Review of International Studies (2008), 34, 115–135 Copyright © British International Studies Association
doi:10.1017/S0260210508007821

Fear no more: emotions and world politics

ROLAND BLEIKER AND EMMA HUTCHISON*

Abstract. Although emotions play a significant role in world politics they have so far received surprisingly little attention by International Relations scholars. Numerous authors have emphasised this shortcoming for several years now, but strangely there are still only very few systematic inquiries into emotions and even fewer related discussions on method. The article explains this gap by the fact that much of International Relations scholarship is conducted in the social sciences. Such inquiries can assess emotions up to a certain point, as illustrated by empirical studies on psychology and foreign policy and constructivist engagements with identity and community. But conventional social science methods cannot understand all aspects of phenomena as ephemeral as those of emotions. Doing so would involve conceptualising the influence of emotions even when and where it is not immediately apparent. The ensuing challenges are daunting, but at least some of them could be met by supplementing social scientific methods with modes of inquiry emanating from the humanities. By drawing on feminist and other interpretive approaches we advance three propositions that would facilitate such cross-disciplinary inquiries. (1) The need to accept that research can be insightful and valid even if it engages unobservable phenomena, and even if the results of such inquiries can neither be measured nor validated empirically; (2) The importance of examining processes of representation, such as visual depictions of emotions and the manner in which they shape political perceptions and dynamics; (3) A willingness to consider alternative forms of insight, most notably those stemming from aesthetics sources, which, we argue, are particularly suited to capturing emotions. Taken together, these propositions highlight the need for a sustained global communication across different fields of knowledge.

Introduction

Emotions play an obvious and omnipresent role in world politics. The ensuing implications are particularly evident in the context of transnational communications. Consider how images of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, broadcasted *ad infinitum* around the world, have had a decisively emotional impact on how people perceive issues of security and national identity. Many of the subsequent political actions, from the swift US-led wars of response in Afghanistan and Iraq to the suspension of basic civil rights and the legitimisation of torture, would not have been possible without the highly emotional impact of 9/11 and the equally emotional

* Earlier versions of this article were presented at the University of St Andrews, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, the Australian National University and the University of Queensland. We gratefully acknowledge feedback from the participants, from the three editors of this Special Issue, and from Thomas Bernauer, Stephen Chan, Richard Devetak, Ned Lebow, Jon Mercer, Iver Neumann, Frank Schimmelfennig, Jacqui True, Pete Van Ness and an anonymous reviewer. Roland recognises the generous support of a fellowship from the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities at Cambridge University. Emma would like to thank the University of Queensland for a Travel Award that facilitated collaborative work on this project.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

governmental appeal to defend the world of good against the forces of evil. But fear and hatred are not the only emotions that play an important role in world politics. Empathy and compassion can be just as influential. Look at the unprecedented level of transnational solidarity that emerged in response to the tsunami that devastated parts of East and South Asia in 2004. Governments and individual citizens around the world donated so generously at least in part because they were emotionally affected by the shocking images of the disaster.

While central to many aspects of world politics, the role of emotions has received surprisingly little attention in International Relations (IR) scholarship. Fear, for instance, is pivotal to realist theorising of security dilemmas, but few authors explicitly identify this emotion, let alone examine it systematically. The major exception is a long tradition of exploring the role of psychology in foreign policy. But here too emotions have not been appreciated fully, in part because they are mostly seen as 'deviations from rationality', as factors that could explain misperceptions.[1]

An increasing number of IR scholars now highlight – and lament – this strange lack of attention paid to the role of emotions. Jonathan Mercer and Neta Crawford were among the first to make this point. The former did so in 1996, in an insightful conference paper that has unfortunately remained unpublished.[2] The latter reinforced this message four years later in one of the most respected and widely read disciplinary journals.[3] The reaction to Mercer's and Crawford's appeal has been puzzling, but not for the reasons one would expect. There was little objection to their arguments. Some of the discipline's most senior scholars started to acknowledge the political significance of emotions. Robert Jervis, who has played a key role in examining the role of perception and misperception in world politics, admitted that his early neglect of emotion was a 'major blunder'.[4] Richard Ned Lebow, another leading American scholar, recognises that the notion of an autonomous and rational individual is 'a fiction of the Enlightenment', arguing, instead, that emotions are 'absolutely central' to world politics.[5] Across the Atlantic the situation is no different. Christopher Hill and Andrew Linklater, two senior scholars in the UK, acknowledge the crucial role of 'feeling and intuition' in decision-making[6] and deplore that the study of emotions in world politics is still 'in its infancy'.[7]

But more than half a decade after Mercer's and Crawford's compelling call to take emotions seriously there are still only very few systematic scholarly inquiries into the issues at stake. And there are even fewer serious discussions about how one could go about doing so. This absence is puzzling for two reasons. First, because scholarly debates on method play a central role in orthodox IR scholarship. One would thus

[1] Jonathan Mercer, 'Rationality and Psychology in International Politics', *International Organization*, 59 (Winter 2005), p. 97.

[2] Jonathan Mercer, 'Approaching Emotion in International Politics', paper presented at the International Studies Association Conference, San Diego, California, 25 April 1996, p. 1.

[3] Neta C. Crawford, 'The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on Emotions and Emotional Relationships', *International Security*, 24:4 (Spring 2000), pp. 116–36.

[4] Thierry Balzacq and Robert Jervis, 'Logics of Mind and International System: A Journey with Robert Jervis', *Review of International Studies*, 30 (2004), pp. 564–5.

[5] Richard Ned Lebow, 'Reason, Emotion and Cooperation', *International Politics*, 42 (2005), p. 283. See also his *Between War and Peace: The Nature of International Crisis* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).

[6] Christopher Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2003), p. 116.

[7] Andrew Linklater, 'Emotions and World Politics', *Aberystwyth Journal of World Affairs*, 2 (2004), pp. 71–7, at 71.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

have expected an equally sustained methodological debate about how to investigate emotions. Second, because just about every philosopher considered central to the tradition of IR scholarship, from Thucydides to Machiavelli and from Hobbes to Rousseau, has engaged the role of emotions. Numerous disciplines, from psychology to sociology, have picked up and carried on these debates, but not so students of international relations.

The main purpose of this article is twofold: (1) to explain the strange absence of discussion about how to study emotions and world politics; and (2) to advance suggestions about how to cultivate an intellectual attitude that may rectify this shortcoming. Given the absence of systematic prior work, doing so is a rather formidable task. Crawford recognises that the inherently 'ephemeral' nature of emotions poses major 'methodological concerns'.[8] Mercer worries that 'emotion is hard to define, hard to operationalize, hard to measure, and hard to isolate from other factors'.[9] Jervis perfectly sums up prevailing attitudes by declaring that he would love to study the relationship between emotion and cognition but that 'at this point the challenge is simply too great'.[10] We certainly do not pretend to meet all aspects of this gargantuan challenge successfully. But we hope to at least carve out a path that may offer helpful suggestions about how to begin tackling some of the issues at stake. We do so by proceeding along the following lines.

