

Preface

Why This Book on Psychology and Politics of Peace Negotiation: Objectives and Approach

The subject of international negotiations, and especially peace negotiations, is considered particularly relevant for the entire planet. The rapid changes that occurred after the fall of the Berlin Wall have proved not only to be heralds of a new and more democratic global balance, but also capable of provoking further outbreaks of war. Today wars are different from those of the last century, but not less painful for people and nations who are affected by them.

Politics, using and taking internal advantage of diplomacy, negotiation, and mediation modalities, has so far been “busy” managing the difficult relationship between governments and people of different cultural anthropology and different geographical, economic, religious, and social conditions, with results that in good and bad times are there for all to see. Our proposal, presented in this volume, concerns the possibility of a concrete and operational integration of the acquisitions of the psychology and psychotherapy of cognitive orientation into the international political and negotiating process, aiming to provide a set of additional tools for the construction of peace processes that may be useful not only for individual human beings sensitive to these topics, but also for public opinion, citizens, negotiators, and governors/rulers.

This text is the second step of our project. In 2008, we published a book titled *Psychological Processes in International Negotiations: Theoretical and Practical Perspectives*, which aimed to draw the boundaries of a new area of study, research and application, resulting from the integration of political science and cognitive psychology/psychotherapy, to analyze and try to change negotiating processes and to outline some modalities of psychologically oriented training for negotiators in the future.

In 2006, during the writing of the previous book, Albert Ellis (1913–2007), one of the most important psychologists and psychotherapists of the twentieth century, encouraged our work with a supportive foreword to our book (Ellis, in: Aquilar and Galluccio 2008) and “authorized” us to continue the path he traced (Ellis 1992). We had already planned to ask, as editors, some of the leading scholars and experts in

cognitive psychology, psychotherapy, and political science for a contribution that would aim at a scientific construction of peace processes.

However, at that time we did not imagine that we would receive such an exciting response from the extraordinary authors who now we have the honor of hosting in this volume. Each author has developed some important aspects of psychological and political strategies for peace negotiations, and every contribution is much richer and more complex than we could fairly present in this introduction. However, it can certainly help to shape our conversation with the reader, and to highlight some strengths of the general context, by providing a rough approximation, as follows:

Intelligences – How to Change Mind	Gardner
Values – Evolution – Compassion	Gilbert
Personal Schemas	Leahy
Emotional Competence	Saarni
Tacit Knowledge	Dowd, Roberts Miller
Thinking Errors – Decision-making	Meichenbaum
Images of the Conflict – Negative Escalation	Faure
Communication in Intractable Conflicts	Pruitt
Practical Cooperation Between Science and Society	Nauen
Decision-Making – Thrusts – Constraints – Collective Action	Druckman, Gürkaynak, Beriker, Celik
Negotiating Practice	Kremenyuk
War Experiences	Zikic
Rebuilding Experiences	Karam
Political Strategies Psychologically Oriented	Galluccio
Psychological Strategies Politically Oriented	Aquilar

More specifically, the book starts with a contribution from Howard Gardner, who presents possible applications of his famous theory of multiple intelligences to peace negotiation, with particular attention to processes related to “changing minds.” What kinds of intelligence should be developed and how can we train minds to be open to creative and effective solutions? What processes should be encouraged so that people can develop new ideas, acquire relevant information, and check the accuracy of their views objectively?

Paul Gilbert, a scholar who is particularly experienced in processes of “compassion,” has contributed a chapter that looks at how the evolution of humans has developed towards a prospective of peace, and through what kind of values. How we could develop a “compassionate mind” and what individual, social, and political benefits might result from this development, are among the topics we can find in his work, with constant reference to the implications of the psychobiology and to the theory of values on past, present and future international negotiations and mediations.

Robert L. Leahy describes the concept of “Personal Schemas,” which is well known to cognitive psychotherapists, presenting an application of this concept to negotiation processes. His contribution clearly shows the effectiveness of the extension of theories and techniques derived from cognitive psychotherapy to the negotiating context, specifying and detailing various operational steps and implications.

Afterwards, Carolyn Saarni shows the functions that emotional factors play in the negotiation process. These factors have long been neglected, ignored, or misinterpreted in past studies and research on the subject of international negotiation. Emotional competence, however, is proving to be a key factor both in negotiations (especially particularly delicate or dangerous ones) and in social communication, as well as interpersonal communication.

Factors beyond cognitive and emotional processes, such as the so-called “tacit knowledge,” may implicitly influence the minds and behavior of negotiators, and especially of political leaders. The forms in which tacit knowledge is expressed are the subjects of E. Thomas Dowd’s and Angela N. Roberts Miller’s chapter.

It is interesting to understand how this psychological knowledge could operationally improve politicians’ decisions, and of which thinking errors they should be warned. This is the subject of Donald Meichenbaum’s chapter, which presents a precise application of theories and techniques of cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy to be applied in key moments when situations may go from bad to worse: that of the decision-making process.

