

Affective Institutions: Emotion, Rationality and the Foreign Policy Process

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Emotions are an integral part of being human; we all express them and they shape the character and contents of our lived experiences. Yet scholarship in international relations has given little consideration to the profound role emotion plays in how we engage with the world around us, how we understand our place in it, and how we act upon those understandings. To bracket out emotion, or to treat it as a bias generating suboptimal reasoning, is problematic given recent advances in neuroscience, psychology and sociology. The juxtaposition of emotion and rationality is false; emotion is functionally integrated alongside cognition in how we reason. It is incumbent upon us as scholars, therefore, to consider how we can integrate the study of emotion into existing theories of international politics – and to consider how the study of emotion may compel us to reconceptualize the dominant theories and methods within the discipline. This paper argues for an interdisciplinary integration of the biological, cognitive and constructivist approaches to the study of emotion in international relations and foreign policy.

As a means to explore how this approach could be useful, I consider its applicability to a study of the future of US/Cuban relations. With a new administration in Washington, and a new head of state in Havana, the possibility for a significant diminution of US/Cuban hostilities seems more likely now than at any time in recent memory¹. Recent moves by the Obama administration to allow Cuban-Americans to travel and send remittances to the island could signal a much less belligerent stance than that adopted by the Bush administration. Given the longstanding conflict between the two states, and the emotionally wrought and often violent nature of the relationship between the two peoples, a consideration of how emotion and identity shape rationality and policymaking seems more than appropriate. Any substantive reduction in tension merits theoretical consideration and offers an ideal subject to illustrate what we gain by engaging the role of emotion in international politics.

A study of foreign policy and international politics must inevitably engage with the idea and application of rationality² in human decisionmaking. As the discipline has evolved during the past century attempts have been made to apply rationality assumptions to the study of international politics; this has reflected epistemic commitments to positivism and empiricism – particularly since the 1950s. Traditionally the key element in any approach to understanding foreign policy is human decisionmaking – either by proxy in the form of unitary states, or within the formal policymaking contexts of states. Approaches to understanding human rationality in policymaking contexts therefore reflect a set of assumptions concerning the nature of agency characteristic of the actors in question. Generally, a fundamental assumption is that human agency in decisionmaking contexts represents an attempt to impose objectivity and order on a fluid and anarchic international system within the constraints (though this varies) offered by the domestic context (Stein 1988: 249). Rationality here represents the human attempt to objectively recognize the optimal path between means and ends. This particular approach to human

¹ A similar potentiality seemed to exist during the first term of the Clinton administration; this potential warming evaporated with the shooting down of two civilian airplanes operated by the anti-Castro group ‘Brothers to the Rescue’ (Randall 1998: 9).

² This argument is informed by the assumption that emotion and rationality should be understood as one interrelated process, rather than separate processes acting in opposition; this also – as I will illustrate – renders problematic any assumptions concerning instrumental rationality dominant within the discipline. Rationality can be defined as “the human capacity to imagine alternative lines of conduct, think through the consequences of each, and pick behaviours that yield the greatest satisfaction” (Turner & Stets 2005: 271). Yet if the human capacity to link means to ends is based upon emotion, and emotion is partly a social construction, then rationality itself must invariably reflect social constructions. My paper, therefore, explores the interplay between emotion, cognition and social context in how humans engage in rational thought.

rationality reflects the influence of economics, as humans are understood to be rational utility maximizers – i.e., inherently self interested and behaviourally responsive in such a way as to seek out the optimal strategy given the structural context to satisfy their goals (Checkel 1998: 327; Rittberger 2001: 3). This characterization of rationality is a broad generalization³, and there have been modifications to this approach without undercutting its basic understanding of human cognition (see Hill 2003: 97-126). While the economic understanding of rationality characterized above can be quite nuanced and useful to policymakers and scholars alike, it is also true that it brackets out much of what I believe is vitally important to any understanding of international politics: emotions⁴ and identities.

A key underlying premise of this paper, therefore, is that the understanding of rationality posited by these models is problematic and requires reconceptualization. This in itself is not a novel position to take as rationalist and behavioralist approaches have come under strenuous attack since the 1980s (see Ferguson & Mansbach 2003: 118-139). Jonathan Mercer argues that the rationalist/empiricist approach to the study of international politics has been a reflection of the discipline's desire to abandon 'folk psychology' as a basis for its understanding of agency; both rationalists and political psychologists have desired to study behavior without reference to the inner workings of the human mind. This aversion to 'going mental' has led rationalists and political psychologists alike to employ rational baselines articulating optimal reasoning in a given context, with rationalists seeking to explain how a given event in international politics should have been dealt with, and political psychologists positing psychological explanations (cognitive biases leading to misperceptions etc...) articulating why actors' decisionmaking was sub-optimal (Mercer 2004: 79). Thus, rationality can be understood without reference to the mind, and psychological approaches function only to explain mistakes in decisionmaking rationality.

It is my contention that both the rationalist and psychological approaches are flawed in so far as they grapple in only a superficial fashion with questions relating to identity and social context – that is, what seems rational in a given context to a given actor⁵; more fundamentally, it is hugely problematic to privilege an understanding of rationality which brackets out the

³ Rational choice approaches to foreign policy analysis have been modified in myriad ways; rationality can be 'bounded' with actors engaging in a satisficing process of determining a particular course of action in a given context (see Voss & Dorsey 1992: 22-23).

