Politics and the Psychology of Power: Multi-level Dynamics in the (Im)Balances of Human Needs and Survival

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Abstract

Two of the most significant global political changes of the past century are interlinked: de-colonization and changes in struggles between the 'Great Powers' [most dominant nations, e.g., U.S. vs. USSR]. Unlike much research in intergroup relations, these phenomena are not simply about relations between two collectives within societies, such as South African race relations, or religious conflict in Northern Ireland. Rather, de-colonization and re-balancing of global power involve cross-societal movements, such as pan-Arabism and communism, cross-societal alliances like NATO, and powerful states' 'spheres of influence', such as Russia's in Eastern Europe, and American hegemony over international institutions and order (e.g., Ikenberry, 2011). Further, these phenomena involve multi-layered relationships and different domains of conflict. We use Power Basis Theory to address why political contexts are so large, why every person can be considered a political actor, and especially to analyze the cross-time and interactional dynamics of power struggles. Augmenting this ecological approach with structural balance theory, we show when and why certain international and domestic power relationships are intertwined and likely to be unstable. We demonstrated the broad applicability of these theories using interviews with people in particular social niches, public opinion surveys in several nations, comparative studies of nations, and experimental games in which multiple kinds of power are in play. We show how social psychological theories can be extended to analyze the social psychology of complex political relationships.

Theories and research agendas in social psychology are often inspired by major political changes. The political desire for effective propaganda of World War II inspired (and funded) research on persuasion (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). The near-success of fascism in the 20th century inspired research on obedience (Milgram, 1974) and authoritarianism (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). The rejection of racial subordination by African-Americans lead to a focus on racism (e.g., Pettigrew, 1993). For the past 50 years, social psychological research has been conducted on one of the biggest global political changes of the past century, namely, the ascendance of feminism (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 1986). But there appears to be little research on the other major, interlinked global political changes: the end of near-global European-U.S. colonization, and the de-polarization of the world from the 'Great Powers' of the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. Rather than viewing these as finished historical events outside the purview of social psychology, we believe they have ramifications for the present that can be both theorized and empirically tested.

Decolonization and depolarization have several features that prevalent theories of inequality and intergroup relations do not address. Decolonization, devolution, and de-polarization are power struggles that have *disrupted* and *reduced* intergroup dominance at the interstate and national levels. Theories that purport to explain only why people capitulate to authority (e.g., Adorno et al., 1950), or how they justify inequality (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004), or how group-hegemony is self-stabilizing (e.g., Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), are poorly equipped to address these phenomena (see Pratto, Stewart, & Bou Zeineddine, in press).

Decolonization and devolution involve multiple collectives. Typically, however, theories of intergroup relations focus on only two groups. Social dominance theory describes dominants and subordinates (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Social identity theory describes the ingroup and the outgroup (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Realistic group conflict theory often presumes there are only two groups competing for some material resource (e.g., Campbell, 1965). All three theories have mostly been applied to relations within long-established nation-states. But decolonization and devolution specifically involve nations, important subgroups of 'nations,' such as the African National Congress, and "transgroups" whose members transcend other designated group boundaries, such as youth or fundamentalist Islamism. Thus, social-psychological theories of politics should address multi-leveled and intersecting group structures (e.g., Ahn, Bagrow & Lehmann, 2010).

To illustrate how social psychology can be expanded by addressing these phenomena and contribute to understanding them, we first elaborate on the complexity of these politics. Next, we point out useful social psychological tools for addressing these complexities. Finally, we illustrate our nascent research that attempts to use such tools for the social psychology of complex politics and discuss their implications.

The complexity of politics

Politics consists of power struggles. That definition appears simple, but in fact, the phenomena involved in power struggles are quite complex. For one, a large number of different kinds of actors are involved in power struggles. Individuals, as well as collective actors of many sorts – families, formal and informal organizations, nations, transnational

corporations – some official and some not, some temporary coalitions and some longstanding allies, participate in and influence each others' participation in politics. Further, even relationships between actors of the same sort are influenced by relationships with and between actors at different levels, such as relations of nations vis-à-vis international organizations. Understanding contemporary global politics requires considering multiple levels and assuming that because each actor has agency, each actor's actions may influence anyone else in the system. Thus, they are part of a dynamic system (Lehmann, 2012).

A second source of complexity is that the inclusion/exclusion criteria for any 'collective' can change, sometimes rapidly. The formation of coalitions, the dissolution of alliances and large multi-part groups such as empires, the formation and adoption of new identities such as 'union member' or 'world citizen', and proximity and affiliation changes in networks are on-going in politics (Lehmann, 2012) as they are in all kinds of natural networks (Ahn et al., 2010). In other words, not only the organization of social relationships, but the *reconfiguring* and *disorganization* of social relationships are part and parcel of politics, and another reason to consider them a dynamic system.

A third source of complexity is that power can exist in different states: (a) that derived from one's social position, such as group membership (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) or authority role (Raven, 1965) (b) power as the state of having high freedom of choice (Russell, 1938), (c) power *over* something or someone else, which may include domination, control, coercion, expropriation, exploitation, abuse, or milder forms of social influence, ownership, and territoriality (e.g., Dahl, 1957; Jackman, 2001), (d)

potential power (Lewin, 1951), (e) power through group membership (Turner, 2005), and (f) empowerment or power *to do (*Pratto, Lee, Pearson, & Saguy, 2008). Considering what people can do with power reveals that there are different kinds of power—reputation, capital, and credible threats being examples of three distinct kinds of power that empower people in different ways. Kinds of power or *means of empowerment* are distinguishable from *methods of social influence* (e.g., coercion, affiliation; Raven, 1965).

