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Trends. Terra Incognita: Video Diplomacy

Editor

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The New York Times has reported that the United States president, Bill Clinton, has for the first time engaged in video diplomacy. This diplomacy involved a real-time address that advocated for peacemaking to a group of political, military, and paramilitary leaders in Burundi. One might wonder how persuasive such video diplomacy could be and what other political psychological consequences might be unwittingly engendered through the video medium.

Already there is much psychological research bearing on the above Issues—although little if any focusing directly on diplomacy. For example, video-relayed social support can affect salivary cortisol (associated with stress) during a laboratory-based behavioral challenge (Thorsteinsson et al., 1998). Video feedforward techniques can affect inappropriate sexual behavior (Dowrick & Ward, 1997)—here conceived as instinctually parallel to aggression. Video repetitions and warnings can affect cognitive and motivational components of suggestibility (Endres et al., 1999) and health-related behavior (Mwanga et al., 1998). Technology-mediated distance learning can facilitate comprehension and retention (Webster & Hackley, 1997) as can computer conferencing (Schwan, 1997). And, of course, bearing on the previous IBPP article, video diplomacy might conceivably lead to a sadder (but, perhaps, wiser (Lane & DePaulo, 1999)) consequence.