⁴ I utilize emotion as an umbrella term referring to all of the following phenomena: affect, feeling, mood and sentiments. There is no consensus definition of what actually – definitively – constitutes an emotion. Depending on one's approach – cultural, biological or cognitive – one can end up with differing working definitions. For example, Jonathan Turner notes that from a purely biological perspective, emotions involve "changes in body systems – autonomic nervous system, musculo-skeletal system, endocrine system, and neurotransmitter and neuroactive peptide systems – that mobilize and dispose an organism to behave in particular ways" (2007: 2); scholars employing a cognitive perspective, he continues, would define emotions as "conscious feelings about self and objects in the environment" (2007: 2, 286). Given that I draw upon all three broad approaches to emotion, I find a definition employed by political psychologists adequate for my needs: "[emotions are] the evolved cognitive and physiological response to the detection of personal significance ... [they can be understood as] an episode of massive synchronous recruitment of mental and somatic resources to adapt to and cope with a stimulus event that is subjectively appraised as being highly pertinent to the needs, goals and values of the individual" (Neuman, Marcus, Crigler & MaCuen 2007: 9-10). To these definitions I would add that the subjective appraisal can be both conscious and sub-conscious.

⁵ As Voss and Dorsey stress, actor's perceptions can be influenced by historical and cultural factors of which the actor may not even be aware (see Voss & Dorsey 1992: 23).

emotions or treats them solely in negative terms⁶. When Arthur Stein argues that “People are crippled rationalists, wanting to make rational decisions but constrained and limited by their own psychology: by their emotions and cognitive processes” he is both right and wrong (1999: 216). He is right in so far as humans seek to make sense of their environments and act upon those cognitions⁷, but he is wrong to presuppose that emotions and cognitions serve only to detract from rationality – they are, in actual fact, absolutely necessary to both environmental and practical rationality⁸. Emotions serve a vital function alongside cognition in human rationality; if we are to better understand what culture and identity mean to those engaged in formal foreign policymaking contexts in different states we must first develop a means to integrate the role of emotion into our analyses.

While much has been written on the subject of emotions in political psychology, I have chosen a specific line of inquiry into our understanding of rationality in foreign policy analysis – drawing upon cultural and neuropsychology, as well as political psychology and constructivism, I argue that emotions (including moods⁹ and feelings¹⁰) and identities play a functional role in human rationality and foreign policy decisionmaking. That is, I accept the hypothesis that emotions and cognition are intrinsically related in human rationality and that affective¹¹ arousal varies depending upon the identities of the actors in question, and related meanings embedded within the social structures they are situated within. I therefore argue that if how we experience emotion is partly a social construction¹², and if emotion and cognition work in tandem in human rationality, then emotion, cognition (or the ‘mind’ of agents) and identities must be taken into account in any consideration of foreign policy decisionmaking. The values, interests and preferences of foreign policy actors are produced, negotiated and reflective of specific cultural contexts; emotion is integral to this process ontogenetically – that is, as humans mature and are socialized they learn to associate specific emotions with events and then generalize and integrate these associations into their capacity for rational thought. Emotion is therefore biologically innate, but its arousal is context specific depending upon the life experiences and environment of the individual(s) in question, which in turn can be reflective of culturally specific modes of identity (see Bechara, A.; Damasio, H.; Tranel, D. & Damasio, A. R. 1997).

⁶ For example, by framing emotion as leading to ‘motivated misperception’ in which policymakers respond to subconscious needs and fears brought on by emotional stress. While there is much to commend this avenue of inquiry, it emphasizes only the negative effects of emotion and fails to engage the possibility that affective response can be functionally important in human rationality (see Stein 1988: 257; for an elaboration on this point, see Marcus 2000: 236-237).

⁷ Cognition emphasizes the role of human judgment in influencing emotion (Turner & Steits 2005: 9). This dimension of the human mind is understood by political psychologists as focusing upon perception, processing and storing of information (Neuman, Marcus, Crigler & MaCuen 2007: 10).

⁸ By this I mean a given agent’s understanding of their social context and their ability to act upon that understanding.

⁹ Moods are diffuse states not attached to any particular object in memory (Cassino & Lodge 2007: 102).

¹⁰ Feelings are here defined as emotional states about which a person is consciously aware (Turner & Steits 2005: 286).

¹¹ While affect and emotion are often treated as interchangeable terms, I utilize the term to denote the experience of emotion – rather than emotion itself.

¹² This is a contentious point, as I will elaborate upon later. While some neuropsychologists acknowledge that socialization shapes emotion (see Damasio 1994), this argument is not unequivocal. It may be that only certain types of affective response are learned and then generalized so as to inform rationality; others may be innate. I accept the argument that emotions are intimately related to cultural contexts – an argument forwarded by cultural psychologists (see Mesquita & Leu 2007: 735).

By focusing upon the role emotion and identities in how policymakers perceive themselves and significant others we can gain a broader understanding of why states implement and sustain specific policies, and why these policies are not necessarily the product of instrumental, consequentialist rationality. Moreover, in exploring these dynamics we gain a new perspective on why inter-state and inter-group enmity is often so difficult to resolve. To do this we must also understand how conscious and unconscious emotions function in relation to the social structural contexts in which the decisionmakers find themselves. To do so goes some way to highlighting the subjectivities of policymakers in differing states in relation to emotion and rationality; this facilitates a better understanding of how international events are perceived, and how certain processes are legitimated in response as a result. This approach also allows us to gain a sense¹³ of how actors understood events *as they occurred* rather than situating them within a rationalist model which brackets out our deems dysfunctional their inner psychologies. As James Blight, who has employed these methods to illustrate the limitations of the rational actor model¹⁴ of foreign policy analysis in his study of the Cuban missile crisis argues: if we are to imbue the subjects of our analyses with psychological life, we must seek out how they *lived history forward* (1990: 58).