In sum, politics are complex because they involve a variety of kinds of actors, for whom numerous kinds of relationships are important, producing changes in their relationship sets and in distributions of numerous sorts of power. Theoretical approaches that can handle these sorts of politics include the notions that: 1) some groups are substantially more powerful than others, yet subordinated groups contest and sometimes fundamentally change structural power balances, 2) one or more components can drive change in the perceptions of and objective reality of the composition of collectives, 3) more than two groups can have simultaneous mutual influence, even in seemingly bilateral interactions, 4) power structures have multiple layers and cross-cutting power relationships, 5) power itself is a complex and differentiated set of interactional and situational properties and states, and 6) the ways people respond to the dynamics of power are diverse and often creative. Social psychology is well equipped to address these complexities for several reasons, although its potential to do so remains underdeveloped.

How social psychology can address the complexities of power

Many kinds of actors with mutual influence. Given that social psychology has addressed dynamic power relations in studies of families, friendships, leadership in

formal and informal groups, gangs, ethnic groups, and international relations, it would seem capable of addressing power among many kinds of actors. Theories that include more than one of these types of actors remain rare, although social dominance theory addresses three main levels (individual, arbitrary set group, and institutional/societal). However, social psychology does have a theory of relational power general enough to apply to relationships among all these kinds of actors.

Interdependence theory (Thibaut & Kelly, 1959) focuses on explaining *dynamic relational power between two parties*. Although it has mostly been applied to intimate relationships (see Rusbult & van Lange, 2003, for a review), it is written more generally, and it incorporates the parties' context and states as sources of potential changes in their relationship.

Interdependence theory assumes that every party has things it wants. To the extent that a party can get such things from another party, the first is satisfied with their relationship. To the extent a party cannot get the things it desires from other places, then the other has more power *in the relationship* than the first party. But this is not just specified as an objective description of relational power. Rather, interdependence theory postulates that the party's perceptions of what its other possibilities are (i.e. *comparison alternatives*), influences its satisfaction in a given relationship, and level of commitment to it. Exposure to information, changes in desires, and changes in the set of alternatives provided or salient in the environment, may all change satisfaction levels, motivating recalibration actions. In other words, the match or mismatch between desires and potential empowerment afforded by the environment, including other actors, is the

engine of dissent, disruption, which create power dynamics and may change power relationships.

Were we to expand interdependence theory's dynamic engine to include more than two actors, more than one affordance in the system, and/or more than one kind of desire, it could describe a dynamic, complex system. This would make it much more akin to its origin, Lewin's (1951) field theory. Lewin (1951) emphasized that power is a potential, not a particular role or behavior, that social perception and imagined possible futures are an integral part of how power is instantiated, that multiple actors are involved, and that the context or field cannot be omitted from any description of power.

Continuous flux in the constitutions of collectives. It follows from dynamic relationships among multiple actors that there will be ongoing change in the constitution of collectives. Although actions such as forming alliances or shunning may be driven by perceived self-interest, decisions over actions will continuously shift because of ongoing changes in the environment. Further, these collectives themselves become a very important aspect of the perceived utility of the environment, not only for material goods but for social 'goods' such as acceptance and group status (e.g., Sherif & Sherif, 1966; Turner & Bourhis, 1996).

Non-exchangeable kinds of utility. Economic theories make two simple assumptions (1) anything one values is convertible to one subjective metric of "utility," (2) the market price for anything of value derives from the interaction between different traders' utilities. Markets, therefore, are dynamic systems.

Social psychology has pointed out additional complexities in utility markets. The immediate utility and the long-term utility of any given thing are often not the same (fresh bread is more useful as food now; money in places with stable currency is useful now and later). The acuteness of one's needs, which varies, hampers one's freedom of choice in markets, and changes utilities. Human psychology makes it hard for people to convert things of value to a common utility because they *feel* fundamentally different (e.g., chocolate is for pleasure, a concrete plan is for security) and because pitting some things of value against other things of value (e.g., lives for money) is deeply distasteful (Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000). Finally, the utility of a given thing (e.g., going to war, a coastline) to a collective may be different than the utility of the same thing to an individual.

The nature of power. Interdependence theory and field theory presume that people chronically want things, but they don't specify what those desires are. Yet one can identify particular domains of power struggles between men and women which are largely like the power struggles between many kinds of collectives, such as workers and owners, nations, ethnic or sectarian categories (Pratto & Walker, 2004; Pratto et al, 2011). We can understand politics—power struggles—and why they recur by attending to these domains.

Power Basis Theory points out that people have several particular survival needs, such as material resources and the care of others (see Pratto et al., 2011 for a theoretical overview). To fulfill each kind of need, people need the power to satisfy them, and this is why survival needs are the basis of power and the motivation to amass power. Extending

field theory, Power Basis Theory states that this ability to meet survival needs is a *joint* function of the properties of the person and the person's local ecology, both physical and social. In general, if the dynamic, ecological system incorporating people's internal states and their context is working, then people are sensitive to what they need, are motivated to obtain it, are able to satisfy those needs from their local ecology. When their needs are satisfied, their sensitivity and motivations adjust appropriately. Power Basis Theory defines constructive power as the ability to meet needs for oneself (or another). When this potential is available and accessible, one is empowered (or empowers another). Thus, this definition of power is not *comparative* nor *relational* to others, but in relation to one's own needs. Destructive power is the ability to prevent one's own or another's needs from being met; acting upon this potential disempowers, potentially to the point of harm or death. Power, in Power Basis Theory, is not control, social influence, domination, asymmetric interdependence, agency, authority, nor, given that people are largely bound by their survival needs, absolute freedom.