After highlighting the key reasons for the neglect of emotions, and the compelling need to rectify this shortcoming, we briefly engage the literature on psychology and foreign policy. While appreciating the ensuing scholarly contributions we also draw attention to their limits. Psychological studies of decision-makers can illuminate their behaviour, but fall short of explaining how emotions are enmeshed in larger socio-political dynamics. Added to this are limits imposed by the type of quantitative methods that prevails among these inquiries. While surveys and other systematic empirical assessments may reveal the depth and prevalence of emotions in decision-makers and samples of the public, they can tell us little about why these perceptions have emerged and how they shape notions of identity and community. Recent constructivist scholarship can address some of these challenges, and we discuss how the respective scholars have proposed to do so. But we also note that none of them, including Mercer and Crawford, have actually studied emotions or even advanced concrete suggestions about how this might be done.

We argue that the relative dearth of discussions about how to study emotions can be explained by the fact that much of IR scholarship, including constructivist contributions, tends to rely on social scientific methods. But emotions are too ephemeral to be understood exhaustively by the type of systematic inquiries that characterise the social sciences. We explain in detail why this is the case, and then highlight the benefits of supplementing social scientific approaches with modes of analysis stemming from the humanities. Although we refrain from discussing particular methodologies – a task that would go far beyond the scope of a short essay – we argue for a methodological reorientation that consists of three components: (1) The need to accept that research can be insightful and valid even if it engages unobservable phenomena, and even if the results of such inquiries can

[8] Crawford, 'The Passion of World Politics', p. 118.
[9] Mercer, 'Approaching Emotions', p. 1.
[10] Balzacq and Jervis, 'Logics of Mind and International System', pp. 564–5.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

neither be measured nor validated empirically; (2) The importance of examining processes of representation, such as visual depictions of emotions and the manner in which they shape political perceptions and dynamics; (3) A willingness to consider alternative forms of insight, such as those stemming from aesthetics sources, which, we argue, are particularly suited to capture emotions.

We conclude by highlighting that scholars can optimise their ability to understand the politics of emotions only by making full use of the entire spectrum of human perception and cognition, which requires more open-ended and active communication among different academic disciplines and fields of knowledge. Seen from such a vantage-point, facilitating global communication should include creating tolerance and space for productive interactions across a range of different knowledge-practices. Emotion and reason can then be seen as intrinsically linked. Or, expressed differently, we can appreciate different forms of rationalities, from the prevailing instrumental versions to more intuitive and emotional ones.

A brief disclaimer is in order before we can start our inquiry. The process of gaining new insights into international relations can be said to involve two parallel processes: scrutinising the disciplinary debates that make up prevailing scholarly inquiries and, in addition, forgetting the object of critique: theorising world politics beyond the agendas, issues, and terminologies that are preset by orthodox approaches.[11] Most of our research has taken place in the latter tradition. We have thought to address key issues in world politics without being constrained by the boundaries that had been established by prevailing conceptualisations. The present article charts a different route: it consciously engages the disciplinary set-up of IR, revealing why prevailing approaches have not taken emotions as seriously as they should. Doing so is important, we believe, for emotions should be placed at the centre of disciplinary debates. But taking such a stance also forced us to make difficult choices: we have been indebted and greatly inspired by feminist and other interpretative approaches, but were unable to draw upon or even acknowledge them as extensively as we would have liked. Many of these studies offer crucial insights into emotions and world politics. They engage themes that range from the gendered assumptions of rationality to the role of trauma, fear and humiliation. But most of the ensuing insights, important as they are, have not yet entered orthodox disciplinary debates, which remain dominated by realist, liberal and constructivist approaches to international relations. This is why engaging the politics of disciplinary framing remains an important issue – and the prime objective of this article.

The neglect of emotions in International Relations scholarship

Since few scholars now contest that emotions play a role in world politics, we dwell on this point only briefly, and only through an obvious example: the inherently emotional nature of global terrorism. Consider how the motives and means of terrorists are usually presented in emotional terms, as 'fanatical', 'irrational' or simply 'evil'. Reactions to terrorist attacks are equally emotional. They involve

[11] Roland Bleiker, 'Forget IR Theory', *Alternatives: Social Transformation and Humane Governance*, 22:1 (1997), pp. 57–86.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

dealing with the memory of death, suffering and trauma, leading to emotional calls for political action, often involving feelings of retribution that go far beyond the mere need to provide security. Political leaders do not shy away from drawing upon emotional appeals, such as nationalist rhetoric, to win support for their positions.

These emotional dynamics are neither surprising nor new. Numerous modern philosophers have long drawn attention to the key role that fear plays in projects of political renewal. Politicians have, indeed, always used fear to manipulate the population in a manner that served their particular interests. Thomas Hobbes even went a step further. Fear, he believed, not only leaves strong marks on public debates and policymaking. It can also serve as an important source for justifying collective political and moral foundations.[12] A perfect illustration of this dynamic can be seen in the new post-9/11 world order, the Pax-Americana that Washington has established around a moral crusade against the forces of evil. Numerous scholars – before and after 9/11 – have stressed how the fear engendered by terror can create moral certainty and lead otherwise diverse and disagreeing constituencies to swift, universal agreements on basic principles and actions. As a result, though, the foundations of our morals are articulated mostly in negative ways, based on fear and closure, rather than on open discussions of difficult issues and a willingness to ground political positions in a positive affirmation of basic values and principles.[13]

These and numerous other linkages between emotions and politics are central to international relations. Crawford gets to the heart of the matter when stressing that emotions are everywhere in world politics, from the above mentioned (mis)use of fear to the necessity of goodwill and empathy in peace settlement negotiations. But she convincingly speaks of a 'taken-for-granted status', stressing that 'emotion is implicit and ubiquitous, but undertheorized'.[14]

Both Crawford and Mercer identify prevailing understandings of reason as a key explanation for the scholarly neglect of emotion. They stress that realism and liberalism rest on the fundamental assumption that the behaviour of states is based on rational, or at least intelligible factors. Crawford strongly laments that this rational-actor paradigm has become so dominant that 'emotions virtually dropped from the radar screen of international relations theorists'.[15] Mercer too critiques the prevailing scholarly eagerness to 'purge' emotions from explanations.[16] Lebow has recently affirmed the adequacy of these complaints, stressing, as Mercer did, that reason and emotion are not nearly as mutually exclusive as was assumed by prevailing approaches to international relations.[17] The attempt to separate emotion and rationality is, of course, part of a long modern tradition. Historically perceived to encapsulate women's 'dangerous desires', emotions were thought to be feelings or

[12] Corey Robin, *Fear: The History of a Political Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 4, 16, 34.

[13] See, for instance, Robin, *Fear*, pp. 145–6; Judith N. Shklar, *Ordinary Vices* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 5, 9; Thomas J. Scheff, 'Emotions and Identity: A Theory of Ethnic Nationalism', in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 279–80; Richard R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 192, 198; and Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (New York: Henry Holt, 1977), pp. 18–19.

[14] Crawford, 'The Passion of World Politics', pp. 116, 118.

[15] Ibid., p. 117.

[16] Mercer, 'Rationality and Psychology in International Relations', pp. 97, 81–7; Mercer, 'Approaching Emotions', p. 2.