The separation of emotion and reason is present in classical Greek philosophy and is represented in much current psychology and political science literature in the assumption that cognition and emotion are separate processes located in different parts of the brain. The influence of Greek thought on modern approaches to cognition and emotion are reflected in the notion that the role of reason is to constrain the emotions; the human capacity for accurate and rational assessment is, following this logic, predicated in part upon their ability to deny the pull of their emotions (Elster 1999: 55-76; Marcus 2000: 222-223; Marcus 2003: 183). The presumption that emotion must be removed from political judgment as a precondition to just political rule is reflected in studies on decisionmaking; in these studies the removal of feeling from rationality is understood as necessary to the efficient linkage of means and ends (Blight 1990: 39-52; Marcus 2003: 185).

There is a growing body of literature in cultural and neuropsychology which calls into question the primacy of cognition over emotion in common understandings of human rationality. This literature points to an understanding of rationality – and with that of decisionmaking – as culturally situated and intrinsically linked to emotion. Thus when considering the likely response of political elites in different states to a similar event we cannot unproblematically assume they will follow the same overarching rational calculus to maximize their utility. Notions of culture and identity shape the emotive responses of elites (and non elites) and with that their understanding(s) of what is happening in the world, what is likely to happen, and how ‘others’ will read and act in response to the same situation (see also Turner & Stets 2005 for how this insight has informed the sociology of emotions). Emotion is therefore ubiquitous to the human experience; it must be understood as an essential component of how humans think and socialize.

¹³ We can never know with absolute certainty what a given individual felt at a given moment in time; what this approach does, however, is offer a more plausible understanding of the psychological dynamics experienced by policymakers as they confront international events in contexts which constrain and influence their thought processes.

¹⁴ Individual decisionmakers arrive at decision via a process whereby goals and values are ranked and alternative courses of action are considered (including a cost/benefit analysis of each). The policy chosen will then reflect the optimal course of action given the above deliberations to link means to ends (Ferguson & Mansbach 2003: 122-123).

Even models of international politics such as structural realism and institutionalism¹⁵ often operate on implicit emotive assumptions, namely that competitive inter-state behaviour is a by-product of anarchy-induced fear (see Crawford 2000). Recent advances in neuroscience have also indicated that the brain processes information for emotional content *before* higher cognitive thinking takes place, indicating that emotion is a necessary precondition for rational calculation to take place (McDermott 2004: 154). The question therefore is not whether emotion should be brought into the study of international politics, but how it should be brought in and where it should be brought in.

In considering the psychology literature – which is massive and varied – it is important to recognize that, like international relations, there are substantive epistemic and theoretical cleavages which hive off certain approaches to emotion from others. Neuropsychologists are ardently committed to science and empiricism. They formulate hypotheses and search for correspondence between their theses and observed – mostly in laboratory settings – reality. Cultural and social psychology in contrast reflects a more relativistic approach (though still scientific) to the nature of emotion. Whereas neuropsychologists seek universally applicable explanations for the biological processes that cause and are affected by emotion, cultural psychologists highlight how emotions are situated in particular cultural and historical circumstances which engender psychic divergence rather than convergence (Cohen & Kitayama 2007: 847-850). Although both approaches differ significantly in the relative importance they give to both biology (neuropsychology) and social context (cultural and social psychology), they both point to one key commonality – namely that sociocultural context plays a key role in emotional arousal and development, and that emotion and cognition both play a functional role in human rationality. Thus, although one might question the compatibility of the approaches I am drawing from, it is perhaps more significant that both have proponents which argue for the functional importance of emotion in the human capacity for rational thought, and for the importance of socialization in shaping emotion.

Emotion is built upon a physiological foundation; the various limbic systems (especially the amygdala) act as the center for emotion, while the prefrontal cortex of the brain processes information for more abstract reasoning and analysis purposes. The hypothalamus within the prefrontal cortex functions to distribute signals from the eyes and ears to other parts of the body after information has been processed by the emotion-based limbic system; in other words, incoming information (the external stimulus) is processed for emotional content before being passed on to the higher decision making areas of the brain (see Damasio 1994; McDermott 2004: 162). Humans with lesions on their limbic systems rendering them incapable of producing normal functioning emotions have been found to be prone to making bad or irrational decisions (Bechara, Damasio, Tranel & Damasio 1997: 1293-1295). This body of literature has ramifications for foreign policy analysis in so far as it relates to procedural and substantive rationality. This again illustrates the importance of emotion in the kind of cold cognitive reasoning privileged in rationalist models of decisionmaking.

Emotions are not easily defined. Major theories in neuropsychology recognize three components of emotions: the neurophysiological-biochemical, motor or behavior-expressive and subjective-experiential (Izard, Kagan & Zajonc 1984: 2-3; Lazarus 1984: 125; Zajonc 1984: 118). Scholars, however, differ in which of these components they believe are most important

¹⁵ Institutionalism employs the same ontology as structural realism and argues for the possibility of regime engendered cooperative inter-state behaviour; said behaviour is understood as a function of the capacity of international institutions to lower transaction costs and increase transparency – that is, to mitigate fear.

and how they define them. While an emotional reaction cannot exist in the absence of any one of these components, the real challenge which has bedeviled researchers is the degree to which (or whether) cognition is an essential aspect of the emotive process. Perhaps the most contentious component is the subjective-experiential, as it calls into question whether emotion is a feeling state, a cognitive process, or a combination of the two. This is a key problem orienting any attempt to apply an understanding of emotion to the study of international politics. If one accepts that emotion can exist independent of, or even interdependently with cognition, then the rationalist models predominating in the discipline of international relations will need to be modified. Phrased differently, if emotion plays a vital role in human rationality alongside, but independent of, cognition then theories of political decisionmaking which privilege cognition and deny or avoid emotion are only dealing with a partial understanding of how humans interact and react to the world around them.