Power Basis Theory posits that each kind of power meets, or threatens, a different basic need. Material resources serve material survival needs. Access to them depends on natural and social factors jointly with requisite skills. Having legitimacy to be welcomed in a functioning community serves the need to belong. Particular kinds of power directly meet or heighten particular needs (e.g., obligatory relationships like families provide care; violence damages well-being). Their immediate utility is therefore highest. For example, a welcoming community may be able and willing to feed one, but is not, in-and-of itself, edible.

However, even having a kind of power that mismatches one's needs may be useful because people often can use one kind of power to obtain another kind (e.g., material resources in exchange for healthcare or legitimacy opening access to material resources). Transactions that change the kind of power to another kind are what make power social. Such transactions do not have a given "price ratio" because social norms and mores influence how open one's "market" is (e.g., should a stranger versus a mother expect care during sickness), as do individual's momentary needs and desires.

The power transactions that indicate how fungible different kinds of power are for one another have important implications both for individuals and for those in their ecologies. If such transactions do not require one to sacrifice one kind of power for another, then those with some power will tend to accumulate more power. This process produces increasing inequality unless curbs are put in place. For example, if paying wages gains one more profit than one pays, and the worker cannot realize as much gain, the employer and employee become more unequal. Further, if an exchange transaction is necessary, and one's need is acute, one could lose what power one has to obtain an immediate necessity. This may also increase inequality unless satisfying the need is compensatory, that is, enables some way to regain the exchanged power.

Power Basis Theory has several implications not emphasized by other theories: 1) the fluctuation of different kinds of power available to both individuals and collectives and their fungibility will result from the transactions and emergent psycho-cultural phenomena (e.g., social rules, norms, notions of justice and of morality, ideologies) in their social ecologies, 2) power struggles are not just a matter of dominance and counter-

dominance striving, but are inherently tied to the struggle to meet one's survival needs, 3) people are more at risk for mortality and suffering the less power they have, and 4) unlike approaches to power that focus on leaders, elites, or dominant groups, power basis theory considers everyone to be a political actor and every behavior to be a political act.

This last point requires clarification. According to the principles of the theory, every agent is a political actor, and every act is political, both because all must seek empowerment to meet their survival needs, and because people can act in an almost infinite number of ways that influence empowerment, including in counter-productive, or as the theory terms it, mis-calibrated, ways. People not only can compete or cooperate, but can deprive, exploit, hoard, subjugate, negotiate, and innovate to access power. In doing so, they alter their physical and social ecologies, all within a grand commons that is equally vital to all for the ability to satisfy needs. Thus, the notion that any act by individuals or collectives is independent of systemic consequences for any polity is untenable. Whether any act is political is a foregone conclusion – how, why, how much, and for whom it is (most) political, are the more important and interesting questions.

We now describe some of our research illustrating these concepts. Health corresponds to environmental affordances for power

The fundamental tenets of Power Basis Theory are (1) that constructive power is to meet survival needs, (2) that empowerment is a joint function of an actor's capacity and the actor's ecology, (3) that disempowerment threatens survival and (4) although needs must be met with particular kinds of power, transactions can make kinds of power fungible with each other. There is indirect evidence for the latter three in research we

have conducted pertaining to HIV. As a serious survival threat, HIV is one marker of disempowerment. Congruent with the postulate that power inheres partly in environment affordances, in a world-wide comparative study we found that national indicators of knowledge (e.g., literacy rates), legitimacy (e.g., rights), material resources (e.g., unemployment rate), and violence (e.g., homicide rate) each correspond strongly to HIV prevalence in nations (Tan, Earnshaw, Pratto, Kalichman, & Rosenthal, 2014). This finding illustrates that ecological deficits in nations disempower their residents, and that several kinds of power (e.g., violence, legitimacy) pertain to well-being (which pertains to survival). HIV is still mainly transmitted through sexual contact, suggesting that sexual transactions may be fungible for other kinds of power that are lacking. In an interview study of U.S. men of color who have sex with men, participants stated that they use particular kinds of power to gain other kinds (e.g., their sexual attractiveness to obtain access to luxuries; Tan, Pratto, Paul, & Choi, 2013). In relationships with potential sex partners, these men often perceived a disadvantage in power with White men, putting them in more HIV-risky situations.

We also found evidence that disempowerment at one level—in one's society—can contribute to disempowerment at another level – in one's personal relationships. For Asian-American men, lack of legitimacy due to low ethnic and immigrant status contributes to lower power in sexual relationships with men (Tan, Pratto, Operario, & Dworkin, 2013). Although it is important to extend research on health and power in many ways, the research we have conducted so far does connect "public politics" (e.g.,

allocation of social infrastructure resources, the identity politics of stigma) to personal empowerment and health.

Experimental evidence of fungibility

Power Basis Theory argues that people's attempts to meet survival needs drive power dynamics, and given that they are doing so within the same super-ecology, the global commons, each action can produce systemic changes in the human-ecological system. Understanding the emergent outcomes of fungibility for communities is also critical to well-being and mortality. We suggested, but had no direct evidence in our HIV studies, that fungibility of different kinds of power worsened HIV risk. Another major health finding, which may be the result of fungibility, is that for developed countries, greater inequality is associated with worse health outcomes, including mortality rates, for everyone (e.g., Wilkinson & Pickett, 2008). To causally test whether it is the exercise of power that can produce these effects, we invented an experimental power game called the In Game.