[17] Lebow, 'Reason, Emotion and Cooperation', pp. 284–5.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

bodily sensations that overtook us, distorting thought and the ability to make rational and ethical judgement.[18] Justice must be free of passion, it was believed, because emotion impels people to perform irrational acts of violence and harm.[19] The ensuing assumptions go far beyond the realm of philosophy and political theory. They permeate much of decision-making and public debate a well. Consider how nuclear strategy during the Cold War was based on highly rationalised assumptions, even when these assumptions bordered on the absurd, as when the very notion of credible deterrence depended on the rather questionable idea that a 'thermonuclear war' between the superpowers was winnable and, in the words of Herman Kahn, 'would not preclude normal and happy lives for the majority of survivors and their descendants'.[20] Or look at a recent media release by the Australian Law Reform Commission, which aims at generating public debate on the effectiveness and need for sedition laws in the fight against global terrorism. Its main objective is to come up with useful – read rational – policy advice by taking 'some of the emotion out of the debate'.[21] These are precisely the attitudes to reason and emotion that many feminists have for long held responsible for gendered and highly problematic practices of statehood, sovereignty and conflict.[22]

Insights from studies on political psychology and foreign policy

While much of IR scholarship has eschewed emotions for decades, one key exception stands out: a long tradition of studies in political psychology and foreign policy. George Marcus distinguishes between two aspects of this tradition. One seeks to understand the role that psychology plays in the process of political decision-making. Another examines how leaders and the population at large emotionally react to particular political situations.[23]

[18] See Jon Elster, *Alchemies of the Mind: Rationality and the Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Victor Jeleniewski Seidler, 'Masculinity, Violence and Emotional Life', in Gillian Bendelow and Simon J. Williams (eds.), *Emotions in Social Life: Critical Themes and Contemporary Issues* (Routledge: London, 1998), pp. 193–210.

[19] Stephen Homes, *Passions and Constraint: On the Theory of Liberal Democracy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), and Kathleen H. Jamieson, *Dirty Politics: Deception, Distraction, and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[20] Kahn cited in Louis Menand, 'Fat Man: Herman Kahn and the Nuclear Age', *New Yorker*, 27 June 2005. See also Carol Cohn, 'Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals', *Signs: Journal of Women in Society*, 12:4 (1987); Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[21] Australian Government, Law Reform Commission, 'Media Release: Are Sedition Laws Necessary and Effective?' 20 March 2006, ⟨www.alrc.gov.au⟩.

[22] Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1983); Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); V. Spike Peterson (ed.), *Gendered States: Feminist (Re)Visions of International Relations Theory* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992).

[23] George E. Marcus, 'Emotions in Politics', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 3 (2002), pp. 221–50; p. 222.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The first approach is epitomised by the work of Jervis, Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, to name only some of the most prominent representatives.[24] Christopher Hill notes how these approaches seek to understand the complex relationship between emotion and reason in the process of decision-making. They oppose the assumption that decisions are taken on the basis of 'classical rationality', stressing, instead, that leaders have often no choice but to draw upon ideas and insights that may involve 'the emotional rather than the calculating part of the brain'.[25] Decision makers, related studies stress, are also shaped by deeply-seated emotional predispositions, particularly those that were acquired in the early, formative stages of their life.[26] Mercer goes as far as claiming that 'ignoring the emotional attributes of a decision is irrational'.[27]

A recent example of the second approach can be found in an essay that appeared in *Political Psychology*, one of the most prominent outlets for such research. It features a systematic empirical study of 'causal attributions' for the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Surveying roughly one thousand US citizens, the authors assess how participants reacted emotionally to 9/11. They examine how anger and sadness shaped people's understanding of the event. These two emotions led to different thought contents. Anger, the study found, was linked to blame. It intensified the search for causal explanations of 9/11. Participants who mostly experienced sadness, by contrast, associated their feelings with loss, which renders causal judgment less relevant to the respective political perceptions.[28]

These and numerous other studies on political psychology have made important contributions to our understanding of emotions and world politics. But the respective approaches can understand the role of emotions only up to a certain point. Three limits stand out.

First, most of the above approaches, particularly those that deal with psychology and deterrence, still operate within the rational choice paradigm. Mercer is particularly concerned about the ensuing consequences. He laments that emotions are seen only as interferences with or deviations from rationality. Scholars tend to study emotions primarily to explain misperceptions, thus missing out on a range of other important insights.[29] Hill writes of approaches that conceptualise rationality as an 'ideal type'. But people hardly ever behave rationally in a consistent manner or even manage to agree on what doing so means in the first place.[30] Marcus disagrees equally with the prevailing assumption that emotions 'should be constrained and minimised

[24] See, for instance, Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1985); Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976); Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, 'Rational Deterrence Theory: I Think, Therefore I Deter', *World Politics*, 41 (1989); Richard Cottam, *Foreign Policy Motivation* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977); Deborah Larson, *The Origins of Containment: A Psychological Explanation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

[25] Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*, p. 116.

[26] A.L. George and J.L. George, *Presidential Personality and Performance* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1998).

[27] Jonathan Mercer, 'Deterrence and Emotional Beliefs', unpublished manuscript, July 2007.

[28] Deborah A. Small, Jennifer S. Lerner and Baruch Fischhoff, 'Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism: Americans' Reactions in a National Field Experiment', *Political Psychology*, 27:2 (2006), pp. 289–98.

[29] Mercer, 'Rationality and Psychology in International Politics', p. 77; 'Approaching Emotion', p. 4.

[30] Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*, p. 97.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

so that reason dictates judgment with minimal distraction'.[31] Jervis and Lebow explain why reason took on such an exclusive role, even in scholarly endeavours that sought to understand the role of emotions. The answers, they believe, has to do with the nature of social science research, which has for decades attempted to subsume emotion to cognition. Even the field of psychology, they stress, was at the time of their earlier studies 'purely cognitive',[32] paying little attention to questions of affect.[33]

Second, empirical inquiries into the emotional attributes of individuals have difficulties assessing the crucial historical dimensions that underlie feelings. No matter how carefully designed a systematic survey is, it can only assess patterns. It cannot explain how emotions emerged and evolved. But for some scholars this is precisely the key to understanding emotions. Corey Robin, for instance, stresses how political fear always 'has a history, and to a surprising degree, it is a history of ideas'.[34]

Third, studies on psychology and foreign policy that do delve into historical dimensions, such as those that examine the formative psychological experiences of decision-makers, tend to do so at the level of the individual. Illuminating as they may well be, such scholarly inquiries are not designed to assess the broader societal dynamics through which emotions help to shape the constitution of community, and thus the context within which politics – domestic and international – takes place.

