

Francesco Aquilar • Mauro Galluccio
Editors

Psychological and Political Strategies for Peace Negotiation

A Cognitive Approach



 Springer

Editors

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To our parents and to our children

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Foreword

"The best of humanity doesn't wait for the storm to pass. They dance in the rain."

Anonymous

For as long as human beings have walked the earth, conflict has been a part of the landscape, whether over food, property, power, control, or relationships. Much of this conflict may come under the general concept of territoriality, which appears to be an implicit trait in human kind. The literature in anthropology is replete with studies dating to early scientific investigations of human beings' intrinsic need to define specific territory as a way to establish and maintain autonomy and to enter into conflict with others. During the course of history, most wars have been fought between neighbors and usually over issues involving power and domain. The question of proximity is generally less likely the cause of conflict than the means for it. Proximity fosters interaction, and interaction can bring differences to the foreground. As the number of interactions between parties increases, the opportunities for disagreements between them also increase.

However undesirable it may be, conflict is inevitable between human beings; it is simply part of the human condition. Power, wealth, and resources are not distributed equally, and the scramble to gain them or protect them or broker them invites conflict, both petty and profound.

The common denominator in many conflicts appears to comprise several components. One aspect is a sense of vulnerability and perceived threats to the integrity to one's existence. This concept typically evokes an emotional reaction for a fight/flight response. When the fight response manifests, it usually leads to anger and retaliation in the other. This pattern can also thwart communication and narrow the pathway for negotiation. This problem may occur despite the fact that both sides actually desire to reach a level of agreement or homeostasis. In many conflict situations, the amount of animosity and distrust that builds up is antithetical to the type of cooperation that is essential for negotiation to be possible. And although these negative feelings may be a matter of perception that has been somewhat distorted by circumstances, they may seem entirely real to the endangered party. Parties that become so mired in the notion of standing their ground or winning often become entrenched in the mechanics

of the struggle, sometimes even forgetting the original issue, much like disgruntled marital partners who become gridlocked in a power struggle.

The Harvard psychologist, Daniel Gilbert, writes that one of the things that bring human beings unhappiness is uncertainty about the future. Conflict brings uncertainty; thus, one way to avoid uncertainty is to avoid conflict. But if, as we said, conflict has existed as far back as recorded history and in virtually every culture, what can be done to ameliorate the situation? It appears that much of the reconciliation perspective presented in this beautifully edited text is predicated upon the removal of the emotional barriers between the warring parties. These include the emotions that are associated with perceptions of having been victimized by an adversary and feelings of distrust that have accumulated during the conflict period. Conflict usually becomes increasingly difficult to resolve when distrust dominates the communication, leaving adversaries waiting for each other to concede.

This unique text presents important discussions of the concept of optimism and finding mutually acceptable agreements between adversaries. This optimism depends on perceptions that have their roots in what cognitive therapists refer to as "schema."

Traditionally, cognitive therapy has focused on three levels of cognitive phenomena, namely: automatic thoughts, cognitive distortions, and underlying assumptions. The underlying assumptions of schemas constitute the deepest and most fundamental level of cognition. They are viewed as the basis for screening, differentiating coding stimuli that individuals encounter during the course of their lifetime. Schemas are typically organized elements of task reactions and experiences that form a relatively cohesive and persistent body of knowledge that guides subsequent perceptions and appraisals. They may also include a set of rules held by an individual that guides his or her attention to particular stimuli in the environment and shapes the types of inferences that individuals make from unobserved characteristics.

Schemas in conflict lend to the ingrained images that individuals or groups have in their minds about their adversaries. These images may go on to develop into collective schemas that are jointly held by populations or cultures, such as is the case with countries that have been at odds for centuries. These schemas are often affected in one way or the other by cognitive distortions about one's self or one's adversary and can contribute to an emotional impasse that is enduring.

Many of the chapters in this text underscore the process of negotiation and offer various useful methods to implement it. Negotiation requires a social mentality that accommodates a cultural sensitivity for both sides, which is often very difficult to achieve. Most important are some of the motivational and cognitive areas that are found in the decision-making process during negotiation. The contrasting aspects of comparison and callous indifference that characterize the relationship between adversaries are often targets of interest. The effects of brain activation are also discussed with regard to some of the engagement in the negotiation process.

Neuroscientists tell us that our primate brain through cold reasoning constantly tries to make sense of our environment and pursues new meaning. This is particularly so when we face a complex problem with disparate facts, such as is the case with any conflict. Our brains try to find a solution that explains all facts. As a result,

adversaries caught in the most severe of conflicts may still maintain a certain amount of vulnerability to being influenced by cognitive restructuring and the type of mediation that exists with a cognitive approach. Cognitive therapy offers a new dimension to negotiation, particularly in overriding the heated emotion that often gets in the way of attempts to pursue effective negotiation strategies, which is clearly outlined in the overreaching theme of this textbook. The impetus for this work is born out of the dire need for an effective intervention to quell conflict during a time when the world is in serious turmoil.

It is my hope that this book will sow the seeds to new thinking with regard to forging successful reconciliation agreements between conflicting nations now and in the future.

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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	Kremenjuk
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 Gürkaynak’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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