

What is political psychology?

- *‘Political psychology explores the border that runs between the intellectual nations of political science and psychology. It is a dynamic subfield that addresses the ways in which political institutions both affect and are affected by human behaviour’*

It examines the connection between political science and psychology by doing two main things – looking at how political institutions affect individuals within society and human behaviour and how human behaviour affects individual institutions. E.g. experiences of war affect individuals such as citizens, soldiers, and in turn they affect political institutions.

Two-way interaction between human behaviour and the institutions under which they live, and political psychology looks at this through the lens of psychology.

The lens of psychology

- *Emotions*
- *Cognition*
- *Identity*
- *Personality*
- *Efficacy*
- *Empathy*
- *Morality*
- *Rationality*
- *Cognitive neuroscience*
- *Evolutionary psychology – psychological traits that have developed over time via natural selection and have become part of our psychological makeup as human beings*

researches of superordinate goals, especially fixing the water tank together, which was a cooperative task for which the two groups had to collaborate – seemed to reduce the prejudice.

Social Identity Theory

- Key problem with realistic conflict theory: competition over scarce resources is not necessary to produce conflict
- **'[T]he mere awareness of the presence of an outgroup is sufficient to provoke intergroup competitive or discriminatory responses on the part of the ingroup' (Tajfel and Turner 2004, p. 281)**

Competition over scarce resources are not always necessary to explain conflict between different groups. Social identity theory says you can have competition over scarce resources, but even in the absence of that, you can have prejudice and conflict between groups. And that happens because, according to this theory, just being aware of the presence of another group or outgroup is sufficient to provoke intergroup competition, discriminatory responses and prejudice on the part of the ingroup.

- Our social identity (rather than scarcity of resources) plays a key role in explaining intergroup conflict. But why?

This theory is called social identity theory because it starts from the importance of our social identity for us as individuals. All of us belong to different groups, and so each of us belongs to more than one group depending on which groups we are focusing on – it could be ethnic groups, religious groups, groups of friends, national groups, professional groups etc. Our social identity always matters for us, even in the absence of the scarcity of resources and competition over them, and this plays a role in intergroup conflict.

- Our self-esteem depends on the social group (s) we are members of
- Social groups may be evaluated more or less positively in a society
 - Negative evaluations → low self-esteem
 - Positive evaluations → high self-esteem

It plays a role because our social identity affects our self-esteem – if we are members of a social group, say an ethnic group, religious group or a national group which is the object of very negative evaluations by other people in the society in which we live, that will seriously affect our self-esteem; we will have a lower self-esteem. If you are a member of a group that is marginalised, who is normally considered less intelligent, less able to work hard, or simply inferior for whatever reason, those who criticise or discriminate against the group may think that your self-esteem will be affected. You cannot possibly enjoy high self-esteem in the situation where such low evaluations exist about the group in which you belong. On the contrary, if your group is the object of positive evaluations; if it is considered in high regard in the society in which you live, you will enjoy higher self-esteem.

- **We want to be part of the best group: 'Individuals strive to achieve or to maintain positive social identity' (Tajfel and Turner 2004, p. 284)**
- **This depends on 'favourable comparisons' (Tajfel and Turner 2004, p. 284) with other relevant groups**

Obviously, we all want to be a part of the best group, or at least that is what the theory argues. And so, if you want to be a part of the best group, you want to ensure that the group of which you are a part of enjoys a positive social identity; you do not want to be a part of a group which is viewed very negatively by those in your society. So it is very important that your group is the object of favourable comparisons with other relevant groups.

We are not always comparing any group with any other groups; there are always specific features and characteristics of groups which are more or less important in different contexts.

For example, race is very important in the US. Whether you are white, African-American or Hispanic is very important. Empirical evidence shows that it is the most salient feature. So, intergroup comparisons will often happen along race lines and cleavages.

Whereas in Canada, what is salient is the English-speaking versus French-speaking capacities (more than race).

- Asian Americans – lower turnout than Whites BUT turnout mainly affected by registration levels (Lien et al. 2001)

Once you control for registration levels, it seems that Asian Americans vote as much as Whites.

