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Institutionalizing passion in world politics: fear and empathy

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Emotions are a ubiquitous intersubjective element of world politics. Yet, passions are often treated as fleeting, private, reactive, and not amenable to systematic analysis. Institutionalization links the private and individual to the collective and political. Passions may become enduring through institutionalization, and thus, as much as characterizing private reactions to external phenomena, emotions structure the social world. To illustrate

this argument, I describe how fear and empathy may be institutionalized, discuss the relationship between these emotions, and suggest how empathy may be both a mirror and potential antidote to individual and institutionalized fear.

My pedagogy is hard. What is weak must be hammered away. In my fortresses of the Teutonic Order, a young generation will grow up before which the world will tremble. I want the young to be violent, domineering, undismayed, and cruel. The young must be all these things. They must be able to bear great pain. There must be nothing weak or gentle about them. The free, splendid beast of prey must once again flash from their eyes. I want my young people strong and beautiful. That way I can create something new.

Adolf Hitler (quoted in Miller 1983, 142)

The many excesses of Hitler's Nazi Germany – the aspiration and realization of violence, domination, and unfeeling cruelty – are the archetype of passion mobilized and skillfully harnessed for patently awful ends. Such a grand policy of aggressive expansionism and genocide, the instigation of a trembling that lasts generations, requires organization, strategy, and foresight. One key to Hitler's thankfully short-lived success, and the success of others who have promoted expansionist foreign policies and genocide, is the kindling and institutionalization of specific emotions, namely the mobilization of fear, hatred, and contempt toward outsiders and the persistent suppression of cross-cultural empathy, compassion, and moral conscience enabling the routinization and normalization of the division of labor for killing others. Hitler perhaps discounted the fact that the world would not only tremble, but many would and did resist, in part by mobilizing and focusing emotions.

Several ontological and epistemological assumptions about emotions are widely held in international relations (IR). First, emotions are understood as primitive and biological, and theories that attend to biology and 'human nature' have often been dismissed on the assumption that 'human nature' is constant, and therefore cannot explain variation. Or we assume that our biology is oriented toward aggression and distrust (see Crawford 2011). Second, passions are often treated as fleeting, private, reactive, and not theorizable or amenable to systematic analysis. Third, much of Western philosophy and social science has long assumed and reified sharp mind/body, brain/mind, thinking/feeling, rational/irrational dichotomies, and discontinuities. Fourth, IR assumes a dichotomy between individual agency and group behavior.³

³ These biases and dichotomies have also blinkered research in anthropology (see Lutz 1998) and psychology (see Forgas 2000, 3–4). Although there are debates among them, feminist IR scholars are more open to approaching empathy and the potential for empathic scholarship (see Sylvester 2002 and Sylvester *et al.* 2011).

These assumptions have hobbled and shaped the analysis of both emotions and world politics. Neuroscience and psychology suggest some new starting points for theorizing. First, human biology is both more complex and less fixed than we typically assume. Experience changes our brains, and the ways that emotions are written on our bodies helps determine our organizations and institutionalized processes. Beliefs and social interaction affect our biology, and biology affects our beliefs and practices. Second, passions can become enduring by becoming institutionalized. As much as emotions characterize private reactions to external phenomena, emotions help structure the social world. Institutionalization of emotion is ubiquitous in world politics, not an outlier or exception, and understanding the content and process of the institutionalization of emotion illuminates perennial concerns of our discipline. Third, emotions and cognitions do not exist in dichotomy or discontinuity, except in our scholarship. Nor do emotions exist apart from social and political institutions; rather social institutions and politics embody and produce emotions. One of the most important practices of both domestic and international politics, arguing, is a form of social reasoning that includes emotions and beliefs (Crawford 2009a). Fourth, individual and group agency share many features. Emotions are an essential element of world politics conceived of as a system of reflexive and coupled complex adaptive systems – characterized by processes of reflection, feedback, interconnection, and tension between agency and structure (see Jervis 1997; Harrison 2006; Cudworth and Hobden 2010).

In previous work, I provisionally defined emotions as ‘the *inner states* that individuals *describe to others as feelings*, and those feelings may be *associated with biological, cognitive, and behavioral states and changes*’. Specifically, emotions are ‘subjective experiences that also have physiological, intersubjective, and cultural components’. The definition underscored that while ‘feelings are internally experienced’ the ‘meaning attached to those feelings, the behaviors associated with them, and the recognition of emotions in others are cognitively and culturally construed and constructed’. I also highlighted emotional relationships ‘that are characterized by the type and degree of emotional involvement; emotional relationships may be neutral or characterized by degrees of empathy or antipathy and so on’ (Crawford 2000, 125). While I mentioned the social context of emotions – their intersubjectivity – and the ways emotions affect organizations, social groups, and interactive processes (such as deterrent threats and argumentation), this conception was too static and focused on individuals. To move forward, we need to theorize the relation between individual emotions and groups including states, and an analysis of how emotions are shaped by and shape group identity, culture, and institutions.

