

# İSTANBUL BİLGİ UNIVERSITY EUROPEAN INSTITUTE JEAN MONNET CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

## Emotions and Narratives: A Brief Literature Discussion

Mustafa Gökcan Kösen

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İstanbul  
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## **Preface**

This paper, 'Emotions and Narratives: A Brief Literature Discussion' by Mustafa Gökcan Kösen, researcher in the DAAD-TÜBİTAK co-funded project 'Distant Neighbours: Exploring Political Narratives and Visual Culture in Turkish-German Relations' from Istanbul Bilgi University, examines the role of emotions and narratives in the field of international relations. After clarifying the differences between emotion and affect and offering precise definitions to distinguish the two concepts, the author provides a brief overview of the role of emotions in international relations before discussing the interplay between narratives and emotions, highlighting how they are interrelated and influence each other. This is the third working paper in the series of the ongoing project supported by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) under the grant number 221N423 and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) under the grant number 57628225. The series hosts working papers related to the research project.

**Dr. ÖZGE ONURSAL-BEŞGÜL**  
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# DAAD-TÜBİTAK Project

Emotions and Narratives: A Brief Literature Discussion



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## **About the DAAD-TÜBİTAK Project ‘Distant Neighbors: Exploring Political Narratives and Visual Culture in Turkish-German Relations’**

The joint research project between the European Institute at Istanbul Bilgi University and the Centre for Global Cooperation Research, funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK). The starting observation in the context of the project is that the relationship between Turkey and Germany has been mainly analyzed in social science research (e.g. foreign policy analysis) through a narrow focus on political elites and in the context of the EU or broader geopolitical concerns. These studies often claim that the relationship has transformed from a befriended to a rather pragmatic mode of cooperation and can be characterized as a form of ‘distant neighbors’ particularly in the ritualized meetings between German and Turkish political leaders (Merkel, Scholz, Erdoğan). Our project aims at challenging or at least supplementing this dominant narrative by broadening the empirical scope from political elites to the much larger variety of political and cultural actors (civil society movements, political activists, scientists, filmmakers, novelists, musicians, artists etc.) from both countries in their European and transnational context. Our main argument is that these actors, operating in often very loose transnational networks (e.g. environmental activism, film festivals), have developed and established practices and creative techniques in transnational cooperation and thereby overcome the nationalist-driven narratives of a distant relationship. In short, the state of affairs in German-Turkish relations is much more complex and, to some extent, much more promising than a focus on bilateral official relations would suggest.

For more information, please visit the project Website: <https://explorenarratives.com/>



[@exp\\_narratives](https://twitter.com/exp_narratives)

## **Biography**

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# **Emotions and Narratives: A Brief Literature Discussion**

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# Emotions and Narratives: A Brief Literature Discussion

## Introduction

The evolving landscape of international relations has been significantly enriched by interdisciplinary approaches, particularly the integration of psychological insights into understanding global political dynamics. This burgeoning dialogue between the two disciplines has been further catalyzed as scholars increasingly recognize the explanatory power of psychology in unraveling the complexities of global political developments. This cross-pollination has not only expanded the research horizons of international relations but has also carved out a distinct space for exploring emotions within international affairs.

Emotions play a critical role in shaping behaviors across various levels of analysis, allowing the different layers of international relations to become intertwined. From another perspective, emotions offer a unique lens for understanding not only individual actions, such as the emotions of leaders and individuals, but also collective dynamics within societies, including group-based and collective emotions, and even broader international phenomena shaped around emotions. The recognition of emotions' nature challenges the traditional state-centric focus in international relations, emphasizing the agency of individuals beyond leadership and bureaucratic structures. Integrating emotions into the study of international relations has opened a more inclusive and nuanced framework for understanding interstate relations, enabling scholars to conduct multi-level, multi-causal analyses that move beyond the limitations of purely rationalist approaches.

The diverse characteristics of emotions in the political arena provide a unique perspective for understanding the complexities of interstate relations. Emotions



can be catalysts, justifications, evidence, or explanations in policy-making. Their influence goes beyond acting as intermediaries, as they shape the construction of stereotypes, prejudices, and archetypes that profoundly affect how nations perceive and engage with one another. Emotions are not merely present in political life; they are deliberately wielded by policymakers as potent tools to mobilize audiences, rally support, and construct narratives of identity. The pervasive role of emotions across various aspects of politics, from visual representations and metaphors to narratives and discourses, underscores their profound significance in domestic and foreign policy.

This working paper first explores the distinctions between emotion and affect, providing clear definitions to differentiate emotion from affect. It then offers a brief discussion on the role of emotions in international relations, focusing on their placement within various levels of analysis. Lastly, it discusses the interplay between narratives and emotions, highlighting how they are interconnected and influence each other.

### What should we understand from emotions?

Rather than merely offering a standard definition of emotions, it is more insightful to explore whether emotions function as a motivation, a process, or an outcome and examine their distinct and critical roles in shaping behavior and perception. What sets emotions apart from similar concepts such as affect? Furthermore, as widely debated in psychology and international relations, can emotions be directly observed, or are they more subtle, complex phenomena that must be inferred from behavior, discourse, and context? Understanding these nuances is vital to grasping the full significance of emotions in broader theoretical and practical frameworks, exploring these questions and clarifying what distinguishes the emotions from other related concepts. To this end, a brief comparative discussion will be provided between affect and emotion rather than focusing solely on defining emotions.