Each player's goal is to stay in the game ("survive") by maintaining a minimum amount of "resource power." To prevent participants from relying on overt social norms about power use, each kind of power is represented by a different colored token (i.e., not labeled) and the rules about what one can do with it vis-à-vis the other players. Participants interact with other real participants, and are required by the game to accomplish things one can think of as "life events," such as obtaining an obligation from another person or giving up resources. The game is not zero-sum nor competitive; all could "win" because we designed the game events so that all the players would retain

enough resource tokens to remain in the game if players did nothing other than what they were required to do. However, their choices over how to use their power (tokens) could redistribute and increase or decrease the amount of power available.

In two games, we found that even with egalitarian starting conditions, equal needs, equal allocations of power tokens throughout the game, and the same rules for all players, players' collective actions created inequality in power among the players. Further, the more inequality created in a game session, the more simulated mortality (people going out of the game because they had too few resource tokens) occurred, and the worse participants felt (Pratto et al., 2008). This simulates public health outcomes for wealthy nations, but shows that people's behavior using power to survive produces the inequality that hampers well-being.

However, Power Basis Theory also posits that social norms and institutional structures and policies, including practices such as progressive income tax, and moral convictions, such as meritocracy, can change the behavior that produces emergent outcomes, like inequality. We tested this idea in additional experiments using the In Game. The In Game allows us to test cause both by manipulating conditions for sessions or for players within a session, and by comparing actual outcomes to a simulated game without the optional uses of power players use. We found that imposing risks on players who were pursuing personal commodities from other players curtailed the development of inequality and the rate of mortality in game sessions (Pratto, Pitpitan, & Lee, under review). In yet another experiment, Stewart, Pitpitan, Lee, and Pratto (under revision)

subtly set the game session norm to be either communal or agentic for an otherwise identical game set-up. The communal condition developed less inequality. The influence of these normative conditions provides causal behavioral evidence that people anticipate consequences of their actions, and that this behavior changes the ecology of their collective.

Needs and the power struggles between dominant and subordinate groups

If dominant groups strive to monopolize the means of meeting survival needs, it is no wonder that subordinate groups would resist dominance; it may be a matter of their survival. In fact, around the world, members of subordinate groups reject group dominance in general more than members of dominant groups do (Lee, Pratto, & Johnson, 2011). Subordinates also often reject the self-justifying view that dominants have of their relationship. Image theory argues that stereotypes of and behavioral tendencies toward other nations depends on the perceived structural relation between one's own and the other nation along three dimensions: relative power, relative status, and goal compatibility (e.g., Herrmann & Fischerkeller, 1995). For nations with incompatible goals, three images are common. A nation perceived as weaker in power and lower in cultural status will be viewed as a *dependent*. Conversely, if the weaker nation also views the stronger nation as culturally superior, the *imperialist* image can motivate resistance to exploitation and sabotage. A weaker nation who views the other nation as culturally inferior will view it as *barbarian,* an image not usually associated with direct conflict. Due to the "barbarian's" greater power, passivity is a wise course of action (Cottam, Dietz-Uhler, Mastors, & Preston, 2004). Alexander, Levin, and Henry (2005) surveyed Lebanese

university students in late 2001 about their perceptions of the U.S. in relation to Lebanon and found that most viewed the U.S. as barbarian. This image likely dampens the desire to fight U.S. dominance despite resentment of it; both stances can be seen among Lebanese citizens and its political factions, as we detail below.

In today's world, U.S. interference in other nations is not often welcomed or respected (e.g., Early 2006; Glick, Fiske et al 2006), but many Americans feel differently. For example, following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the U.S., Pratto, Lemieux, Glasford and Henry (2003) found that the end of American dominance was a hope of Lebanese but a fear for Americans. In fact, resistance should be considered a normal part of group dominance because dominance itself sows the psychological seeds of resistance: identification with subordinate groups, feelings of injustice, and rejection of hierarchy-legitimizing ideologies (see Pratto, Stewart, & Bou Zeineddine, 2014). Historical studies have described the advent of counter-dominant ideologies such as disestablishmentarianism, abolitionism, feminism, socialism, anti-colonialism, human rights, pan-Africanism, pan-Arabism, and liberation theology. These newer ideologies seem to have widespread influence; people around the world continue to adopt more egalitarian values and to reject group prejudice (Bou Zeineddine & Pratto, in press). Rejecting dominant ideologies and developing alternative views is an important, creative, and often generative, tool of resistance (Sweetman, Leach, Spears, Pratto, & Saab, in press) and need-fulfillment.

As a case in point, throughout the 20th century, academics, military leaders, politicians, and business leaders argued that Arabs are incompetent to govern themselves,

and that outside control of Arabs is necessary to maintain world security (e.g., DeAtkine, 2009; Friedman, 2006; Huntington, 1993; Lewis, 2002; Patai, 1973; Parker & Opell, 2012). Such arguments made to U.S. presidents helped to shaped dominative policies towards many Arab nations (e.g., Jreisat, 2006; Little, 2002, pp. 118–155), policies that are resoundingly resented by Arabs (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2011; Zogby & Zogby, 2010). However, surveys in 14 nations shortly after the beginning of the Arab uprisings in 2011 showed that many participants rejected these ideologies (Pratto, Saguy, et al., 2014). This was especially the case for people low on social dominance orientation, and rejection of these ideologies appears to legitimize support for an independent Palestinian state and for the popular Arab uprisings to succeed.