For example, Campos and Barrett argue that whereas emotions were once viewed as “unimportant outcomes of ‘cold’ cognitive processes, lacking adaptive value at best or constituting maladaptive functioning at worst ... it is now clear that emotions are useful as organizational constructs, lending clarity to the relationship between various aspects of situations and ... an organism’s responses to those situations” (1984: 256). Links drawn between environmental and bodily cues and subsequent rewards and punishments emerge and develop in childhood and resonate into adulthood, forming cues for later assessments of what feels good or bad about the environment (McDermott 2004: 163). In other words, emotions are key elements in how humans learn and adapt to social situations – they are functionally important to rationality and decisionmaking.

With this last point in mind, I argue in favour of a functionalist approach to the study of emotion in foreign policy. Such an approach seeks to move beyond framing emotion as divorced from reason, or as a bias to be mitigated or avoided (Marcus 2000: 236). Rather, I argue in favour of exploring how emotion functionally manifests itself in relation to different identities in different sociocultural contexts in inter-state relations. In political science, scholars have generally approached the study of emotion in the following four ways¹⁶:

1. The study of the personalities and decisionmaking of political leaders, with a focus upon the role of emotional development and attachments in how these individuals are shaped.
2. The study of the personalities and decisionmaking of political leaders, with a focus upon how the emotional content of contemporary events, individuals, crises and groups magnifies their impact.
3. The study of mass publics and the role of emotion in political judgment and in securing enduring dispositions; the theoretical focus here mirrors the emotional development approach noted in example 1.
4. The study of mass publics and the role of emotion in political judgment and in securing enduring dispositions; the theoretical focus here mirrors the contemporary emotional content approach noted in example 2.

Obviously, in a study of foreign policy it is difficult to focus solely upon political leaders given the role of domestic factors in the formation of state identities. Specifically in the case of Cuban/American relations it would be difficult to avoid engaging with the Cuban/American community which has had an influential, though not deterministic, role in the formation of US policy toward the island state (see Torres 2001). Indeed, the often substantive differences in how Cuban foreign policy is viewed within the Cuban-American community *and* within the international community of states – and the political consequences of these differing views – necessitates a consideration of emotional appraisal in FPA.

¹⁶ Noted by Marcus 2000: 225.

There have been many attempts to model how the relationship between cognition and emotion works in appraising events. One approach is to argue that appraisal of emotional events is a reflection of emotional interpretation rules or ‘productions’ (essentially generalized habits); when a stimulus (event) is encountered and its nature matches a given ‘production’ the emotion is fired and enters consciousness (Gilligan & Bower 1984: 584; Mesquita & Lui 2007: 737). More interestingly, if a subject is already emotionally aroused then the given event will be more likely to trigger productions matching the existing emotional state. Thus, if you are angry, the productions associated with anger will be more likely to be selected in your emotional response to the event at hand. These emotional events can be stored in memory in three components: the description of the event or episode, the emotions it aroused, and the emotional interpretation rule by which that episode called forth those emotions. The storing of the interpretation rule is considered by some to be the key to understanding subsequent reappraisals of emotional episodes; the rule helps the individual explain their reaction to the episode, and subsequent altering of the rule facilitates the assignment of a different emotional reaction to the episode (Gilligan & Bower 1984: 584-584)¹⁷.

One can go further still in considering how individuals appraise emotional events. Some emotions are more complex than others, having more of a social character to them and consequently requiring the subject to internalize social rules. For example, guilt is an emotion which can be understood to require the experience of perceiving the emotional reactions of others in certain situations (Campos & Barrett 1984: 248). Cultural psychologists offer quite nuanced descriptions which facilitate a better understanding of the social dynamics inherent in human emotive response to events. Certain emotional responses have been found to be universal, regardless of cultural context; these include happiness, anger, fear, sadness, disgust, surprise, and contempt (McDermott 2004: 160). Yet intercultural variation can still occur in terms of which emotions are socially acceptable to express or otherwise should be repressed¹⁸ (McDermott 2004: 161). Sociologists employing dramaturgical approaches to emotion have focused upon the role of cultural scripts in shaping face to face interactions; these scripts are theorized to delineate ‘proper’ and ‘improper’ behavior and how the context of the interaction (ceremonial, work-practical or social) shapes the emotions aroused during and as a result of the interactive process (Turner & Stets 2005: 28-30). Failure to accord behavior to the prevalent cultural script results in negative emotions such as shame, embarrassment or humiliation; the converse is true when the cultural script and the presentation of self to others are reasonably in accordance (Turner & Stets 2005: 30). Applied to an understanding of the role of institutional context in foreign policymaking, this approach can lead to a reconceptualization of our understanding of

¹⁷ Gilligan and Bower argue that emotional reappraisal can occur in a number of ways: first, a person may receive new information which recontextualizes the given event in the individual’s memory; second, a person may undergo a change in attitudes or values over time which alters how one remembers the given event; third, the mood of the individual while reappraisal occurs can alter the emotional interpretation of the given event; and fourth, new events may alter the importance of the event in the individual’s memory (1984: 585).

