
Introduction

Cengiz ERİŞEN*

The goal for this special issue on political psychology is twofold. The first is the need to consider different perspectives in foreign policy analysis. Neither a single theoretical understanding of foreign relations between states nor a deterministic state-level analysis is capable of truly depicting relations among states. Today, these scholarly tools are considered to be rudimentary at best, and this special issue seeks to expand our knowledge in this field by drawing attention to possible contributions from newer approaches. Second, foreign policy analysis has various determinants. To find answers to this complex net of relations, where at the end a decision has to be taken and an event occurs, one needs to employ analytical methods that offer sensible inferences of the outcome. Insights from political psychology are of particular use in this endeavour.

* Cengiz Erişen is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at TOBB University of Economics and Technology. His research interests include political psychology, comparative political behavior, public opinion, quantitative research methods, and foreign policy analysis. His current research examines the role of emotions in Turkish political behavior.

Levels of Analysis and Political Psychology

One should begin by noting that levels of analysis is a useful conceptual innovation widely used in international relations and politics. The traditional old-school approach considers the state the single entity that can make foreign policy decisions and lead foreign actions. On the other hand, one could also consider the individual level of analysis, the domestic level of analysis, and finally the global/system level of analysis. This special issue primarily focuses on the individual and the domestic levels of analysis through the lenses of political psychology.

Considering these two levels of analyses in this special issue, one can see that political psychology offers the best tools and the most distinct ways of approaching a foreign policy phenomenon. As one of the major sub-disciplines of political science, political psychology is the result of the behaviouralist school that flourished back in the 1960s in political science

in particular and the social sciences in general. Predominantly behaviouralist and process oriented in nature, political psychology employs various research methods (among the most prominent ones are experimental design, survey research, and content analysis) to explore distinct topics of interest at different levels of analysis. Taking the individual as the centre of events and decisions, political psychology extends to public opinion at large by exploring the multifaceted relations among actors.

In analysing foreign policy, we first need to understand individuals and their attitudes, judgments, decisions, and behaviour. We need to explore what comes to their mind and how they think about a given problem. Individual decision makers should be studied starting from their personal qualities (e.g., traits, images, experiences, prejudices, motivations, and beliefs) and the context in which they operate (e.g., the people in their close circles, group decision-making platforms, and bureaucracy). In particular leaders, as the key decision makers in foreign policy, are important for many reasons. Scholars thus need to account for how leaders could influence foreign policy making by studying their individual qualities. This line of thinking has evolved into a strong leadership analysis literature that is mainly dominated by Operational Code (OpCode) and Leadership Traits Analysis (LTA). This literature has also benefited from research carried out by

Turkish contributors. These scholars have mainly applied the leadership analysis models to the Turkish leaders and improved the generalizability and the inferences of the models.

Trying to understand a decision maker as a single entity is critical but probably not sufficient when trying to make greater claims about understanding foreign policy decisions. Group processes and contextual effects should also be accounted for. In this analysis, the effects of groupthink and the context in which the leaders function and reach decisions are important. It is with these considerations that groupthink literature focuses on this level and explores the context in which leaders and decision-makers reach judgments.

A step further from the group level takes us to the level of public opinion. Citizens collectively make public opinion. As a state becomes more democratic, the role of public opinion in foreign affairs becomes more important. Since politicians are held accountable for their decisions, a democratic citizenry will question the motivation and the thought process for an unsuccessful foreign policy decision. Although the public attitude is not a social reaction at all times, we can certainly see that the public takes sides and supports or opposes leaders. By analysing public opinion, one can find answers to many questions, from voting choices to attitudinal determinants on major political issues (e.g., support for

EU membership or support for particular foreign policy decisions).

At the gist of these topics, psychological reactions remains. Individuals as part of the public define themselves through identity, religion, and other group-level factors, and are affected by emotional and cognitive influences around them. In defining public opinion, one needs to consider not only the basic effects of economic indicators on voting but also more complex and theoretically valid psychological short-term influences. In addition, in defining interstate relations, one could rely on psychological constructs that depict and model the nature of relations between the actors.

Given the important contribution of political psychology to the general understanding of politics and foreign policy in particular, this special issue has five articles on this discussion that exemplify thought-provoking scholarly research drawn from the Turkish context. Each article begins with a clear research question, employs a method in exploring its goals, and discusses its findings and implications. Through a variety of empirical approaches, this volume presents a distinct look at foreign policy analysis.

Overview of the Articles in this Special Issue

Below, I briefly discuss each article in the order they are printed according to

their level of analysis in answering their research questions.