I argue here that emotions are social and can be institutionalized within and between groups and describe how institutionalization may affect policy and

behavior. I then focus on the institutionalization and interrelationship of fear and empathy. Understanding how fear and empathy, arise, are deployed, become institutionalized and feed back through the complex adaptive system of world politics, may illuminate questions of how, when and why relationships among groups change from acceptance to antagonism or vice versa. Empathy may be both a mirror and potential antidote to individual and institutionalized fear in world politics. Low levels of empathy (and trust) characterize and underlie persistent conflict. Increasing empathy often precedes and may indeed be an important cause of the reduction in tensions and conflicts between groups.⁴ Further, levels and the capacity to feel fear and empathy can be deliberately altered – diminished or enhanced – in both micro and macro processes in world politics. Finally, the development of outgroup empathy is essential for the promotion of human rights, democracy, and peace.

One caveat is in order: despite the universalizing tone in the next section, I do not mean to suggest that emotions and emotional relationships are understood to be the same across cultures. The biological and institutional co-constitution of emotions and beliefs/practices, suggests potentially significant variations, and these have been found by anthropologists (e.g. Lutz 1998).⁵

Fear and empathy

Just as genes cannot predict our futures, neurons do not tell the whole story of world politics. We need to be cautious about how we use neuroscience, not least because we are reflexive, reasoning, and social beings. Nevertheless, the analysis of emotions entails some discussion of neurobiology and psychology.⁶ Emotions such as fear and empathy are biological processes *and* intersubjectively mediated reactions to perceptions that depend on pre-existing social understandings and contexts. Emotions leave a physical trace at a biological level and often a social trace in the practices that individuals and groups adopt to cope with emotions. And emotions can become part of a feedback loop of behavior and feelings; because humans act and react, their behaviors generate actions and reactions in others that can reinforce or alter their own emotions: ‘the neural circuitry of emotion and cognition interact from early perception to decision making and reasoning’ (Phelps 2006, 28).

⁴ See White (1984) and Kelman (1996) who emphasize ‘realistic empathy’ and ‘empathic processes’, respectively.

⁵ Emotion recognition also varies across groups. See Elfenbein and Ambady (2002).

⁶ Research in biology and psychology are evolving and often open to multiple interpretations.

The available research clearly points to a bi-directional... link between affect and cognition... [specifically] affect influencing attention, memory thinking, association, and judgments. Equally, however, cognitive processes are integral to elicitation of affective states, as people's appraisal and analysis of situational information activate appropriate emotional responses. (Forgas 2000, 6).

So it is with fear, which begins with a sensory perception, narrative, or memories that prompt a cascade of reactions and consequences in the brain and the rest of the body. When a person perceives something they consider a threat (and perception depends on prior experience and beliefs), the signal might travel directly to the amygdala, a fear center, (fastest), or be routed through the thalamus (very fast), which processes and sorts sensory information, or to the pre-frontal cortex (comparatively slow) the area in the front of human brains that handles complex reasoning. If and when the signal overcomes an inhibitory threshold, a cascade of other biochemical events occurs within seconds, sending neurochemical messages to the hippocampus (memory), the locus coeruleus (alertness), and the hypothalamus, which sends neurotransmitters to the pituitary and adrenal glands that in turn produce adrenaline, cortisol, and other hormones, affecting heart rate, digestion, and breathing. We are now more attentive and able to act.⁷

The system has to 'fire' when faced with a threat, distinguish threats from non-threats, and shut off when the threat has ended. When the stressful situation has resolved the nervous system should relax – heart rate and blood pressure should lower, and digestion should return to normal.

Under chronic stress, however, physiology does not quickly return to normal (McEwen 2002). Long-term fear, or even a single traumatic event, may alter brains at a biochemical level. Repeated stress caused by immediate or anticipated threat can reshape our brains as the stress hormone cortisol etches a chemical traumatic trace; nurture becomes nature. Without the ability to turn off the fear response, the ability to distinguish non-threats from threats is diminished; if we cannot distinguish threats from non-threats, we will find it hard to turn off our fear response. Over time, our biology, perceptions, and cognitions may become primed for perceiving threat (hypervigilance) and over-reactive. Once bitten, twice shy (LeDoux 2002, 396). The brains of people with post-traumatic stress disorder show abnormal levels of activation of both the amygdala and pre-frontal cortex and atrophy of the hippocampus.

⁷ This is a simplified chain of cause and effects; other brain regions and neurochemicals and feedback effects are involved.

Fear's effects on memory and reasoning are not confined to those with post-traumatic stress. Fear changes what we look for, what we see, and the way we think. Fearful experiences or memories may prompt individuals to focus on potential future threats. Because stress affects our ability to store memory, memories associated with strong emotion are often vivid, though not necessarily entirely accurate.⁸ Firsthand or bystander experience with a highly emotionally charged event will likely leave strong *emotional* memories of that event. Further, situations that evoke similar emotions will likely bring to mind those historical events that deeply affected the participants. This is analogical reasoning triggered by emotions, not a coldly cognitive assessment – suggesting that a past event where we were afraid is like the current situation (regardless of whether the historical event is similar in important respects).

Fear can be moderated by inputs from areas of the brain that are involved in cognition and memory, which can reduce responsiveness to fear and inhibit violence. Humans distinguish threatening from non-threatening stimuli in the pre-frontal cortex (the seat of complex cognition and moral reasoning), which works more slowly, but speed of arrival does not necessarily determine response. The pre-frontal cortex can override fear. The effects of fear are also affected by the individuals' habits and training, as well as social context and social cues. Individuals distinguish between justified fear and unjustified fear through a process of reasoning. Groups, make such distinctions through a process of argument where both evidence and emotions are mobilized and emotions may be given as evidence.

