International conflict can be conceived as a set of interactive and interdependent decision problems that arise within the context of world politics. The context shapes, but does not determine, the choices leaders make and, indeed, through their choices, leaders change the context and structures of world politics. Individual and collective theories of choice, the focus of systematic research in cognitive and social psychology, become relevant to international politics just as we accept the proposition that leaders of collectives—states or groups—acting alone or as part of a group, make decisions that have consequences not only for themselves but for others. The choices of one leader can have a powerful effect on the structure of the decision-problem itself and on the choices available to others.

Psychological approaches are useful in establishing boundary conditions for on-going arguments within structural explanations of systemic politics. They help as well to specify theories built on identity formation and change and on the wide norm creation and observation. Psychological theories are also useful in explaining the bounded choices political leaders make to escalate and to de-escalate conflict, and in the analysis of patterns of interaction that are the result of indirect series of choices.

In international conflict, important decision problems are typically ill-structured. The definition of the problem is often contested among the parties and there is little agreement on the nature of the stakes or their value. Even when the representation of the problem is not contested, the environment often does not provide timely and accurate feedback nor do leaders have the opportunity to engage in repeated trials over time to generate robust probability distributions (Newell and Simon, 1972; Simon, 1957; Voss and Post, 1998; Voss et al., 1985; Voss et al., 1991). Leaders are consequently often uncertain about the problem, stakes, the values and intentions of others, and the constraints that define the problem. Abstract values must be constructed, postulated and reformulated as precise objectives in the light of specific contingencies. Often, the options themselves are not known and leaders must identify the options as well as their consequences. At times, the structure of a problem emerges only through the process—individual or collective—of constructing the representation of the problem. Leaders' representations of decision problems have a significant impact on their construction of preferences and identification of options, as well as on their choices.

Psychological theories are especially useful in the exploration of international conflict when representations of problems are contested, when these problems are not routine, the stakes are high to the choosers, and when the environment offers sufficient degrees of freedom to permit a range of choices. Under these conditions, institutional routines are often not considered adequate and the role of leaders, acting alone or collectively, is critical. In the first part of the chapter, I began by reviewing the contribution of cognitive psychology to the explanation of processes of problem representation in ill-structured problems typical of non-routine conflict environments of institutional politics. I examine next the contribution of prospect theory, the leading alternative to theories that model choice as subjectively expected maximizing decisions. I then move from the individual level to explore the contribution of social psychology to the exploration of small group decisions. Many foreign policy decisions are made in the context of a small group, functioning either as a
collective choice, or a advisers to a leader with
final executive responsibility. In the second part of
the chapter, I move beyond choice as the focus of
explanation to examine the contributions of social
psychology to the analysis of mass ethnic conflict,
where identity and group dynamics are important
drivers of conflict in the international system.

**Psychological Explanations of Choice**

**Cognitive Approaches to Individual Choice**

Cognitive psychology has identified a series of sys-
tematic deviations from the norms of rational
choice. Deviations from rational actor assumptions
about judgement, estimation and choice are
explained by the need for simple rules that permit
straightforward responses to the complex, often ill-structured
problems and the uncertain environments of the
political leaders typically face in international
relations. These responses are adaptive in routine,
well-structured environments but can produce sig-
ificant distortions in complex poorly structured
environments. There is no single `cognitive theory
of choice, and cognitive psychologists have identi-
fied no dominant decision rule (Mintz and Geva,
1993). Instead, they have specified and categorized
the filters through which people process informa-
tion, and the simplifying mechanisms they employ
to help them make sense of the world. Political psy-
chologists, drawing on research done in cognitive
psychology, see leaders of collectivities facing
choices about conflict as cognitive managers strug-
gling to manage inherent uncertainties and com-
plexities through typical cognitive `short-cuts."
Although cognitive psychology provides no unified
theory of choice, it explains why people deviate
from ideally rational choice and allows the analyst of
international politics both to the importance of
identifying leaders’ representation of their prob-
lems, and to a menu of systematic strategies of
simplification leaders are likely to use.

**Cognitive Stability: Beliefs, Schema, Heuristics, Biases and Information Processing**

Cognitive psychology has demonstrated that people’s
prior beliefs strongly affect information processing
(Croson and Schwartz, 1999; Lamm, 1997; Sanbon-
maata et al., 1997; Weigener and Petty, 1998). Theo-
ries of cognitive consistency posit that individuals
seek to maintain their consistency of their `belief sys-
tems against incoming information in ways that lead
them to depart from norms of rational inference and
choice. Indeed, exposure to contradictory informat-
ion frequently results in the strengthening of beliefs.
The strengthening of beliefs after exposure to contradic-
tory information results from the processes of reason-
ing people use to explain the apparent inconsistency.
The discount rate of information that is inconsistent
with organizing beliefs is systematically higher than
rational norms would dictate and people tend to
choose options whose anticipated outcomes are con-
sistent with established beliefs.

In international politics, leaders can be expected
to discount systematically new information and resist
to change in fundamental beliefs (Little and Smith,
1983). President George Bush, for example, required a consistent stream of evidence over a pro-
tected period of time before he changed his belief
about Mikhail Gorbachev. Indeed, even a consistent
stream of evidence was insufficient; it took the
destruction of the Berlin Wall to overcome his
resistance. Discounting has also been used to explain
the success of strategies of deception and the con-}
sequent strategic surprise experienced by
intelligence officials. The failure by American
intelligence to detect Japanese intentions before the
attack on Pearl Harbor, the failure of Israel’s intel-
lignce to predict the Egyptian and Syrian attack in
1973, and the failure to predict Iraq’s invasion of
Kuwait in 1990 have all been explained not by the
absence of good evidence but rather by the ten-
daency of officials to discount systematically evi-
dence that was inconsistent with prevailing beliefs.
Analyses of a wide range of political leaders, work-
ning in divergent political systems, suggest very
similar processes of discounting information is
incompatible with belief systems are at work.

