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Trends. Terra Incognita: Video Diplomacy

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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.

Direct research on the psychology of video diplomacy can be launched after analysis of ancillary areas such as those referred to above. As the political world becomes ever more virtual, such research may bear extremely high significance. (See Burundi: Clinton urges peace. (February 23, 2000). The New York Times, p. A6; Dowrick, P.W., & Ward, K.M. (1997). Video feedforward in the support of a man with intellectual disability and inappropriate sexual behavior. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability*, 22, 147-160; Endres, J., et al. (1999). Repetitions, warnings, and video: Cognitive and motivational components in preschool children's suggestibility. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 4, 129-146; Lane, J.D., & DePaulo, B.M. (1999). Completing Coyne's cycle: Dysphorics' ability to detect deception. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 33, 311-329; Mwanga, J.R., et al. (1998). Experience from video-recorded focus group discussion on schistosomiasis in Magu, Tanzania. *Qualitative Health Research*, 8, 707-717; Schwan, S. (1997). Media characteristics and knowledge acquisition in computer conferencing. *European Psychologist*, 2, 277-285; The political psychology of virtual reality: Scandinavian trail blazing. (July 18, 1997). *IBPP*, 2(12); Thorsteinsson, E.B., et al. (1998). Effects of video-relayed social support on hemodynamic reactivity and salivary cortisol during laboratory-base behavioral challenge. *Health Psychology*, 17, 436-444; Webster, J., & Hackley, P (1997). Teaching effectiveness in technology-mediated distance learning. *Academy of Management Journal*, 40, 1282-1309.) (Keywords: Bill Clinton, Burundi, Diplomacy, Video.)