Constructivist debates on emotions and their relevance to world politics

The recent emergence of constructivist scholarship in IR has helped to address some of these shortcomings. Numerous authors recognise that emotions have a history and that this history is essential to how collective identities – including those of states – are constituted. Crawford, for instance, stresses that emotions, and the situation in which they become political, are linked to particular historical, political and cultural circumstances.[35] The obvious example she cites here relates to the perceived anarchy of the international system, which neorealists see as playing a key role in generating tension and conflict. Crawford and other constructivists oppose this interpretation. Instead, they follow the logic of earlier, classical realists, stressing that conflict emerges not from systematic restraints, but from the manner in which emotions, such as fear or anger, shape the perception of decision-makers.[36] Mercer too points out that questions of affect play a crucial role in determining how individual and collective identities are constituted, thus also shaping perceptions of the international system and the threats it may pose to states.[37] Lebow, likewise, recognises how the

[31] Marcus, 'Emotion in Politics', p. 221.
[32] Lebow, 'Reason, Emotion and Cooperation', p. 304.
[33] Balzacq and Jervis, 'Logics of Mind and International System', p. 565.
[34] Robin, *Fear*, p. 28.
[35] Crawford, 'The Passion of World Politics', pp. 131, 136.
[36] Ibid., p. 119.
[37] Mercer, 'Approaching Emotion', p. 13; 'Rationality and Psychology in International Politics', pp. 93–4; Jonathan Mercer, 'Anarchy and Identity', *International Organization*, 49 (1995), pp. 229–52.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

behaviour of states is intrinsically linked to their prior identity and interests, which, in turn, are bound up with a range of emotional factors.[38]

Acknowledging the relationship between emotion and identity in IR scholarship opens up the possibility of learning from debates in other disciplines, where constitutive or constructivist approaches have for long recognised that emotions cannot be separated from their social context. Scholars in psychology, anthropology, sociology, philosophy or feminist theory passionately disagree with each other about how emotions should be understood and appreciated. But they agree by and large on the need to oppose two stereotypical views of emotions: that they are purely private and irrational phenomena.[39]

Recent literature on the sociology of emotion suggests in particular that feelings are an active component of identity and community.[40] Emotions help us make sense of ourselves, and situate us in relation to others and the world that surrounds us. They frame forms of personal and social understanding, and are thus inclinations that lead individuals to locate their identity within a wider collective. As Sara Ahmed suggests, emotions are an intimate part of the attachments that bind individuals to particular objects and to others; they 'colour' the relational ties that can come to constitute identity and belonging.[41] Feelings of both pleasure and pain are illustrative here. An encounter that brings pleasure can create a certain kind of attachment to whatever brings that joy. Meanwhile, a painful or regrettable encounter may create a similar attachment, perhaps a 'negative' one, to the object or person that inflicted

[38] Lebow, 'Reason, Emotion and Cooperation', p. 284.

[39] See, for instance, Lila Abu-Lughod and Catherine A. Lutz (eds.), *Language and the Politics of Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Claire Armon-Jones, *Varieties of Affect* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991); Jack M. Barbalet (ed.) *Emotions and Sociology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002); Jack M. Barbalet, *Emotion, Social Theory and Social Structure: A Macrosociological Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Peter Goldie, *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002); Rom Harré, *The Social Construction of Emotions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); Alison M. Jaggar, 'Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology', in Susan R. Bordo and Alison M. Jaggar (eds.), *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), pp. 145–71; Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Stephen Leighton (ed.), *Philosophy and the Emotions* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2003); William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Chris Shilling, 'Emotions, Embodiment and the Sensation of Society', *Sociological Review*, 45:2 (1997), pp. 195–219; Robert C. Solomon, *Not Passion's Slave: Emotions and Choice* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2003); Simon J. Williams, *Emotions and Social Theory: Corporeal Reflections on the (Ir)Rational* (London: Sage, 1991).

[40] See, in particular, Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003); Lauren Berlant, 'The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy, Politics' in Jodi Dean (ed.), *Cultural Studies and Political Theory* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 42–62; Mabel Berezin, 'Emotions and Political Identity: Mobilizing Affection for the Polity', in Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta (eds.), *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), pp. 83–98; Mabel Berezin, 'Secure States: Towards a Political Sociology of Emotion', in Barbalet (ed.), *Emotions and Sociology*, pp. 33–52; Burkitt, *Social Selves: Theories of Social Formation of Personality* (London: Sage, 1991), p. 2; Karin M. Fierke, 'Whereof We Can Speak, Thereof We Must Not Be Silent: Trauma, Political Solipsism and War', *Review of International Studies*, 30 (2004), pp. 471–91; Arlie Russel Hochschild, 'The Sociology of Emotions as a Way of Seeing', in Bendelow and Williams (eds.), *Emotions in Social Life*, pp. 3–15; Kate Nash, 'Cosmopolitan Political Community: Why Does It Feel So Right?', *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory*, 10:4 (2003), pp. 506–18; Thomas J. Scheff, *Bloody Revenge: Emotions, Nationalism and War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994; Scheff, 'Emotions and Identity', pp. 277–303.

[41] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 28.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the pain. The emotional nature of identity and communal belonging is implicit here, because our sense of identity and belonging are constituted by the way we attach and situate ourselves within the social world.

A substantial body of literature also emphasises that emotions accompany so-called rational actions as much as irrational ones. Robert Solomon and Martha Nussbaum go as far as stressing that emotions are important forms of knowledge and evaluative thought.[42] Understood in this way, emotions either involve, or indeed are, judgments. Emotions are always about something, or are directed at something for specific reasons. Anger implies that something thought to be bad or wrong has happened. Fear can be attributed to the feeling that something untoward may happen, and similarly, joy and happiness imply something good. Emotions can thus be seen as telling us certain things, as providing insights and pointers that could be of use in our attempts to address social and political challenges. This so-called cognitive approach to emotions, epitomised by the work of Solomon and Nussbaum, has always been juxtaposed to more biologically-based assumptions about emotions. The latter positions, influenced by William James but going back to ancient Greek philosophy, assume that emotions are not primarily thoughts, judgments and beliefs, but bodily sensations. We refrain from entering or even summarising these debates in detail here, in part because doing so would go beyond the focus of this article, in part because several IR scholars, such as Crawford, Marcus, Mercer and Ross, have already done so convincingly. The latter two have, in addition, outlined the relevance of recent insights on affects from the neurosciences and attempted to apply them to the study of political phenomena.[43]

The limits of social scientific inquiries into emotions

Although the centrality of emotions to world politics is now largely recognised, there are surprisingly few studies that systematically analyse how emotions matter in concrete political settings. This is puzzling, for one would have expected at least some serious inquiries more than half a decade after Crawford's convincing call to take emotions seriously appeared in one of the most prominent disciplinary journals. Even more surprising is that there are hardly any sustained discussions about how to go about studying emotions in world politics. The few methodological debates that do

[42] Martha C. Nussbaum, 'Emotions and Women's Capabilities', in Jonathan Glover and Martha C. Nussbaum (eds.), *Women, Culture, and Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 360–95, 374. See also Martha C. Nussbaum's 'Rational Emotions', in *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1995), pp. 53–78; *Upheavals of Thought*, pp. 1–22; *Loves Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 45; and Solomon's *Not Passion's Slave* and *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life*, 2nd edn. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1993). Finally: Jean-Paul Sartre*, Sketch for a Theory of Emotions*, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Routledge, 2002).

[43] Crawford, 'The Passion of World Politics', pp. 126–8; Marcus, 'Emotions in Politics', pp. 231–2; Mercer, 'Rationality and Psychology', pp. 93–4; Andrew A.G. Ross, 'Coming in from the Cold: Constructivism and Emotions', *European Journal of International Relations*, 12:2 (2006), pp. 197–222, at 200–4. See also William E. Connolly, *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Rose McDermott, 'The Feeling of Rationality: The Meaning of Neuroscientific Advances for Political Science', *Perspectives on Politics*, 2:4 (2004), pp. 691–706.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

exist tend to focus on inquiries into the personality of decision-makers and on largely quantitative approaches that assess the emotional predispositions of leaders and samples of the population.[44] Crawford writes little about method other than to suggest that scholars examine diaries, transcripts and interviews with political leaders – aimed at finding out how emotions are expressed or denied in the context of decision making.[45] Mercer hopes that emotions can be recognised by looking for norms in international politics, but he refrains from further specifying how exactly this is to be done.[46] Most other commentators who convincingly draw attention to the significance of emotions offer no suggestions about how to actually study them.