The concept of affect is often discussed alongside emotion; however, it is essential to recognize that these constructs, while related, serve distinct functions

in human experience. Affect can be understood as a more primal sensation or feeling that is less cognitively mediated than emotion. It is characterized by its immediacy and intensity, often described as something that "strikes" us, fostering connections between individuals (Clough, 2010; Shouse, 2005). This notion aligns with the idea that affect operates on a subconscious level, influencing our emotional responses without explicit awareness (Massumi, 2002; Russell, 2003). In contrast, emotions are typically more complex and socially constructed, involving a subjective experience, physiological responses, and behavioral components (Ekman, 1992; Roseman et al., 1990; Nummenmaa et al., 2018). For instance, fear is an emotion reaction triggered by a specific stimulus, such as a perceived threat, which elicits a structured sequence of physiological changes and subjective feelings (Lazarus, 1991; Weidman et al., 2017). Their temporal positioning further emphasizes the distinction between affect and emotion. Affect is often perceived as preceding or following emotional states, serving as a background tone that colors our emotional experiences (Röttger-Rössler & Slaby, 2018). This perspective is supported by the idea that affect can be viewed as a dynamic, relational process connecting bodies, as Russell (2003) suggested.

In contrast, emotions are typically evaluated in terms of their appropriateness, intensity, and duration, and they are often tied to specific objects or events (Weiner, 1985). For example, an individual may wake up feeling a generalized sense of unease or contentment, which illustrates the diffuse nature of affect that can influence subsequent emotional reactions (Barrett, 2017). Moreover, the relationship between affect and emotion is complex, as affect may serve as the underlying substrate upon which emotions are constructed (Hochschild, 1979). This layered complexity of human emotional life underscores the importance of distinguishing between these constructs. While affect can shape our emotional responses, it is not entirely reducible to them, highlighting the intricate interplay between affective experiences and emotional states (Damasio, 1999). Understanding this distinction is crucial for advancing studies of human experience, as it allows for a more nuanced exploration of how affect and emotion interact to inform our emotional lives (Nussbaum, 2001).

### Emotions and Narratives: A Brief Literature Discussion

Some researchers contend that emotions cannot be experienced without affect, as it provides the intensity and subjective quality that transforms social interactions into emotional experiences (Damasio, 1999; Shouse, 2005). Affect refers to a non-conscious experience of intensity, representing a moment of unshaped and unstructured potential. This is because affect cannot be fully expressed through language and exists before or outside conscious awareness (Massumi, 2002; Russell, 2003). It is the body's way of priming itself for action in a particular situation by infusing a quantitative layer of intensity into the qualitative aspects of the experience. In essence, affect serves as the raw material from which emotions are constructed. Wetherell (2012) and Roseman et al. (1990) acknowledge the difficulty in clearly delineating affect and emotions but suggest that emotion can be understood as an expression of affect. From this perspective, affect plays a crucial role in embodying emotions, representing the subjective experience that underlies emotional responses. This view further emphasizes the interdependence between affect and emotion, illustrating how affect acts as the foundational layer that gives rise to the more complex and structured emotional experiences. Another key difference lies in the immediacy and duration of these experiences. Emotions are typically more intense and shorter-lived, occurring in response to specific stimuli. Conversely, affect is often more persistent, providing a continuous stream of feeling that can last for an extended period (Nummenmaa et al., 2018). This persistent nature of affect allows it to influence behavior subtly and thought over time, often without the individual's conscious awareness. For instance, a prolonged state of low affect might predispose someone to feel sadness more readily, even in situations where they might not typically respond with sadness (Koval et al., 2013).

The distinction between emotion and affect has significant theoretical implications, particularly in psychology, anthropology, and philosophy. Understanding this difference is crucial for accurately analyzing human behavior and discourse (Wetherell, 2012; Shouse, 2005). In psychology, this distinction can inform the study of mood disorders, where affect might be disrupted, leading to inappropriate or maladaptive emotional responses (Lerner & Keltner, 2010; Russell, 2003). In sociology, the affective tone of a group or society can shape

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collective emotions, influencing social movements, political attitudes, and cultural norms (Ahmed, 2004; Roseman et al., 1990). Philosophically, the distinction raises questions about the nature of consciousness, the role of the body in shaping experience, and the relationship between mind and emotion (Damasio, 1999; Nummenmaa et al., 2018). While emotion and affect are interconnected, they are not synonymous. Affect is even more diffuse and less cognitively mediated than emotions (Massumi, 2002; Weidman et al., 2017). Affect can be thought of as a fundamental, pre-conscious experience of feeling that may underpin both emotions (Nussbaum, 2001). It represents the raw, unprocessed sensation of being that can influence the emergence of specific emotions. Whereas emotions are often specific and identifiable, affect is characterized by its fluidity and role as the substrate upon which both emotions are constructed (Barrett, 2017; Jupp, 2021). Emotion is a more structured, evaluative, and object-focused state, whereas affect is a more fluid, diffuse, and often unconscious experience (Russell, 2003; Gregg & Gregory, 2010). This differentiation is significant for understanding how we experience and express emotions, and it highlights the importance of considering both constructs in the analysis of human behavior and discourse. Recognizing the distinct roles of emotion and affect allows for a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of human experience, ultimately contributing to a deeper insight into the nature of our emotional lives (Koval et al., 2013).

While emotion and affect are closely related, they represent distinct aspects of human experience and play different roles in the political scene. Emotions are typically short-lived, intense reactions to specific stimuli involving a complex interplay of cognitive, physiological, and behavioral responses (Lindquist & Barrett, 2008). Particular events or situations often trigger them and are closely tied to the individual's perception and interpretation of these events. The differentiation between affect and emotion offers valuable insights into the analysis of narratives. Emotions hold a pivotal role in this framework, influencing the nature, definition, and even the form of these related concepts (Barrett et al., 2007). Solomon (2015) suggests that while affect undoubtedly influences discourse, its precise role remains somewhat ambiguous, potentially serving as a representation or manifestation of emotion. This complexity highlights how affect can shape

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emotional experiences, thereby affecting political discourse and collective emotions (Ahmed, 2004; Roseman et al., 1990). Furthermore, understanding the dynamics between affect and emotion can enhance our comprehension of social movements, where collective emotions are often driven by underlying affective states (Niven, 2017). The interplay between these constructs is crucial for analyzing how narratives are constructed and how they resonate with audiences, ultimately shaping public perception and political engagement (Gianolla et al., 2024).