Attribute theories have emphasized the impor-
tance of `schema’, or individuals’, concepts and their
defining attributes. A `schema’ is a working hypoth-
esis about some aspect of the environment, and may
be a concept of the self (self-schema), other individu-
als (person schema), groups (role-schema), or
sequences of events in the environment (scripts)
(Fiske, 1986; Fiske and Taylor, 1994: 146; Lau and
Sears, 1966; Weigener and Petty, 1998). People use
schemas to organize their interpretation of their environ-
ment and develop scripts — a working hypothesis about the
environment — to prepare for action. Unlike theories of
ego-consistency, attribution theories do not assume that
as individual’s collection of schemas form a coherent system. But like theories of cogni-
tive consistency, they too assume that schemas, once
formed, are resistant to change.

The well-established tendency to discount infor-
mation that is discrepant with existing schema con-
tributes significantly to cognitive stability. The
postulate that schemas resist change can be inter-
preted as consistent with statistical logic if
people assign a low variance estimate to their expec-
tations. Psychological research contradicts this inter-
pretation through repeated observations that exposure to discrepant information strengthens
rather than undermines existing schema.
Common heuristics and biases can impair procedures of reflex-revision and judgment as well (Kahneman et al., 1982; Nisbett and Ross, 1980; Sussel and Tselock, 1997; Von Winterfeldt and Edwards, 1996). Heuristics are rules people use to lose the properties embedded in their judgments, and may be thought of as convenient short-cuts or rules-of-thumb for processing information. Those of the best documented heuristics are availability, representativeness, and anchoring. The availability heuristic refers to people’s tendency to interpret ambiguous information in terms of what is most easily remembered (Ross and Nisbett, 1979; Taylor, 1982; Tversky and Kahneman, 1973). The heuristics of representativeness refer to people’s tendency to exaggerate the similarities between one event and a prior class of events, typically leading to significant errors in probability judgments or estimates of frequency (Kahneman and Tversky, 1972, 1975; Tversky and Kahneman, 1982). The heuristic of anchoring refers to an estimation of magnitude or degree by comparing it with an “available” initial value taken as an anchor only as a reference point (not making a companion (Fiske and Taylor, 1984, 250-6, 268-75).

All three heuristics help explain crucial errors in estimation and judgment by mapping the effects of prior mental states. Availability and representativeness provide a convincing account for the tendency of Israel’s leaders to relate Arab threats to the Nazi holocaust, despite differences in capacity and context. These heuristics affect not only estimates of probability but also the representation of the conflict Israel’s leaders use. Anchoring accounts for the frequent Israeli reference to the Holocaust in public discourse. In contrast, the political value attached by Prime Minister Ben-Gurion in the autumns of 2000— one which included a ten percent of the West Bank to Palestinians from now on and the far more limited offers made by earlier leaders.

Cognitive biases also lead to errors in attribution. The epistemic bias, which leads people to exaggerate the likelihood that the actions of others are the result of their own prior behavior is illustrated by a recent study of people to investigate the extent to which they are the target of these actions. Contributions in an escalation agent in a conflict environment. When people exaggerate the importance of dispositional over situational factors in explaining the behavior of others, they commit the fundamental attribution error (Fiske and Taylor, 1984: 72-9; Kahneman et al., 1982; Nisbett and Ross, 1980). The fundamental attribution error makes it more likely the leader will attribute hostile intentions to others more and that the other will not commit the fundamental attribution error error (Fiske and Taylor, 1984). This kind of reasoning can lead to a mutual perception of intentional hostility that is unwarranted by behavior, escalating security dilemmas, and near arms races and escalation to violence.

Research suggests that the fundamental attribution error is most likely to occur when the observed behavior is consistent with prior beliefs about the actor (Keller,1981). Consistent behavior is especially likely to be attributed to dispositional factors when there are compelling situational explanations. Dispositional attributions are likely to be highly available for consistent behavior and the readily available belief that the actor is ‘just the knapsack’ who would engage in such behavior may make people insensitive to situational factors that might have evolved consistency. The representative bias may therefore help to explain the occurrence of fundamental attribution errors when observed behavior is consistent with prior beliefs. This kind of reasoning can sustain and deepen hostile representations of other’s intentions, and make conflict escalation more likely and conflict resolution more difficult.

Impact of Embedded Enemy Images on Conflict

Once schemas are embedded, they are extraordinarily difficult to change. This is particularly true of hostile images. An image refers to a set of beliefs, or the hypothesis that an individual or group is consistent with an image. An image includes both, expected knowledge about beliefs and beliefs about another’s beliefs. It might include a known belief that an actor is hostile and uncontrollable, and that the actor is likely to be hostile. A cycle of reciprocal behavior then reinforce adversary images by providing allegedly confirming evidence of hostile intentions. Adversarial images tend to become self-fulfilling and self-reinforcing and can fuel spirals of international conflict (Chen and Birg, 1997: 94-5; Pruitt and Rubin, 1986: 117-18).

