

# Maéva Clément and Eric Sangar (eds): Researching Emotions in International Relations: Methodological Perspectives on the Emotional Turn

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In the last two decades, neuroscience and neurophysiology served as a germane trigger for social scientists to ponder upon the connexion between the human brain and physiological traits and political behaviour. From the late 1930s, nevertheless, there had been some initial endeavours to use sundry experiments and include psychology in political science, albeit in a limited manner. In the 1950s, scholars of behaviouralism flirted with the idea of specialising in behavioural patterns more rigorously (SOMIT – TANENHAUS 1967). However, the technological means and research methods they had used cannot be compared to those employed in the last decades. As a consequence, new neuro-x fields, such as neurolaw, neuroeconomics, and neuropolitics, gradually emerged. Amongst these, sub-fields zeroing in on specifically designed areas have been formed too. Most interesting in this regard, though, is the field of philosophy and international relations (IR), in which scholars have refused to take part in the neuro-x formation (SEE HOLMES 2014) due to the fact that neuroscience and other forms of biological research may have already disproved the rudimentary pillars of international relations theories (HYDE 2010). Hence the reviewed co-edited book might then serve as a felicitous point of reference while adverting to the fact that scholars of international relations have become open to debate. Apart from a handful of papers (E.G., BLEIKER – HUTCHISON 2008; BLEIKER 2015), the number of books dedicated particularly to international relations theories and their bond to emotions and (neuro)physiological traits has remained exiguous. Some pioneering exceptions may be found though, as in the case of Yetiv and James (2017), who attempted to draw researchers' attention to interdisciplinarity when examining IR, and Holmes (2018), who vindicated that *tête-à-tête* negotiations proved to be more successful in comparison to other forms of bargaining.

The reviewed volume was co-edited by Maéva Clément and Eric Sangar, who have already worked together on their analysis examining the use of emotions amongst US and Islamist political leaders (CLÉMENT – LINDEMANN – SANGAR 2017). Dr. Clément has graduated from Sciences Po Lyon, Sorbonne University, and Goethe Universität-Frankfurt. Currently she is Senior Researcher at the Centre for Democracy and Peace Research (*Zentrum für Demokratie- und Friedensforschung*) at Universität Osnabrück in Germany. And her research foci comprise, for instance, international political theories, interdisciplinary emotion research, and peace and conflict studies. Eric Sangar, by contrast, studied at Sciences Po Paris and the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. And at the moment, Dr.

Sangar works as Lecturer at Sciences Po Lille, and his academic research has focussed on the linkage between collective memory and foreign policy and conflicts.

Apart from the first chapter, which serves as the introduction to this book, there are three main parts that divide the volume into three thematic blocks (“The Influence of Emotions on Actors and Politics”; “Emotions Shaped by Powerful Actors and Institutions”; and “Discursive Agency and Emotions”). In total, excluding the above-mentioned opening chapter, the volume consists of 13 chapters with each one having a different author or team of authors. The authors have concentrated on diverse aspects of emotions and their meaning and use in IR. The editors, nonetheless, emphasise their intent to fulfil and achieve the following three research goals (pp. 2–3): (1) to deliver “*valuable insights into how emotions and affects can be operationalised*”; (2) to give evidence of “*the role of emotions in IR*”; and finally, (3) to itemise the main obstacles to this type of research and the corresponding limitations. And after delineating the background of emotions and its short-term existence and overall complexity, the editors then summarise the two main debates they observe within the area. These debates have been comprised of emotions as the “*analytical concept*” and the “*conceptualisation of emotions at the international level*” (pp. 5–6). Regardless of the initial claim that the authors had only briefly summarised the roots and delimitations of *emotions, feelings, and affects*, at the same time it has remained blurred whether their approach and definitions had come from and were to be understood entirely from the angle of political science, or, by contrast, whether they were built on conceptions of psychology. In juxtaposition, in the way of utilising and comprehending these terms, a clear-cut variance exists as is later even implied in passing (p. 330). On the whole, the editors utilise emotions as an “*umbrella term*” (p. 5) as each author of the volume then perceives emotions differently. By analogy, all the authors always delineate their approaches to methodology and methods separately in the given chapters.

