Commentaries

Review of "The Oxford Handbook of Intergroup Conflict"

Gert Sommer*[a]

[a] Professor Emeritus, Philipps University of Marburg, Marburg, Germany.

The *Oxford Handbook of Intergroup Conflict* has the primary aim to bring together the perspectives of social psychology and peace psychology on intergroup conflict, which the editor believes "have grown apart" over the "last several decades" (p. 3), and to "provide a more integrative and cohesive foundation for research- and practice-oriented scholars who seek to develop effective approaches for reducing and resolving conflict, and promoting peaceful relations between groups" (p. 9). In this commentary, I first describe the structure of the book, and summarize and comment on the individual book chapters. Then, I evaluate to what extent the handbook as a whole has achieved its aims, and suggest what might still be missing on our way toward the development of an integrative and encompassing social and peace psychology of intergroup conflict.

The handbook is arranged in four major parts, each of these covered by four to five chapters: *Sources* and *perpetuation* of intergroup conflict, strategies for *reducing* and solving as well as *moving beyond* intergroup conflict. These parts, however, show considerable overlap and are thus linked. For instance, every chapter discusses ways and methods to reduce violent and to support non-violent conflict management.

Annotated Summaries of the Book Chapters

The introductory chapter by L. R. Tropp presents a highly informative overview of the book. It also expresses the limitations of the field in a critical way: "it is difficult to assess precisely what contribution social science has made to an adequate diagnosis of the sources of violent conflict", let alone how "to alleviate conflict, promote reconciliation, and achieve sustainable, peaceful relations among diverse groups" (p. 3).

R. R. Vallacher, P. T. Coleman, A. Nowak, and L. Bui-Wrzosinska discuss the dynamical perspective on intractable conflicts. The authors exemplify both tangible (e.g., access to resources) and less tangible (e.g., values and moral superiority) existential issues. They argue that intractable conflict develops when complex systems and problems are defined in narrow ways that become resistant to external influence and to change. Beyond giving insights into the dynamical perspective, the authors propose strategies that might lead to more positive relations. But whether or not this perspective of dynamic processes with its major concept of the "attractor" (i.e., "a subset of potential states or patterns of change to which a system's behavior converges over time"; p. 16) adds sufficiently to other existing models still has to be demonstrated empirically.

Regarding the *sources* of intergroup conflict, D. Bar-Tal und P. L. Hammack elaborate on the important concept of delegitimization: the socially construed and extremely negative categorization of people or groups, which are then perceived as outside of the realm of those to whom basic human norms or values apply. Psychologically, this implies that the outgroup is seen as deserving maltreatment, and that even immoral acts against it are legitimized, from intentional harm like discrimination and exploitation to war or genocide. In its contribution of the authorization and legitimization of harm, in my view, the concept shows considerable overlap with the earlier concept of enemy image (e.g., Holt & Silverstein, 1989; White, 1992). The authors suggest that delegitimization develops especially in violent, protracted conflicts and that it is part of a broader ideology, incorporating ethnocentrism (i.e., the belief in the ingroup's moral and cultural superiority). The social narrative of being a victim – instead of being an offender or at least a part of a vicious circle of revenge – is often used to justify violence. Delegitimization seems to be an important part of a "culture of conflict", often construed by leaders, but adopted by media and other social institutions (e.g., the education system); probably the institutions of religion and science should have been added. The authors suggest several strategies to reduce delegitimization on the societal level, such as searching for pragmatic conflict resolution and for more structural symmetry.