Kohnstam has established at least three different schemas of enemies: imperialists, barbarians, and degenerates (Jernberg and Fischer-Bellnegg, 1995). Throughout the Cold War, the research showed that the United States as an imperial enemy, Chinese leaders have at times, stereotyped others as “barbarian” and the Ayatollah Khomeini is seen described Western leaders as “degenerates.” These schemas informed the representation of problems that leaders in the Soviet Union, China, and Iran construed, and influenced the way they processed information and estimated probabilities, and the choices they made. Cognitive processes tend to support stereotypes of images and biases once they are established. People

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Mitigating Factors

Although these are systemic errors and biases, their impact can be mitigated in part by the individual and group setting in which decision-making takes place. The group context of the decision may mitigate or accentuate individual biases. Group processes can reinforce and strengthen the tendency to discount incongruent information, by appealing to group solidarity, or by discrediting existing processes that allow for and indeed encourage early challenges to prevailing beliefs (Hilt et al., 1997). Written testimony when I examine the dynamics of collective choice. At a more general level, transparent systems, which allow for scrutiny and accountability, can help to reduce the impact of some of these biases by facilitating the movement of information in the system in a timely manner (Lerner and Teltsch, 1999; Trocki and Lerner, 1999). A political system where powers are shared helps to reduce those kinds of biases by leaders while the kind of isolation characteristic of leaders of authoritarian states — Haber at Assad in Syria and Saddam Hussein in Iraq — produces biases. Cloud parades democratic and pluralistic systems can better mitigate those kinds of biases than closed authoritarian political systems.

Revision of Schemas, Inference and Estimatives

Stability in enemy images is the default and change the exception. Yet accounting does not hold unconditionally. Schemas are change, although they generally tend to change gradually over time, rather than undergo quick and far-reaching conversion. Schema theory has not yet developed an integrated set of propositions about why schema change. In large part because schema theories focus on which schemas, they are relatively static (Kruglanski et al., 1991). The centrality of schemas, their fixity, the diagnosability of discrepant information, the pattern of attribution and cognitive complexity have all been identified as predictors of the likelihood of revision and, by extension, of change in judgement.

Change in is part a function of the rate at which discrepant information occurs, and how diagnostic leaders and officials consider the information. Contrafactual evidence dispersed across many instances should have a greater impact on schemas than a few isolated examples (Crocker et al., 1993). As people consider information incongruent with previous knowledge, they incorporate into their schemas the conditions under which the schema does not hold, permitting gradual change and adjustment (Hagens and Borgs, 1987; 386). Incremental schema is challenged only when there is no other way to account for contradictory data that people consider diagnostic. Greater change will occur when information comes in large batches, rather than by by. President George Bush, as I noted, did not change his image of Gorbachev even though the Soviet leader made a series of unilateral gestures to the United States. Only when information about large change arrived in a rush, did he finally alter his well-established image. Even the strongest schema cannot withstand the challenge of strongly incongruent information at competing schemas that fits the data better (Miklos and Zajonc, 1985).

Significant change in schema about another also occurs when targets are exposed to incongruent information and are persuaded that the behavior is not arbitrary, but reflects the nature of the target. Creation and Muslim leaders, for example, did not change their image of Soviets because they attributed the change in Soviet policy to the military setback they suffered at the hands of the Creation forces in Kuwait. Change occurs when incongruent information is attributed to dispositional rather than situational factors. The general tendency to perceive situations rather than dispositional attributions for incongruent behavior explains why change occurs so infrequently.

Change is also a function of cognitive complexity, or the intimacy of the cognitive rules used to process information about objects and situations. Cognitive complexity refers to the degree of the organization of cognition rather than to the content of thought. Complexity can have somewhat contradictory effects on schemas change. The more complex the cognitive system, the more capable is the decision-maker of making new and useful generalizations when confronted with new information (Teltsch, 1985). Experts with highly complex cognitive schemas are more sensitive to new information than novices with low cognitive complexity, whose schemas are likely to be fixed and rigid (Goodwin and Feldman, 1984). Those who possess multiple judgement dimensions also tend to possess rules of abstraction that facilitate the integration and comparison of information. They tend to produce alternative interpretations of new information, but by using their capacity for abstraction and integration, are able to resolve these ambiguities.
Framing Effects and Prospect Theory

Cognitive psychology has identified a series of systematic biases that are likely to distort the judgments made by those with an interest in international policy. An important stream of research on framing and decision-making focuses on the impact of presentation of information on the judgments made by those with an interest in international policy. The theory of prospect theory – the most important and influential theory of decision-making – states that those with an interest in international policy are likely to be more risk-averse than those who are not. This is because those with an interest in international policy are more likely to be aware of the potential risks associated with their decisions, and therefore are more likely to avoid taking actions that could lead to negative outcomes.

Framing theory suggests that the way in which information is presented can have a significant impact on the judgments made by those with an interest in international policy. For example, a study by Kahneman and Tversky (1979) showed that framing the same information in different ways can lead to different judgments. This is because those with an interest in international policy are more likely to be more risk-averse than those who are not. This is because those with an interest in international policy are more likely to be aware of the potential risks associated with their decisions, and therefore are more likely to avoid taking actions that could lead to negative outcomes.

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laboratory may be transposed to and made operational in real-world settings.

Attribution studies typically ask subjects explicitly to determine why an event occurred, whereas, in real events, actors are often unaware of specific causes or questions. The elaboration procedure of structuring the problem and defining the task's fields may systematically bias the results of the studies (Aide and Shipher rejected, 1974; Pyerowski and Greenberg, 1981: 37). Moreover, the tasks subjects are asked to perform in most prospect theory experiments are generally trivial and highly structured; they are also unrelated to other tasks and judgments the subjects are likely to perform outside the laboratory. Judgments made by political leaders on foreign policy issues, by contrast, are often interrelated and deal with issues that are significant and highly valued.

People's recognition of the importance of a decision may influence their thoroughness in collecting and evaluating information and choice of decision-making rules (Feyn, 1960). Some cognitive psychologists, however, dispute the proposition that important judgments will encourage the collection of more explicit and articulated cognitive processes. They argue that laboratory procedures often result in an underestimation of the magnitude of inferential failures (Nieboer and Ross, 1980: 220-2, 250-4).