The differentiation between emotion and affect enhances our understanding of their respective impacts and functions within narratives. This distinction sheds light on character motivations and plot dynamics and enriches the thematic elements present in storytelling (Wetherell, 2012; Shouse, 2005). While emotions undoubtedly occupy a central role in narrative analysis, it is crucial to recognize that this perspective does not diminish the significance of other influencing factors and concepts (Solomon, 2015; Russell, 2003). Affect, although less explicitly articulated within narratives, often serves as an underlying force that shapes the emotional genre of a story, subtly guiding the reader's emotional responses (Ahmed, 2004; Roseman et al., 1990). Thus, the distinction between affect and emotion is vital for a comprehensive analysis of narratives. However, avoiding a reductionist approach that attributes all narrative roles solely to emotions is essential, as this may overlook the complexity of human experience (Damasio, 1999; Nummenmaa et al., 2018). A nuanced interpretation that considers emotions and affect can provide a richer understanding of how narratives function and influence their audiences (Nussbaum, 2001; Weidman et al., 2017). This perspective highlights the interplay between immediate emotional reactions, enduring emotional states, and the foundational affective experiences that shape both. Before going into the intricate relationship between narratives and emotions, it is essential to explore the role of emotions in international relations (Lindquist & Barrett, 2008).

## Emotions and International Relations

The role of emotions in international relations is increasingly recognized as a crucial factor influencing political behavior and decision-making. Emotions can significantly shape public opinion and political engagement, as evidenced by how emotional appeals in political messaging mobilize citizens (Young, 2023). Furthermore, emotions like anger, fear, and hope have been shown to affect collective emotions during crises, impacting how societies respond to political events (Capelos & Exadaktylos, 2016). The interplay between emotions and political behavior is complex; for instance, implicit attitudes formed through emotional responses can influence voter behavior and political participation (Albertson, 2010). Additionally, the emotional climate within a political context can shape trust and engagement levels among citizens, affecting their willingness to participate in political processes (Kidron & Peretz, 2018). Moreover, the emotional dynamics within political groups can foster collective identities and drive social movements, highlighting the importance of understanding emotions in political mobilization (Bettarelli et al., 2022). Theoretical frameworks such as affective intelligence theory elucidate how emotions inform political participation, suggesting that emotional responses can serve as critical motivators for civic engagement (Valentino et al., 2011). As such, recognizing the significance of emotions in international relations enhances our understanding of political behavior and underscores the necessity of incorporating emotional analysis into the study of political phenomena (Groenendyk, 2011). The incorporation of psychological approaches within international relations has significantly expanded the field, enriching it by introducing unique frameworks for understanding political behavior and fostering a productive dialogue between the two disciplines. By examining human behavior, decision-making processes, and rational choice through a psychological lens, scholars have gained more profound insights into the actions and motivations of individuals, leaders, and groups (Stein, 2013). This dialogue has facilitated the exploration of the emotional dimension, offering a more nuanced perspective on inter-state relations and challenging traditional rationalist approaches (Crawford, 2000).

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Emotions have emerged as a pivotal area of focus in international relations, offering new dimensions for analysis by providing valuable insights into the behavior of individuals and groups, including the impact of leaders' emotions on political decisions. This expanded perspective allows for a more comprehensive analysis of inter-state relations, acknowledging that emotions play a crucial role alongside rational considerations (Hutchison and Bleiker, 2014; Graham, 2014). Incorporating emotional aspects that influence political behavior has the potential to deepen our understanding of international relations, which traditionally emphasizes rationality and bureaucratic structures (Lebow, 2005). Despite these advancements, the role of emotions in international relations has often been marginalized. Emotions have traditionally been positioned in opposition to rationality, with rational decision-making perceived as the ideal in political contexts (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2008). Historical figures such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Morgenthau, and Rousseau recognized the significance of emotions but primarily used them as explanatory tools rather than central elements of analysis (Saurette, 2006). Recent research has put forward a more integrated approach that acknowledges the influence of emotions alongside cognitive factors, suggesting that emotions should be considered a fundamental aspect of political behavior and decision-making (Hutchison & Bleiker, 2014; Gold, 2015).

The emergence of interdisciplinary studies has undeniably brought forth new paradigms and perspectives within the field of international relations. The concept of the 'emotional turn' (Koschut, 2020) underscores the growing recognition of the significant role emotions play at various levels of analysis in international relations. One such perspective involves conceptualizing states as individuals (Sasley, 2011; Russell, 2003; Wendt, 2004), attributing feelings and emotions to them that reflect the collective emotions of their constituent individuals and institutions. This approach can prove valuable in understanding foreign policy decisions and state behavior. Alternatively, states can be perceived as groups (Rythoven, 2015), offering a different lens through which to examine emotions in inter-state relations. However, it is important to note that this viewpoint tends to perceive states, societies, and groups as unitary actors, assuming they can socialize, form relationships, and experience intra-group dynamics similar to

individuals. This approach, while insightful, also highlights the tendency to apply characteristics specific to individuals to states at various levels of analysis.

Within these developments, emotion research in international relations can be divided into two waves (Koschut, 2014). The first wave primarily focused on defining, conceptualizing, and establishing the legitimacy of emotions within the field. However, it lacked concrete ways to link emotions directly to inter-state relations, hindering the development of interdisciplinary approaches (Sasley, 2011). Although the first wave laid the foundation for addressing the subjective nature and methodological challenges of studying emotions, it also demonstrated the feasibility of interdisciplinary collaboration with psychology (Koschut, 2020). The second wave has witnessed a significant shift, with emotions assuming a central role in analyses of political developments. This does not imply an exclusive focus on emotions, but rather a recognition of their importance in understanding political interactions (Koschut, 2020). While fear remains a prominent emotion in the literature, the second wave has expanded its scope to include a broader range of emotions, such as humiliation, revenge, trauma, honor, shame, and pride. Koschut (2022) elucidates the critical changes in understanding emotions in this second wave. With the second wave, emotions have been viewed as biological and integral to human nature rather than confined to simplistic dichotomies such as mind/body or rational/irrational. Additionally, emotions are recognized as operating at the intersection of various concepts, including agency and structure and individual and group behavior. This nuanced understanding of emotions has opened new avenues for exploring their multifaceted influence on international relations.