¹⁸ Another method by which emotions are categorized involves valencing. Valence is a term used to categorize emotions; it is understood as a “focus upon a single positive-negative dimension upon which emotions can be arrayed, frequently associated with the fundamental behaviours of approach and avoidance” (Neuman, Marcus, Crigler & MaCuen 2007: 10). It is thus associated with socialization and in-group/out-group behavior. It is a not unproblematic means to deal with the concept given the fact that many ‘negative’ emotions (fear, anger) can have positive social outcomes, and given the fact that many emotions are not easily categorized as either positive or negative (for example: boredom).

groupthink dynamics and of the effects of institutionalized emotional repression on the interpretation of events and the normative parameters bounding the appropriate policy procedure in response.

The interplay between culture and emotion in emotional expression has been termed the neurocultural position (McDermott 2004: 161). This intercultural variation in emotive response can be quite marked; the nature of emotion – what individuals in differing cultural contexts understand to be characteristic of a given emotion – can refer to quite different experiences (Mesquita & Leu 2007: 737). Cultural psychologists argue that people situated in ‘independent’ cultural contexts¹⁹ will often read reality (and with that emotion) quite differently than people situated in ‘interdependent’ cultural contexts. The former group is less likely to be aware of how the situation will be perceived by others, while the latter group tends to assume that others will tend to “interpret, feel and act in a similar manner in the target situation” (Mesquita & Leu 2007: 739). These differing cultural models are referred to as ‘inside-out’ (independent) and ‘outside-in’ (interdependent). Such inter-cultural variation has obvious implications for any understanding of state foreign policy; how a given event is interpreted cannot be understood to be universally applicable – the emotional quality and intensity of the event will vary depending on the cultural context of the individuals interpreting the situation. As such, policy prescriptions and the actions they advocate will be read differently as well. The rationality or reason employed in such responses will be contextualized by the emotional and cultural context within which that reason manifests itself. The intensity of the emotive experience, combined with the cultural context it is experienced within, can result in differing interpretations of the appropriate policy response.

The FPA literature has tended to emphasize cognition and has tended to ignore emotion (Crawford 2000: 118). There are strong methodological reasons for this: emotions are difficult to measure; there are difficulties in distinguishing between real and fake emotive displays; and there are practical problems with conducting psychological work in foreign policy settings²⁰ (Crawford 2000: 119). Yet, FPA is impoverished by its neglect of the functional importance of emotion in decisionmaking. Crawford argues that studying emotions has at least three implications for international relations theory. First, it challenges the common understanding that the attributes of agents are primarily rational. Second, it could place fear as the primary engine of the security dilemma, rather than the structural dynamics of offense/defense balance; emotions are not simply attributes of agents, they are also institutionalized in the structures and processes of world politics. Finally, FPA concerns with diplomacy, confidence building and post-conflict peacebuilding would more systematically take emotions into account (2000: 119). While I take issue with her implied juxtaposition of rationality and emotion, I agree with her assertion that the study of emotion in FPA can have implications for confidence building between hostile states – it is one of the reasons the US/Cuban relationship is appropriate to this line of inquiry. Mercer argues that if we are to understand concepts such as trust, a rationalist understanding of international politics will be inadequate. He writes:

The concepts “identity” and “trust” have causal power only when analysts recognize their dependence on emotion. Identification without feeling implies a cold, neutral, blood- less observation; it inspires no action. Trust without emotion implies an expectation of trustworthiness based on incentives; trust adds nothing if

¹⁹ Here I am referring to the ‘cultural model’ a given individual or groups of individuals may be situated within; independent refers to contexts in which individuals view emotional situations primarily from their own perspective, while interdependent refers to contexts in which the individual assesses the emotional meaning from the perspective of others (Mesquita & Leu 2007: 739).

²⁰ Crawford notes that diaries, transcripts and post-hoc interviews can be utilized to help scholars understand the role and consequence of emotions – particularly in decision making settings (2000: 131).

incentives explain cooperation. Emotion makes identity, trust, and solutions to collective action problems possible (2004: 99).

There are three basic approaches to theorizing emotion in foreign policy – the biological, the cognitive and the social constructivist approaches. Biological approaches focus on the physiological structures linked to the production of emotive responses in humans (Crawford 2000: 127). These approaches have manifested themselves in FPA in the conflict resolution literature; the argument usually characterizes ethno-nationalist hatred as primordial – that once it has been kindled, there is little hope in a peaceful accommodation of the warring parties short of physical separation (i.e.: Kosovo, Cyprus, Israel/Palestine etc...). Cognitive approaches regard emotions as the products of thoughts and beliefs (Crawford 2000: 127). Rather than attributing emotive responses to physiological attributes, cognitive researchers characterize emotions as being learned responses which can be reinforced or altered through social interaction. Thus, analogic reasoning can result in powerful emotive responses – either positive or negative – if the referent memory has positive or negative meaning to the actor or actors. Andrew Ross notes this when he argues that “the response to 9/11 points to the synthetic quality of affect – its capacity to combine already-existing affect with contemporary experience” (2006: 214). Finally, the social constructivist approach considers emotions to be social constructions (Crawford 2000: 128). This is so, argue social constructivists, because the attitudes which characterize emotion – beliefs, judgments and desires – are contingent, and vary depending upon the social context. Moreover, these culturally contextual attitudes are learned and context sensitive, in many cases being social constituted to restrain certain behaviours and to endorse and sustain other cultural values. Social constructivist FPA takes these assumptions and focuses upon cross-cultural variation and the social purposes of emotion.