Biases may matter less in foreign policy decision-making than they do in the laboratory because the continuous environment of foreign policy decision-makers gives them some feedback that often permits them to approach decisions incrementally, repeatedly, and noisily. People are more likely to make mistakes when they are dealing with issues that are significant and highly valued. In real-world settings, such as the high stakes, complex, and uncertain environments that characterize high-value international conflict, the effects of biases may be more pronounced. People may be more likely to make mistakes when they are dealing with issues that are significant and highly valued.

Social and political conditions may also work to minimize biases. When controlled political systems become more open, for example, leaders may learn through experience that a process and the selection of criteria available to others and, consequently, shift their reference points and give greater weight to attributes or characteristics of other decision-making systems that are more likely to be found in democratic cultures that emphasize norms of accountability. These kinds of deliberations are especially likely to occur when there is a rough balance of power and policy-making resources among group members. When accessing and controlling information is roughly equally distributed, group membership is heterogeneous rather than homogeneous, and expertise is not the monopoly of one or
two members, pressures to conform are likely to be less (Hart et al., 1997).

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS OF CONFLICT

Group Identity and Conflict

International conflict grows not only out of the interaction among states and their leaders, but also increasingly out of the violence among ethnic groups that spills across international borders. In the past ten years far more people have been killed in civil wars than in inter-state wars, and it is civil wars that have provided the greatest challenge to international institutions struggling to manage conflict. Social psychology addresses the dynamics of conflict among groups and processes of conflict management, resolution and reduction. It pays particular attention to incompatible group identities as a permissive context of conflict.

Two important bodies of scholarship in international relations challenge the importance of intergroup differences and incompatible group identities as significant contributors to violent conflict. Structural explanations of conflict generally give little attention to the processes that mediate between attributes of the environment and behavior. Realist explanations that focus on competition for scarce resources or changes in patterns of alignment assume that conflict can be explained independently of the collective identities of contending groups. They treat collective identities as epiphenomenal.

A second body of scholarship uses rational-choice models to explain the resort to violence as an optimal response to collective fears of the future (Fearon and Laitin, 2000; Lake and Rothchild, 1996; Posen, 1993). As groups begin to fear for their safety, strategic dilemmas arise that are exacerbated by information failures and problems of credible commitment, and, fueled by political entrepreneurs, conflict explodes into violence. Violence becomes a rational response to strategic dilemmas fueled by fear. Here, rational choice explanations are compatible with psychological explanations in so far as the intervening mechanism that triggers fear into violence. Lake and Rothchild argue, for example, that ethnic activists deliberately play on fears of collective insecurity, which are in turn magnified by political memories and anxieties.

Social psychology addresses the origins and triggers to the collective fears that prepare the ground for violence. Converging streams of evidence from social psychology, cultural anthropology, international relations and comparative policies suggest that individuals and groups are motivated to form and maintain images of identity as part of a collective identity even in the absence of solid, confirming evidence of hostile intentions.

Enemy images can be a product of the need for identity and the dynamics of group behavior. Social psychologists have identified a fundamental human need for identity—the way in which a person is, or wishes to be known by others, is a conception of self in relation to others. One important component of individual identity, social identity, or the part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from knowledge of his or her membership in a social group or groups, together with the value attached to that membership (Cajif, 1981: 255). Social psychologists suggest that people satisfy their need for positive self-identity, status or reduction of uncertainty by identifying with a group (Hogg and Abrams, 1993: 173). These needs lead to bolstering and favorable comparison of the in-group with out-groups (Braver and Schneider, 1990: 169-84; Hogg, 1992; Menzies and Mackie, 1999; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel and Turner, 1986: 7-24). Membership in a group leads to systematic comparison and differentiation, and often to derogation of other groups.

The most striking finding of social psychologists is that social differentiation occurs even in the absence of material bases for conflict. This need for collective as well as individual identity leads people to differentiate between ‘we’ and ‘they’, to distinguish between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, even when scarcity or gain is not at issue. In an effort to establish or defend group identity, groups and their leaders identify their distinctive attributes as virtues and label the distinctiveness of others as vices. This kind of ‘looping’ responds to deep social-psychological needs and can lead to the creation of enemy stereotypes. An examination of massive state repression leading to group extinction, for example, concluded that genocide is a way to escape from the terrorizing fear that a particular group not only endures but enjoys greater rights and advantages in environments in which groups seek to satisfy their needs and the norms that they generate and accept. Certain kinds of international and domestic conditions facilitate the collective formation of enemy images (Taylor and Meguidhah, 1987).