Social and psychological factors

- Neighbourhood (e.g. class, education, political affiliation, and diversity) – importance of comparative dimension

Your neighbourhood has a significant influence on your willingness or likelihood to vote. There are different factors at stake, such as the class composition of your neighbourhood, the level of education of others, their political affiliation, and also the level of diversity. It is often the case that what counts so much is not, for example, your level of education, but your level of education compared to that of the people who are around you, in your more immediate context, i.e. your neighbourhood. So, if you live in a neighbourhood in which, for a number of reasons, you are happy to be more educated than others in the neighbourhood, you are more likely to vote. You will feel as though you have a stronger voice, because you will feel more politically aware than those who are around you, and this acts as a psychological driver of political participation. But also, the comparative dimension is important when it comes to the diversity element of your neighbourhood for a number of reasons. For example, some studies in the US show that, say if you are a Republican, and you live in a mainly Democratic neighbourhood, you are less likely to vote than if you lived in an area with other fellow Republican voters. It is not clear what the issue of stake, or the factor driving this choice here is, but it could be something like as though you feel stigmatised by those who vote for the opposing party, and that you are in a political minority, and therefore less inclined to voice your political position, and participate in politics in various ways.

- **'Living in diverse political environments may inhibit people from participating in politics in order to avoid offending one's neighbours...Also, people living in more diverse environments may feel more ambivalent and hold their political views with less certainty, which may inhibit behavioural expression of those views'** (Harder and Krosnick 2008, p.535; see also Mutz 2002)

More generally, it seems that when you live in a diverse neighbourhood, that is diverse along different kinds of lines and cleavages, people seem to vote and participate in politics less, to avoid offending the neighbourhood. Or they may simply feel more uncertain about their own views, because they are facing different ways of living, people with different political orientations, and therefore, even if they had, previously very convincing and solid political beliefs, one way or another, this may become diluted and uncertain, and that may result in a lower level of political participation overall.

- Marriage and divorce (e.g. Kingston & Finkel 1987; Petrocik & Shaw 1991; Stoke & Jennings 1995)

Married people tend to vote at higher levels than non-married people. Some have argued that this is because if you have a more politically engaged partner in a marriage, they will be able to influence the less politically engaged one, but this is very inconclusive. There are also studies showing that once people get a divorce, their political participation increases quite significantly, perhaps because they have more time, some people argue, not being involved in a stable relationship at least temporarily.

- Civic engagement (e.g. Tate 1991; Verba et al. 1995)

The more engaged citizens are in civil society associations of various kinds, the more likely they are to also vote and participate in politics. So, the more active you are in NGOs, or even things like sports clubs, music clubs, bowling clubs, the more engaged you are in this variety of associations – the more likely you are to participate in politics.

A more individualised society, in which people are less likely to participate in civil society organisations, is also one in which people will also vote and participate in politics less frequently.

- Trust (e.g. Cox 2003; Holbrook, Krosnick, Visser, Gardner, & Cacioppo 2001; Timpone 1998)

A clear way in which people can overcome prejudice and increase their level of trust towards members of outgroups is by participating in shared civil society organisation. Social capital is built in this way – if you engage and interact with people frequently, that will help build trust.

- Revenge
- Obstacle to interpersonal cooperation
- Obstacle to the pursuit of justice

Some voters and scholars argue that anger is not always good when it comes to political action. Anger can be distorting – may act as an irrational driver which may make protests less effective, and may also prevent the arguments on which the protest is based from being presented clearly to the other members of public or even to politicians, if someone is trying to invoke change. Also, anger can be the source of revenge – can cause intergroup conflict, exacerbate existing conflicts, it can prevent interpersonal cooperation, because it makes it more difficult to cooperate especially across different groups if you feel a lot of anger towards another group that you consider responsible for an injustice, and more generally, it will prevent the achievement of social justice, which is often the final goal for many protestors.