The exploration of cognition and emotion in FPA offers a challenge to the degree to which one can formulate hypotheses from the third image; such an approach acknowledges that while rational behaviour is possible for decisionmakers, this ‘rationality’ is profoundly contextualized by “their simplified subjective representations of reality” (Tetlock & McGuire 2005: 485). Cognitive FPA approaches also challenge those who assert the primacy of the domestic realm in foreign policy behaviour, as any understanding of non-state actor (corporate, NGO, etc...) or bureaucratic influence on the policymaking process must address how these actors interpret the structural context in which they are situated. A ‘one size fits all’, utility maximizing assumption will result in crude approximations of agency at odds with the actual experience of the actors in question (Hill 2003: 97-98). The ways in which policymakers perceive incoming information is hugely influenced by what they believe – a priori – is important; that is, as Robert Jervis argues, “... actors tend to perceive what they expect” (2005: 463). As the emotional appraisal literature has indicated, actors may be emotionally inclined to perceive significant others action’s in certain ways depending upon the emotive state they happen to be in at the time. Thus what a given actor expects to perceive can be understood as being dependant upon how they feel (or are inclined to feel by their socio-structural context) about the object in question; this emotive state can have both conscious and subconscious elements implying the actor can be unaware of the influence of emotion (feeling or affect) on his/her perception. This point also corresponds to and broadens the cognitivist argument that familiarity with an actor’s domestic context will shape what the actor in question is likely to perceive in others (Jervis 2005: 471). Moreover, some works within the literature have highlighted the role of historical analogy in cognition and perception (see Tetlock & McGuire 2005: 492; Jervis 2005: 472; Foong Khong 2005: 502). Such analogies, it is argued, can lead to

overreaction by policymakers – or can be used to justify policies taken as a result of other processes (Tetlock & McGuire 2005: 486).

Other misperceptions can emerge when assumptions are made about the clarity of one's intentions. When policy is enacted policymakers can assume that the logic underlying how the policy is clear to other international actors when in fact it is not; this assumption can be a product of the thoroughness with which the policy has been developed – the actors involved in developing the policy see what is important in the pattern of actions advocated, when they can in fact be interpreted in multiple ways (Jervis 2005: 475). States can also confuse effect with purpose in interpreting other states actions. This misperception is reflective of a tendency of policymakers to assume that when a given state acts in accordance with their desires it is largely responding to the same factors which they would respond to; conversely, when the effect of the other state's behaviour is negative, it is assumed to be internal and intended (see Stein 1988; Blight 1990; Blight & Brenner 2000; Jervis 2005: 476). This is particularly in evidence in the US-Cuban relationship – a relationship in which a failure to empathize has resulted in the perpetuation of hostile relations for more than four decades (see Blight 1990; Blight & Brenner 2002).

Yet the cognitive approaches suffer from a number of significant problems. Firstly, there is the question of access. Decisionmakers do not readily make themselves available for the kinds of experimentation employed in psychology; consequently, much of the cognitive literature must rely upon experimentation drawn in non-foreign policy contexts. This results in a problem when considering the role of emotion given the importance of sociocultural context in emotional arousal. The subjectivity of the policymaker in that context – not in the laboratory – is what needs to be explored and consequently, given the aforementioned problems of access, a means needs to be devised to understand how context shapes and is shaped by emotion.

No one approach to studying emotions is likely to suffice in FPA. The biological approach overstates the role of biology in emotive response; it fails to account for how emotive responses vary over time and space. Cognitive approaches overstate the degree to which human beings are conscious of their emotional responses. While it is true, to a certain extent, that humans are aware that they are angry or happy, and have some sense of what is triggering that response, the autonomy of emotion implies that humans are not always conscious of their emotional state, and its role alongside cognition in what seems rational (Ross 2006: 198; Onuf 2002: 121). Emotion can “infuse our beliefs and judgments in ways that regularly escape our attention but nevertheless connect us to collective agencies” (Ross 2006: 214). Thus, even if one accepts – as seems plausible – that there is a physiological element to emotions, this should be understood as a capacity which is manifested consciously and unconsciously in relation to social phenomena; the relational quality of emotion can be cognitive (intentional/conscious), or unconscious and lacking in intentionality. If we incorporate the role of emotion into a study of rationality and identity in FPA, we will be better able to explore the important role of the subconscious in reproducing and transmitting identities (Ross 2006: 210). I therefore argue that the three approaches can all be drawn upon to offer a more analytically coherent means of understanding emotion in international politics. There is a substantial body of literature pointing to the biological basis for at least some emotions, such as fear and anger. We can therefore theorize that emotions are biologically innate and hardwired into the brain, but their arousal is determined by social learning and is therefore a function of cultural context and identities. In this way, biological, cognitive and constructivist approaches can be understood as complimentary

and insights from each can be drawn together to provide a more complete picture of the emotional life of policymakers in differing cultural contexts.