C. Cohrs defines ideology narrowly, as socially shared systems of beliefs regarding how societies should be arranged. Prominent examples that the author mentions are liberalism, socialism, conservatism, and fascism. Cohrs argues that Schwartz's model of cultural values presents valuable dimensions for classifying ideologies: autonomy versus embeddedness, egalitarianism versus hierarchy, and harmony versus mastery or exploitation. He discusses the relationship between ideology and violent conflicts within a multilevel approach. At the individual level, the major influence of right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation is outlined, in part because of these constructs' connections with nationalism and militarism and hence with violent conflict. At the group level, ideologies may become destructive when an enemy is defined who can be blamed for problems and injustice. At the societal level, which too often is ignored in social psychological theorizing, an ideology of collective superiority could be particularly relevant for violence. Thus, destructive ideologies – demanding social conformity and uncritical respect for authority, favoring hierarchical structures, and justifying domination and exploitation – provide the moral and psychological justification for hostility and violence. In my opinion, capitalism or neoliberalism should have been included as examples of ideology, and even democracy might have been added, as well as the role that science and scientists play in supporting ideology.

The overlapping concepts of justice and fairness and their role in intergroup violence is the topic of S. Opotow's contribution. A narrow range or scope of justice implies that persons, groups, or states are morally excluded and that principles of just and fair treatment do not apply to them, thus fostering destructive intergroup behavior. Moral exclusion may vary on three dimensions, from narrow to widespread, passive to active, and mild to severe. The exclusion can be based on race, class, gender etc., and it may become a self-evident part of a society. Based

on four case studies – from U.S. slavery to Nazi Germany, the Rwandan genocide, and the conflict in the Basque Country – Opotow discusses the applicability of her justice concept. In my opinion, more recent case studies would have been useful, especially conflicts in which the U.S. or NATO have been involved, such as Iraq and Libya. The author suggests that a widened scope of justice facilitates peaceful intergroup relations via mutual respect and constructive conflict management.

The second part of the handbook is arranged around the *perpetuation* of intergroup conflict. The importance of emotions is the focus of B. Lickel's contribution. Although many intergroup conflicts appear to be about tangible issues such as oil, water, land, or other resources, they are often also "over what is *just*" (p. 89) and who is good or evil, and hence they are accompanied and fueled by emotions. In addition to the core emotion of anger for intergroup aggression, three other emotions are discussed: fear, humiliation, and contempt. Fear might induce threat and this might be used as a justification for military action, as in the US-war against Iraq. Humiliation, combined with the experience of victimization, might lead to hate and violence. Lastly, contempt and hate, especially when linked with the attribution of an evil character of the other party, are prone to lead to violent conflicts. Cognitive processes that might enhance these problematic emotions are collective rumination as well as motivated cognition (i.e., seeking and interpreting information in a way that justifies retribution and revenge). Common consequences are an essentialized view of the outgroup as evil and a corresponding positive view of the ingroup. The outgroup is hated for what it has done and for who it is. The importance of leaders and media for shaping and perpetuating these processes is mentioned, but these aspects would have deserved much more attention in the chapter.

S. Roccas and A. Elster elaborate, at the beginning of their chapter, on the potentially negative impact of strong group identification on intergroup conflict. Strongly identified persons tend to endorse aggressive policies. However, in large part the chapter discusses identity-based strategies to reduce violent conflict. Awareness of multiple identities may allow to focus more on connections across groups or to find a common identity. Feeling critical attachment to one's group (vs. its glorification) may help to reduce conflict. Different identity contents may contribute differently to conflict development: Conflict is enhanced by concepts such as past glory and chosen people, but also by collective victimization. The "mutually reinforcing patterns of identification and conflict" (p. 116) are stressed. These contents of social narratives and collective victimization are the focus of the following chapters.

The immense relevance of group narratives for group identity and intergroup conflict is discussed by R. Bilali and M. A. Ross. Conflicting groups often have considerably different views and narratives of relevant topics, such as past conflict or war. These different versions serve the interests of corresponding groups and "[e]ven the narratives of professional historians are fictions to varying degrees" (p. 123f.). The ingroup's version of history is evaluated as adequate and true, the other groups' version as a distortion or lie. Historical memories of the ingroup are shaped, amongst others factors, by eliminating or modifying past events and by dehumanizing the opponent. The harm experienced by the ingroup is conceptualized as victimization, whereas harm inflicted on others is minimized. Two approaches to reconciliation are discussed in this chapter, both of which involve addressing instead of ignoring the past. Public apologies for historical injustices and truth commissions may help to develop a more common narrative of past events and hence benefit future intergroup relations. These topics are addressed in later chapters in more detail.