Mediating Factors

Social identity and differentiation do not lead inevitably to violent conflict (cf. Meren, 1985) If they did, conflict would occur all the time, under all conditions. First, personal and social identities are often in tension with one another. By identifying
strongly with a group, people inevitably emphasize their individual identity, and those with a strong sense of individual identity give less weight to their group identity. Minority rights activists, for example, characterize individuals as "people with a particular identity" and more with names of individual responsibility. Second, people also generally identify with set-nu groups and typically identify with a group whose importance is salient in a given situation (Fukuyama, 1987). Which group identity is activated situational dependent. The critical question is under what conditions identity and violent conflict are related. Why are relationships among some groups so much more competitive - and violent - than among others? Ifuras and Turrisi have engaged in violent conflict for a long time, while Quebecois and Anglos-Amerians in Canada, despite important and deep differences between the two groups, have not fought for over two hundred years. Moreover, substantial minorities of Quebecois also share multiple identities, including strong and positive identification with Canada. What explains why strong group identity precipitates violent conflict only in some situations? The answer may lie partly in the stability of democratic pluralist systems where citizens have internalized norms of conflict resolution. Canada is a stable democratic system, whereas the success of the former Yugoslav states is the former Yugoslavia were not. Even stable democratic systems, however, have experienced violent conflict. Much depends on the variability of identity. Social identity is not given. Social learning theories and construalism argue that it is constructed through membership in a group and through interaction with others (Bardach, 1973; Harre, 1986). To the extent that identity formation and mapping its critical. Conflict does not develop when the sources of identities or the identities themselves are compatible. When the identity an individual chooses is incompatible with the identity imposed by others or the social situation in which identity is commonly being reproduced conflict can develop. Muslims living in Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, defined themselves as Serbs or Croats until the 1970s, when the Serb and Croat identities began to be redefined as separate. One does not need to begin to define themselves as Bosnian Muslims with a distinct political identity. Even then, however, incompatible political identities may not be sufficient to cause violent conflict. To return again to the Canadian example, some Quebecois see fundamental incompatibilities between being Canadian and being Quebecker, but not consider a reason to force. They do not because they are committed to norms of fairness and due process, and they expect that the consequences will be reciprocated by their counterparts in English Canada (Stern, 1995). Several important conditions have been identified that shape identity and precipitate the strain for violent conflict. The first set of hazards operate between groups within incompatible identities, while the second set is internal to the groups. Ethnic or national identity increases during periods of social, economic, or political crisis, when uncertainty grows and the mechanisms in place to protect one group from another lose their credibility (Lake and Rudolph, 1994: 43). As a central authority declines in the context of socio-economic or political crisis, fears about physical insecurity grow, and groups invest in measures to protect themselves, making the violence they fear more likely (Pessen, 1963). State weakness, its perceived incapacity to protect one group from the anticipated violence of another, is an important trigger of violence among groups with incompatible identities. Identity conflict is often a perception of ownership of the state and control of its resources. States can stand above and attempt to mediate conflict - for example, giving representation to different groups as in Belgium or by the creature and the instrument of one exclusive group, as in Nigeria where the Hausa-Fulani dominate the military regime (Bress, 1997; Curr, 1993). The exaggerations of the identity, symbols and research of the states by one group to the exclusion of others is a strong producer of the likelihood of violence. Conflict can trigger violence among groups under conditions of scarcity. Some evidence suggests that culturally and physically similar groups can generate hostility and aggression toward one another due to competition for scarce resources (Short, 1966). Some analysis of civil violence similarly conclude that relative deprivation is the most important condition for participants in collective violence (Curr, 1970: 12-13). As the gap grows between the expectations of victims, aggression toward those perceived as the cause of relative deprivation grows and intensifies. The competition for scarce resources is exacerbated when the state actively controls the distribution of limited resources. In the Soviet Union, for example, the Portuguese, Slovaks and Croatians actively regulated their distributions of resources to poorer regions of the country. Less division is likely to intensify when groups compete for scarce resources in a context of decreasing expectations; others, predict that the capabilities decline, prospect theory suggests that people who are experiencing a decline in their resources or "lax", are especially likely to make risky choices (Gour, 1970: 46-50; Stein and Paulus, 1989). Yet, the Czechs and Slovaks competed for scarce resources and divided them without resort to violence. Competition for resources and relative deprivation, a sharpened version of competition, cannot satisfactorily account for violence among groups with differentiated and competing identities. Conflicts of identity are likely to escalate to violence when group members construct the recognition of another's identity can compromise their
own, when they perceive the granting of rights to the other as an abdication of their own identity. And when they fear that the other group may move pre-emptively to make gains at their expense. Throughout much of its history, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been this kind of existential conflict; because both identities are tied to the same territory, leaders on both sides have an acknowledgment of the other’s identity would fundamentally compromise their own (Roths, 1982: 6). When one or the other group has attempted, for example, to seize territory and establish a presence on contested ground, violence has ensued. When the state is too weak or unwilling to constrain pre-emptive action by one group, the other becomes too fearful, loses confidence in institutional strengths, deepens the perception of the hostility of their ethnic rival, and prepares for violence. The intense violence between Palestinians and Israelis in 2000 did not erupt after the failure of bargaining but when the Palestinian leadership perceived that Israel was negligently asserting sovereignty over holy places in East Jerusalem. It had never normalized for the loss of sovereignty, and Israel’s position accentuated the Palestinian sense of loss.

Leaders of ethnic groups manipulate group fear to solidify their positions within their own ethnic community. Ethnic activists, with a strong need to identify with their ethnic group, manipulate identities and fears to produce a rapid and spontaneous process of social polarization that magnifies hostility and fear among groups (Farron and Latte, 2000). As polarization proceeds, members of an ethnic group are pressured by their leaders—and by the reciprocal identification of hostility in the other group—to identify with their own group and to break or cross-cutting ties. In the former Yugoslavia, for example, despite a high degree of social integration among Croats and Serbs, ethnic activists were able to instill a process that broke apart families and forced (forced) to self-identify with a single group. In a related process, “political entrepreneurs,” who are oppor
tuists for political gain, may take advan
tage of a process of social polarization to achieve political ends. They deliberately reinterpreted ideas and traditions to shape ethnic differentiation, heightened grievance to increase fear (Ranger, 1983). In the Rwandan case, for example, Tutsis was both an ethnic activit
ist and a political entrepreneur: he exaggerated Tutsi violence against Caucasian refugees and the Mwine threat to Tutsis in Kibuye as a pretext to consolidate and expand the political power of the Tutsi-dominated state (Kibuye). Violence strength that was provoked by the presence of Hutu refugees, but that was triggered by Hutu provocations following Tutsi’s death.