We argue that the relative dearth of methodological debates on how to study emotions is linked to the strong – at times almost exclusive – role that social science occupies in orthodox approaches to the study of international relations, such as realism, liberalism and constructivism. Although social science offers a wide range of methods, the most prevalent among them are limited in their ability to understand the nature, role and impact of phenomena as ephemeral as emotions. Emotions cannot be quantified, nor can they easily be measured, even in qualitative terms. For a social scientist, investigating emotions would thus seem to result in research that is speculative or tenuous at best. This is the case because even the more hermeneutically oriented versions of constructivism tend to display what John Ruggie calls a 'commitment to the idea of social science'.[47] This commitment comes in various shades, but often includes, as Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit stress in a revealing review article, a basic adherence to an 'empirically-based form of critical scholarship' which is designed to arrive at 'logical and empirically plausible interpretations of actions, events or processes'.[48]

It is thus not surprising that even those constructivist approaches that deal specifically with emotions are influenced by a search for knowledge that is if not objective, then at least systematic, measurable and ideally also falsifiable. Mercer would like to understand how the interaction between emotional and relational influences on decision-making leads to reactions that are 'systematic and generalizable'.[49] Jervis aspires to study the psychological aspect of various political behaviours through a 'rigorous analysis'.[50] Lebow hopes to arrive at a new paradigm or even a 'fully blown theory' that assesses numerous emotional dimensions of international relations.[51] Crawford, likewise, seeks to 'devise valid measures of emotions' in an attempt to create a 'comprehensive theory of emotion in world politics'.[52] One of the

[44] Marcus, 'Emotions in Politics', pp. 235–6; and Small, Lerner and Fischhoff, 'Emotion Priming and Attributions for Terrorism', pp. 291–3.
[45] Crawford, 'The Passion of World Politics', pp. 131.
[46] Mercer, 'Approaching Emotions', p. 11.
[47] John Gerard Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalism* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 35.
[48] Richard Price and Chris Reus-Smit, 'Dangerous Liaisons: Critical International Theory and Constructivism', *European Journal of International Relations*, 4:3 (1998), pp. 261, 272. For a contextualisation and critique of these assumptions, see Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism and International Relations: The Politics of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Cynthia Weber, 'IR: The Resurrection: Or New Frontiers of Incorporation', *European Journal of International Relations*, 5:4 (1999), pp. 435–50.
[49] Mercer, 'Approaching Emotion', p. 2.
[50] Balzacq and Jervis, 'Logics of mind and international system', p. 559.
[51] Richard Ned Lebow, 'Fear, Interest and Honour: Outlines of a Theory of International Relations', *International Affairs*, 82:3 (2006), pp. 431–48.
[52] Crawford, 'The Passion of World Politics', p. 155.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

possibilities she mentions is measuring how certain emotions manifest themselves through particular physiological conditions, such as fear being expressed through higher heart rate, increased blood pressure and perspiration.[53]

Such a search for measurable manifestations of emotional influences offers limited opportunities to understand the politics of emotions. When studying the nature and impact of emotions the main challenge is not to find forms of knowledge that can approximate external appearances as authentically as possible. The inner feelings of a person cannot easily be known or even communicated authentically. The same is the case with emotions that are shared by communities. They cannot be assessed in the same manner as more tangible phenomena, such as patterns of conflict, trade volumes or peace agreements.

Appreciating feminist and other interpretative work on emotions and world politics

To gain an adequate appreciation of the role that emotions play in world politics we need tools that reach beyond those applied and approved by social science. We also need modes of analysis that capture the more elusive emotional elements of political events, their mood and spirit, the manner in which they matter deeply even though scientific or even verbal forms of communication may not be able to express, let alone objectively measure them.

The second part of our article now seeks to identify the type of attitude to knowledge, method and evidence that would facilitate such an approach to understanding the politics of emotions. By doing so we draw on various interpretative approaches to international relations, which employ methods that include those developed in the humanities.

We acknowledge a particular debt to feminist contributions, which have long intervened with how social scientists think about and do research. Few of these and other interpretative approaches have entered orthodox disciplinary debates, but they offer crucial insights into the role of emotions in world politics. Central to these inquiries has been an unease with customary approaches to knowledge production and what it means to do 'good research'. This concern is motivated by the desire to bring the lived experiences of women to the forefront of social analysis. Indeed, feminist scholars often believe that social science has been complicit in marginalising the lives of women and silencing their voices. By offering alternatives to such practices of closure, feminist methodologies have significantly broadened the possibilities of knowing the social and political world.[54] Much of feminist rethinking of the nature of knowledge and academic inquiry has emerged from rejecting the separation

[53] Ibid., p. 118.

[54] For one of the most recent and comprehensive contributions, see Brooke A. Ackerly, Maria Stern and Jacqui True (eds.), *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Other examples include Shulamit Reinharz, *Feminist Methods in Social Research* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), and J. Ann Tickner, 'What is Your Research Program? Some Feminist Answers to International Relations Methodological Questions', *International Studies Quarterly*, 49:1 (2005), pp. 1–21.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of mind and body, reason and emotion.[55] Reason, the argument goes, has been associated with members of dominant social, cultural and political groups, while emotions are relegated to the powerless and marginal ones.[56] Against this long history of ostracising emotions, feminist contributions recognise – much like the earlier mentioned constructivist approaches in psychology and sociology – that emotions are an inseparable dimension of personal, social and political life.

Despite these key insights into emotions, there are still surprisingly few explicitly feminist projects that situate emotions at the centre of research. This is to say that even though feminist projects often focus on harrowing and deeply personal experiences of women, they are, like the remainder of IR, yet to orientate research specifically around unravelling the political dynamics of emotions. Some of the notable exceptions here include excellent work on trauma, war and social movements or, from a more general interpretative perspective, recent analysis of shame and humiliation.[57] It is beyond the scope of this article to systematically engage these important contributions, but much of our analysis has been inspired by them.

Our main purpose in the remaining pages is to identify the type of broad methodological mind-sets that would allow IR scholars to become more effective in their analysis of emotions and to gain a better appreciation of the various alternative, interpretative scholarly works that have already done so successfully. To facilitate such a broadening of methodological inquiries we advance three particular propositions.

Accepting ambivalence in the study of emotions and politics

Our first proposition is brief and of a preliminary nature. We contend that the numerous intangible but nevertheless important political dimensions of emotions can be appreciated only if scholars accept that insight cannot necessarily produce

[55] Lorraine Code, *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); Mary E. Hawkesworth, 'Knowers, Knowing, Known: Feminist Theory and Claims of Truth', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 14:3 (1989), pp. 533–57, esp. 547–53; Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld, 1983) and 'Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology', in Bordo and Jaggar (eds.), *Gender/Body/Knowledge*, pp. 145–71; Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Hilary Rose, 'Hand, Brain, and Heart: A Feminist Epistemology for the Natural Sciences', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 9:1 (1983), pp. 73–90.

[56] Christine Di Stefano, 'Dilemmas of Difference: Feminism, Modernity, and Postmodernism', in Linda J. Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 67.