The sociology of emotions offers an excellent means to gain a foothold on how culture, identity and structural context affect the interplay, expression and development of conscious and subconscious emotion and rationality. Dramaturgical approaches to the sociology of emotions stress the processes through which individuals manage emotional responses in situations given by the emotional culture of a given society.²¹ Positive or negative arousal is anticipated by the degree to which a given individual successfully negotiates the expectations produced by the various, and often conflictual, cultural scripts. These emotional subcultures can be reflective of differing social categorical units²² such as gender, age ethnicity and class (Turner & Stets 2005: 296; Turner 2007: 67-69). Thus, individuals are often compelled to put on emotional fronts in order to gain in status within social structural hierarchies. The more intense the contradiction between actual feelings (and note the bias toward conscious emotion, as opposed to unconscious emotion) the more emotional work must be done by the individual. This can result in individuals manipulating their bodies via gestures to convey the 'correct' emotion in line with cultural expectations, and can also result in individuals trying to produce the correct emotion in themselves by focusing their attention selectively to exclude inappropriate thoughts. Moreover, such tensions can also result in the activation of defense mechanisms in which emotional response is transformed via repression into other forms of affect with subsequent consequences for rationality and decisionmaking (Turner & Stets 2005: 297).

These various dynamics play out in a social structural context in which the status and power (determined by the social structural context) of the interacting individuals influence what emotions are aroused and how they are valenced²³. Thus, high-power, high status individuals are more likely to experience positive emotions in relation to the deference and compliance that is due to them given their status positions; those subject to this power and the obligations and deference it requires are less likely to experience positive emotions (Turner & Stets 2005: 296). Applied to foreign policy making, this theory implies that in the hierarchies of power and status within institutions, those with high status and power are more likely to experience positive emotions than those further down the hierarchy. Negative arousal can result in a loss of legitimacy for the social structure and can also generate conflict; conversely, if the given social structure is perceived as in accordance with prevailing norms of justice, acceptance of the given hierarchies and power relations can result in the strengthening allegiance to the social structure and with that, prevailing modes of thought (emotions, cognitions) – with consequent implications for how outside events are interpreted within the social structure.

Symbolic interactionist approaches to the sociological study of emotion involve an exploration of the role of identity and self. This approach is valuable for the attention it brings to

²¹ Emotional culture is defined by Jonathan Turner and Jan E. Stets as being composed of "ideologies, beliefs, norms, logics, vocabularies, and stocks of knowledge about emotions, particularly with respect to what emotions should be felt or displayed in various situations" (2005: 296).

²² A categorical unit is defined by Jonathan Turner as "a social distinction that affects how individuals are evaluated and treated by others" (2007: 68).

²³ Valencing – or the degree to which a given emotion is understood as 'positive' or 'negative' is also a problematic simplification. For example, it is in many cases quite difficult to place certain emotions as either positive or negative; emotions such as nostalgia, awe and veneration do not seem to lend themselves to this type of framing (Turner & Stets 2005: 288). Also, in some instances 'negative' emotions can produce 'positive' outcomes; fear and anger can play important roles in self preservation and guilt and shame can compel individuals to make amends for their actions.

how notions of identity and self can generate positive and negative emotions when culturally derived expectations are not met (Turner & Stets 2005: 300). To achieve congruence between self, others and cultural expectations a number of behavioural strategies can be employed with implications for the study of foreign policy decisionmaking. These – significantly – include “selectively perceiving gestures of others to achieve perceptions of congruence between self and the responses of others and by making external attributions onto others and external social structures for the failure to achieve congruence” (Turner & Stets 2005: 300). Thus, these three aforementioned approaches lend analytical coherence to my dissertation in so far as they point to how emotion can function in hierarchical, institutionalized settings to generate differing rationalities, interpretations, and ultimately policies, in relation to external events in differing social structural contexts.

These approaches can also, I contend, be complementary to prevailing constructivist accounts of foreign policy and global politics. Given that the sociological approaches point to how identities, and the cultural and subcultural emotional scripts they generate, can influence emotional arousal, and are simultaneously sustained and potentially transformed by the emotions they generate, there is a potential point of interconnection with rules-based constructivist approaches to international politics and foreign policy which try to conceptualize the relationship between agency and structure. These approaches “focus upon how rules shape the relationships of a wide range of actors” (Ferguson & Mansbach 2003: 206-207; Kubalkova 2001: 56-58). It is the scope of rule-based constructivism and its ability to engage questions of agency and structure and the rules which govern and transform their interaction that lends itself well to a study of emotions. What transforms this type of constructivism by incorporating the study of emotion is the ontological status it affords to language. Whereas rules-based constructivism focuses upon speech acts and the interplay of language and rules in co-constituting agents and structures, emotion can be understood to result from speech acts and *to inform those acts themselves*. Affective development occurs before linguistic development in infants; the ontological privileging of language in rules-based constructivism, therefore, reiterates the sociological tendency to focus upon feeling (conscious emotion) rather than unconscious emotions. Thus, my approach will utilize the analytical categories developed within the rules-based constructivist literature on foreign policy, while simultaneously broadening its ontology to recognize that as language/rules shape the interaction of agency and structure on multiple levels so to does the interplay between language/rules and emotion. Emotion can thus be understood as manifesting itself in a constructivist account of foreign policy as partially generating the ontological grounding of policymakers, while also being shaped by language rules dominant within a given sociocultural context. Taken in total, I believe that this combination can allow a more nuanced understanding of why certain logics of appropriateness predominate in certain contexts and not in others in relation to the same event.