On the other hand, chemical signals from the amygdala can override the pre-frontal cortex and fear may thus affect our ability to engage in complex cognition. Further, humans tend to give more weight to negative information. The fearful are often less able to see how their defensive behavior might be seen by others as threatening – enhancing what is already a cognitive bias. The fearful also have a decreased ability to calculate the costs, risks, and benefits of options. And an individual's emotions and emotional states can be the basis of categorization. Threats that evoke anger (if they are associated with perceived insults) tend to decrease the perception of a threat and simultaneously heighten risk-taking behaviors on the part of those who feel angry (Huddy *et al.* 2007).

In sum, once fear is aroused, there is no simple way to disentangle thinking from fear and fear from thinking. So too with empathy. Like fear,

⁸ On the other hand, traumatic events are often not remembered, or may be only partially recalled.

empathy is a biological phenomenon that is intimately related to social context and pre-existing beliefs.⁹

Empathy also involves multiple brain regions and neurochemicals, as well as judgments about others.¹⁰ A mirror neuron system helps humans feel what others feel at a basic level of neural resonance (de Waal 2008, 2009; Pfeifer and Dapretto, 2009). The feeling of empathy is related to the cognitive ability to take another person's perspective. As Pfeifer and Dapretto (2009, 185) suggest, the causality is not necessarily uni-directional: 'Affective response might result in, result from, or be concurrent with cognitive component(s) of empathy, including explicit reasoning about another's emotional state'. Empathy as a social and cognitive process thus includes the ability to understand how and why others feel and think the way they do and the capacity to see how our behavior might be understood by another. Scholars of empathy also often include a third element, the disposition to behave a certain way – either pro-socially or anti-socially (Zaki and Ochsner 2012). Empathic individuals do not only engage in more pro-social behavior, they also tend to have decreased social prejudice.

The neural resonance that characterizes empathy depends on social context and pre-existing social relationships – specifically, how we understand the in-group and the out-group. Individuals, who already see themselves as more similar to another, often more easily identify with another. Humans find it easier to feel empathy and develop empathetic understanding with those they are close too and the deeper the connection, the greater the empathy (Ickes 1993, 64; Goubert *et al.* 2009, 160–61). Moreover, the perception of closeness, or even what psychologists call 'perceived oneness', is related to empathic concern and a predictor of helping behavior (Decity and Lamm 2009, 208). Better acquaintanceship and knowledge of others (e.g. through trusting interactions), can promote greater empathy and empathic accuracy (Eisenberg and Eggum, 2009, 72; Ickes 2009, 64).

Humans demonstrate empathy early – during the 2nd year of life – and empathic capacity develops depending on social experiences and normal brain development through childhood (Eisenberg and Eggum 2009, 71). The capacity to feel empathy and to understand what another person is thinking can be taught through various means, including role playing, training in perspective taking, and exercises in group problem solving (Feshbach and Feshbach 2009, 87–90). Specifically, the areas of the brain

⁹ Because beliefs and feelings are co-constitutive, I am thus sidestepping the question, raised by Reus-Smit, about the difference between beliefs and feelings. Yes they are different, but they interact.

¹⁰ McDermott is right to question whether empathy is an emotion. But again, I do not think the boundary between emotions, emotional processes, and beliefs is so firm.

involved in feeling empathy, and the capacity to use the feelings for reasoning about another's feelings, beliefs, and intentions can be harmed or enhanced. Stress and fear can diminish empathy: 'As stress wears away at the nervous system, risk assessment grows less and less accurate. Minor insults are seen as major threats. Benign details take on new emotional urgency. Empathy takes a back seat to relief from the numbing discomfort of a stress-deadened nervous system' (Niehoff 1999, 185).

Low levels of empathy can lead to difficulty sympathizing with others, and therefore decreased opportunities for positive interactions and social isolation. When humans observe others experiencing pain who are dissimilar to them, or who they perhaps find disgusting, their biological response is less active. When the pre-existing relationship is one of antipathy, the neural reaction to the other will be lower (Harris and Fiske 2006, 2011; Hein *et al.* 2010). De Waal (2009, 80) puts this quite strongly: 'If identification with others opens the door for empathy, the absence of identification closes that door'. A competitive relationship may produce a counter-empathic response (antipathy or *Schadenfreude*), such that when the other is sad, the observer is pleased (de Waal 2008, 291; Decity and Lamm 2009, 208; Cikara and Fiske 2011).

More sophisticated empathic responses, where someone understands not only *that* a person feels a certain way, but *why*, require that the brain must be intact and experience normal brain development (Shamay-Tsoory 2009). Individuals with a defective mirror neuron system, or in whom the pre-frontal cortex is damaged, do not display normal levels of empathy. These individuals also have difficulty with moral reasoning. Abusive individuals tend to have low levels of empathy and lower levels of empathic accuracy (Ickes 1993, 61–62).

Capacities of self-reflection and emotional regulation are also important for the development of empathy (Decity and Lamm 2009, 206). Self-awareness helps us reason about another's feelings. Further, 'self-awareness with regard to one's own feelings should enhance sensitivity because an individual's recognition of his or her own feelings is the basis for identification with the feelings of others' (Goubert *et al.* 2009, 159–60).

