada and Kals (this issue). Several implications of this research for environmental policy are spelled out. Research is also reported showing how people evaluate different environmental policies. A salient attribute in such evaluations is the degree to which the policies conform to justice norms.

The two articles on environmental policy making provide an in-depth introduction to an area whose importance appears to have been less recognized in international diplomacy. In addition, many implications of the psychological research in this area are detailed. Yet, like several of the others, these articles are not directly focused on negotiation and mediation. The implications for international diplomacy nevertheless appear clear. Highlighting them may lead to new fruitful research questions being posed in psychological negotiation research.

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