Moreover, dominating policies have given rise to counter-dominant political movements that have hampered the degree of U.S. control in the region (e.g., Lynch, 2012). Such movements appeal, to some extent, to Arabs for their counter-dominant stance (e.g., Early, 2006; El-Husseini, 2010). For example, in random samples of urban Syrians and Lebanese in March, 2010, approval of Hezbollah was stronger the more participants opposed U.S. domination of Arabs (Pratto, Bou Zeineddine, Sidanius, Kteily, & Levin, 2013). The (need for) resistance by subordinates introduces changes in the boundaries of collectives, identification with collectives, and in what kinds of power are available to and used by actors.

Multiple layers and players

Both resistance and domination mean that the relevant actors in their ecology are numerous and involve changing collectives in hierarchical and cross-cutting

relationships. For Syrians and Lebanese for example, because of alliances or enmity between domestic political factions and their neighbors (notably Iraq and Israel), and because of alliances or enmities between even more dominant political entities (the U.S. and Russia), there is no clear distinction between domestic and foreign politics. Thus, Syrian and Lebanese citizens' political attitudes towards "domestic" political factions, including their own government, is inherently related to their attitudes towards outside political entities such as the U.S. (Pratto, Sidanius et al., 2013).

To understand political attitudes as part of complex political dynamics, we can use structural balance theory (Cartwright & Harary, 1956). Balance theory states that triads of actors will tend towards "balanced" relationships, primarily mutual positivity or "friendship," followed by two-on-one "enmity." Any other configuration of a triad, such as mutual "enmity," or one actor a "friend" to two "enemies," will be unstable (Heider, 1946). Structural balance theory extends these simple rules about triads into large networks, with the implication that any change within an unstable triad may perturb directly connected triads, potentially changing relationships across the system. This conceptual tool can therefore be used to understand the kind of direct and more distal power relationships among neighbors, regional factions, and global powers. Using recent research, we illustrate how structural balance theory, coupled with power considerations, shows why some places can be expected to be unstable and conflictual.

Returning to the 2010 surveys of Pratto, Sidanius et al. (2013) of Lebanon and Syria, consider a citizen's likely pattern of attitudes towards Hezbollah, his or her own national government, and the U.S. For a Syrian, the mutual enmity between the U.S. and the

Syrian government implies that the citizen would find it difficult to like both. Therefore, citizens' attitudes towards these entities should correlate negatively. Given Syria's alliance with Hezbollah and that both entities oppose the U.S., we should also expect Syrian citizens who favor their government to favor Hezbollah and to dislike the U.S. In fact, at the time of our survey (a year before Syrians began their uprising against the Al-Asad regime), Syrian participants' attitudes correlated reliably in just this way (see top triad of Figure 1).

When the survey was conducted, the Lebanese government's divided but relatively Westward-leaning stance towards the U.S. would produce a somewhat positive correlation between attitudes towards the U.S. government and the Lebanese government. The opposition of the non-Hezbollah majority of the Lebanese government to Hezbollah should lead people who approve of one to disapprove of the other, producing two negative correlations. Likewise, the perceived enmity between the U.S. and Hezbollah should make it unlikely a Lebanese could approve of both, resulting in another negative correlation. These patterns were also reliable, as depicted in the bottom triad of Figure 1. Thus, although alliances and attitudes are in flux (in part for reasons we explicate below), Lebanese and Syrians' attitudes followed balance theory's predictions (see also Eicher, Pratto & Wilhelm, 2013, for a study of Palestinians', Israelis', Americans;, and Swiss projections using image theory and balance theory).

Now, for more complexity, let us now consider the configuration of these same four actors all together. If we take citizens' actual attitude correlations as representing the

actual relationships among the entities, the only way that the two sets of attitudes can be made stable is if Lebanon and Syria have a fundamentally hostile relationship (shown in top panel of Figure 2). And indeed, such has occurred, as in Syria's occupation of Lebanon, and the Lebanese expulsion of that occupation. Note, then, that one could attribute one source of difficulty in the relationship between these two border- and history-sharing neighbors as due outsiders: to the colonial powers in the past and now the U.S. This is one example about how the larger geo-political context influences regional inter-national and inter-factional relationships. Nonetheless, it is difficult to have one's next-door neighbor as an enemy. The dashed line in the top panel of Figure 2 marks the problematic relationship in this configuration.

The other theoretically balanced relationship among this quartet is shown in the bottom panel of Figure 2. This configuration may be thought to occur when Hezbollah dominates the Lebanese government. Although this configuration solves the problem of enmity between Lebanon and Syria, it is predicated on an unfriendly Lebanon-U.S. relationship. Their violent history and their enormously imbalanced military capacities make this implausible. Thus, neither "balanced" solution shown in Figure 2 is stable for Lebanon.

Were we to insert Israel into either configuration in Figure 2, as we show in Figure 3, we introduce more complexity, even assuming that Israel has stable relationships with every entity except Lebanon. All the small triads shown in the top panel of Figure 3 are balanced, but each consists of the "mutual enemy" relationship (- + -). Though balanced, empirical research shows that "mutual enemy" relationships are not as stable as "mutual

friendship" relationships (+ + +; Szell, Lambiotte, & Thurner, 2010). Assuming that the implied large diagonals (beneath Israel) in the top panel of Figure 3 are positive between Lebanon and Syria, and negative between Hezbollah and the U.S., all the triads are balanced. This configuration shows that Lebanon cannot simultaneously be on friendly terms with both its bordering neighbors, Israel and Syria. It also means that Lebanese friendliness towards Syria implies enmity towards both the U.S. and Israel, and all three nations have invaded and attacked Lebanon from outside in recent years. Lebanon has no mutually good options vis-à-vis relations with these nations. Were positive relationships between Lebanon and the U.S. and Lebanon and Israel to be established, as shown in the bottom panel of Figure 3, Lebanon would have to be opposed to Hezbollah. This is untenable because Hezbollah is not only indigenous, but a successful political party, well-armed, and a provider of social services (e.g., Early, 2006). Approving of Hezbollah would make Lebanon have poor relationships with Iran, and by implication Russia. Not getting along with its neighbors might improve Lebanon's relations with the U.S., but given the historical level of U.S.–sponsored interference and violence in Lebanon and the Arab world, that is also implausible. Thus, the three relationships marked with dashed lines in the bottom of Figure 3 are theoretically, but not plausibly, stable.