Just the right level of empathy, whatever that is, may foster perspective taking that 'allow us to overcome our usual egocentrism' (Decity and Lamm 2009, 203). Too much empathy can be just as disabling as too little. Without the capacity to self-regulate an observer may become too distressed, unable to distinguish their feelings from the other, and then be unable to act, experiencing a loss of agency. Or individuals may seek to distance themselves from another's pain without acting to help the other (Zak 2011, 56). Or if there are too many or conflicting claims on our sense of empathy and moral obligation, actors may feel paralyzed.

Thus, the experience of empathy requires the capacity to self-soothe, enter a non-judgmental frame of mind, and ‘decenter’ (Decity and Lamm 2009, 206; Watson and Greenberg 2009, 131).

The capacity for moral reasoning may help us grapple with questions of how to deal with distant others or negotiate situations of perceived conflict between duties to others. Thus, the basic biological process of empathic feeling is related to more complex cognitive functions and social processes: ‘The ability to *feel* what others feel might be a... precursor to more explicit processes of *reasoning through* what others feel’ (Pfeifer and Dapreto 2009, 185).

Imagination of the other, and our understanding their situation through a moral lens, is accomplished by narratives – stories told in history books, around the dinner table, through media, and in classrooms. Imagining another may have less impact than direct observation, while *deliberate* acts of imagination may produce a stronger response than observation alone (Jackson and Decity 2004, 127–28 citing Watson and Greenberg 2009). The imagination of the other may be both inclusive and exclusive as when we imagine a nation of distant individuals a community (Anderson 1991). Or our imagination may prompt an inclusive identification and a desire to help the distant other, or at least to stop hurting them, such as when individuals tell what Rorty (1993) has called ‘sad and sentimental’ stories.

Neuroscience thus confirms Adam Smith’s observations about moral sentiments (see Jeffery 2011; Zak 2011). Although the word empathy was not yet in usage, Smith was concerned in *Theory of Moral Sentiments* that we understand sympathy, or fellow feeling: ‘Pity or compassion, [is] the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner’. For Smith, an active imagination, the ability to put oneself in the position of another, is the key to empathetic understanding: ‘As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation’ (2011 [1759], 3, 1.1).

Empathic accuracy (correctly assessing another’s feelings) may not be pitch perfect; in fact, often it is not. Those in whom empathic feelings are aroused must be careful not to presume too much; the “sense of knowing” does not necessarily imply *accurate* knowing’ (Goubert *et al.* 2009, 154). Because ingroup and outgroup empathy are potentially distinct (Mathur *et al.* 2010), empathic feelings and interpretations must be checked through the act of listening to the other (diplomacy).

Figure 1 traces the relationship between internal emotional processes and interactions within the social environment, moving from an initial relationship and observation (lower left). Because the brain is shaped and reshaped by experience (neuroplasticity), each interaction has the potential

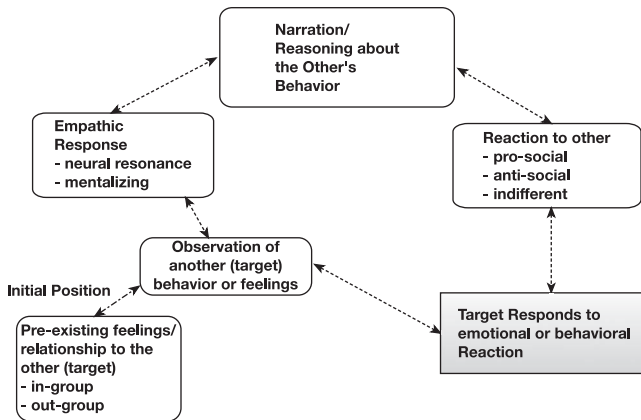


Figure 1 Pathways for institutionalization of empathy.

to reshape the brain – deepening pathways. Emotional responses shape behavior, which in turn prompts emotional and behavioral responses in the other, shaping interactions and the environment. Positive feedback loops, can lead to escalatory spirals. Emotions such as empathy can be enhanced, or diminished, by social cues, social practices, and the arrangement of organizations.

Empathy and trust can moderate the effects of fear. The biological correlates of empathy include the ‘trust hormone’ oxytocin. When empathy increases, oxytocin increases; when oxytocin increases, trust increases. Further, ‘if we perceive trustworthy behavior directed toward us, our oxytocin levels go up’ (Pfaff 2007, 105). Moreover, oxytocin dampens the activity of the amygdala and the release of stress hormones from the adrenal glands. In other words, either trusting behavior or oxytocin may start an upward spiral where demonstrations of trust promote oxytocin release, which leads to more trusting and bonding behavior.¹¹ Empathy triggers oxytocin and oxytocin promotes empathy, trust, and pro-social behavior (Barraza and Zak 2009, 182–89; Bartz *et al.* 2010, 1426–428; Zak 2011, 53–65).