For instance, Saurette (2006) highlights how the interrogations conducted by US soldiers in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay served as a catalyst for feelings of humiliation among Iraqis, Afghans, and detainees. This humiliation, starkly contrasting honor and respect, underscores the complex interplay between power dynamics and emotional responses in international conflicts. While the US-led interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan were primarily framed in terms of containing threats and projecting hard power, the political decisions and actions taken on the



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ground triggered a cascade of emotional reactions, particularly humiliation, that significantly shaped the political landscape. Saurette further emphasizes how the actions of US soldiers not only impacted the self-esteem of individuals directly involved but also resonated with a wider audience, contributing to a sense of collective humiliation. This example illustrates how emotions can transcend the immediate context of conflict, influencing public perceptions and shaping the broader political narrative. Similarly, Löwenheim and Heimann (2008) explore the relationship between humiliation and revenge in international politics. They argue that humiliation can serve as a powerful motivator for retaliatory actions, often employing hard power, discourse, and other political instruments. These examples highlight how emotions can shape and influence political behavior, extending beyond individual experiences to encompass collective emotions and inter-group dynamics.

In this context, it can be argued that emotions' social and relational dimensions have been instrumental in shifting international relations away from its traditional state-centric realist paradigm toward a more comprehensive understanding of global politics (Fattah & Fierke, 2009). This broader approach recognizes states not as monolithic entities but as complex systems influenced by the will and consent of people, which are closely linked to emotions. The social and relational dimensions of emotions have further enabled them to act as facilitators and catalysts in international interactions. In light of research, Koschut (2020) identifies three key assumptions that underpin contemporary research on emotions in international relations; a) Emotions and reason are not distinct entities but rather intertwined aspects of human experience. b) Emotions are integral to all decision-making processes, including political ones. c) Emotions are not limited to individual experiences but are socially constructed and mediated through language and cultural norms. These assumptions highlight emotions' complex and dynamic nature in international relations, challenging traditional views that privilege rationality and objectivity.

The examples and theoretical frameworks presented in the second wave demonstrate the diversity of methodological approaches available for researching

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emotions in inter-state relations. They also underscore emotions' profound impact on shaping and transforming individuals' perceptions of political developments (Widmann, 2021). The study of emotions in international relations has thus progressed beyond mere description, offering a more nuanced understanding of the intricate relationship between emotions, cognitive processes, and political behavior. Furthermore, the impact of these emotions on foreign policy can be analyzed through various lenses, including the interconnectedness of foreign and domestic politics (Morgenthau, 2006; Buzan, 1991) and the concept of collective emotions (Koschut, 2022). At the systemic level, emotions embedded in ideologies, social structures, and shared cultures have been analyzed, with notable examples being the fear prevalent during the Cold War's bipolar system and the wave of hope that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. The fear generated and propagated by one state, for instance, can significantly influence the decision-making of policymakers in other states, while threats can reinforce in-group/out-group dynamics and solidify the concepts of "us" and "them" on the international stage (Löwenheim & Heimann, 2008). On the other hand, emotions play a crucial role in shaping social identity formation, influencing relationships within and between societies, and impacting how societies interact with one another on the global stage (Crawford, 2000). While interactions at the individual level, often focusing on leaders, are abundant, it is crucial to recognize that analyses at this level encompass more than just the emotions experienced by individuals. They also delve into how emotions are strategically employed, manipulated, and instrumentalized in politics (Hutchison & Bleiker, 2014). This understanding emphasizes the nature of emotions in international relations, highlighting their capacity to influence individual decision-making and broader social and political dynamics.

Individual-level analyses investigate how decision-makers and politicians perceive and react to political developments, how their emotions evolve and change over time, and how these emotions ultimately impact their personalities and decisions. The sociability, fluidity, and responsiveness to stimuli of emotions are key elements of their structure. The intricate relationship between appraisal, assessment, judgment, and emotions offers a valuable framework for

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understanding their complexity (Lazarus, 1991). This relationship encompasses physiological reactions, subjective feelings, and the cognitive processes involved in emotional experiences. Through this lens, individuals can interpret a political situation as threatening or benign, highlighting the subjective nature of emotional responses. Moreover, scholars argue that emotions are inherently linked to value and moral judgments (Fattah & Fierke, 2009; Nussbaum, 2001), providing a crucial starting point for understanding their role in social and political life (Gold, 2015).

It is also important to recognize that value judgments are not separate from cognitive and assessment processes. Emotions, as value judgments, may need a stimulus to be triggered. In addition, not all emotions lead to observable reactions; some remain internalized as feelings, posing a challenge for observation and analysis. If emotions are reactions to stimuli or circumstances, these reactions can manifest through words, behaviors, or physiological changes such as facial expressions or gestures (Russell, 2003). In this context, the stimuli are also crucial for analysis, providing clues about the nature and meaning of the emotional response. Although emotions can be manipulated and instrumentalized through narratives, researchers can identify and analyze the specific stimuli used to evoke particular emotions, such as using narratives about martyrs to elicit feelings of pride or sadness (Hutchison & Bleiker, 2014; Roseman et al., 1990). Emotions need to be understood within the social environment and context in which they emerge. This setting gives political actors the opportunity to strategically shape and evoke certain emotions through policies designed to internalize or externalize those feelings. In this way, emotions can either facilitate existing dynamics or drive transformation. For example, political narratives can shift feelings of shame into pride, as seen in Wolf's (2020) analysis of Syriza's rhetoric on Greece's national debt. Syriza tapped into emotions like anger and pride to build national unity and a sense of empowerment by reframing the conversation around debt repayment. This shows just how adaptable emotions are and how effectively they can be used to achieve political aims. Ahmed (2014) deepens this understanding by arguing that emotions are not isolated or one-sided but are embedded within social relations and shaped by reciprocity. She emphasizes the contextual and interactional nature of emotions, noting that while emotions have the power to

affect us, they are neither immediate nor spontaneous (Ahmed, 2003). Crawford (2000) adds that emotions are reflexive and interconnected, influencing and being influenced by social interactions. Building on this, it suggests that although emotions may begin at the individual level, their expressions often emerge as collective experiences (Gold, 2015).