There are three chapters in the first block, and each chapter stands for an independent study, which is a scheme applied throughout the whole volume. To begin with, Chapter 2 considers the work of Eugene T. Gendlin, an Austro-American philosopher whose research balanced on the verge of philosophy and psychology when elaborating on the felt sense and personal skill performances, a concept issued in his book entitled *Focusing*.

This chapter adumbrates the aspects of Gendlin's philosophy, and possibly his sofa too, and connects it to the side of emotions alongside the importance of non-verbal expressions and body languages as demonstrated in cases of American political representatives (P. 43). The next chapter particularly specialises in two selected political actors, specifically Winston S. Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt. The purport of this analysis is to apply the concept of friendship and human relationship-based research onto international politics via *interpretative political science*. And finally, in the third chapter of this block, qualitative content analysis (QCA) was employed for the purpose of examining Russian foreign policy and its state of anger and status concerns. In this case study, the author uses two particular conflicts for looking into the examined course of action. The coding scheme is based on three general groups (cognitive, behavioural, and affective) that are further dismantled. Afterwards, the author compares the changes in Russian foreign policy towards the West over 25 years, and thereby concluding that there has been an "emotional learning curve" symbolising an increase in "assertiveness in the relationship" (PP. 95; 96).

The second block engages in institutionalism and its interconnection with the actors' emotions. In the four chapters of this block, the authors immerse in miscellaneous ingredients of war, violence, power, and dehumanisation in association with the respective stakeholders. To start with, Chapter 5 demarcates the borders and use of *auto-ethnography*. In order to analyse and appraise security discourse, this case study examines and brings affective and emotional experience at London's Imperial War Museum to the fore. As later admitted by the author, nonetheless, this personal experience may indeed lead to biased results due to the personal traits and socio-economic determinants, such as one's social class affiliation, for instance (P. 120). The following chapter (CHAPTER 6) outlines the "discursive nature of emotions" (P. 131) and this discursive approach had been employed when examining a set of data that the author acquired after interviewing 40 French airmen. Subsequently, a framework based on two main vectors was created in order to scrutinise the links to violence and its perception. Chapter 8 applies a computer-assisted narrative analysis sharing similarities with qualitative content analyses, as the authors had endeavoured to elucidate the narrative of actors taking part in the decision-making process in the Iraq War of 2003. Specifically, the roles of aggressor, victim, hero, and coward were taken into consideration under the terms of their political reactions in four investigated scenarios. According to the results, there were

palpable discrepancies between the discourses adopted by the West, represented by the US, and bin Laden in respect of victims (p. 201). In contrast to that, the “*hero-protective*” narrative was proved to be universal and boundless.

The longest and also the final block contains six chapters. Amid the migration crisis in 2015, Chapter 9 ponders upon multilevel interpretation possibilities in the case of the displayed images and ensuing emotional reactions depending on the infamous image of a dead three-year-old boy from Syria. The author’s analysis concludes that the relation between graphic photographs and politics are of a complex character, and as in the case of the examined image, the impact of images may prove to be “*indecisive*” (p. 224), thereby having a multivalent effect on politics and the public. Chapter 9 then, however, recommends re-running the analytical arrangement of *political resentment* for further research in conflict studies, not only necessarily from the historical perspective, since it shows the overlapping role of emotions in collective identities (p. 246). While Chapter 10 employs discursive analysis in order to look into the concept of [governmental] *political resentment* in the case of the Greek debt crisis in relation to Germany, Chapter 11 changes sides by turning to philosophical persuasions when applying Hans-George Gadamer’s framework of *fusion of horizons* to emotional experiences in the course of time of 9/11. Chapters 12 and 13 are built on discourse analysis and qualitative content analysis, respectively. The former explores the conflict between Russia and NATO over the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, shifts in the role of Russia *vis-à-vis* the West and how it was made into “*a pariah state*” owing to the incidence of *emotionalisation effects* (p. 288). The subject of the latter chapter is the national identity of the US and its coupling to the relations between the US and Iran. The qualitative content analysis sheds light on the occurrence of the “*fear*” that has prevailed in the US on the grounds of Iran’s possession of nuclear weapons (p. 313). The results are also supported by a visual analysis testifying to the “*mistrust*” of the US towards the Iranian leadership (p. 315). Chapter 14, the last one in both the block and the volume, recapitulates the methodological challenges associated with emotions and their research in IR as they appeared in the aforementioned case studies. Furthermore, the authors put these research hindrances into context, which makes this chapter distinctively valuable.