Increasing the capacity for empathy is likely one of, if not the most important, routes to peace and justice. First, with respect to the causes of war and peace, the lack of empathy can lead to misperceptions and security dilemma spirals. Psychological research by Ervin Staub (2011) found that a lack of empathy toward outgroups enables harsh treatment, and political

¹¹ Females produce more oxytocin, and are more sensitive to its calming and bonding effects, than males (Taylor *et al.* 2002, 668).

research by Kristin Monroe (2012, 2004), suggests that the presence of empathy and empathic understanding promotes pro-social activism. Without empathy we cannot understand the other's beliefs and feelings, nor how our actions may be understood and felt by the other. McDermott (2014, 557–62), questions whether empathy is always positive. Empathy works best to increase pro-social behavior within groups; empathy can also be used to change the sense of we-ness, enlarging (or shrinking) social identities and identification (see Mathur *et al.* 2010).

Empathy is the foundation for both the ability to see the other as deserving our respect and the ability to understand when the other's rights have been violated. It is the foundation for justice in the sense that it motivates our decisions about whether and how to help someone who is suffering. Jürgen Habermas also argues that a feeling of respect or compassion for others, 'moral feeling', plays a role in the 'constitution' of moral phenomena. Humans would not understand what is moral without feelings. 'We would not experience certain conflicts of action as morally relevant at all unless we *felt* that the integrity of a person is threatened or violated. Feelings form the basis of our *perception* of something as moral'. A lack of moral feeling is an incapacity. 'Someone who is blind to moral phenomena is blind to feeling. He lacks a sense, as we say, for the suffering of a vulnerable creature who has a claim to have its integrity, both personal and bodily protected. And this sense is manifestly closely related to sympathy or compassion' (Habermas 1993, 174). Moral feelings help us judge when someone has been harmed and engage in moral reasoning.

However, imperative statements that individual humans *should* feel for the distant other, and that this feeling should cause us to act toward others with better understanding of the others' fears, or with courage to save those in danger of harm, does not mean that we do so. Further, empathy may not lead to helping another when we interpret their situation as their own fault rather than, as may be the case, the result of their circumstances. This tendency to blame the victim – assuming their effective agency and therefore that the blame for their condition must be theirs alone, rather than examining how their social or cultural circumstances could have caused their fate – a fundamental attribution bias, can cause bystanders to withhold or withdraw help.

Further, it is possible to use empathy to bolster deterrence threats, refining the manipulation of threats and fear in the war system. Jervis (1985, 29) has argued that 'it is particularly difficult and particularly important for the state to determine how the other sees it. This task is difficult because the evidence is not easy to obtain, a state's beliefs about itself are so powerful that it is hard to imagine others having a different view, and a state's self-image carries a heavy load of affect'. Jervis's (1985, 29) concern is to design effective deterrent

strategies: 'But if the state does not understand how the other sees it, it is not likely to be able to predict how the other will interpret the actions it plans to take. Since one of the purposes of these actions is to influence the other, the failure to grasp the other's image of the state will often make it impossible to design effective deterrent policies'. Jervis notes that states' leaders often think they understand the other's views and they are perplexed when their signals and statements are misunderstood.

Greater empathy can certainly decrease the problems associated with misperception and the misunderstanding of deterrence threats. Empathy can also allow states to transform their relationship and transcend the perceived need for deterrence. In this way, empathy can be the route to a peace that is trusting and cooperative, and not simply a Hobbesian peace, an armed and tension-filled truce.

Institutionalizing emotions: from individuals to groups and organizations

Of course one has to be careful about linking private emotions with public action and politics.¹² Yet, the move is unavoidable: emotions are never entirely private – they are socially shared and constructed, deeply related to how we understand the social world and how we interact through our social institutions.

As Lutz observed, 'Emotions are social not only by virtue of being generated by living in a world with multiple others whose desires, for example, conflict with one's own. Their existence and meaning are also negotiated, ignored or validated by people in social relationships' (1998, 212). In turn, our emotional relationships influence our social institutions and practices. The structures and practices of world politics – from walls that divide a region or a city, to the militaries and their doctrines that defend borders or take territory, to the formal and informal diplomatic exchanges that characterize relations between groups – express and alter our emotional relationships with others. Oddly, perhaps, once institutionalized, the passion seems to recede from view, as overtly emotional language is replaced with the language of justification, beliefs, and reasons.

¹² Because we cannot directly know another's beliefs, feelings, memories, or calculations, we must rely on his or her self-reports and make inferences based on our own experiences, beliefs, and feelings, from their behavior. We also use empathy to understand empathy. Can we speak of groups having feelings? Or simply acting as if they have feelings? Groups are not homogenous; nor do individual members of groups, such as tribes or nations, experience the same phenomena the same way or have the same reactions to it. It would be imprecise and perhaps even dangerous to argue that a 'group' feels something or even believes something. Individuals feel, and just as there is a diversity of beliefs in a group or organization, with one belief perhaps being dominant, there may be a diversity of feelings, with one dominating.

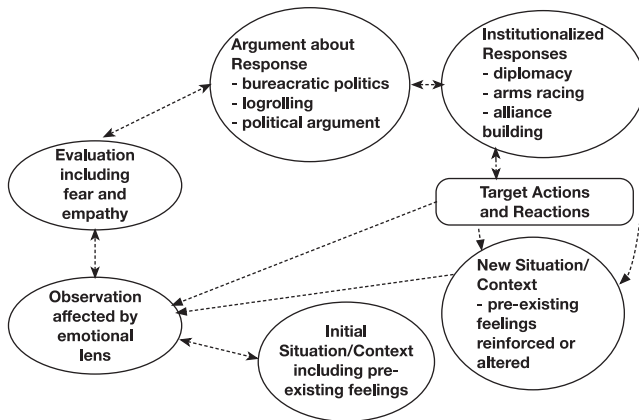


Figure 2 Schematic of the institutionalization of emotions.