The relationship between emotions and international relations has fostered an interdisciplinary perspective that offers valuable insights into actors' behaviors, institutions' functioning, and the complexities of international dynamics. Emotions, which operate at multiple levels of analysis, provide diverse interpretations of political phenomena; however, this complexity poses significant challenges to their measurement and analysis (Sasley, 2011). A promising approach to overcoming these challenges involves examining the interplay between emotions and narratives. By analyzing narratives across various levels of political interaction, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the role emotions play in shaping political outcomes. This intersection of emotion and narrative enhances our comprehension of political processes and underscores the importance of interdisciplinary methods in exploring the intricate dynamics of global relations. Such an approach can illuminate how emotional narratives influence decision-making, public perception, and international cooperation, ultimately enriching the study of international relations.

### Emotions and Narratives

The inherent nature of emotions suggests that our worldview can be profoundly shaped by the feelings we experience. Emotions have the unique ability to adhere to specific objects or remain fluid and transferable, enabling their circulation and influence within social and political life (Ahmed, 2004; Shouse, 2005). Furthermore, value judgments play a crucial role in the experience and expression of emotions, necessitating the presence of objects that can be evaluated and associated with specific emotional responses (Russell, 2003). In this regard, narratives emerge as ideal vessels for carrying and conveying emotions. Narratives, encompassing context, background, words, images, and other symbolic elements, provide a rich

tapestry for embedding and expressing emotions (Hutchison & Bleiker, 2014; Roseman et al., 1990). They offer the necessary stimuli, objects for evaluation, and the foundation for evoking emotional responses. However, considering the advancements in communication technologies and the increasing accessibility of information, the interplay between narratives and emotions in shaping political discourse and behavior warrants closer examination (Groth, 2019; Weidman et al., 2017). This exploration can illuminate how emotional narratives influence public sentiment, political identity, and collective action, ultimately enriching our understanding of political dynamics in contemporary politics.

The intricate relationship between emotions and narratives is a many-sided study area encompassing various perspectives and methodologies. Emotions are not merely embedded within narratives but strategically employed to achieve specific communicative and policy goals. This strategic use of emotions can be observed in political narratives, where emotions shape public perception and influence behavior. For instance, Chaban et al. (2023) highlight how strategic narratives, particularly in political contexts, utilize emotively charged information to construct a narrative that aligns with the desired political outcomes, thereby demonstrating the deliberate manipulation of emotions within narratives. Moreover, the role of emotions in narratives extends beyond mere expression; it involves a complex interplay of emotional knowledge and regulation. Research indicates that emotional self-efficacy, a component of emotional intelligence, significantly predicts psychological resilience, suggesting that managing and expressing emotions can influence how narratives are received and interpreted (Türk-Kurtça & Kocatürk, 2020). This aligns with findings that emphasize the emotional complexities involved in teaching conflictual historical narratives, indicating that educators must navigate a range of emotional responses from students, which are shaped by their understanding of the narratives presented (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2011) and highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach to understanding the impact of narratives on emotional experiences and vice versa (Nabi & Green, 2014).

For example, the emotional norms within communities, as discussed by Koschut (2018), illustrate how collective emotional expressions can shape political

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identities and influence international relations. This perspective is complemented by Buitrago's (2019) exploration of how emotions and identity contribute to knowledge production in international relations, suggesting that emotions play a critical role in shaping our understanding of global events. The integration of emotion analysis into international relations provides a richer understanding of political phenomena, highlighting the need for diverse analytical perspectives. In addition, the relationship between emotions and narratives challenges traditional dichotomies between rationality and emotionality. Prior and Hoef (2018) emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to emotions in politics, suggesting that understanding emotions requires a nuanced analysis that transcends simplistic categorizations. In conclusion, the strategic employment of emotions within narratives is a dynamic and multifaceted process that warrants comprehensive analysis across various disciplines.

A fundamental question revolves around the existence of basic emotions and the possibility of their categorization. This debate encompasses the hypothesis that some emotions are built upon and interconnected with these basic emotions. This variability is evident in the observation that emotions can be built upon and transformed by other emotions, showcasing their dynamic and interconnected nature. Moreover, the fact that emotions can manifest (un)observable reactions in the short term adds another layer of complexity, posing challenges for their measurement and understanding within their context. The recognition that emotions exist at the individual level and within and between societies has spurred further discussions on collective emotions and cultural variations in emotional experiences (Scheve & Ismer, 2013). Emotions within societies are not solely confined to collective expressions; they also hold individual importance in various forms (García & Rimé, 2019). The emotion norms within communities, as discussed (Koschut, 2018), illustrate how collective emotional expressions can shape political identities and influence international relations. This perspective is complemented by Buitrago's (2019) exploration of how emotions and identity contribute to knowledge production in international relations, suggesting that emotions play a critical role in shaping our understanding of global events. Within this context, it is difficult to provide simple categorization of emotions.