The role of collective victimization for group conflicts is elaborated on by J. R. Vollhardt, who reviews social as well as clinical psychological literature on this topic. Major parts of this chapter deal with definitions and concep-

tual and methodological clarification, such as differentiating types of victimization. Collective victimization might be experienced directly by oneself or by members of the ingroup, or indirectly through social narratives. Victimization as a more objective state and collective victimhood or victim consciousness as a more subjective state are differentiated. When victimization is not psychologically processed or when it is misused by political leaders, victims may become victimizers. The acknowledgement of the ingroup's victimization by relevant persons and groups plays an important role in changing destructive group interactions. Vollhardt suggests that construing victimhood in exclusive (vs. inclusive) ways, that is, focusing exclusively on the ingroup's suffering, may perpetuate and intensify a conflict. "[P]reoccupation with the ingroup's suffering may cause people to feel less empathy for others in need … and experience less collective guilt when other groups are harmed by the ingroup" (p. 147). In my opinion, in future studies on victimization the behaviors and attitudes of the victimizers toward the victims might be taken more into account, because they are a relevant part of the victimization process. Also, the clinical psychological concept of (radical) acceptance might be of value for research on collective victimhood. Radical acceptance means that a person accepts that a (traumatic) experience has happened, thus enabling him or her to attend more openly to ongoing and future tasks of life (e.g., Linehan, 1993). On the societal level, radical acceptance might mean to cope with recent suffering through strategies fostering non-violent resolution instead of revenge.

In the chapter by J. F. Dovidio, T. Saguy, T. V. West, and S. L. Gaertner, the fundamental role of social categorization for intergroup conflict is discussed. Ingroup members are perceived as being more similar and more valuable than outgroup members. During the intergroup interaction, behavior is explained in a way that stabilizes the positive image of the ingroup. Also, implicitly activated prejudice may lead to negative nonverbal behavior, which is perceived as such by the partner/opponent and thus leads to further negative interactions. Thus, "intergroup biases can alter the course of intergroup interaction in ways that reinforce and exacerbate biases" (p. 167). A major part of the chapter deals with differences in power, which are fundamental for intergroup conflict. Members of high-power groups are motivated to maintain their power, for instance by deflecting attention from power differences or by supporting ideologies that legitimize them. Members of low-power groups, however, seek empowerment. Thus, as the authors indicate, improving contact between groups is important, but not sufficient, if relevant disparities as well as injustice are not addressed. While implicit biases as elaborated by the authors may be relevant in some conflicts, in many others hatred and delegitimization are blatant. An additional question might deserve more consideration: Why are some outgroups perceived negatively, whereas others might be perceived as interesting and valuable, thereby creating different emotions, cognitions, and behaviors?

The third part of the handbook deals with strategies to *reduce and resolve* intergroup conflict. The focus of E. L. Paluck's chapter is on research methods utilized to study prejudice and conflict reduction. She outlines typical differences between social psychology studies, mostly being "brief laboratory analogues of real world situations" (p. 180), and peace psychology studies, being located in the environments of interest and lasting longer. Concerning the typical social psychological method of experimentation, she argues that beyond the great advantage of internal validity it is largely unknown "whether laboratory interventions yield reliable and durable strategies for prejudice reduction in the world" (p. 182). Paluck argues strongly for field experimental studies – bringing together scholars and practitioners – that should utilize "behavioral and longitudinal measurement" (p. 185), quantitative as well as qualitative data, and be aware of different outcomes for different individual and environmental conditions. Theories should be based more on Lewin's insight that "individuals and environments continually influence and shape one another" (p. 187). Because of the complexity of the field, it might be added that Lewin's action research, which involves circles of planning, action, and evaluation, is indeed an appropriate and useful scientific approach (see, e.g., p. 245 of the handbook).