[57] Sara Ahmed, 'The Contingency of Pain', *Parallax*, 8:1 (2002), pp. 17–34; Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Karin M. Fierke, 'The Liberation of Kosovo: Emotion and the Ritual Reenactment of War', *Focaal: European Journal of Anthropology*, 39 (2002), pp. 93–113; Liz Philipose, 'Politics of Pain and the End of Empire', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 9:1 (2007), pp. 60–81; Maria Stern, ' ''We'' the Subject: The Power and Failure of (In)Security', *Security Dialogue*, 37:2 (2006), pp. 187–205; Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca, 'Rethinking Globalised Resistance: Feminist Activism and Critical Theorizing in International Relations', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 9 (2007), pp. 284–301; William A. Callahan, 'War, Shame, and Time: Pastoral Governance and National Identity in England and America', *International Studies Quarterly*, 50 (2006), pp. 395–419; Alex Danchev, 'Like a Dog: Humiliation and Shame in the War on Terror', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 31 (2006), pp. 259–83; Paul Saurette, 'You dissin me? Humiliation and Post 9/11 Global Polities', *Review of International Studies*, 32 (2006), pp. 495–522.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

certainty, or at least not the type of knowledge that is objective and measurable. Needed is not a systematic theory of emotions, an attempt to fix the parameters of knowledge once and for all, but a more open-ended search for a type of scholarly and political sensibility that could conceptualise the influence of emotions even where and when it is not immediately apparent.

Such an epistemological stance is well accepted among interpretative researchers. Feminist scholars, for instance, have for long recognised that the messiness of everyday life – how the public sphere seeps into the private, and *vice-versa* – leads to situations where knowledge is inherently situated and inevitably ambivalent. This is why we do not dwell on the ensuing issues in detail, except to note one possible opposition to such open-ended explorations of emotions: the fear that ensuing insights into politics are irrational and relativistic at best, meaningless at worst. How, indeed, can perspectives on political reality be judged as legitimate or not if traditional standards of judgment do not apply?

Although ephemeral phenomena, such as feelings or moods, cannot be measured through criteria that lie outside their own modes of being, one can still judge insights into or derived from them. Not all emotions are equally political or relevant, nor is every attempt to understand and interpret them. Determining the value of a particular insight is always a process of negotiating knowledge, of deciding where its rotating axes should be placed and how its outer boundaries should be drawn. The actual act of judging can thus be made in reference to the very process of negotiating knowledge.

Insights into emotions could be evaluated not by some *a priori* standard of reference, but by their ability to generate new and valuable perspectives on political puzzles. For instance, if examinations of fear can provide us with explanations of political behaviour that would not have been possible through other, more factual accounts, then they have made a contribution to knowledge, even though the so-generated insight may remain contested and, ultimately, unprovable. This process is neither radical nor unique to the task of assessing ephemeral phenomena, such as emotions. It applies just as much to the domain of reason. Quentin Skinner is one of numerous scholars who stress how our judgment of what is reasonable depends not on some prior set of objective criteria, but on the concepts we employ to describe what we see or experience as rational.[58]

Examining emotions through representation and communication

Our exploration of alternative insights into emotions has been somewhat abstract so far, but we hope to make the issue clearer and more practically relevant with our second proposition: that one of the most promising locations to study emotions is the manner in which they are represented and communicated.

There are, of course, numerous ways in which emotions are communicated, from political speeches and constitutional declarations to protest marches and televised depictions of famine, terrorism or any other major political event. We argue that

[58] Quentin Skinner, *Vision of Politics*, vol. 1: *Regarding Methods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 4, 44. See also Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London: Verso, 2002), esp. pp. 214–29.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

examining these representations is as close as we can get to understanding emotions. We do so even though we recognise that there are inherent limits to this endeavour. What can one gain from studying mere representations, rather than the 'real' political phenomena they seek to depict? Representations always entail a certain bias: they may tell us more about the values of those representing than the objects or events they portray. Are not real political facts and phenomena what we should investigate? At least two major reasons stand out why investigating representations are of crucial importance to understanding the role of emotions in world politics.

First, representations are all we have to understand emotions. Crawford noted convincingly that emotions are 'deeply internal', making it very difficult to distinguish ' ''genuine'' emotions from their instrumental display'.[59] Since emotions are inherently internal we can only know them through practices of representation, through narratives, gestures or other ways of communicating feelings and beliefs.[60] Consider how surveys, no matter how meticulously designed and executed, only assess what people say about their emotions. The data that such studies produce still only reflect certain representations about emotions, rather than the emotions themselves. Ignoring this difference does not make scholarship any more objective or convincing. Quite to the contrary, doing so leads to major misperceptions about the significance of emotions and our ability to understand them properly.

Since the issue of representation is central to understanding the politics of emotion we offer a brief elaboration here. We do so by observing what happens when emotions become most acutely visible: in times of crisis.[61] This is not to say that emotions matter only during traumatic events. Emotions play a central role at all times: they lie at the heart of how communities, including states, are organised and function. But traumatic events challenge and often uproot related attachments, exposing their emotional nature in a particularly acute and visible manner.

Elaine Scarry's innovative and influential work on pain and trauma convincingly illustrates the issues at stake. She strongly believes that pain, and the emotions associated with it, is an inherently unknowable phenomena. One person can never really know what another person's pain feels like. It cannot be verified on objective grounds. Scarry goes as far as asserting that 'pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it'.[62] Many agree with her arguments. A growing body of literature that deals with the respective phenomena points out that feelings of disbelief are particularly common among survivors of major traumas, who tend to find that there are no words to convey adequately what happened. Words suddenly seem incapable of representing the physical and emotional sensations experienced. This is one of the

[59] Crawford, 'The Passion of World Politics', pp. 118, 125.

[60] Andrew A. G. Ross, *Affective States: Rethinking Passion in Global Politics*, Ph.D. dissertation (Johns Hopkins University, 2005), p. 11.

[61] Or so suggest Crawford, 'The Passion of World Politics', p. 130; Ross, 'Coming in from the Cold', p. 211.

[62] Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, p. 4. For other texts that discuss the difficulty of linguistically expressing trauma, see Linda Alcoff and Laura Gray, 'Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?', *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture*, 18:2 (1993), pp. 260–90; Roberta Culbertson, 'Embodied Memory, Transcendence, and Telling: Recounting Trauma, Re-establishing the Self', *New Literary History*, 26:1 (1995), pp. 169–95, esp. 173, 176, 178–80; Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Nancy K. Miller, ' ''Portraits of Grief'': Telling Details and the Testimony of Trauma', *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 14:3 (2003), pp. 112–35, esp. 112–16; David B. Morris, 'About Suffering: Voice, Genre, and Moral Community', *Daedalus*, 125:1 (1996), pp. 25–45.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

reasons why the immediate response to 9/11 was one of shock and silence. David Eng and Jenny Edkins are among several commentators who stress how the entire city became 'utterly silent',[63] how bystanders became speechless, 'transfixed in horror as they watched the impossible turning into the real in front of their eyes'.[64]

An odd contradiction arises out of the ensuing political dynamics. The very fact that emotions are inherently private often leads to a compulsion to communicate them to others. Or, as seen from the other side of the social relationship: if I can never truly know another person's emotion, I would at least like to know the visible causes or manifestations of this emotion. Consider how the media almost obsessively depicts pain-causing phenomena as a substitute for actually knowing pain. This includes a range of highly symbolic representations that give us the illusion of coming as close as possible to the actual pain: hence the frequent global circulation of 'images of starvation, of emaciated concentration-camp victims, of hooded prisoners, of broken and bleeding skins, of blood-stained floors in prison cells'.[65] The compulsion to depict bodies in pain, as a replacement for knowing the true emotions involved, is a deeply entrenched cultural practice, reaching from early Christian art all the way to the recent photographs of torture at the Abu Ghraib prisons.[66]

The second major point we want to make here follows from the recognition that studying representations comes as close as possible to actually understanding emotions: it is the simple acknowledgment that representations matter and that they do so in a highly politicised manner.