As balance theory is supposed to describe intuitive psychology, it seems likely that relevant political actors perform similar calculi when they are considering power as possibility (Lewin, 1951). For instance, in the top diagram of Figure 3, if we changed the sign of the relationship between the U.S. and Israel to be negative, then the resulting perturbations would mean that everybody is negative towards Israel, and everybody else

is positive towards everyone else. This may be the kind of isolation that Israelis fear and may contribute to their sense of threat. We have inserted Israel into Figure 3 because of its history of violence with its neighbors, but conceptually any number of other relevant actors (Iraq, Russia, Turkey, Egypt, the EU), could be added instead or in addition. Structural balance theory is therefore a simple but intuitive tool for understanding others' positions, and for identifying unstable tensions and where the dynamic flipping points in complex sets of relationships are.

Note, too, that citizens living in these complex, unstable, frequently violent, and multi-layered contexts are sensitive to these politics, and their support for different political factions corresponds to their value preferences about foreign relationships. In fact, Pratto, Sidanius et al. (2013) argued that the fraught situation for Lebanon of either attraction to Syria and repulsion from U.S., or the converse, contributes to divisions *within* the Lebanese polity. One of the recent schisms in Lebanese politics consists of two coalitions, one leaning towards the U.S. (March 14th) and one towards Syria (March 8). Starting on the right side of Figure 4, this simple triad (the two coalitions and the U.S.), coupled with the assumption that each coalition appeals to some Lebanese, produces not only popular support (March 14) or opposition (March 8) to the U.S., but also necessitates divisions among Lebanese citizens in order to provide otherwise balanced relationships. In other words, the intractability of Lebanon's foreign relations helps to divide Lebanon internally.

Discussion

Social psychological theoretical tools have been underutilized to address several of the biggest global political and socioeconomic changes of the previous century, such as de-colonization, or the dominance of free-market capitalism. Arguably, such changes present more complex social problems to analyze, in terms of the number and type of actors, number of levels of social organization, time scales, and socially-interactive dynamism, than other temporally or geographically more localized, but momentous and research-worthy changes. But these phenomena also provide enormous opportunities to develop the social psychology of power and power struggles, or politics. Certainly any number of new developments could be constructive. By briefly reviewing the nascent research we presented, we can provide potentially useful guidelines for future research on the social psychology of politics.

We approached the complexities of politics by assuming that it is an aspect of a dynamic system in which both physical and social features are critical, and in which many actors and many kinds of actors are a part. Given that we defined politics as power struggles, we used an in-depth analysis of power – its various states, its various types, its various kinds, its various users, its various impacts, in theorizing an answer to the question of why there are recurrent power struggles in human life. Fundamentally, Power Basis Theory argues that the bases of power are particular survival needs, so that everyone must engage in power struggles, and the sites of conflict help to indicate what the particular bases of power are. We tested consequences of the theory using comparative studies, surveys, interviews, and experiments, and we examined power for people in specific social niches, experimental contexts, national contexts, and geo-political

contexts. First, we showed that people whose ecologies were impoverished with respect to any of several kinds of power risked ill-health and likely, early death more than people who have more ingredients for power in their ecologies. Second, we reviewed evidence that people's power position changes many of their social psychological outlooks, including those that lead people to invent alternative and counter-dominant ideologies. Third, we showed with behavioral experiments that people using power for their own survival goals can create power inequality for others in their context, even without a zero-sum situation. Fourth, we showed that people in lower power positions can be quite sensitive to the layered power structures above them. Fifth, we demonstrated how networks of political collectives spanning global, regional, national, and transnational levels can have predictably unstable and divisive politics. We were able to describe these very complex sub-national, regional, and global political relationships by postulating that dynamism can stem from two simple things: a tendency towards balanced social relationships, and the idea that different kinds of power can be fungible through social transaction. These first steps demonstrate that social psychology has at least rudimentary tools for addressing the power struggles of politics, and can be elaborated to address the world of 21st century global political changes.

Many other approaches may also be useful, and those might be compared with the meta-lessons of our approach. We suggest that theories can assume that universal psychology – not just that of leaders, dictators, and revolutionaries -- is pertinent to politics. Our approach reinforces social psychology's focus on situationism, but it considers situations to be an ecology, and assumes they are far broader than many

theories do. It also suggests that multi-layered theories may be necessary and should specify the relations among levels of social organization (e.g., transnational, sub-national groups). Finally, although we are starting to tackle a new and complex politics, it is still possible to use simple principles to derive useful means of understanding our political world.

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Figure 1. Direction of correlation of citizens' attitudes towards the U.S. government, participants' own national government, and Hezbollah in Syria (top triad) and Lebanon (bottom triad).