- However, anger can actually help to signal and fight injustice
 - **'[A]ngry discourse is epistemically important not just because it tells the audience that the speaker is angry but also because it can help them imaginatively experience what it is like to be in the speaker's shoes, how the world appears or feels from where they stand. Put differently, angry discourse can enable the audience to empathise more fully with the speaker, where I am taking "empathy" to be synonymous with "imaginatively taking on the perspective of another to grasp how things appear or feel from there" (Lepoutre 2018, p.11)**

On the other hand, there are scholars who think that anger can play a very positive role, not just in motivating people to protest, but also in helping people to **put themselves in someone else's shoes**. What anger tends to do often is it helps listeners who are listening to someone who is delivering a speech that transmits a lot of anger, to put themselves in the situation of the speaker and to perceive the injustice that the **speaker is experiencing from the speaker's perspective**. This is very important because it triggers empathy, which is a necessary condition for motivating people to participate in protests and redress various forms of injustice. It also helps people to understand injustices more clearly.

- Emotional contagion
- 3 stages:
 - 1) **Speaking louder and faster is 'likely to raise the listener's blood pressure and feelings of anger' (Siegman et al., 1990, p.641)**
 - 2) **'Anger renders salient properties of our situation that are liable to ground injustices' (Lepoutre 2018, p.12)**
 - 3) **'[T]his emotional sensitivity facilitates the development of more nuanced moral concepts' (Lepoutre 2018, p.13)**

When someone is speaking in an angry way, that will manifest itself in various vocal features – someone will probably speak louder and faster, **and this is not just an accessory of someone's speech. It is something that renders salient properties of our situation that are liable to ground injustices**. It makes us more perceptive of key elements of the injustice that the speaker is talking about. It makes us more open to understanding that injustice; more sensitive to it.

- Example 1: Frederick Douglass
- **'The more I read, the more I led to abhor and detest slavery, and my enslavers [...] I loathed them as the meanest and the most wicked of men [...] Liberty! The inestimable birthright of every man had, for me, converted every object into an asserter of this great right. It was heard in every sound, and beheld in every object. It was ever present, to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition [...] My feelings were not the result of any marked cruelty in the treatment I received; they sprung from the consideration of my being a slave at all. It was slavery – not its mere incidents – that I hated. [...] The feeding and clothing me well, could not atone for taking my liberty from me. The smiles of my mistress could not remove the deep sorrow that dwelt in my young bosom' (Douglass 1855, p.161)**

This excerpt displays his anger when thinking about slavery, that not only he, but African Americans in general had been experiencing at the time he was writing, before the Civil War. You can see from his words that his anger transpires, and the anger makes him more aware and more conscious of injustice that he and his fellow African Americans were experiencing.

- Effect on others:

more intergroup counterparts may well be beneficial. Our findings clearly imply that by these means, it is at least possible to disconnect in-group favouritism and/or in-group identification from out-group devaluation. This might be the way to achieve a **positive regard for, and identification with, one's own country that is not dependent upon the disregard of other countries'** (Mummendey et al. 2001, p.171, emphasis added).

It is possible therefore, to acquire a positive ingroup favouritism, without having outgroup devaluation. You love your country, and that is it – you do not need to say you love your country because I hate these other countries, or because you think that that your country is better than these other countries. You can say that you simply love your country for what it is, you feel that it conforms to these high ideals of liberalism, such as individual freedom, basic rights, and you feel that your country has travelled a lot from the past, when it is used to be a dictatorship, and a less free country, and so your country has improved, and established institutions that protects rights and liberties, and imposes checks and balances on politicians, which guarantees the freedom of all citizens.

This is an addition to social identity theory, and one that tells us the limits of intergroup comparisons – we can have comparisons internal to our country, in our history, without needing to hate or have prejudice towards other groups.

- Propaganda undermining free speech and democracy
- *'In the US Supreme Court decision Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, written in 2010, the US Supreme Court decided that the rights in the US Constitution extended to corporations. The Court presented the decision as if extending free speech and other rights to corporations was like the Civil Rights Act, namely, an extension of rights to hitherto unrecognised persons. It was therefore presented as an embodiment of the principles of democracy. Yet the unlimited corporate donations that Citizens United gave rise to are themselves an existential threat to democracy, promising to hand over the mechanism of government to corporations that do the bulk of funding for political campaigns' (Stanley 2015, pp.61-62, emphasis added).*

Supreme Court decided that corporations can free speech, like individuals, and so because they have free speech rights, they should be allowed to give a lot of money to political campaigns, and therefore to influence them, and the outcome of elections. According to Stanley, this a form of propaganda, maybe not the Supreme Court per se, but those who use this argument that big corporations should have free speech and should be able to give whatever amount of money they want to their preferred candidates, that is actually undermining free speech, because it is really creating an inequality of free speech – some people have **'greater' free speech than others. And this is undermining democracy**, because for the US Supreme Court and for many scholars in the US, the main goal of free speech is to guarantee democracy, the accountability of politicians, and ensure that everybody is informed about political matters. But all of that is undermined if some powerful groups or corporations dominate the debate.