Representation is the process by which individual emotions acquire a collective dimension and, in turn, shape social and political processes. Here too, the issue of trauma is illustrative. Although distant witnesses can never truly understand the emotions of somebody affected by a tragedy, the process of communication establishes a public context where the private nature of grief can be ascribed wider social meaning and significance. Luc Boltanski speaks of 'an unstable position between real emotion and fictional emotion'.[67] There will always be voices that seek to tell stories about emotions, weaving their accounts – incomplete as they may well be – into the fabric of both individual and collective conceptions of being and knowing.[68] In other words, individual experiences of trauma can translate, through processes of representation, into shared or collective experiences. David Morris refers to a 'culture of pain' while Jenny Edkins speaks of a 'rush to memory', showing how mechanisms of commemoration and remembrance intersect private grief with public

[63] David L. Eng, 'The Value of Silence', *Theatre Journal*, 54:1 (2002), pp. 85–6.

[64] Jenny Edkins, 'Forget Trauma? Responses to September 11', *International Relations*, 16:2 (2002), pp. 243–56, at 243–44; Michael Humphrey, *The Politics of Atrocity and Reconciliation: From Terror to Trauma* (London: Routledge, 2002); Peter Suedfeld, 'Reactions to Societal Trauma: Distress and/or Eustress', *Political Psychology*, 18:4 (1997), pp. 849–61.

[65] Elizabeth Dauphinée, 'The Politics of the Body in Pain: Reading the Ethics of Imagery', *Security Dialogue*, 38:2 (2007), p. 147. See also W. J. T. Mitchell, 'The Unspeakable and the Unimaginable: Word and Image in a Time of Terror', *ELH: Journal of English Literary History*, 72:2 (2005), pp. 297.

[66] See Robert Mills, *Suspended Animation: Pain, Pleasure and Punishment in Medieval Culture* (Reaktion, 2006); E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

[67] Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media, and Politics*, trans. Graham Burchell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 152.

[68] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, pp. 20–39, 92–100.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

mourning, and in doing so transcribe individual injury and the emotions associated with it into a larger, more collective, political discourse.[69]

The influence that representations of emotion exert on political dynamics is particularly evident in the realm of visual culture. A growing body of literature examines how in the age of globalisation various senses interact with the visual and how the latter has come to be seen as a particularly 'reliable,' even 'authentic' way of knowing the world.[70] Some go as far as stressing that the real political battles today are being fought precisely within these visual and seeming imaginary fields of media representations, where 'affectively charged images' shape our understanding of political phenomena more so than the actual phenomena themselves.[71]

Locating visual representations and communications is thus an important step towards appreciating the politics of emotions. We began this essay by highlighting how emotional representations of pain, such as images of 9/11 or of tortured bodies in Abu Ghraib, have influenced the nature and direction of public debates about the issues at stake. The fact that images of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York were broadcast worldwide substantially shaped the political impact of the event. Had news of the attack been communicated by texts alone, as would have been the case only a few decades ago, the response would unlikely have been equally intense. Likewise, the unprecedented level of aid that was committed in response to the Boxing Day tsunami that devastated parts of East and South Asia in 2004 would not have been possible without the global circulation of graphic and emotional depictions of the disaster. Only a few months later an equally devastating natural disaster, this time an earthquake, affected northern Pakistan. But with few images reaching the outside world, and few Westerners being directly affected, the disaster created not nearly as much attention and generated not nearly as much global solidarity as the more emotional representation of the tsunami did.

Broadening the perceptive and cognitive tools to understand the politics of emotion

Our third and final proposal: to understand and evaluate linkages between emotions and world politics we need to broaden our descriptive and analytical tools. Rather than relying on social science methods alone we should complement them with modes of inquiry stemming from the humanities. Many intellectual traditions in the humanities can offer important sources and methods for the study of emotions. Examples here include approaches such as phenomenology, hermeneutics and semiotics or methods applied in ethnography, architecture, art history, musicology

[69] Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, pp. 73–91; David B. Morris, *The Culture of Pain* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993). See also Duncan S. A. Bell (ed.), *Memory, Trauma and World Politics: Reflections on the Relationship between Past and Present* (New York: Palgrave, 2006).

[70] William J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994); *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2005); and Scott McQuire, *Visions of Modernity: Representation, Memory, Time and Space in the Age of Camera* (London: Sage, 1998).

[71] Elisabeth Bronfen, 'Reality Check: Image Affects and Cultural Memory', *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 17:1 (2005), pp. 20–46. See also, Michael C. Williams, 'Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics', *International Studies Quarterly*, 47 (2003), pp. 511–31, and esp. pp. 524–8.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and media studies. There are, for instance, extensive methodological tools designed to study visual images.[72] It cannot be the task of a short essay to elaborate on the wide range of these alternative, humanities-oriented methodological approaches. Instead we would like to illustrate their potential by briefly illuminating one of several potentially important realms: the usefulness of aesthetic sources, such as literature, photography, cinema, visual art and music.

We argue that aesthetic sources play a particularly important role in illuminating the emotional aspects of politics. In doing so we follow several scholars, such as Martha Nussbaum, who believe that aesthetic sources are not only inspired by the need to express feelings, but also able to solicit a range of emotional responses from those who encounter them.[73] Aesthetic ways of expressing emotions offer an alternative to the more habit-prone verbal forms of communication. We may, in fact, have become so used to the latter that they have become intellectualised to the point that they can no longer capture the emotions that underlie our thoughts and behaviour. This is why Nussbaum stresses that aesthetic ways of representing emotions should be accepted, alongside more conventional sources, as legitimate elements in the formulation of ethical and political judgment.[74]

Aesthetic sources are particularly suited to capture emotions because they seek to do more than simply represent an object or event as realistically as possible. To be of artistic value, a work of art – be it a poem, an opera, a painting or a photograph – must be able to engage and capture not only exterior realities, but also, and above all, our human and emotional relationship with them. The key is to offer an interpretation of reality that actively differs from the reality itself. Gadamer calls this process 'aesthetic differentiation'.[75] A brief and well known example may help to illustrate why such aesthetic differentiation can be important to our understanding of emotions and politics. Consider how Pablo Picasso's famous painting *Guernica* has given us insight into the Spanish Civil War and the human psyche because it did not seek recognition and life-like representation. The significance of *Guernica* as a form of insight and historical memory is located precisely in the fact that Picasso created a distance from life-like representations, thus capturing a certain emotional truth about the atrocity of the civil war that no factual account could ever hope to achieve.[76]

It is thus no coincidence that one of the most remarkable but often overlooked reactions to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 is the astonishing outpouring of artistic creativity. Countless artists around the world have tried to deal with both the nature of the tragic event and its implications for the future. They painted and filmed, they wrote poems and novels, they composed and performed music. This wave of aesthetic creativity can be seen as a way of dealing with the emotional aspects of the trauma:

[72] Michael S. Ball and Gregory H. Smith, *Analysing Visual Data* (London: Sage, 1992); Michael Emmison and Philip Smith, *Researching the Visual: Images, Objects, Contexts and Interactions in Social and Cultural Inquiry* (London: Sage, 2000); Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Methods* (London: Sage, 2001); Tony Schirato and Jen Webb, *Understanding the Visual* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2004).