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In addition to the debate on collective emotions, another significant contention revolves around the potential variability of emotions across cultures. Some researchers propose that emotions are universal, transcending cultural boundaries, while others argue that they are shaped by cultural contexts and norms (Mesquita & Frijda, 1992). This perspective suggests that emotions, while potentially universal in their core essence, can be experienced and expressed differently depending on the cultural milieu (Markus & Kitayama, 1994). The relationship between emotion and culture raises another crucial point: the potential for diverse perceptions and evaluations of situations. This leads us to consider the concept of appraisal in understanding emotions. Lazarus (1991) proposes that three types of appraisal—primary, secondary, and reappraisal—allow researchers to categorize emotions based on assessments and judgments. Through these appraisals, individuals respond to situations that may threaten or excite them, demonstrating the cognitive processes underlying emotional experiences. Lerner and Keltner (2000) further suggest that emotions can be distinguished by their appraisal themes, which are closely tied to individuals' judgments about a given situation. Given the intricate relationship between narrative and emotions, it is plausible that group members and the entire group can be exposed to the same stimulus or emotion through a shared narrative. In this context, the stimulus is the narrative itself. Exposure to such narratives can influence interactions between group members, leading to either convergence or divergence in their emotional assessments. The nature of emotions extends beyond individual responses to repeated stimuli; it can also affect the creators of those stimuli. Constant or prolonged exposure to specific emotional experiences can lead to an automated emotional response in those generating the stimuli. Zajonc's (1980) concept of the mere exposure effect explains this phenomenon, suggesting that prior experience with emotion can influence future reactions, even bypassing cognitive processes. In other words, repeated exposure to an emotion can create a shortcut, leading to automatic emotional responses to certain stimuli. This highlights the interconnectedness of emotions with an individual's environment and past experiences.

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For example, news of a martyr or a war can trigger a range of emotions in individuals based on their prior experiences and the prevailing social context. However, the automatic nature of emotions extends beyond merely experiencing the same emotions repeatedly; it can also lead to the attachment of emotions to specific objects, issues, or political events. Individuals may consistently react to particular agendas with the same emotions, driven by specific stimuli. This automaticity differs from the adherence of emotions to objects, where the emotion becomes intrinsically linked to the object itself. To illustrate this distinction, consider the difference between automatic emotions triggered by a cross-border military operation and those inherently attached to the concept of military action. While an army operation may automatically evoke feelings of pride or a sense of justice in some individuals, these emotions are not necessarily inherent to the concept of military action itself. Instead, emotions such as fear or anxiety may be more deeply ingrained in the concept due to the potential consequences and risks associated with military conflict.

In this regard, narratives can be strategically constructed to elicit specific emotions, either by leveraging automatic emotional responses or by shaping the long-term attachment of emotions to certain objects or concepts. This process can be observed in the narratives surrounding historical relations between countries, where societal members develop ingrained emotional responses to particular nations over time (Kövecses, 2000). This highlights another crucial aspect of the relationship between narratives and emotions: the changeability and fluidity of emotions (Kösen & Erdoğan, 2023). The central question in this discussion is how emotions interact with narratives. As previously mentioned, narratives can act as stimuli that trigger emotional responses, and conversely, narratives can be imbued with and shaped by emotions. This dynamic relationship allows narratives to be strategically crafted to achieve various political goals, fostering emotional engagement and ensuring the continuity of specific policies (Hutchison & Bleiker, 2014). By associating narratives with particular emotions, memory can be narrowed and utilized to reinforce specific perspectives or agendas (Nairne, 2002). Additionally, narratives can be strategically positioned as salient, capturing attention and influencing public discourse (Entman, 1993). Furthermore, narratives



can be employed to compete with and even reshape existing emotional landscapes, thereby facilitating policy changes or maintaining the status quo (Bennett, 2016).

Another crucial aspect lies in primary and secondary appraisals (Lazarus, 1991). These appraisals represent two distinct cognitive layers in an individual's response to a stimulus. The primary appraisal involves assessing the relevance and implications of the stimulus in relation to the individual's needs and goals. Conversely, the secondary appraisal considers the potential consequences of reacting to the stimulus (Smith & Lazarus, 1990). In the context of narratives, these appraisals can shape how individuals engage with and interpret emotionally charged narratives. An individual may consider their own goals, objectives, and needs when encountering a narrative, as well as the potential social outcomes of adopting or rejecting it (Lerner & Keltner, 2000). While this process involves individual-level analysis, this discussion focuses on how the narrator shapes and manipulates narratives to evoke specific emotional responses. For example, a narrative constructed to elicit fear and anxiety can have various consequences on individuals' social and political lives. Their reactions to the narrative will be influenced by the context in which they encounter it, their prior experiences with similar narratives, and their evaluations of the narrative's implications (Nabi, 2002).

Language provides individuals with a means to express emotions, manage their feelings through shared expressions, and even develop new emotional responses. Scholars argue that language and emotion are closely interconnected, playing a vital role in constructing and shaping emotional experiences (Loseke, 2009). By transforming abstract emotions into tangible concepts, language allows individuals to articulate and share their feelings. For instance, anger toward a particular policy may manifest through specific discourses, or an event can evoke certain emotions through strategic linguistic framing (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Narratives are significant in this process, as they offer a medium for individuals to interpret events and understand how to feel, thus helping to make abstract emotions more concrete (Bruner, 1991; Roseman et al., 1990; Barrett, 2012). According to Rythoven (2015), emotions can be learned, and narratives are practical tools for this emotional learning. The context in which emotions arise

significantly influences their nature, and narratives play a central role in shaping these contexts, impacting how emotions are experienced and expressed (Hutchison, 2008; Weidman et al., 2017).

For instance, the context of war, with its inherent threats, anxiety, and stress, can profoundly affect emotional experiences, distinguishing them from the anxieties and stresses of everyday life. This illustrates that the underlying emotions may be the same, but they can be felt and expressed differently depending on the context. This highlights the social nature of emotions and emphasizes their fluidity and malleability rather than their fixedness. The social nature of emotions further implies their circulation among individuals. Within specific contexts, emotions can evolve, change, and even trigger other emotions. Schwell (2015) posits that emotions are embedded in social practices, and their meaning and effects can be altered within particular contexts. She argues that emotions are not only part of social phenomena but can also be transformed by them. This socialization process plays a vital role in concretizing emotions, which are inherently abstract concepts. However, its significance extends beyond individual interactions, impacting the realization and legitimization of policies. The transformation of abstract emotions into concrete manifestations through narratives is particularly crucial, enabling their circulation among individuals and laying the groundwork for their transformation into other emotions. This dynamic process underscores the connection between emotions and heuristic information processing, influencing reasoning and decision-making (Seaton & Wu, 2023; Chaiken, 1980).