U. Wagner and M. Hewstone highlight the great relevance of intergroup contact for the process of conflict reduction. Based mainly on Allport's preconditions for successful contact (i.e., equal status, common goals, institutional or societal support, and perception of common humanity), meta-analyses of empirical studies show rather low to moderate correlations of contact with reduction of prejudice ($r = -.21$), which, nevertheless, might be of high practical value. However, as the authors indicate, the more relevant criterion of behavior (rather than attitudes) is only rarely investigated. Major underlying individual processes for improved intergroup relations that have been studied so far in the contact literature are the reduction of anxiety and threat as well as the promotion of empathy and perspective-taking. While the great majority of studies on intergroup contact utilize U.S. American or European samples and, as such, persons living in relatively peaceful conditions, the authors extend their chapter theoretically and empirically to intractable conflicts. While contact during violence is especially problematic because it might offer opportunities for additional violence, data indicate that post-violence intergroup contact shows positive effects, as does positive pre-violence contact. Planned interventions have been mainly conducted in schools, but Wagner and Hewstone present several examples of broader societal approaches. In discussing future questions and problems, they indicate an important problem: Successful intergroup contact may reduce the willingness in subordinate, low-power groups to take collective political action for changing their problematic situation. Also, the positive effects of intergroup contact may be outweighed by ingroup pressure, dehumanizing ideology, propaganda, and threat to one's own or one's family's life.

In extending the intergroup contact approach, B. A. Nagda, A. Yeakley, P. Gurin, and N. Sorensen discuss how intergroup dialogue may help to build relationships and enhance collaborative actions toward greater social justice. They show how power asymmetries may affect emotions (for high-power groups shame and guilt, for low-power groups anger and resentment), analyses (system justification vs. questioning the legitimacy of inequalities), and actions of the parties involved in intergroup conflict. Also, they specify four critical-dialogic communication processes: engaging self, appreciating difference, critical reflection (how power privileges operate in one's life and in one's society), and building alliances. With a number of examples from students who participated in race/ethnic and gender dialogues, the authors illustrate and reflect on their four-stage model as well as the related communication processes. The authors present their approach as specifically suitable for identity-based conflicts. The examples illustrate heightened self-reflection and self-awareness of the student participants. However, in my opinion, it has to be demonstrated in future research whether this leads to changes in behavior and how this approach works with non-student participants involved in conflict.

Intractable conflicts are traditionally addressed by diplomacy and negotiation. T. P. d'Estrée discusses the potential of interactive problem-solving, based on the approach of the Australian diplomat Burton and its psychological elaboration mainly by Kelman and colleagues. Interactive problem-solving aims to change attitudes and relations, frame problems and solutions, and address unmet basic human needs. Identity as well as security needs are addressed to allow the development of insight, trust, and joint solutions. The author specifies the conditions for successful problem-solving workshops, including the agenda, selection of influential participants, setting, communication style, time frame, and third-party facilitators. She demonstrates with different examples how interactive problem-solving may supplement official diplomacy at different stages of conflicts, and serve to create solutions, improve relationships, and even help address structural injustice. Problem-solving workshops have been applied in different conflicts, among them Cyprus, Middle East, Northern Ireland, and Sri Lanka. However, because of the complexity of the conflicts and the multitude of interventions, "it is difficult to specify what changes may have been caused by the intervention" (p. 244f.), and to identify what concrete actions were in fact results of workshops.