[73] Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, p. 272; Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice*, pp. 3–12.

[74] Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*, pp. 1–22.

[75] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1989), p. 85.

[76] For more general elaborations, see Jill Bennett, *Empathetic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005); Miller, 'Portraits of Grief', pp. 112–16; Morris, 'About Suffering', pp. 29–31; and Christine Sylvester, 'The Art of War/The War Question in (Feminist) IR', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 33:3 (2005), pp. 855–78.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

a recognition that prevalent faculties, such as reason, are unable to comprehend this terrifying event in its totality.

Several aesthetic inquiries into international politics already exist. Some of them also address the issue of emotions.[77] Many of these studies are insightful, but they are often perceived as contentious and politically unreliable. Some social scientists, such as the terrorist expert Walter Laqueur, find much merit in the use of literature and other aesthetic forms of interpreting political phenomena.[78] They assume that there are inherent benefits in deriving information from what is one of literature's main assets: to provide detailed descriptions of situations, including emotional insights, that would otherwise remain beyond our personal experiences.[79] An investigation of aesthetic expressions may also help scholars understand better why states keep going to war even though there are few rational reasons for them to do so. But many disciplinary based scholars are sceptical about the feasibility of aesthetic sources to illuminate political dilemmas. Alexander Wendt, one of the most influential voices in contemporary IR scholarship, believes that 'poetry, literature and other humanistic disciplines . . are not designed to explain global war or Third World poverty, and as such if we want to solve those problems our best hope, slim as it maybe, is social science.'[80] We are fully aware that we do gross injustice to Wendt by citing this statement out of context. His work is complex and includes reflections on social science that call for a methodological pluralism.[81] We have highlighted the above passage only because it captures an attitude that remains prevalent in the more disciplinary-bound versions of social science research, which considers humanities-oriented methods as peripheral and perhaps even inappropriate to the type of 'real-life' issues that preoccupy scholars of international relations.

Conclusion: The need for cross-disciplinary communication

To understand the complex and seemingly elusive relationship between emotions and world politics we need to use all of our perceptive and cognitive tools. Rather than relying on social scientific methods alone, as scholars of IR have tended to do, we need the type of 'common discourse' that Edward Said and other more interdisciplinary authors advocate: a broad understanding of society and politics that replaces the current specialisation of knowledge, where only a few fellow experts are still able to communicate with each other.[82] We may well even need to heed Hayden White's

[77] See, most notably, the growing body of literature on the aesthetic turn in international relations theory. Representative here are several special issues of journals devoted to this theme, such as *Alternatives: Social Transformation and Humane Governance*, 25:3 (2000) (on 'Poetic World Politics'); *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 30:3 (2001) and 34:3 (2006) (on, respectively, 'Images and Narratives in World Politics' and 'International Politics, Representation and the Sublime'); and, most recently, *Security Dialogue*, 38:2 (2007) (on 'Visual Culture').

[78] Walter Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1987), pp. 174–5.

[79] Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. xvi.

[80] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 90.

[81] Ian Shapiro and Alexander Wendt, 'The Difference that Realism Makes: Social Science and the Politics of Consent', *Politics and Society*, 20:2 (1992), pp. 197–223.

[82] Daniel Barenboim and Edward W. Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), pp. 149–50.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

encouragement and look beyond the currently fashionable dichotomy of fact and fiction. New ways of recognising the politics of emotion could emerge if we returned to earlier intellectual traditions that provided space for a range of different truth claims, including those 'that could be presented to the reader only by means of fictional techniques of representation'?[83]

The prime task of this essay was to take a step in the direction of such inquiries into the relationship between emotions and politics. We fully recognise that by doing so we have taken on a topic that is far too large to cover comprehensively in the context of a short essay. Our objective was thus limited to identifying the type of attitude to knowledge and evidence that can facilitate inquiries into emotions. We have, however, refrained from discussing particular methods or ways of operationalising research. The latter would entail focusing on a specific political problem and then identifying the emotions attached to them, whether they are, for instance, fear, anger, shame, pity, compassion, empathy or sympathy. To be politically meaningful a study would then need to demonstrate, empirically or conceptually, what exact role emotions play in the issues at stake. Doing so would also entail investigating the extent to which prevailing modes of inquiry into international relations, such as those shaped by social science, may already be able to account for the issues and factors that are to be explained. The features that remain elusive, such as those linked to the more intangible aspects of the politics emotions, call for a willingness to explore alternatives modes of inquiry. Particularly important here are methods developed in the humanities, such as those designed to understand the nature and impact of visual and other aesthetic sources. A more active exploration of these sources can increase our understanding of the relationship between emotions and world politics, even through the so-produced knowledge may at times appear uncertain or even dubious when evaluated by standards of measurement applied in the social sciences.

To argue for a more sustained reliance on humanities-oriented modes of inquiry is not to reduce the value of social science, to question the impact of material forces, or to draw a stark line between reason and emotion. The point, rather, is to refuse to reduce reason to its instrumental or technological versions,[84] thus making room for appreciating a wider spectrum of different rationalities, including intuitive and emotional ones.

A more open-minded and sustained form of communication between different faculties, fields of knowledge and academic disciplines can open up the intellectual spaces necessary to appreciate the politics of emotions. Scientific and social scientific methods, for instance, can be employed to assess how individuals experience and process emotions. Related inquiries range from neuroscientific studies into brain stimuli to quantitative surveys of how individuals respond emotionally to particular political events. Such modes of analysis are, however, less appropriate when it comes to understanding the manner in which emotions are represented and communicated. Here, methods from the humanities, such as those designed to interpret texts or visual sources, can provide us with important insight into the processes through which individual emotions become collectivised. Once we are equipped with a more

[83] Hayden White, 'The Fiction of Factual Representation', in his *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 123.

[84] See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1991/1944); Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), pp. 311–41.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press

thorough and nuanced understanding of these relatively elusive but important political features we can return to social scientific methods, which may provide us with a more precise understanding of the actual impact that these representations of emotions have on political practices.

Taken together, such cross-disciplinary forms of communication not only reveal emotions as inherent within all political perceptions and decisions, but also increase our ability to understand the motives and behaviour of states and other key actors in international politics. The ensuing insights would be of significance to a range of scholarly and practical endeavours, from inquiries into terrorism, international security and cooperation to engagements with more normative issues, such as humanitarian intervention, international justice and the politics of reconciliation. This is why we hope that our methodological framework, incomplete as it inevitably is, will provide at least a few useful pointers that inspire and facilitate further research on the emotional dimensions of world politics.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508007821 Published online by Cambridge University Press