Emotions are dynamic and interactively transform within themselves, highlighting their fluid nature in various contexts, particularly in political narratives. The interplay of emotions can create a cascading effect, where one emotion builds upon another, leading to complex emotional experiences. For instance, during times of conflict or war, emotions such as pride and success may not suffice to rally a nation; instead, they often require the augmentation of other emotions like injustice, sadness, or shame, which may arise from historical grievances or perceived threats. This layering of emotions can be crucial in shaping collective action and national identity, as evidenced in the study of emotional responses to political narratives (Tausch et al., 2011; Clément et al., 2016). The transformation

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of emotions through narratives is particularly significant in political contexts, where the framing of events can alter public emotions. Narratives serve as powerful tools that can evoke specific emotions, thereby influencing collective behavior and social cohesion. For example, narratives emphasizing anger or fear can lead to heightened mobilization for collective action, while those fostering pride and purpose can galvanize support for national initiatives (Zomeren et al., 2004; Drăgan, 2020). The emotional arcs of political narratives can thus profoundly impact their reception and effectiveness, shaping the social and political landscape (Drăgan, 2020). Moreover, the consequences of emotions and narratives are not merely individual but extend to collective outcomes, which can be either functional or dysfunctional within a society. Negative emotions such as anger and contempt can disrupt social relationships and lead to conflict, while even positive emotions can have adverse effects if perceived as excessive or inappropriate (Zhabotynska, 2022). This duality underscores the importance of understanding the emotional context in which narratives are constructed and received. The emotional climate surrounding political events can significantly influence public perception and response, as seen in various case studies of collective trauma and recovery (Páez et al., 2007). The interplay between emotions and narratives is crucial in shaping political discourse and collective action. The dynamic nature of emotions allows for their transformation and manipulation through narratives, which can lead to significant social and political consequences.

The dynamic interplay between narratives and emotions allows for their circulation and mutual influence within society. The manner in which a narrative is disseminated plays a crucial role in its reception and impact on individuals. Perceptions and evaluations formed during interactions with narratives significantly influence how individuals assess and internalize them (Tausch et al., 2011). Therefore, the narrator's effective shaping and communication of narratives is paramount. The relationship between emotions and narratives is interactive; emotions are strategically employed within narratives, while narratives are crafted to evoke specific emotions. This flexibility allows for various applications in policy implementation and public persuasion (Clément et al., 2016). The emotional dimension of narratives is crucial in making them compelling and resonant with

audiences. As Solomon (2015) observes, expressions alone cannot explain why some narratives are more captivating than others (Zomerén et al., 2004). As a core component of narratives, emotions play a facilitating role in their effectiveness. People often use emotions as evidence, as they are feelings rooted in beliefs (Barrett, 2012). Cupac (2019) further argues that a narrative's emotional range directly correlates with its potential to resonate with an audience and construct diverse meanings that capture their imagination. This is particularly evident in political contexts, where narratives can be designed to evoke collective emotions that mobilize public support or dissent (Páez et al., 2007). Moreover, the strategic use of narratives in political discourse can influence public perceptions of justice and responsibility. For instance, narratives that frame emotions like anger and injustice can serve to galvanize collective action against perceived structural injustices (Revelo & Barreto, 2022). This highlights the importance of understanding how political narratives can manipulate emotional responses to achieve specific outcomes, such as legitimizing the use of force or fostering national unity (Kinnvall, 2018). The emotional undercurrents of these narratives can significantly shape the political landscape as they resonate with historical grievances and collective memories (Head, 2020).

While interaction is central to the relationship between narratives and emotions, individuals can initiate the exchange by introducing stimuli or acting as narrators. They become the first receivers and transmitters of knowledge, gaining an advantage in framing and interpreting events (Tausch et al., 2011). This advantage can be leveraged to galvanize sentiments, mobilize social action, and reinforce in-group/out-group dynamics (Clément et al., 2016). The nexus of emotions and narratives can thus contribute to establishing common sense and shared understandings. Beyond their interactive nature, emotions and narratives share several common features. Both have the power to shape ideas, perceptions, and beliefs (Zomerén et al., 2004). While this suggests that emotions are naturally embedded in narratives, it also implies that narratives can offer a means of coping with or transforming overwhelming emotions. Narratives, like emotions, play a role in the reproduction of power and consent. Their fluidity allows for reshaping social and political spaces through manipulating and transforming emotions (Drăgan,

2020). Emotions and narratives possess the capacity to construct and shape realities. A narrator can build a narrative upon various genres (Spencer & Oppermann, 2020) or lay the groundwork for future narratives, such as emotions, which can be interconnected with past events, interactions, or previously experienced feelings. This shared characteristic of construction fosters a symbiotic relationship between emotions and narratives, enabling emotions to become attached to narratives and functionally persist alongside them (Zhabotynska, 2022). Through the skillful utilization of emotions, narratives can create lasting impressions, such as fear, or establish a foundation for legitimization and audience persuasion. While this constructive aspect is integral to the emotion-narrative nexus, it is crucial to acknowledge its dependence on other factors, particularly the contextual background in which it operates. Narrators can strategically highlight or reiterate specific issues across various narratives, utilizing different platforms and timeframes to achieve a desired level of awareness among their audience (Páez et al., 2007). This strategic repetition serves to amplify the message and ensure its effective transmission. Similarly, the interconnectedness and simultaneous experience of multiple emotions can necessitate guidance and direction. Narrators can either instrumentalize the emotions embedded within a narrative or strategically raise awareness for targeted emotions. This process is significantly influenced by historical and cultural contexts, with shared norms, historical narratives, and collective understandings playing a crucial role (Revelo & Barreto, 2022). However, it is important to recognize that raising awareness can also trigger specific reactions, which may or may not align with the narrator's intentions.