- Freedom of speech and hate speech

Many political leaders on the far-right or right-wing populist end of the spectrum have often invoked key liberal principles and freedoms in order to support their position, in order to persuade people to embrace their views.

Geert Wilders – the key point is that many liberal thinkers would support Wilders. Although they might disagree with his views, they would agree with his agree with the idea that he should have the right to say the things he says, and to use hate speech against Moroccans and other minorities. But others would say that, if we say that free speech should involve allowing people like Wilders or other right-wing politicians to use hate speech against religious and ethnic minorities, that seems to go against the ideal of free speech, because that kind of hate speech is often a type of silencing speech – that free speech is in silencing other free speech, which in this case, would be that of Moroccans and other minorities. And there is empirical evidence showing that this is the case, so you are not in fact promoting the freedom of speech, all things considered – you are promoting the freedom of speech for some, while also precluding the freedom of speech of others, that is those who feel silenced by the fact that they are being victims of hate speech. Many feminists have made, throughout the years, similar arguments about pornography – many liberals say that we should allow pornography, because it is about the freedom of speech, but many feminists have said over and over, pornography silences women, and so it is not really good for free speech, or only good for the free speech of men, or those men who enjoy viewing pornography. So, we need to think about this relationship between free speech and its effects when we try to defend absolute freedom of speech, and in cases like this, people would argue that this is an instance of propaganda, because free speech is producing, or is being used to achieve a goal that undermines the very rationale behind it.

Propaganda, persuasion and cognitive biases

Limited reception and acceptance

- Sometimes propaganda and persuasion have a less significant effect when we normally assume
- Limited reception
 - Low exposure, interest, attention and memory
 - **'A great many people will simply never receive the messages, no matter how painstakingly their persuasive effects were calculated'** (Sears and Kosterman 1994, p.261)

Fewer people than we expect, will be exposed to the messages that a politician is trying to convey. Some people will not be part of the audience, and thus targeted by the social media or traditional media that the person trying to persuade them is using. Also, people have a brief

Although it sounds scary to have something that would be worth dying for but that would make life so simple: to know that this is the most important thing. So, this gives people a script, a purpose. Having a script is healthy in and of itself; not this script in particular, but to provide people scripts can be very healthy for them, so we naturally seek them, and this is one script that can be offered.

- Ultimately, Cottee & Hayward (2011) argue that in addition to negative emotions (e.g., hate, anger), terrorism may very well be motivated by positive emotions such as love, solidarity and compassion

A lot of literature suggests that almost all terrorist groups think that they are being altruistic; they think that what they are doing is for the better of the world, and that rarely are they acting on what they would call self-interest.

(E)motives for terrorism – The desire for glory

- Cottee & Hayward (2011) argue that terrorists may be involved in an identity project motivated by *self-affirmation* and *self-vindication*:
 - Terrorists see themselves as *moral agents* caught in a battle between good and evil (Cosmic War)
 - Involvement in terrorism provides participants a chance to become *heroic figures* and part of an *exalted elite*

They might not care about the battle between good and evil, but this provides them an opportunity to become a hero, to do good, fight for the world and be remembered as that hero, i.e. to have glory.

- Terrorists use ‘overt personification of the *warrior ethos*’ to appeal to potential recruits (also see: Richardson, 2006)

This is like ultimate meaning, but this is not about doing something bigger than yourself and participating in some sacred battle, but being remembered and leaving a legacy, such like dying a good death on a battlefield, in the Roman sense.