D. J. Christie and W. R. Louis distinguish three phases of intrastate violence – conflict, organized violence (in contrast to personal violence), and post-violence –, and suggest three types of contingent interventions: nonviolent conflict management, violence de-escalation, and reconciliation along with sustainable development. The specific interventions discussed include peacekeeping, confidence building, reframing, unofficial diplomacy, intergroup contact, interactive problem resolution, forgiveness and reconciliation as well as sustainable development. The last type of intervention points to the importance of security with a reliable police and court system, and to physical, social, political, and economic reconstruction. Several of these interventions are further elaborated in other chapters of this handbook, thus giving this chapter somewhat the status of a synopsis. In their final section on future directions, the authors stress the importance of promoting not only negative peace (i.e., the absence of violence and war), but also – following Johan Galtung's concept – positive peace (i.e., social justice): "Structural violence … kills people just as surely as violent episodes but does so slowly through the deprivation of human needs … Structural violence is chronic and normalized" (p. 265). The authors also argue that the problem of cultural violence should be addressed, for instance the beliefs in "just war" and in the "protestant ethic" with its emphasis on individualism. They also outline several psychological paths toward the endeavor of positive peace.

The topic of the fourth and final part of the handbook is *moving beyond (violent) intergroup conflict*. E. Staub briefly outlines several origins of violence (including genocide) that are also addressed in more depth in other chapters, such as destructive ideologies, the violation of basic human needs, a collective self-concept of superiority as well as devaluation, humiliation and dehumanization of the other, and strong intergroup differences in power and rights. Important aspects of prevention, which has to start early to be successful, are understanding the influences that lead to group violence (mass media might play an important role here, as exemplified with educational radio programs in Burundi and Rwanda), addressing difficult economic and political conditions, and developing a vision for a positive future. Also, generating a positive orientation toward the other group is an important preventive task, which might be achieved by humanizing the other group through contact, dialogue, in words and symbolic acts, and through common identities. This could lead to "inclusive caring", which "might mean that a person sees some people as "other", … but still sees the shared humanity and cares about their welfare" (p. 281). Staub then elaborates that reconciliation, the topic of the next chapter, has an important role to play in preventing new violence, but future research has to address the question of the adequate sequence of different aspects of prevention and reconciliation. A caveat is given to political conditions, destructive ideologies, and new hostility, which all might hamper the peaceful endeavor.

A. Nadler elaborates on the concept of reconciliation by distinguishing three overlapping hierarchical perspectives – structural, relational, and identity-related reconciliation: "Ideally … relational reconciliation would begin only after intergroup equality had been ascertained, and processes of identity-related reconciliation start after an environment of trustworthy intergroup relations has been created. However, this is rarely the case" (p. 295). Regarding basic structural reconciliation, where he sees less expertise within social psychology, he differentiates between political, legal, and economic changes. In regard to emotions that are important for reconciliation, Nadler argues for collective guilt instead of collective shame as a basis for apologies. He then discusses the effectiveness of truth telling, public apologies, and forgiveness, which might be limited depending on the specific needs and expectations of the victims. He distinguishes between the needs of victims, mainly for power and positive self-esteem, and the needs of perpetrators, mainly for social acceptance and belonging. Finally, he makes an important distinction between genuine and false reconciliation, points to the relevance of intensive resentment of victims, and the acceptance of wrongdoings as an integral part of the social identity of perpetrators.

Different aspects that have to be considered in order to determine when apologies and reparation can lead to reconciliation and peace are elaborated on by A. Iyer and C. Blatz. The authors discuss the parties involved, from victims to perpetrators, representatives, governments, and third parties. Governments might be reluctant to offer an apology because of high material (reparations), political (threat of not being reelected) and psychological costs (negative self-concept as a perpetrator). An apology must be preceded by the acknowledgement of illegitimate harm and by taking responsibility for it. Emotions of guilt and ingroup-directed anger within the perpetrator group might be helpful. Contents of apologies and reparations, such as cash payments or reparations for stolen land, are differentiated. A difficult task is to make an apology explicit and sincere as well as satisfactory to the victim group. But "the magnitude of the harm done might be so immense that no amount of symbolic or concrete restitution could possibly make up for it" (p. 315). The authors then discuss the consequences of apologies and reparations, separately for the victims and perpetrators. An apology might have a limited positive effect on the victim group, depending on who expresses it in what words and with which motivation. Altogether, Iyer and Blatz stress that the concept of apology is highly complex, and little is known about what makes for successful reparations.