Inasmuch as the editors highlight the uniqueness of the volume, one may anticipate: (1) a chapter specifically devoted to the introductory

roots of the historiography of emotions in IR or (2) an extra chapter on methodology and methods since in this area, “*methodology is still relatively under-discussed*” (P. 7), as claimed, but regrettably, the editors had merely encapsulated the peaks of prior research in a brief, yet accurate, section of the Introduction. And when it comes to discussing the limits of the research, this was done in the very last chapter (CHAPTER 14), which took account of the methods and methodology per se, albeit only to a limited extent once again.

On the one hand, the authors aimed to construct their methodology and the respective methods on those employed in political science, IR, and humanities. And meritoriously, the authors and editors strictly followed this direction whilst concentrating on epistemological, ontological, and theoretical aspects of research in order to insist on “*integrating tools from ‘classical’ social science*” (P. 2) in their work. But on the other hand, the significance of research opportunities in respect of neuroscience, or physiology, was not addressed. Alas, it was up to the footnote on page 25 to solve this problem, as in it, one may learn that the authors and editors “*recognise the insights gained through psychological experimentation [...] but the volume is made primarily for a broad readership for whom experimental work and the resources it demands is [sic] not a realistic option*”. Nonetheless, some of the authors (E.G., CHAPTER 10) at least acknowledge the non-negligible role of psychology and thus interpret and adopt findings from it. Even though this volume is a valuable contribution to the studies of emotions in IR, the first question is whether this solely non-experimental and yet empirical approach may be sustainable. Each chapter has produced an inspiring insight into the opportunities of research into emotions as they appear across the theories and practice of IR. Yet it is imperative to bear the above-mentioned objectives of the volume in mind. Hence, those approaches towards methodology and methods that were utilised throughout the volume, may serve the purpose of *characterisation* and *depictions* of given situations, rather than identifying the *causes* or *origins*. In a long-term perspective, however, one may even wonder whether similar books will not have served as a dead-end track due to the fact that they endeavour to build a parallel milieu for the former theories of IR. And since not even the methods of psychology have been included in the book, many similar efforts to inquire into political affairs of IR may turn out to be disputable because enquiring into emotions without psychology and experiments may be a contradiction in terms. At the same time, nevertheless, findings from and interpretations of

data obtained through the tools of neuroscience, as associated with neuropolitics, have not been flawless either. Yet the latest studies using the tools of neuroscience and neurophysiology (E.G., DECETY – PAPE – WORKMAN 2018; HATEMI – MCDERMOTT 2012; SMITH ET AL. 2011) shall be acknowledged and recognised by the theorists of IR since their findings may be of great significance in terms of explicating deeper patterns of political behaviour.

Secondly, one may ask who shall make up the “*broad readership*”? Apart from the enthusiasts, who are not merely exclusively political scientists and their students, and a narrow selection of scholars of IR who are willing to consider the importance of such concepts as emotions and empathy and are not afraid to leave their comfort zone, one may hope that not just the appealing title of the volume may attract many readers from the outside of political science as well. This volume is worth reading because the editors have gathered together a group of experienced and noteworthy scholars who managed to deliver thought-provoking chapters whose content keeps raising both praising and scathing queries, even after finishing the very last page.

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