- Faisal Shazhad (as cited by Cottee & Hayward, 2011: 977) the man who attempted to detonate a car-bomb in Times Square offered the following to the judge in his trial when asked if he had intent to kill:
 - **“But...I would point out one thing in connection to the attack, that one has to understand where I’m coming from, because this is – I consider myself a mujahid, a Muslim soldier. The US and NATO forces, along with 40, 50 countries, has attacked the Muslim lands...I am part of the answer to the US terrorising the Muslim nations and the Muslim people, and on behalf of that, I’m avenging the attacks...”**

He is the warrior soldier, who is carrying the cause for the rest of the cause, and there is a glory attached to that. He wants to be remembered that way, which is why he is saying it. He knows this is not going to be a compelling point to a group of Magistrates in a Western court; this is for the record, for other people to see.

- Hafiz Hanif (as cited in Cottee & Hayward, 2011: 977), a 16-year-old Taliban recruit in Pakistan, offered this testimonial:
 - **“The aim of my life has always been to be a shahid [martyr]. I want to attack infidels who insult Muslim women, who occupy Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan. There is nothing more to be strived for in this life except joining the jihad and becoming a shahid.”**

He has a romantic notion of what a shahid i.e. martyr actually is, and that there is nothing greater in life than actually fulfilling this ambition. So again, it is not about ultimate meaning or the greater good, but that it is going to make one look like the best self that they can be – somewhat of a vanity project.

The gist of it

- Cottee & Hayward (2011: 965) argue that for certain individuals it would be inaccurate to say that they are pushed or driven to terrorism, but rather that they are drawn to it:
 - **“It is contended here that terrorism, for some terrorists, is an existential choice concerning the kind of life they want to live. For these particular individuals, it does not make sense to say that they are “pushed” or “driven” toward terrorism by distant psychological, political or ideological forces. Rather, it is more accurate to say that they are drawn to terrorism: that they allow**

integration via other means, that is through friendship, family life, education and so on. This is a social explanation of the reason why many people decide to join the army.

Jackson et al. (2012)

- Jackson et al. (2012) – personality traits and the military
 - **What personality traits predict people's choice to enlist?**
 - What personality traits are affected by military service?

Another study by Jackson and others focuses more specifically on personality traits: zooms in to focus on what kind of personalities lead people to join the army, and also what kinds of personality traits are affected by a person's decision to join the army.

- The Big Five personality traits:
 - Extraversion
 - Agreeableness
 - Conscientiousness
 - Neuroticism
 - Openness to experience

Some of **these are important in explaining some people's decision to join the army**, in the same way in which they are important for explaining some people's decision to participate in politics, to join protest and collective action, and so on.

- Results – predictors of enlistment (Jackson et al. 2012):

There are specifically three personality traits which are important for predicting people's decision to join the army.

- Lower agreeableness

Less likely to be cooperative and friendly towards others.

- Lower neuroticism
- Lower openness to experience

Being less inclined to experiencing new social situations and places.

If you are more conservative in the way you approach the world, you are more likely to join the army.

- Results – personality traits affected by military service (Jackson et al. 2012):
 - Decreased agreeableness persistent over time
 - **'Given that lower levels of agreeableness are associated with greater levels of conflict in romantic relationships, difficulties in getting along with friends, and aggression...our findings suggest that military training may be potentially detrimental' (Jackson et al. 2012, p.275). However...**

But openness to experience seems to be affected by the very military training you are subject to, once you join the army.

You are more likely to join the army if you display lower levels of agreeableness, and this also results in your inability to lower ability than others to engage in romantic relationships, having friends and so on. But this will also increase once you join the military, because of the kind of discipline, hierarchy which characterises military life. So, if you already display lower levels of agreeableness than other people, those levels will become even lower once you have joined the army.

- **[L]ower levels of agreeableness are not completely negative, as they also predict greater occupational attainment' (Jackson et al. 2012, p.275)**

radicalisation, and makes them vulnerable to the appeal of religious extremist leaders. But you could make the same argument for non-religious extremist leaders, and non-religious forms of radicalisation.

Counter-radicalisation strategies

- Sometimes members of extremist groups voluntarily choose to leave these groups/disengage.

Some people will spontaneously choose to leave radical extremist groups.