Some scholars argue that emotions play a central role in all conflicts; however, this perspective has not been fully developed or theorized, particularly in conjunction with the concept of collective emotions (Tausch et al., 2011). This highlights the importance of considering the complex interplay between emotions and other factors in shaping narratives and political behavior. While existing research emphasizes the relationship between emotions and narratives, it is essential to recognize the interconnectedness of emotions with other concepts for a comprehensive analysis. Understanding these fundamental relationships allows for a more nuanced examination of political narratives using various analytical

methods (Clément et al., 2016). However, avoiding overly simplistic or reductionist interpretations is crucial when analyzing the relationship between narratives and emotions. Their similarities and the interdisciplinary nature of emotions can lead to a narrow and limited perspective. Analyzing narratives solely through the lens of emotions can reinforce the misconception that narratives can only exist through emotions (Zomerén et al., 2004). Furthermore, using a limited set of emotions or categories to analyze narratives can further constrain the scope of analysis. Reducing emotions to simple positive/negative dichotomies or basic emotional categories can oversimplify their complexity and limit interpretive possibilities (Drăgan, 2020). The role of emotions in political contexts is multi-sided, as they can drive attitudes and behaviors, particularly in protracted conflicts (Zhabotynska, 2022). For instance, collective emotions can influence policy support and conflict resolution strategies, demonstrating the need for a deeper understanding of how emotions shape political narratives (Páez et al., 2007). Additionally, the emotion preferences of groups can significantly affect their responses to conflict and their willingness to engage in conciliatory versus aggressive actions (Revelo & Barreto, 2022). Moreover, the interplay between emotions and political ideology can further complicate this relationship. Research indicates that emotional responses can vary significantly based on ideological alignment, which can, in turn, influence the effectiveness of political narratives (Kinnvall, 2018). This suggests that a comprehensive analysis of political narratives must account for the dynamic interactions between emotions, ideology, and the broader socio-political context (Head, 2020).

It is important to address potential criticisms regarding the nature of the relationship established between these two concepts. One critique posits that the connections drawn might suggest a shortcut or an oversimplification of the complex interplay between emotions and narratives. Specifically, the argument that narratives serve as stimuli for emotions might be seen as reducing the intricate processes involved in emotional experiences. However, this discussion maintains that narratives, as complex symbolic structures, can indeed function as powerful stimuli capable of eliciting a wide range of emotional responses. This perspective aligns with the fundamental understanding that emotions require a stimulus to be

triggered, and narratives, with their rich tapestry of language, imagery, and context, can effectively fulfill this role. Another potential criticism concerns the perceived fragmentation or over-attachment of emotional characteristics to narratives, potentially leading to a reductionist understanding of their relationship. This critique raises concerns about oversimplifying the complex interplay between emotions and narratives, potentially neglecting other influential factors, as discussed. However, it is crucial to emphasize that the characteristic features of both narratives and emotions are intertwined, primarily due to their shared role in mediating social interactions and shaping individual and collective experiences. While previous research has often criticized the concept of emotion for its perceived reductionist tendencies in the study of international relations and other disciplines, this discussion does not claim that narratives exist solely through emotions or are exclusively constructed by them. As highlighted earlier, some scholars propose that language and emotion form an inseparable binary. Analyzing narratives from an emotional perspective can thus provide valuable insights into their underlying meanings, predict potential outcomes, understand policy objectives, and reveal the continuity and evolution of narratives over time. The overlapping features of narrative and emotion nexus show that they could benefit from each other. In addition, the nexus can be helpful in different ways. The similarities of the features also provide ways to analyze emotions in narratives, *vice versa*, and the place of emotions in inter-state relations. The nexus offers a unique perspective on understanding relations and how they are neglected in international relations.

## Conclusion

The interdisciplinary exploration of emotions and narratives within international relations has revealed their profound impact on global political dynamics. This paper has highlighted the importance of differentiating between emotion and affect, identifying distinct roles for each in shaping individual and collective behaviors. Emotions serve as powerful tools for political mobilization, identity construction, and policymaking, thereby challenging the rationalist paradigms that

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often dominate international relations. The exploration of foundational theories and nuanced definitions within psychology has offered a richer understanding of emotions, supporting the assertion that affect functions as the raw, subconscious layer that both underpins and shapes emotional responses.

In discussing emotions' role in international relations, this paper has underscored the "emotional turn," illustrating how emotions influence decision-making, public emotions, and inter-state dynamics. With the second wave of emotion research, emotions are now viewed as inherent to human and state behaviors, driving responses to perceived threats and fostering collective identities. This evolution has illuminated the social and relational nature of emotions, enhancing our understanding of how national and global politics are not merely shaped by rational interests but also by complex emotional undercurrents. Furthermore, this perspective has elucidated the significance of both individual and collective emotions in shaping the foreign policies and identities of states, revealing emotions as both a motivation and a product of inter-state interactions.

The intricate relationship between emotions and narratives demonstrates that narratives are not merely conduits for information but are deeply embedded with emotional content that can guide public perceptions and actions. Strategic narratives employ emotive language and imagery to evoke specific emotions, ultimately shaping collective memories, social cohesion, and political outcomes. This paper has also discussed that the effectiveness of political narratives hinges on their ability to resonate emotionally with audiences, whether through historical grievances, collective trauma, or shared national pride. The analysis of emotions and narratives raises essential questions about the influence of cultural and historical contexts on emotional responses. Emotions vary across cultures and can be understood through the lens of narrative as collective emotional experiences that transcend individual experiences, influencing national identities and inter-state relations. Moreover, the dynamic, reciprocal relationship between emotions and narratives enables political actors to leverage this nexus, shaping emotion frameworks and constructing narratives that resonate with societal values and



political goals. This ability to construct enduring narratives that attach to specific emotions highlights the ongoing utility of emotions in achieving political objectives.

This paper has discussed the powerful role of emotions and narratives as both analytical tools and mechanisms of influence within international relations. By integrating emotions into the analysis of global political interactions, scholars and policymakers can gain a more nuanced understanding of international relations, recognizing the multi-sided forces at play. This approach provides valuable insights into the motivations behind political actions and the enduring effects of collective emotions on the trajectory of inter-state relations. The findings call for continued interdisciplinary research to deepen our understanding of emotions and narratives, refining methodologies to capture their complex interplay in global politics.

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