B. Hamber reviews transitional justice concepts with a focus on justice-based mechanisms (e.g., trials, traditional justice, and amnesty) and truth commissions. He discusses the strengths and limitations of each, even the possibility of aggravating the conflict. In societies after long-lasting violent conflicts, a combination of different approaches seems necessary, including reparations and endeavors for more social justice in the fields of education, health, or economic issues. For restorative justice it seems advisable to use formal trials for the most responsible perpetrators, and truth commissions as well as traditional justice approaches for other perpetrators. Hamber comes to cautious conclusions: "How transitional justice interventions are causally linked to intergroup relations and post-conflict reconciliation remains unspecified, undertheorized and underresearched…" (p. 330) and "[o]n the whole … the outcomes of truth commissions for victims and the society at large … are more ambivalent than linear models … would suggest" (p. 336).

In his chapter on sustainable peace, K. P. Clements builds heavily on the work of the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, which he underpins with psychological arguments. In his ethics of responsibility, comprising peace and justice, Levinas emphasizes the role of good relationships with family and other social categories. An important goal is to "enhance awareness of the vulnerable Other" (p. 346), with attention to his or her singularity. The "capacity to harm others is a fundamental challenge to all interpersonal, intergroup and international relationships" (p. 347). At the very least, responsibility for the other means not to kill him or her. Clements argues that stable and cooperative communities with a strong emphasis on equality, trust, social cohesion, justice, and welfare as well as a cessation of domination are a cornerstone of cultures of peace. Communities' focus on safety and security, in contrast, is believed to lead to cultures of violence. When studying sustainable peace, topics like relational ethics, egalitarian communities, and the strengths of local communities should be much more in the center of attention. These factors may lead to economies that can satisfy basic human needs more easily. Thus, Clements adds the highly relevant topic of ethics. In my opinion, however, his strong emphasis on relationships, as compared to individuals and organizations, might somewhat underestimate the relevance of the latter two. Moreover, supranational institutions like the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, or the NATO should also be considered. Additionally, it would be worthwhile to discuss explicitly the relevance of his important arguments for Western societies and their attitudes and actions concerning peace and war.

In his concluding chapter, H. C. Kelman reflects on this handbook and on his own long-lasting involvement in social psychology and peace research as a scholar-practitioner. He outlines his many theoretical and empirical inputs

to conflict resolution, especially his multifaceted contributions to interactive problem-solving. He underlines the relevance of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI), the Research Exchange on the Prevention of War, and the Center for Research on Conflict Resolution. His definition of social psychology as "concerned with the intersection between individual behavior and societal-institutional processes" and Pettigrew's label of "contextual social psychology" both point to the (potential) contributions of social psychology to societal problems, including war; at the same time, these authors refer to (and criticize) the often decontextualized models and research in social psychology.

Evaluation and Limitations of the Handbook

Altogether, this handbook is an excellent up-to-date review of the field. It brings together scholars from eight different countries, all of whom are experts in the fields of social psychology and peace psychology. Every single chapter represents a profound presentation and discussion of the chosen subject. The handbook is well organized in four major parts, with summaries of each article and with an informative index. The authors adequately, and sometimes very critically, discuss methodological, empirical, and conceptual limitations of the field and outline many questions and challenges for further research and practice (see also, e.g., Vollhardt & Bilali, 2008). Throughout the book it is stressed that peace is an ongoing and challenging process, and that all levels of society – from the individual over groups to societal institutions like media, education, parties, religions, science etc. – can foster or destroy the delicate endeavor of building sustainable positive peace.

Nevertheless, some limitations of the handbook may be stated. *First*, the book contains thousands of interesting empirical results and hundreds of suggestions for actions to prevent violent conflict. These, however, have to be condensed to be of more practical value. Social psychology is in need of more general theories instead of dozens of narrow and often overlapping models and concepts (e.g., intergroup contact and intergroup dialogue show considerable overlap, as do delegitimization and a narrow scope of justice).