Some of the ethnic activists have also fostered social polarization when new political arrangements that would cut across ethnic lines are at stake. After the moderate Hutu and Tutsi reached a painful compromise on new arrangements for political leadership in Rwanda, the militant

House, anticipating their exclusion from political power and marginalization, deliberately planned the assassination of the moderate Hutu leadership and a genocidal campaign of violence against Tutsis. The Rwandan genocide is often mistakenly explained as the result of competition for scarce resources, or in the weakening of the state structures, or a principal conflict between the two dominant ethnicities. None of these is a sufficient explanation of the out
come of genocidal violence. Militant leaders who sought marginalization and loss in institutional arrangements that would have deepened polarization chose to execute others rather than to accept a diminished political status. They were able, howev
er, to mobilize support for genocidal action because they expertly played on long-standing ethnic fears.

In sum, some leaders or elites whose domestic support is uncertain or threatened can manipulate identities to bolster political loyalty. A bind on non-government’s observer of human rights concl
uded that “time after time, a proximate cause of violence is governmental exploitation of communal differences...” The “cardinal command” is frequently played, for example, when a government is losing populous or legitimacy and finds it convenient to wrap itself in the cloak of ethnic, racial, or religious rhetoric... (Human Rights Watch, 1995: 8).

To gain public support, parochial interest groups that benefit from militarist or imperialist policies create strategic misrepresentations or myths. Over time, some elites come to believe the myths that they have learned, making those images extraordinarily tena
ment to change. A process of myth-making that perpetuates societal trauma is most likely when one group’s interests are threatened and in the absence of positive action or policies that can compensate for the adversities, the more superficial are the values that are generated by declining possibilities, and the smaller the range of other activities that can compensate for the absence of these assets, the more rapid the process. Whether it be regional or institutional, the more naive and likely to engage identity politics in their own interests, the more likely the manipulation of images that experience violent conflict, is the presence of sepa
rate structures, organized on the basis of identity, that define every aspect of society, it is convenient, for example, political office from the center to local levels traditionally been allocated on the basis
of religious identity. In these kinds of societies, creation and maintenance of ethnic stereotypes and enemy images is easily done.

This analysis suggests that differentiated identities are not remediable as a cause of violent conflict. Even when perceivable identities are present, violence is likely only when it is triggered by the exclusory acts of leaders, either by monopolizing the emotions of the state against groups within their own societies, or to quest claims against those within others. Leaders and elites evoke threats as a political identity that then provoke stereotyping and contribute to violence.

**Psychological Explanations and Conflict Resolution**

Hostile imagery must change if enduring conflict is to be reduced and resolved. Inter-state conflict has been managed and mitigated without moderation in elite, much less public images, but requisite civil violence as well as borne; inter-state conflict cannot be solved unless images change and leaders and publics learn. The process must also be reciprocated. Once leaders or groups begin to change their image of their adversary and are interested in attempting to resolve that conflict, they must change the image they adversary has of them if conflict reduction is to make any progress.

Strategies of conflict resolution that focus only on competing interests will likely not be successful to provoke the learning that is fundamental to the change of hostile imagery and identity conflicts. In both enduring inter-state rivalries and bitter ethnic conflicts, interests are shaped by images and beliefs that in turn are partially shaped by identity. What we see is as a threat is a function in large part of the way we see the world and who we think we are.

If threatened identities facilitate the creation of hostile imagery and contribute to violent conflict, then securing these identities must be a fundamental component of any conflict resolution. If they are to be effective, peace-talkers who confront bitter civil wars or enduring state rivalries must address interests in the broader context of images and identity.

In the former Yugoslavia, the conflict could be best be managed temporally by territorial partition and self-determination. The conflict could be resolved only if the parties recognize the legitimacy and the permanence of the others' identities. President Sadaq's recognition of Israel's legitimacy was the critical key that unlocked the long and difficult peace process between Israel and its neighbors.

In conflict between states, reciprocal recognition of legitimacy and renunciation of the use of force can most directly secure threatened identities and reduce imagery. Civil conflicts may be more difficult to resolve, in part because of the proximity of clashing identities and the intensity of fear and emotion (Crawford, 2006: 150, Stedman, 1998). Vacuated states can be reconstructed through political secession and mutual recognition of competing identities, through a "constructivist" or group building-block approach, where elite leaders accommodate and groups remain distinct with constitutional guarantees, or through an integrative approach, which seeks to forge multivocal coalitions with cross-cutting ties (Sisk, 1992).

Mutual recognition and political separation is the most far-reaching strategy of conflict resolution. In 1989, after a brutal civil war that lasted over a decade, leaders of Lebanon's religious groups reshaped the fundamentals of their pro-war cosmopolitan bargain. Instead of privileging the Maronite Christian community, Muslims and Christians now share power equally. The bargain still provides for a Maronite Christian president, a Sunni Muslim prime minister, and a Shi'a president of the National Assembly. Political decisions are still made by leaders at the top while their communities remain distinct.

The forging of multi-ethnic coalitions with cross-cutting ties is yet another strategy. This was the principal agreement of the Muslim leadership in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The agreement reached by Dayton honors a multi-ethnic Bosnia in principle, but in its political arrangements provides for de facto separation of Bosnian Serbs from Muslims and Croats. Kosovosimons unresolved as Kosovars press for formal independence and Serbs insist on integration. In all these cases, conflict reduction required more than co-provision of small concessions in a gradually building process. The core of the solution lies in the often difficult decision by senior leaders to acknowledge, respect and accommodate different identities and diverse political power.

All these strategies mean that identities and images are fixed and that they must be accommodated as they are. Such a pessimistic assumption is unwarranted. Research in social psychology suggests that individual stereotyping can be overcome, but that more educational and social processes can inadvertently reinforce bias (Fiske, 1998; Lopez et al., 1999; Ilak and Olson, 1999; Petty et al., 1998; Slovicczyk and Shabad, 1999). Others argue that identity is not given, but that it is socially constructed as interactions develop and continue to evolve (Tajfel, 1997). Benedict Anderson (1991) observed that nations, unlike families and clans where individuals can know the others, are 'imagined communities', whose past, tradition and conceptions are integrated and misrepresented through time. Political identities similarly depend on imagined communities whose traditions are constructed and reinterpreted. Identities can consequently be reshaped and reconfigured as leaders and communities restructure their relationships.