- **'The personal damage suffered by extremist group members can be significant: including anxiety, paranoia, trauma, poor physical health, drug/alcohol abuse, physical injury, loss of relationships with family and friends, disrupted education and career, criminal charges, and/or imprisonment leading to limited future employment, housing and social opportunities. The damage inflicted on a person's community as a result of their involvement in political extremism can be enormous, ranging from economic disruption, to hate crimes, to large-scale attacks, as well as the significant policing and social resources that go towards preventing and responding to acts of political violence' (Barrelle 2015, p.130)**
- Barrelle (2015) – interviews with 22 former extremist group members

There are a number of factors which have been discovered in interviews and qualitative research, which seem to explain why some people simply leave extremist groups. Many of them become disillusioned with the leaders of the groups that they have joined or with other members, or they start to realise that the group uses excessive levels of violence that they do not like. But they also often feel that there are personal costs, such as being arrested, economic and financial costs, which may result from being arrested, such as losing your job. But there are, according to some research, engaging in extremist acts will have repercussions for your group; your group is more likely to become the target of hate speech, discrimination and violent acts. They leave because they feel guilty for having brought about said repercussions for their fellow group members.

- However, when this process of disengagement does not occur, states can prevent/counter radicalisation in various ways.

The state, according to many scholars and policy makers, needs to intervene because most or many people who have joined extremist groups will not spontaneously leave them, and so we need to do something. We need to ensure that people do not join these groups to begin with. There are a number of models which have been proposed or implemented in practice to counter radicalisation

'Prevent' strategy in the UK

'Reasoning from conjecture'

- **'[W]e argue from what we believe, or conjecture, are other people's basic doctrines, religious or secular, and try to show them that, despite what they might think, they can still endorse a reasonable political conception that can provide a basis for public reasons. [...] We must openly explain our intentions and state that we do not assert the premises from which we argue, but that we proceed as we do to clear up what we take to be a misunderstanding on others' part, and perhaps equally on ours' (Rawls 199, pp.786-787).**

Model advanced by people in political theory, which draws on John Rawls' work and the idea of reasoning from conjecture. This means that in a liberal democratic society, one of the best ways of preventing radicalisation in dealing with extremists or what Rawls called unreasonable citizens is to engage with them by showing that their own doctrine, whether they are religious or not, embodies or contains within itself, foundations for liberal order. E.g. Engaging with Muslims and showing them that the Quran and Islam as a religion contains strong foundations for endorsing liberal democratic order.

E.g. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Nai'im's (1990, cited in Rawls 1997, p. 590, n. 46) interpretation of Islamic Shari'a law

systematically – above any baseline level – when people shift from a deliberative to an implemental mindset' (Johnson and Tierney 2011, p. 18).

- Shift from deliberative to implemental mindset when war is perceived as imminent due to:
 - 'Choice'
 - 'Entrapment'
 - 'Turmoil'
- Consequences of shift to implemental mindset:
 - Outbreak of war (self-fulfilling prophecy)
 - Overconfidence about war victory
 - Risky military planning

Question 5 – Fundamentalism & Extremism

- In your revision, you should focus especially on the 5 models of radicalisation
- You should be prepared to provide some real-world examples
- 5 models of radicalisation (from King and Taylor 2011):
 - Borum's (2003) Pathway
 - Wiktorowicz's (2004) Theory of Joining Extremist Groups
 - Moghaddam's (2005-2006) Staircase to Terrorism
 - The NYPD's (Silber and Bhatt 2007) Radicalisation Process
 - Sageman's (2008) Four Prongs
- Borum's (2003) Pathway
 1. 'Social and economic deprivation' – 'it's not right'
 2. 'Inequality and resentment' – 'it's not fair'
 3. 'Blame and attribution' – 'it's your fault'
 4. 'Stereotyping and demonising the enemy' and legitimised use of violence
- Wiktorowicz's (2004) Theory of Joining Extremist Groups
 1. 'Cognitive opening' (e.g. after a personal crisis or after talking to an Islamic extremist)
 2. 'Religious seeking'
 3. 'Frame alignment' (involving deference to authority)
 4. 'Socialisation' (face-to-face or online)
- Moghaddam's (2005) Staircase to Terrorism
 1. 'Psychological interpretation of material conditions'
 2. 'Perceived options to fight unfair treatment'
 3. 'Displacement of aggression'
 4. 'Moral engagement'
 5. 'Solidification of categorical thinking and the perceived legitimacy of the terrorist organisation'
 6. 'The terrorist act and sidestepping inhibitory mechanisms'