First, Elif Erişen provides the theoretical setting for the special issue by discussing political psychology research and the methodological tools used in the discipline. At the beginning, Dr. Erişen defines the individual focused analysis in political psychology. Next, she draws attention to the multi-disciplinary and multi-method nature of the discipline. The goal in this theoretical set up is to present an overview of the trends in the discipline and the current interests related to international relations in general. In this discussion, research methods employed to provide answers on research questions are nicely explained to provide basic information for the reader. Given the difficulties of studying individual qualities, each method's contributions and drawbacks are nicely teased out. Considering the weakness, and at times the absence, of research method training in undergraduate and graduate education in Turkey, the methods discussion provides an initial review of the research tools not just for political psychology but also for any sub-discipline of political science. Finally, Dr. Erişen discusses the contributions of political psychology to the study of international relations. She briefly states the major scholarly works that have greatly contributed to the study of international relations and foreign policy analysis.

Second, Barış Kesgin provides a substantive example of the discipline

through a successful overview of the leadership level of analysis in understanding certain foreign policy decisions. Barış tests these expectations by applying the LTA to Tansu Çiller and her foreign policy decisions. By using the LTA, Dr. Kesgin analyses Çiller's foreign policy decisions, and compares her profile to post-Cold War Turkish leaders. His article presents a nice and clear example of how to use LTA in understanding a leader's decision and behaviour. This is also a valuable contribution to the LTA method by providing a study of non-Western leaders.

Third, Tereza Capelos and Stavroula Chrona provide an empirical example of analysing a state through its domestic politics. Foreign policy analysis involves understanding a state through certain domestic determinants, and this study demonstrates this by using an example from Turkish politics. Drawing a convenience sample of mainly Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) supporters, Dr. Capelos and Chrona study the effects of religiosity and national identity, two major concepts in Turkish politics, on a number of important political attitudes. They find that for CHP supporters, while religious attachments promote tradition and customs, national attachments evoke state-oriented notions of citizenship. Critical to this finding is that the religious attachments to Islam influence CHP supporters' political attitudes as well as national attachments. Considering the

goal of disentangling the determinants of political attitudes at the individual level this study yields interesting questions for future research.

Fourth, Gizem Arıkan takes a step further in determining the level of support towards the EU by using social identity theory. Presenting a wide evaluation of public opinion through the use of aggregate survey data analysis, Dr. Arıkan nicely shows that support for EU membership in Turkey relies on individual level determinants such as identity, group-based interests, and perceived threats. Stemming from the social identity theory, the study empirically analyses Turkish public opinion on the issue based on nationally representative data. The principal finding in this study is that while material expectations and rational calculations bolster pro-EU attitudes, the strength of national identity and perceived cultural threat to the nation lower support for the EU. What is important in this study is that more than the rational calculations, perceived group benefits and symbolic concerns influence one's level of support for the EU. Given that EU membership has been a longstanding debate in the Turkish public and political arena, understanding the determinants of public opinion is relevant to capture how domestic indicators could influence foreign policies.

Fifth, Binnur Özkeçeci-Taner takes us to the state level of analysis

while employing an individual level phenomenon, image theory. Primarily a psychological construct, image theory use a number of tools to understand how decision makers perceive each other. Image theory models how elite decision makers (on behalf of their state) perceive themselves (the Self) and other states (the Other). The article takes recent developments in Turkish-Israeli relations and tackles this unexplored topic via image theory. The main finding in this study is that while Turkey considers Israel an inconvenient or untrustworthy partner, Israel increasingly perceives Turkey as a frenemy (a partner who is simultaneously a rival). What perhaps remains for the future is to start to change the current images formed in the minds of decision makers.

While these five articles comprise the core of the special issue, the final two articles are slightly related to the political psychology focus in this special issue. First, Yaşar Sarı explores Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy between 1991 and 2010 by focusing on leadership quality and domestic factors. To him, a state's foreign policy behaviour depends on certain domestic conditions in addition to the leader's ability to control the domestic affairs. Second, Rashed Uz Zaman takes a historical perspective and argues that political culture is the main reason for the recent growth in extremist politics in Bangladesh. To the author, the principal cause for the current difficulties in

domestic politics stems from an identity conflict engendered by several factors in the history of the country.

Conclusion

This special issue aims to increase interest in further research using a political psychology point of view in foreign policy and international relations. We need to consider different perspectives to advance our understanding of foreign policy phenomena. If scholars get stuck in deterministic or normative standpoints, their ability to advance scientific inquiry in the discipline would be limited. Especially with regards to the lack of models and research hypotheses in examining foreign policy, we need to use the scholarly tools that generate tested and generalizable information.

Finally, I would like to thank a number of individuals who have made this special issue possible. First, I would like to thank the editors of *Perceptions* for asking me to be the guest editor of a special issue. Their invitation has generated what seems to be a successful and interesting first step in opening up new directions in the study of foreign policy and international relations through political psychology. Second, I would like to thank all the authors, including those who wrote the book reviews. Without their hard work, this entire project would not have been possible. Third, I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their extremely

valuable comments and suggestions for the authors, which not only improved the quality of the articles but also ultimately created a useful special issue.

I hope this special issue will set a humble example to increase people's willingness to consider distinct levels

of analysis (particularly the individual level) within political science not only on foreign policy analysis but also on different areas of research. I hope this special issue will be motivating for academics as well as policymakers and will lead to further academic research in the discipline.