In this handbook, several core elements of a broader model are elaborated, already, repeatedly. Among these are:

1. the principles of social categorization, but more importantly – based on this categorization – the appraisal of a superior, worthy ingroup and an inferior, unworthy outgroup. This categorization might be accompanied by the perception of the ingroup's cultural and moral superiority, by devaluation, dehumanization, and moral exclusion of the outgroup, by acting on emotions such as anger and hate, and by developing enemy images and legitimizing harm towards the outgroup;

2. underlying ideologies such as ethnocentrism, social dominance, right-wing authoritarianism, militarism, and nationalism;

3. social narratives that exaggerate the glory of one's group, and sometimes also its victimhood;

4. the relevance of propaganda, leaders, media, and education in supporting these ideas;

5. underlying power asymmetries with consequential differences concerning economy, health, education, culture, and effective political participation (i.e., structural violence).

Translating these elements, which all foster violence, into positive concepts – in the sense of creating a Culture of Peace with reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (e.g., Boehnke, Christie, & Anderson, 2004; similarly Kelman, 2007, p. 101) – the following major points might be included, most of which are discussed repeatedly in the handbook:

1. the fulfillment of basic human needs such as for security, positive personal and social identity, welfare, justice, and sense of control, but also a safe environment and adequate access to food and dwelling;

2. the core belief that conflicts are omnipresent, but that they can be settled in nonviolent ways;

3. the perception of a common humanity, which is the basis for empathy and perspective-taking, inclusive caring, and a widened scope of justice;

4. critical attachment to one's groups, including social narratives that incorporate own wrongdoings into the collective self-concept;

5. perceiving the outgroup as different, but equal and with the same human needs.

The *second* limitation, or remark, is already mentioned in the final chapter by Kelman. The volume "does not cover the entire range of work at the interface of social psychology and peace research" (p. 369). This might be, in part, due to its focus on "ethnic, religious, and racial" conflicts (p. 3). Nevertheless, important topics like power, political leadership, decision making, public opinion, mass media, negotiation, arms and militarization, human rights and social justice, enemy images, and psychological warfare are missing or given only limited space (but see, e.g., Christie, Wagner, & Winter, 2001; Sommer & Fuchs, 2004; or White, 1986).

The following, third and fourth remarks reach somewhat beyond this handbook and might be somewhat controversial among psychologists. *Third*, how does the accumulated psychological knowledge reach the public and relevant persons, groups, and institutions? Are the researchers willing and influential enough to teach their knowledge to influential policy makers and to the public? And, on the other hand and even more importantly, are decision makers willing to listen to researchers and practitioners? Often enough, politicians and other decision makers seemingly have made their decisions in favor of violent and military interventions before these are publicly and openly discussed. This, of course, limits or even destroys any psychological attempt towards nonviolent conflict resolution.

I would like to underpin the last argument with several examples. The Yugoslavia-Kosovo war in 1999 was the first war after World War II in which Germany actively took part; also, this war was not legitimated by the UN Security Council. The then-director of the Institute for Peace Research and Security Politics at the University of Hamburg (IFSH), Germany, asked the former Secretary of Defense (both members of the Social Democratic Party) for a meeting to discuss nonviolent solutions for this conflict. The meeting did not take place, and some time later the war started. About two years later the public German television (ARD) showed a documentary with the title "It started with a lie" (Angerer & Werth, 2001) with reference to several cases of misinformation by the government to achieve public support for this war.

Concerning the U.S., some illustrations are available to show how different U.S. presidents have manipulated the public to support war, including the supporting role of the media therein (e.g., Alper & Earp, 2007; Global Research TV, 2012).