To the extent that individuals are organized into and act through more or less institutionalized groups, the *dominant* beliefs and feelings of the group are institutionalized – translated and embodied into practices and procedures designed meet emotional needs and organizational goals. Organizations see the world through the newly institutionalized beliefs and feelings, and recognize a situation as something that it should address and uses guidelines for data gathering and information processing that are appropriate for the newly institutionalized beliefs or feelings.¹³

Organizational actors, operating within their institutionalized roles use pre-existing or newly articulated beliefs and feelings to apprehend their environment, structure the acquisition and organization of knowledge, interpret information, routinize decision-making procedures and operations, and formulate the responses to challenges. In other words, emotions and beliefs structure the organization of knowledge (e.g. intelligence gathering and threat assessment) and the development of standard operating procedures and routines for handling challenges. Emotions are recognized, reframed and shaped within institutions in the same way as beliefs. An organization or group incorporates a belief, practice, or feeling into its store of taken for granted knowledge of the world and in the development of its behavioral routines. These new chains of belief, action, and response, may confirm or heighten initial emotional reactions. Figure 2 illustrates the process of the institutionalization of emotions in a political setting, from an initial situation/context, including feedback and alternative responses to observed behaviors by targets.

¹³ In the same way hot emotions become warmer, more enduring, moods? (see Forgas 2000, 6)

Once institutionalization occurs, the framing of problems and solutions are normalized and may become taken for granted (see Eden 2004). When the institutionalization of beliefs and feelings promotes one procedure or doctrine, it may rule out or makes other practices less likely, and so the gathering of particular kinds of information is also both more and less likely.

Institutionalizing fear

Emotions and charged emotional relationships may permeate the international system and long outlast the initial cause for emotions. Fear may become a self-sustaining climate, almost independent of its initial trigger, and difficult to dislodge even in the face of evidence that the threat has diminished, or beyond any structural or material reasons states may have to fear other states. Narratives of historical enmity, harm and aggression will rehearse and reinforce the fearful relationship. On the other hand, the development of a positive emotional relationship may help diminish or render irrelevant the structural reasons states leaders have to distrust and fear each other. In this way, emotions can create their own dynamics or spirals of action and reaction.

In deeply rooted and seemingly intractable conflicts, fear and enmity are written on the bodies of individuals in elevated cortisol and other stress hormones, in hyper-arousal, and the tendency to both look for and recall threats and past harm, and on the body politic, in perceptions, routines, expectations, military doctrines, and forces. Fear is embodied in preemptive and preventive military doctrines and in organizations capable of delivering threats and using military force. Fear is institutionalized not only when states adopt a particular military doctrine, such as preemption or preventive war, but when decisionmakers assume that fear ‘works’ – that the deliberate production of fear in an adversary, by for instance deterrence threats, can coerce a target who will capitulate in the face of threat. Indeed, when not based on simple denial or destruction, military strategy relies on fear – the promise of punishment withheld in exchange for compliance.

Institutionalized fear can bias the assessment of ambiguous actions. Fear may be taken by institutional actors as information and become a filter by which organizations develop information about self and other. Just as individuals who are frightened tend to search for confirmation of their view of the threat and discount disconfirming evidence, organizations operating in a climate of fear may also do so. Standard operating procedures may in fact put possible threat information on the fast track. The biological and psychological tendency to recall previous fearful situations, and reason analogously, may magnify the effect of fear. Emotions may be translated into attributions of the other’s hostile intentions. Fear thus affects the development and organization of knowledge and the tendency not to seek,

or to discount, other information. Emotional relationships between groups and the emotional climate may be concretized in expectations and ways of creating knowledge. The essential skill, again, is to distinguish between justified fear and unjustified fears and some threat assessment procedures may be better able to do so than others.

The fear that many in the United States felt after the 9/11 attacks became institutionalized in hypervigilance. General Ralph Eberhart, then directing the US military's role in homeland security said of possible threats in 2002 that 'the list goes on and on. We can all envision the terrible things that might happen' (quoted in Shenon and Schmitt 2002, A12). The United States maintained vigilance against a threat from terrorist attack, despite evidence that there was less activity among terror cells that it was monitoring: 'Nevertheless the administration has maintained the government's color-coded terrorist threat level at orange, representing a heightened threat of terrorist activity, because of fears that the war will eventually provoke terrorism' (Johnston and Risen 2003, B1). Fear was also institutionalized when the United States restructured its intelligence gathering, and articulated a preventive war doctrine (including the Iraq war) and a targeted killing program against potential future threats.

In sum, the effects of fear are potentially self-reinforcing. Initial fear may be institutionalized in the adoption of an emotional attitude about the other and the world (that it is threatening), which affects the intelligence gathering and assessment functions of organizations. Fear may be institutionalized in physical structures (e.g. fences, fallout shelters) the adoption of technologies (e.g. X-rays of baggage at airports), and development of rules of procedure and military doctrines (e.g. preemption and preventive war) that are intended to reduce the subjective sense of threat and fear but which may simultaneously and inadvertently heighten conditions that produce more fear.