Identities are complex structures, with components that emphasize shifting communal traditions and
norms that usually include empathy on propriety of the task, social responsibility, generosity, fairness, and reciprocity as well as honor, reputation, and vengeance. Empathy is given so these different norms vary with the situation. Skilled arbiters can emphasize the positive values of responsibility, fairness, and cooperation as important elements of honor and reputation. Appeal to the 'evil' in the solicitation of an identity may shift the emphasis within an 'imagined community' to create the space for fairness and reciprocity which can ultimately change insights, reshape instincts and cultivate in tolerance and recognition of others' identities.

**Psychological Explanations and International Relations Theories: The Scope of Analysis**

The evidence of systematic patterns of decision from among rational choice is robust. Though traces of the evidence are sometimes of controlled laboratory experiments, political psychologists have documented these patterns across a wide range of institutional settings and political cultures in the analysis of decisions about high stakes international conflict. Yet, the dominant theories in international relations use mass limited assumptions about choice and motivation; require true states in unitary security maximizers and liberals and neoliberal institutionalists concepts of states as wealthy maximizers. Such accept the representation of a problem as given and emphasize the contours of the-decision problem from attributes of a payoff matrix; in this sense, they retreat backward. Constructivists do problematize the representation of choice but focus on forms as crises of norms. The theoretical - and empirical - gaps among these theoretical constructions and between psychological-analytical reasoning wide. The gaps may be less than they seem, however, when the boundary conditions of different theoretical approaches are examined more carefully.

A central challenge is to identify the scope conditions of analysis. Under what conditions can psychological analysis be used in combination with, leading theoretical approaches to increase explanatory power and enrich the analysis? Are psychological analyses comparable to the prevailing theories, or can they be useful complements under specified conditions? How can psychological approaches best be embedded within the structural analysis of the dominant approaches?

**Rational and Psychological Explanations of Choice: The Scope of Analysis**

Realist and liberal approaches embed rational choice in their core. Psychological approaches and rational choice have different comparative advantages. Rational choice is theoretically elegant while psychological approaches provide descriptive accuracy of processes of decision-making. Each has different disavowals; the evidence from psychological studies is now robust that people are not "rational actors", except in the most trivial and situational situations, yet psychologists have not yet developed powerful general theories that explain choice. Theorists of rational choice who accept concepts of "bounded rationality" find it easier to engage in conversation with cognitive psychologists.

Rational choice provides a comparative deductive apparatus for the formal analysis of international interactions. Rational choice theorists forego descriptive accuracy in specific cases and insist that nothing states as if they were unitary rational actors yields better in explanatory and predictive power if predictions of the model match behavior. Through simplified representations of strategic interactions, rational choice theories claim to provide powerful explanation and prediction of how states behave that would otherwise be observed by expertel detail (Morrow, 1993). Rational choice analysis is most successful when decision problems typically concern examples of well understood classes of events that are formally identical to judge numbers of other events. In the analysis of competitive markets or large organizational systems, rational choice can provide elegant, powerful, and it times counter-intuitive explanations.

International conflict occurs in a relatively small universe, however, with small numbers. It is therefore difficult for analysts and decision-makers alike to identify among historical episodes sufficient number of 'like' cases on crucial dimensions from which to focus on generic problem representations, probability distributions and metrics of value across dozens of topics. Much, reformative scholarship on international relations deals with the apparent complexity and insufficiency of decision problems in international conflict through a strategy of simplification representation. Such simplified representations are often analytically tractable, in the sense that all qualitative solutions to games, when they exist, yield determinate predictions of behavior (Stigler, 1960). A strategy of simplification representation assumes that the abstractions suggest the essence of a decision problems for states or actors relative, while understanding the conclusions with uncertainty about stakes, options, costs, benefits, likelihoods and the interests, goals and intentions of the adversary. The claim is prima facie plausible when reality and representation are isomorphic, and becomes less plausible as the insufficiencies break down (Green and Slaughter, 1994; Moe, 1979).

While simplified representation might be a useful analytical strategy in well-structured decision problems, it is unlikely to help in the analysis of international conflict where problems are almost always
ill-structured in ill-structured decision problems, the choice of game to use as a representation of a strategic interaction (and the specification of players' preference orderings) represents an arbitrary stipulation that undermines the analytical utility of the representation as an explanatory tool. Cognitive and social psychology explain how leaders cope with this uncertainty and complexity. They commonly ignore ambiguous situations in the light of personally salient historical experiences, or employ behavioral cues of thumb that reflect idiosyncratic 'lessons of history' (Kemper, 1952; Lebow, 1981; Neustadt and May, 1980). Since these are idiosyncratic variables that none the less strongly influence problem representation, judgement and estimation, they greatly complicate rational choice analysis. Problem representation is a significant variable in any international conflict and, consequently, it is difficult to justify formal abstractions from real-world decision problems of the kind rational choice theories seek. The concepts and methods of cognitive psychology are comparatively well suited to understanding problem representation (George and George, 1956; Herrmann, 1974, 1980; Hoflin, 1983; Holli and George, 1973; Janis, 1982; Jervis, 1976; Jervis et al., 1985; Lebow, 1981; Mandel, 1986; Stern, 1992; Steil, 1994).