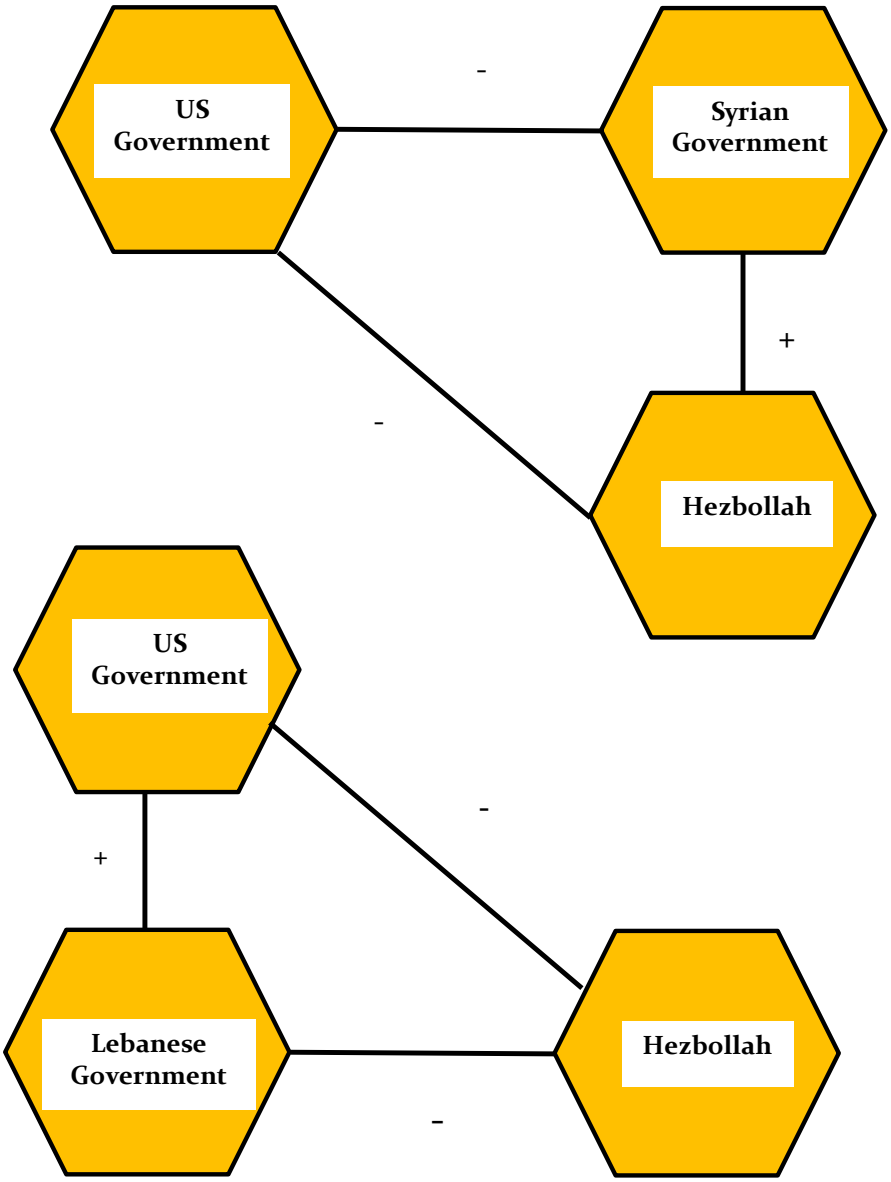

Figure 2. Potentially balanced configurations among U.S., Syria, Lebanon, and Hezbollah, with difficult relationships marked with dashed lines.