Institutionalizing empathy

Like fear, empathy is not only a private experience that waxes and wanes between individuals; empathy, or its lack, may be a feature of the relations within and between groups and states. Empathy is essential for the development of deep, deliberative, democracy. Aristotle believed that friendship is the lubricant of a just society. Empathy makes friendship possible. 'Friendship seems to hold states together, and lawgivers to care more for it than for justice; for concord seems to be something like friendship, and this they aim at most of all... and when men are friends they have no need of justice; while when they are just they need friendship as well, and the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality' (Aristotle, 192–93). Similarly, Martin Hoffman (2000, 3) asserts, 'empathy is the spark of human concern for others, the glue that makes social life possible'. Empathy, as

Nussbaum (2013) and Mercer argue, aids the formation of well-functioning states. Some have linked empathy to ethical deliberation and normative change (e.g. Crawford 2002, 2009a, 2009b; Jeffery 2011) and social movement organization (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

Empathy can be promoted and institutionalized, or alternatively, fear and a lack of identification with another may diminish empathy. To the extent that anarchy is understood as a self-help system, where trust cannot be expected, and groups exist in a relation of fear toward each other, it will be difficult to develop empathy between the leaders and peoples of states. Conversely, politicians may certainly believe, and publics may be told, that it is in their 'interest' to lower barriers to trade and travel, or that it is no longer necessary to increase military spending directed at their neighbors. The perception and creation of interests is an emotional process as well as one rooted in a material reality or drive for power.

The potential role of empathy in world politics is deep and wide. Diplomacy is an opportunity to develop interpersonal and intergroup empathy. Trade, communication, and cultural interaction could lead to the reduction or elimination of economic and political barriers and the formation of security communities, which then increase empathy and identification. Empathy was arguably institutionalized in the European Union and other pluralistic and amalgamated security communities (Deutsch *et al.* 1957; Adler and Barnett 1998), as well as the trigger for the institutionalization of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine (Marlier and Crawford 2013). The development of empathy, moral reasoning, and deliberative capacities will be essential for the development of non-paternalistic institutions and practices of global governance (see Crawford 2009b).

Greater empathy toward antagonists can develop through contact, patient negotiation, or by accident. Herbert Kelman has shown the importance of processes that increase empathy during informal and formal negotiating processes. Kelman put mid-level Israeli and Palestinian officials together in unofficial 'problem solving workshops' for many years that proceeded from the assumption that parties to a conflict shared a problem, the 'relationship between the two parties – a relationship that has become wholly competitive and mutually destructive' (Kelman 1996, 100). Kelman aimed to create the conditions for the reduction of tensions and the negotiation of a peace that addresses the needs and concerns (fears) of all parties: 'Negotiations are designed, not merely to produce a minimally acceptable political agreement, but to provide the basis for a stable, long-term peace and cooperative, mutually enhancing relationship that contributes to the welfare and development of both societies' (1996, 104). But a dialogue about the practical issues, Kelman found, was not possible until the emotional issues were addressed. Parties who began with an antagonistic stance toward each

other were able to engage in a ‘transformation’ of their relationship. Kelman argues that elements of the problem-solving workshop approach can be integrated into pre-negotiations and formal negotiations to enhance the diplomatic process. Yet, empathy, once evoked between individual negotiators, must be institutionalized, and this is where the problem-solving workshops seem to have failed to generate a larger impact. Experimental research and practical interventions in conflict situations by Staub (2011) also suggests the importance of both *ad hoc* and more institutionalized efforts to decrease dehumanization and promote empathy.

The global anti-apartheid movement and South Africa’s negotiated transition to democracy during the 1980s and 1990s illustrates the political role of empathy. Many were concerned that white minority rule would only end in a violent uprising by the oppressed black majority. The National Party-led regime in South Africa was thought to be too racist and brutal to make concessions, and the African National Congress (ANC) had embarked upon an armed struggle in the 1960s. Hundreds had already died at the hands of the apartheid government – not only in the 1961 Sharpeville and 1976 Soweto protests, but all over the country as the government fought to crush the anti-apartheid movement.

The anti-apartheid movement consciously mobilized transnational anti-apartheid activism through the telling of emotion-laden narratives of apartheid regime violence and humiliation to promote sanctions against the regime and divestment as a non-violent response to a violent regime and a measure of solidarity for anti-apartheid activists living inside and outside South Africa. The emotional relationships developed and maintained over several decades across borders sustained and enlarged the global anti-apartheid movement.

By denying the regime resources, or increasing the costs of acquiring the resources sanctions denied or limited, sanctions ultimately helped weaken the regime and push the apartheid government to reform (see Crawford and Klotz 1999). The Apartheid regime’s desire to reduce the pressure of sanctions eventually prompted the release of anti-apartheid leaders, including Nelson Mandela, and the unbanning of the ANC in 1990 by the new government and National Party leader F.W. de Klerk.

Empathy sometimes also worked at an interpersonal level among negotiators in South Africa’s transition. Negotiations between the anti-apartheid movement and the apartheid regime began in 1990, but a relatively peaceful outcome was not guaranteed. Distrust was rife, violence in the black townships was escalating and the ANC suspected (later proven correct) that the ‘black on black violence’ was being funded, organized, and fomented by the apartheid government as a way to divide the majority. Hit squads, organized by the government, were killing black leaders.