Analyses of the debate between models of 'frame' and spirals of escalation illustrate the complementarities between the two approaches. The debate can be better formulated as a problem of scope conditions. Rational choice theorists model uncertainties as a set of independent rational choices, and have identified counter-intuitive strategic choices to resolve the dilemmas they face. Psychological explanations have focused on problem representation, judgment, escalation and war, and have specified that cognitive, emotional and normative factors influence strategic behavior and consequence. Abstractions from real-world situations are quite different from psychological methodologies and have argued that the strategies deduced from rational models can be counterproductive and culminate in dangerous escalatory spirals (Lutsko, 1989; Lowery, 1990; Fasom, 1993; Huth and Starr, 1990; Jervis, 1989; Kriya et al., 1989; Lebow and Sosik, 1990, 1990a, 1990b, 1994).

Prospect theory helps to resolve these seemingly contradictory findings. When states are fundamentally satisfied with the status quo they can be considered to be in a domain of gain, and as appropriate targets for deterrence threats, since they are likely to be risk-averse with respect to gains. Under these conditions, except at the extreme of the probability distribution, rational choice is likely to provide a parsimonious explanation. When, however, states have experienced significant losses, and have been normalized for the loss, deterrence threats are likely to provoke escalation by leaders who are risk-acceptant with respect to losses. Cognitive psychology and rational choice can be complementary, once the critical scope conditions are established. After the representative of the problem is institutionalized, rather than assumed, scholars can examine the complexity of the environment, the scope of uncertainties, and the attributes of the situation. They can then establish whether leaders are in the domain of gain or loss and assess the likelihood that the calculus will be utility-maximizing, satisficing, or approximating the systematic deviations from rational norms that psychologists expect.

**Constructivism and Psychological Explanations**

There is a much more natural fit between constructivist explanations of international conflict and psychological analyses. While the controversies with rational choice can be seen as cognitive psychology, the dialogue of constructivists is with social psychology. Constructivists develop a concept of identity that is deeply informed by leaders' identity - how they define their state or group, who they are, and how they see themselves in relation to others. Constructivists have expanded the repertoire of psychological explanations of international relations - that traditionally focused on beliefs, images, and judgement of leaders - to include the collective or shared belief that constitutes a common identity, and processes of norm creation and norm observance. Unlike realism and liberalism, constructivists do not take identities and interests as given, but rather as created largely through interaction with others. They build into the concept of identity not only interests but attention to norms as a constitutive element (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Przew, 1997; Ragin, 1998; Tammes and Schwebel, 1999).

This emphasis on unasserted identities as the explanation of choice makes constructivists a special dialogue with social psychological theories that examine the conditions under which norms become the criteria for choice. Social psychology explores the conditions under which criteria of equity, fairness and justice override the transmission of interests as the decision rule. Social identity theory in psychology emphasizes how identity changes a critical component of constructivist arguments. Social identity theory can enrich and broaden arguments above identity change. Social identity is created not only through interaction with others, as constructivists suggest, but as social psychologists argue, through processes of identification with a group. Whether people identify with a particular social group is a matter of choice, and, in choosing an identity, people struggle between the contradictory imperatives of inclusion and differentiation (Brewer, 1993; Brewer and Schlenker, 1996). Canada, for example, is part of the larger North American trading system while seeking to protect its cultural distinctiveness. The cognitive mechanisms that produce group identification - or

As I have argued earlier, however, stereotyping does not always lead to conflict. Groups and states have a choice of strategies to deal with identity conflict; they may seek to assimilate to a more favorable identity, they may choose to redefine the value of their identity, or finally, they may choose to compete (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Some states currently excluded from the European Union emphasize their identity as democratic states observing norms of human rights and respect for legal processes. Their leaders have chosen to assimilate to an identity that they regard as more favorable to identity change a strategy of entry and opportunity. ASEAN members have chosen to emphasize the value of their distinctive strategies by creating a group that is defined by the 'Asian Way.' At the extreme, when groups fail to find their identity threatened, and barriers to inclusion are insurmountable, they choose to compete. Social identity theory helps to explain why leaders select from a repertoire of available social representations, and by maximizing the thickness of barriers to inclusion helps to identify the conditions under which states and groups are likely to choose one or another strategy of identity change.

Psychological theories of International Conflict

Critics of psychological approaches to international politics charged that these approaches may be relevant to individual choice but they are both too limited, too under-determined, too theory, and situation specific to fit into an explanation of the large systems: patterns of world politics. Proponents argue that evidence of systemic patterns of thinking and behavior, both at the individual and the group level, are robust, and that broad patterns of thought, perception, and flawed assumptions that violate much of what we now know about how individuals and collectives define themselves and choose, are likely to provide valid foundations for powerful explanations of international and inter-group conflict (Huth, 1996: 1-16). Psychological approaches are useful in establishing boundary conditions for on-going arguments within structural explanations of systemic patterns. They help to refine and inform explanations that rely implicitly on theories of choice that are unlimited by varying conditions. The 'mysteries' of psychological theories and evidence can give specificity and rigor to big debates about the dynamics of international conflict, and its prevention. Psychological approaches also help to specify theories built on identity formation and change and on inter-group creation and observance. Psychological theories are also useful in explaining the bounded choices political leaders make to escalate - and to de-escalate - conflict, and in the analysis of patterns of interaction that are the result of linked sets of choices. The recent puzzle of why bargaining processes, for example, have value on the table or fail to produce the agreements that are transparently obvious to the disinterested observer, is often powerfully explored by psychological theories of choice. A related puzzle - the repeated failure of one set of leaders to read and interpret accurately the signals of another - is also well explained by psychological theories. Theoretical and empirical progress in the examination of escalation and de-escalation of conflict can benefit by embedding psychological theories within the dominant rational-choice or constructivist traditions and by carefully examining their complementarities and their relative purchase.

Bibliography


PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT