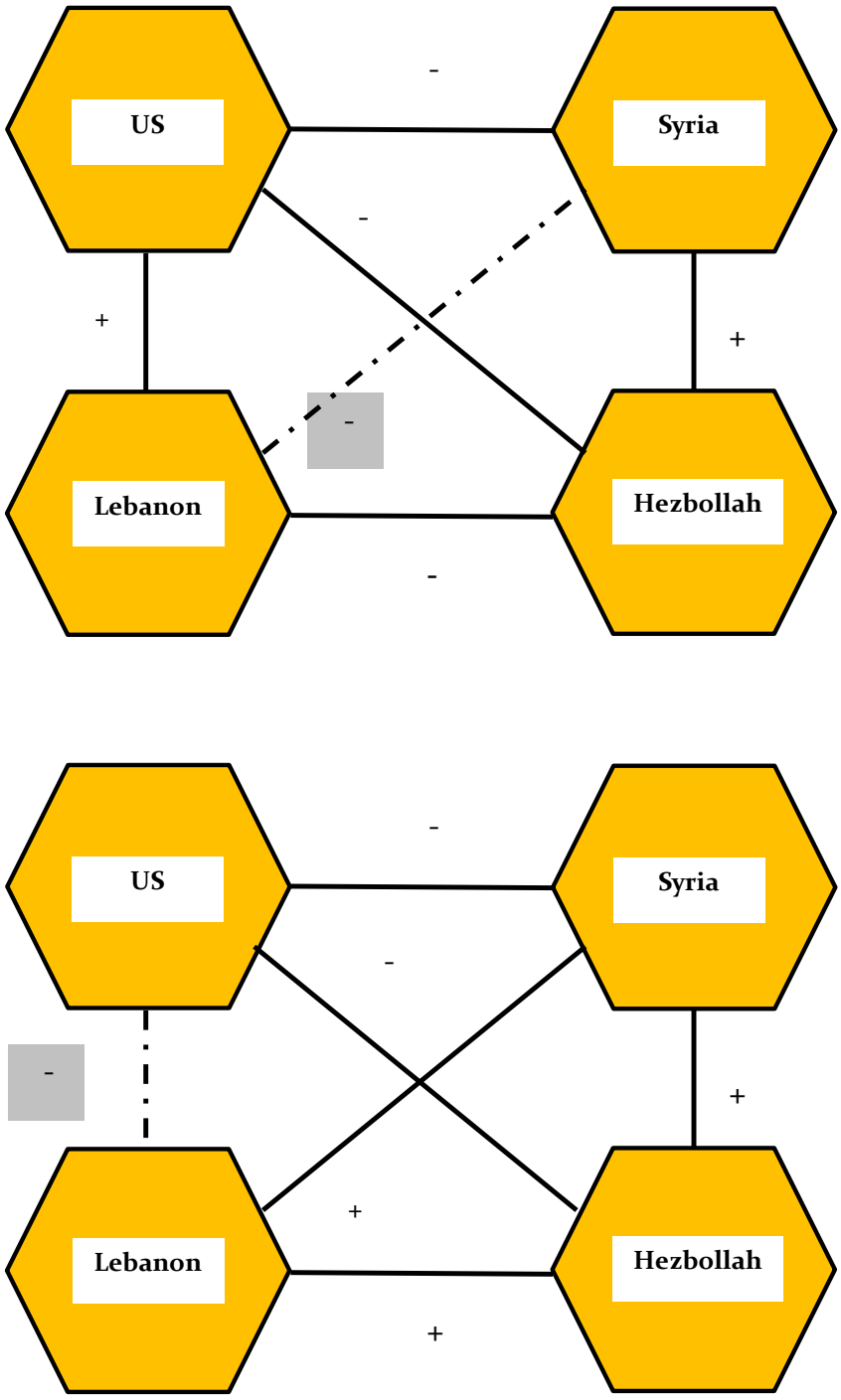

Figure 3. Potential relationships among Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Hezbollah, and the U.S., with problematic negative relationships, and the concomitant requisite positive relationships surrounded by dashed lines.

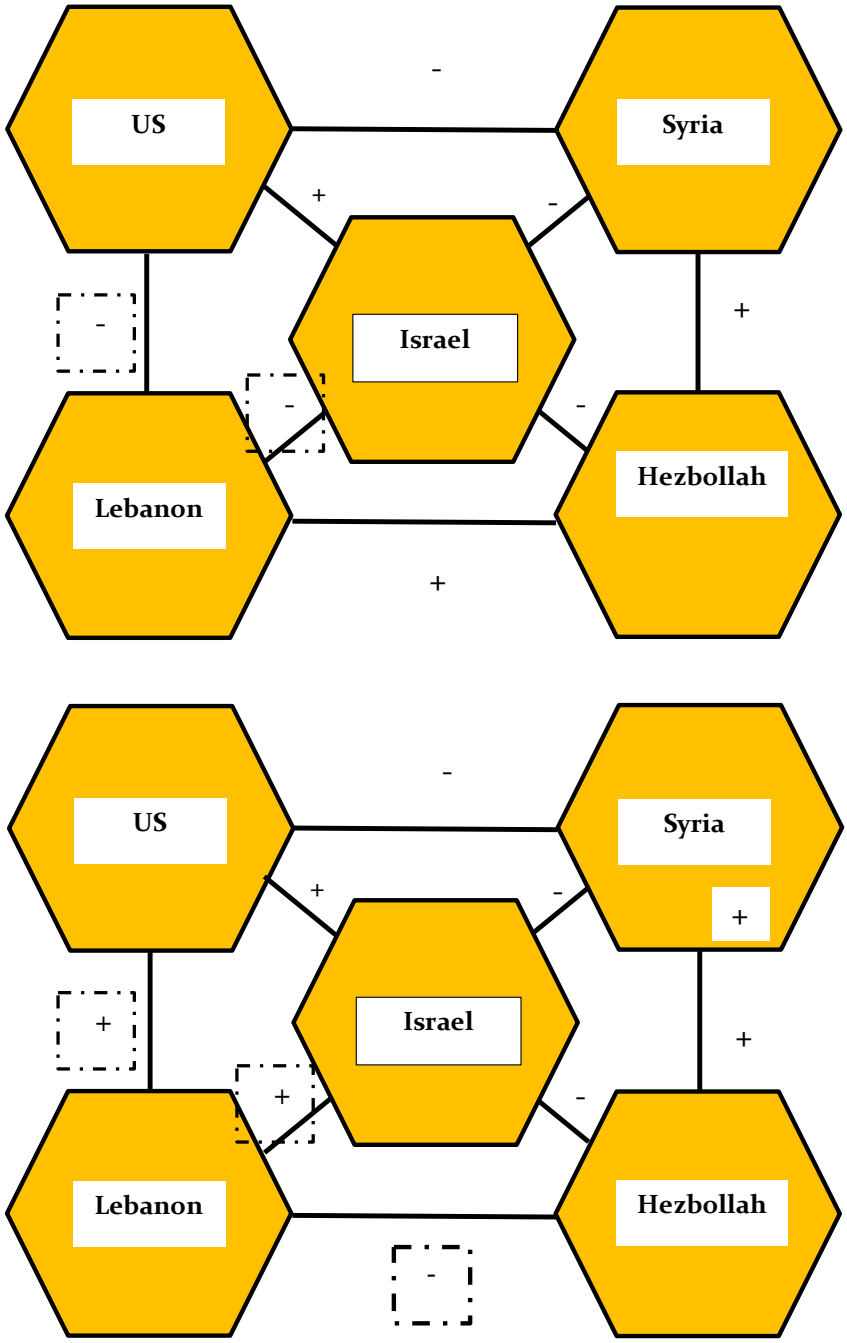

Figure 4. Relations within the Lebanese polity to internal coalitions and their relation to the U.S.

Citizenry Political factions