Why does the above discussion lend itself to a study of US-Cuban relations? If we accept that emotion develops and shapes rationality via social learning then it stands to reason that ‘lessons’ learned from historical experiences – whether actual or mythic – will have an influence on how policymakers and domestic groups are emotionally primed by the actions of specific others, and on the subsequent policy responses which are legitimated as optimal as a result. Historically, US policymakers have interpreted many Cuban attempts at compromise as evidence of weakness and as a justification for intensifying US pressure on the regime (see Blight & Brenner 2002). In addition, the US has been implicated in many schemes to subvert the Castro regime – even as it professes to embody self-restraint (Blight & Brenner 2002: 156-157). The

United States has been implicated in the shooting down of Cubana flight 455 on October 6, 1976 (Blight & Brenner 2002: 161); a fact widely known inside Cuba and one (and there are many more examples of this type of state-sponsored terrorism) which has profoundly shaped how the Cuban people and state view US actions. The weight of history between these two peoples is palpable; the emotional dynamics which legitimate violence on both sides – and which also hold out the possibility for moving beyond entrenched hostilities. For example there has been work done on how representations of the Cuban regime have been conferred generation to generation within segments of the Cuban-American community. Taken within the context of my analysis, and given the role that this spatially concentrated US domestic interest group has had on US Cuba policy, such a consideration could illuminate how the changing tenor of the US-Cuban relations and the difference in lived experience can open up possibilities for reconciliation. It might also indicate that the modes of identity – and the emotional/affective dynamics entrenched within them – in formal, hierarchical institutionalized contexts make this type of social learning extremely difficult.

It is also important to remember, given this last point, that the above dynamics have resulted in the continuation of the US embargo for more than 40 years. This embargo has engendered tremendous human suffering – particularly since the end of the Cold War. If we work toward a better understanding of the role of emotion in rationality and decisionmaking it may point to ways in which policymakers can respond to events in foreign policy contexts that will allow for the formation of new identities – and one would hope, more empathetic and amicable relations. This process occurred, according to Blight, during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The fear of nuclear annihilation functioned to compel both the Soviets and Americans to reconfigure their identities to defuse the conflict. Fear led to a realistic empathy of the situation that both sides found themselves in and to policies which allowed the situation to defuse without a nuclear catastrophe.

It has been argued that the removal of Spanish power from Cuba only resulted in a quasi-colonialism with the US as imperial administrator (see Benjamin 2000). The term ‘Spanish-American’ war itself reveals the lack of subjectivity bestowed upon the Cuban people; this objectification is perhaps nowhere better reflected than in the 1903 Platt Amendment, which legitimated US political and military intervention in the newly ‘independent’ Cuban state (Schwab 1999: vii; Blight & Brenner 2002: 175). The 1996 *Helms-Burton Act* is seen as a similar intervention by the United States in Cuban affairs; indeed it is rightly seen as example of US intervention in the sovereign affairs of many of its closest allies (Morley & McGillion 2002: 120-130). The strict conditionalities²⁴ imposed in the Act are reflective of the ethnocentric (one could call it racist) paternalism evident in the Platt Amendment. US policy toward Cuba and Latin America has been argued to reflect a deep-seated desire to ‘uplift’ peoples incapable of uplifting themselves (Schoultz 2009). This paternalistic notion is deeply entrenched in the US foreign policy establishment and can be understood to reflect broader – and parochial – notions of the US identity and its role in the world (see Wylie 2004). Indeed by the 1950s, Cuba was dominated by US capital and was torn by stark disparities in wealth distribution (Blight & Brenner 2002: 172-175).

The Cuban revolution of 1959 (and the Castro regime which gained power from it), if understood within the broader historical context of US intervention in Latin America, represents

²⁴ The refusal to allow Castro or his brother Raul to be involved and more broadly the right of the United States to decide whether there has been an appropriate transition to democracy (Blight & Brenner 2002: 174; *Helms-Burton Act* 1996 – accessed online <http://www.thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c104:H.R.927.ENR:>).

the first time in Cuban history where the regime in power enjoys real autonomy from foreign powers (Blight & Brenner 2002: 189). This fact can be understood to confer tremendous legitimacy upon the Castro regime in the eyes of the Cuban people and should be taken into consideration when considering the regime's actions or its ability to endure crises (Blight & Brenner 2002: 188-191); this adamant refusal to compromise Cuban sovereignty has also been argued to be reflective of the Cuban stance during the 1962 missile crisis wherein Castro seemed willing to risk nuclear annihilation rather than compromise with the United States. James Blight and Philip Brenner argue in relation to the Cuban response to the missile crisis that:

... Cubans seem almost to be from some other planet. Their attitudes and behaviour seem to make no sense, because as the superpowers tried desperately to defuse the crisis, the Cubans resented the very idea of a resolution to the crisis on the terms agreed to in Moscow and Washington. More, they did what they could to prolong the crisis and seemed unworried about increasing the risk of a war that might have destroyed human civilization (2002: 188).

They continue that this all or nothing perspective in relation to Cuban sovereignty is still evident today. The above gives an indication of the possible ways in which emotion, culture and identities are manifested within rationality and policymaking; failure to engage these phenomena empathetically, or to question instrumental rationality assumptions, leads to questionable assertions relating to the character of Cuban policy and to the ends the Cuban regime seeks.

What this all potentially means is that identity, emotion (and with that rationalities) plays a significant role in the inter-state dynamics between Cuba and the United States. By exploring how culture and identity shape affective response in policymakers, and by exploring how different socio-cultural contexts encourage and repress the affective responses of policymakers and non elites, I believe we can gain new insight into why policies in both states have been different and quite intransigent. It may also indicate how entrenched conflicts may be resolved via dialogue and various other forms of inter and sub-state social interaction.

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