Negotiation processes are embedded in social contexts and raise specific reactions in public opinion. Such reactions “bounce” on governments and negotiators and to some extent tend to influence them. To this end, social images of international conflicts are meant to be studied for their fundamental importance, and are analyzed in the chapter written by Guy Olivier Faure, who pays close attention to distorted images of the conflict that may lead to its escalation.

Unfortunately, conflict escalation sometimes becomes uncontrollable and it is easy to face situations where the conflict is instead characterized by a serious long-term hostility. The modalities used to resume an effective negotiating communication in these dramatic cases are the subjects of Dean G. Pruitt’s chapter. He proposes, after a historical and psychological analysis, an operational method for a reassessment of the motivations of each actor. This, through a specific sequence of communication that uses as its first steps back-channel communication and many unofficial channels of communication, and only then passing to the official channels of communication.

But how could we transfer information resulting from scientific research and psychotherapeutic practice to the real world? Why, despite the efforts of generations of scholars, are we still witnessing a disconnection between knowledge and social applications? The aim of Cornelia E. Nauen’s chapter, which homogenizes the experience arising from sustainable efforts in the field of international cooperation, is to try to establish a functional link between science and society, encouraging the construction of peace processes.

Another key issue is the constraints faced by politicians and negotiators. These often represent an insurmountable obstacle to peace negotiations. This topic is the central subject of Daniel Druckman’s, Esra Çuhadar Gürkayanak’s, Betül Celik’s and Nimet Beriker’s chapter. In particular, the authors focus their attention on the interaction between political decisions and processes of collective action, which may be, for better or for worse, decisive in promoting or destroying peace processes.

Viktor Kremenyuk, starting from the concept of “practical negotiator,” focuses his attention on the description of an ideal model of negotiator that would better fit present and different times (compared even to the recent past). This means not being misled either by unfounded hopes or pessimistic temptations. The negotiation practice, in fact, even in light of recent studies, brings implications with it, which are not always taken into account by pure theorists.

Moreover, to focus on practical experiences, we have contributions from two cognitive psychotherapists who have experienced the plight of the war and the strenuous reconstruction modalities of acceptable political and interpersonal environments in two countries that suffered the most tragic consequences of failed peace negotiations: Serbia and Lebanon.

In Olivera Zikic’s chapter the reader is conducted through the human experiences and the tragic consequences of the dissolution of former Yugoslavia from the perspective of a Serbian psychiatrist. The topics analyzed include: possibilities and failures of the prevention policy, management modalities of the conflict period and its consequences, and reconstruction processes.

In her chapter Aimee Karam highlights the opportunities arising from the use of cognitive psychotherapy techniques in negotiations following the acute phase of the war in Lebanon. She makes a careful analysis of some real episodes and frames the planning of possible further psychological interventions aimed at a concrete and peaceful rationalization of negotiation processes.

The possible political strategies for peace negotiations, in light of psychological processes outlined all along this book, are the subject of the study made by Mauro Galluccio, who after having reviewed the results achieved so far, outlines possible future scenarios. To make the chapter more readable and up-to-date, he critically examines some of US President Barack Obama’s speeches, identifying strengths and weaknesses and proposing and advising actions oriented to “changing minds.” From this analysis, the author derives a four-part operative model for peace negotiation, which includes: (a) awareness, (b) sustainability, (c) inclusiveness, and (d) balancing. Moreover, in the chapter there are some specifications of the elements needed for a functional and permanent training of leaders, politicians, and negotiators, which could constitute, empower, and systematically update their skills and abilities for understanding, communication, and negotiation.

The evaluation of the possibility of cognitive psychotherapy intervention in promoting peace concretely is presented in Francesco Aquilar’s chapter, with respect to different units of analysis and intervention. Following in the footsteps of Albert Ellis (1992), he distinguishes three possible levels of action: (a) the construction of a peace attitude in individuals; (b) the social dissemination of some constructive modalities for peace, in order to structure and organize a cognitively based peace movement, which would be aware of the magnitude and seriousness of the variables involved (obvious, tacit or hidden); and (c) the training of politicians and negotiators who would be able to influence not only decisions and collective actions, but would also aim to constitute a public opinion that offers significant support to peace and to a motivated war deterrence and of ideologies that tend to produce war.

Finally, as editors, we will try to draw some conclusions from the analysis of the issues addressed, as well as identifying potential scenarios for an integrated application of the issues and strategies mentioned above.

In this way, we hope that the discussion on psychological and political strategies for peace negotiations, through a cognitive approach, is addressed from different points of view that are compatible and integrated. However, we need more specific research, and we know that other relevant aspects of international negotiation were not addressed on this occasion. However, we hope that the wide range of topics and issues addressed, which outlined some key components, could lead to a range of practical applications and operational suggestions for implementing peace processes. As soon as possible!

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