Mandela, practicing the African Ubuntu concept of openness to the other, learned Afrikaans, and so, Mandela says, he better understood the Afrikaners and their fears.¹⁴ What is less well known is the relationship that developed between two other negotiators. In August 1991, Cyril Ramaphosa, the Secretary General and chief Negotiator of the ANC, and Roelf Meyer, Deputy Minister of Constitutional Development for South Africa were invited to a remote fishing at lodge in South Africa. Their host departed by helicopter to take his daughter to a hospital to treat a broken arm. The journalist Allister Sparks (1994, 4) begins his narrative of the transitional period with the story of that day:

After a while Meyer's sons began nagging their dad to take them fishing. Roelf Meyer protested that he knew nothing about fishing, so Ramaphosa, the experienced trout fisherman, offered to teach the boys. The group headed for a dam below the lodge and there, as Roelf Meyer too tried clumsily to cast a line, he got a hook deeply embedded in a finger of his left hand.

They returned to the lodge, where Nomazizi Ramaphosa [Ramaphosa's wife], a nurse tried in vain to manoeuvre the hook out. After an hour, with Meyer growing faint with pain, Cyril Rhamaphosa intervened. 'Roelf', he said, 'there's only one way to do this'. He poured a glass of neat whisky for Meyer, fetched a pair of pliers from the tool kit of his car, and took a firm grip on the hook. 'If you've never trusted an ANC person before, you'd better get ready to do so now', he told the deputy minister. Ramaphosa pressed the hook down hard to make space for the barb and, with a powerful wrench, pulled it out.

As Nomazizi staunch the flow of blood that spurted from the wound, Meyer muttered: 'Well Cyril, don't say I didn't trust you'.

Months later, as formal negotiations floundered and then ground to a halt, Ramaphosa and Meyer, who had been promoted to full minister, continued private one-on-one negotiations in hotel rooms from June to September 1992. When formal negotiations resumed, the men worked together to bring their sides along in an agreement that would eventually lead to an interim constitution, elections, and then a new constitution. The agreement was finalized near dawn around Ramaphosa's birthday in November 1993. When negotiators opened the bar in the World Trade Center near Johannesburg 'to toast the new nation being born', Sparks writes: 'It was Ramaphosa's forty-first birthday and Meyer presented him with a candled cake. "I want to propose a toast to Cyril", he said. "I want to wish our country a happy birthday", Ramaphosa replied.

¹⁴ On Ubuntu, see Tutu 1999.

A band struck up with “In the Mood” and the two principal negotiators swung onto the dance floor together’ (Sparks 1994, 196).

Structural forces, not least the tight grip of economic and military sanctions, pushed the National Party to negotiate with the ANC and its allies. But it is arguable that the transnational sanctions movement was driven by increased empathy for black South Africans who were able to tell their story in vivid poetry, songs, and testimony. The ability to get to the negotiating table and make concessions that met each other’s needs and addressed each side’s fears – even in the midst of continued violence and political assassinations – depended on a leap of trust and an attitude of Ubuntu. Moreover, the negotiations also occurred in a backdrop of several decades of work within multiracial coalitions, such as the United Democratic Front and the Communist Party, between white and black South Africans to create more trusting relationships.

Conclusion

Just as the biological trace of fear can deepen, harden, and even generate a self-fulfilling prophecy, so fear that becomes institutionalized in organizations and group interactions may deepen and harden. While it may not be possible to directly observe emotions at work, we can observe this trace. The institutionalization of fear and anger is perhaps more easily seen in world politics in interactive processes such as the Cold War, the nuclear arms race, and the persistent conflict between Israel and Palestine. Where empathy is low and societies may be locked in cycles of antipathy and aggression, fear and opportunities to increase it are institutionalized in military budgets, arms race dynamics, and cross-border skirmishes. Lack of sufficient empathy may diminish the capacity to distinguish between justified and unjustified fear.

Neuroplasticity enables the biology of fear to be rewritten: in the way that stress induces changes in the brains of humans and other animals, outside interventions and conscious practices can repair the brain (Davidson and McEwen 2012). Just as biologists call for more research, the extent of neuroplasticity and ways to promote neurological repair and growth, so should social scientists attend to the institutionalization of emotions and the potential for changing institutionalized processes that reproduce and promote conflict – our political plasticity.

Understanding emotions and their institutionalization, as well as pragmatic interventions to change emotional relationships at the organizational and systemic level, necessarily involves understanding world politics as a reflexive, coupled complex adaptive system where emotions are not epiphenomenal, fleeting or *ad hoc* in their effects. Emotions and emotional relationships are constitutive of world political dynamics. Emotions are not a causally separate sphere: the challenge for theory lies in integrating an understanding

of emotions into our analysis of reasoning processes, identity, identification, contestation, and cooperation.

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The body doesn't lie: a somatic approach to the study of emotions in world politics

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The role of emotion in politics has typically been characterized in opposition to reason, or what psychologists might have traditionally measured as 'cognition'. Much of this approach clearly emanated from the work of early political philosophers going back to Aristotle, through Hume, and most famously captured in Descartes' famous dictum, 'I think, therefore