As a last example I would like to refer to a speech of U.S. 4-Star General Wesley Clark, who was the Supreme Commander in the Kosovo War. According to this speech, shortly after September 11, 2001, a classified memorandum of the Pentagon announced that seven wars were planned in the Middle East to reconstruct this region towards achieving more U.S. control (FORA.tv, 2007). The seven countries named were Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Iran.

In the present handbook, the wars in former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the uprisings and wars in the Middle East are mentioned repeatedly, but the authors in the handbook remain worryingly silent about the role of the U.S., other Western states, and NATO in instigating violence instead of nonviolent conflict resolution (but see, e.g., Staub, 2003).

Additionally, concerning intergroup violence and the role of Western states, it seems advisable to take into account relevant legal and political documents. For instance, since 1992 the German Defense Guidelines ("Verteidigung-spolitische Richtlinien") do not only point to the relevance of the Bundeswehr (German Armed Forces) for defense, but also for ensuring open trade routes, free markets, and access to basic materials (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 2011). Also, according to Article 42 (3) of the Treaty of the European Union (European Union, 2007), "Member States shall undertake progressively to improve their military capabilities" (p. 34).

Finally, the U.S. Department of Defense asks in its 2012 guidelines to sustain U.S. global leadership and military superiority (Department of Defense, 2012). Taking all this together, and remembering that the U.S. military expenditure is about 40% of the world's total military expenditure and NATO's is about 55%, it seems obvious that the potential for violent conflict management has high priority. This is an example of a highly relevant power asymmetry in the world. Additionally, the mere existence of a strong military enhances the temptation and the likelihood of using it. Also, prominent recent concepts such as *humanitarian intervention* and the *Responsibility to Protect* (ICISS, 2001; Paech, 2012) are based on the idea of a *just war* and are used to justify violent interventions like in Libya 2011. These concepts might be worthwhile to discuss in more detail in a handbook about group conflict and violence.

Relating these remarks back to the handbook, in my opinion, the aforementioned and related topics (i.e., political decisions in favor of violence, defense guidelines, military spending, just-war concepts) are highly relevant for intergroup conflict. They may be essential for whether a conflict is resolved with or without violence. Therefore, an important topic for psychological research may be to assess knowledge and attitudes concerning these issues among public and societal representatives. Another important research topic involves the questions how decision makers perceive and process psychologically based suggestions for nonviolent conflict management, and how this can be influenced by psychologists. It might be useful to point out these issues in discussions to increase chances that psychological conflict interventions are even considered, and in hindsight to reflect on why interventions may have failed.

A *fourth*, last remark. Psychology deals with human emotions, cognitions, and actions. If we limit ourselves to these topics and do not deal with problems such as limited resources, wealth and poverty, unemployment, homelessness, insufficient medical systems, ecological problems etc., we are in danger of missing important influences. For instance, hunger is mentioned several times in the handbook, but it did not make it to an index word. Hunger, however, leads worldwide to about 50,000 *deaths per day*, and among these are about 21,000 children under the age of five (UNICEF, 2011). Of course, these topics are in the focus of other disciplines such as economics, sociology, and political science, but they also have a great impact on human behavior and experience, and they are important aspects of intergroup conflict. Therefore, these topics are crucial to address in future social psychological research, and they provide a wealth of important and original research topics, including: How are issues such as poverty or social injustice perceived (or not), cognitively and emotionally processed, and acted upon (or not) – both by the general public and by relevant societal groups and representatives? And, even more

importantly, these problems are consequences of human decisions and actions, and new attitudes and actions are needed to change them in a way to benefit people and to improve peace.

Conclusions

Regardless of these critical remarks and suggestions, the handbook presents a highly valuable source of information on the topic of intergroup conflict. Together with the accompanying meeting, it started the discussion and path toward more integration of the different perspectives and methods of social psychology and peace psychology – as intended by the editor. Because of the complexity and the density of the presentation, the handbook seems more suitable for researchers than for practitioners or policy-makers. And it seems especially advisable for students of social psychology who seek to extend their horizon.

Acknowledgments

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