

Power, Emotions, and Violent Conflicts

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Hatred, fear, and disdain—these are emotions that drive conflict protagonists to commit acts of violence against their adversaries. With such emotions, reason is minimized and replaced by fabricated notions about the enemy’s threats, intentions, and character replace facts about the dangerous “other”. Conventional thinking about the protagonists’ emotional life assumes their psychic world is cut off fundamentally from the objective realm about the conflict. Such a realm includes power relations among conflicting groups. Such power relations illustrate the inherent duality of their objective power relations and the subjectivity of emotions.

However, such conventional thinking regarding this duality between emotions and power cannot explain the following: the manifestation of certain moral emotions under certain social conditions constitutes a social-psychological force that intersects with the conflict dynamics. The exertion of such a force has the potential to induce, motivate, lure, compel or overwhelm conflict actors. In many conflict settings, the release of such a force is a political act, with the potential to mobilize conflict actors to take up arms against their adversary. Such a force reflects a manifestation of affect power. Reflecting the integration of power dynamics and the actors’ emotional life, affect power manifests itself in the public performatives where people gather, debate, deliberate, cheer, jeer, and sometimes fight. Such power is also embodied in the emotions of those who experience power’s effect, as if the force of such power is inscribed on the bodies

of those affected. Over time, the repetition of experiencing such a force affects the body if the body is being trained—or domesticated—to react in certain ways. One insidious form of such power consists of state-sponsored campaigns designed to control the minds and lives of targeted population groups. Such campaigns deploy techniques designed to instill in such group members a sense of their inferiority, as if they are lesser beings, morally, politically, and socially. These are techniques designed to instill a sense of debasement within the minds of such groups for disciplinary control, reflecting the power to exploit emotional vulnerabilities of targeted population groups.

In this paper, I examine the entanglement of certain emotions and power relations among actors immersed in protracted violence. Central to my arguments are the recent findings in social psychology regarding the complexity of moral emotions as they are experienced as a contagious force in conflict settings. Section 1 summarizes these findings. In section 2, I develop certain themes regarding the inter-linkages between the conflict actors' emotional life and their power relations. The notion of affect power is developed. In section 3, I present two case studies of affect power, which center on elements of structurally violent systems. I conclude with a summary regarding the implications of this emotion-power entanglement for conflict analysis. I recommend conflict analysts abandon the alleged distinction between the subjectivity of social psychological constructions, such as notions of identity and difference, and the objectivity of power dynamics that represent external drivers of conflict.

1. Aggression and Emotions

The centrality of emotions to the outbreak and prolongation of protracted violence is a subject of enormous scholarly research (see Kemper, 1990; Mackie & Smith, 2002; Petersen,

2002; Rimé & Christophe, 1997). From its nascent years as a distinct profession to the most current investigations, psychology has given prominence to the link between emotions and aggression. Most of the findings regarding the emotional underpinnings of aggression rest on a notion of linear causality, according to which those situational factors that foster an individual to experience emotional arousal tend to foster their aggression. This linearity takes the following form: environmental social conditions → emotional arousal → aggressive behavior. Freud focused on the social conditions of modern life that tend to repress the release of unconscious instinctual drives for pleasure. Rejecting any appeal to the unconscious, behaviorist oriented psychologists focused on situational factors and observable emotional reactions. For example, Leonard Berkowitz explained aggression through his frustration-reaction theory, according to which individuals are prone to aggress when they react with emotionally charged frustration to certain harsh situational factors of their lives, such as the deprivation of their basic elemental needs (Berkowitz, 1990).¹ In the burgeoning studies of neuroscience, aggression is explained as a neurological reaction to those stimuli that overwhelm an individual's cognitive function and activate the amygdala. Some neurological studies show that the psychic pain of social rejection increases anger, which in turn fosters aggressive behavior (Leary, Tweng & Quinlivan, 2006; see also Gaertner et al., 2008, and Warburton, Williams & Cairns, 2006).

Representing a major development in the psychology of aggression, the General Aggression Model gives due attention to multiple sorts of factors, including emotions. The model's architects explain aggression through a combination of distal causes—biological,

¹ Although enormous attention among psychologists has been given to Philip Zimbardo's famous 1971 study of aggression, such a study was not designed to examine the causal impact of emotions on the tendency towards violence. But clearly the experimental subjects who acted as prisoners exhibited intense expressions of anger, frustration, and rage as a reaction to their treatment by the prison guards.

environmental, and personality factors—and proximate causes that include situational and social encounters. With this model, an individual's reaction to both distal and proximate causes is spontaneous, uncontrolled, and unintentional. Emotional arousal is strongly influenced by an individual's knowledge structure, which in turn rests on their perceptions of others, interpretations of experiences, and their own behaviors (Allen, et al., 2018).

Yet, a growing body of social scientific research shows that the emotions that foster aggression are not reducible to an individual's subjective reaction to environmental and biological factors. Such emotions are inherently social experiences that rest upon interpersonal relationships, social influences, and mechanisms of group bonding (Harré, 1986; Nussbaum, 2001, Chapter 1; Armon-Jones, 1986). At the macro-level, the sociality of emotion is a driving force for intragroup connectivity. As I illustrate below, a nation experiences intense collective emotions in times of war, including fear of enemy attack, grief at the loss of fallen heroes, and joy at the nation's victory.

To probe this topic of the sociality of emotions in relation to aggression, I offer the following three themes from recent findings in social psychology, conflict analysis, and political science.

A. Moral Emotions. Many emotional experiences are inherently moralistic. They are inseparable from the landscape of our mental and social lives and thoroughly suffused with a sense of one's moral relations with others, as Martha Nussbaum shows (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 1). Underpinning certain positive moral emotions is a sense of caring for the well-being of others that another person or group will survive, thrive or flourish. For example, the emotion of grief at the loss of a loved one constitutes a moral response to such loss. Such a response is effused with valuation in two respects—first, the value of the person who has left or died, and second, the

value of the relationship between the griever and the person lost (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 31). Grief is a long-term disposition, as is feeling homesick, distressed, enthusiastic, and sorry for oneself. Extending beyond a momentary feeling, grief extends over time. We would not say “I grieved for 10 minutes, but now I am over it,” although we might say “I grieved for two years, but then moved beyond that.”

In general, moral emotions intersect with cognitive function regarding the social bonds and breaks with others. As Jonathan Haidt writes, moral emotions are those “that are linked to the interests or welfare either of society as a whole or at least of persons other than the judge or agents” (Haidt, 2003, p. 853). Such emotions rest upon positive or negative normative evaluations of others. Anger, contempt, and disdain are clustered together, like a family of emotions that are experienced as negative responses to the actions of others (Haidt, 2003, p. 855). For example, anger tends to prompt attacks against others based on a moral judgment that someone, possibly oneself, is being treated unfairly by others (Berkowitz & Heimer, 1989). Underpinning an angry reaction is a sense of a moral bond between the angry person and those who are, or were, presumably attacked or threatened. Such a bond reflects a sense of caring for the threatened person who presumably deserves protection. Of course, anger can spread, as in cases where an entire family can experience anger at another family from a single incident of attack across family lines.

B. Enculturation. Experiences of anger, contempt, and disgust reflect the social norms. Certain moral emotions become embedded in the ethos of society, reflecting the effect of socially sanctioned value judgments about morally right and wrong actions, good and bad life conditions, and virtuous or vicious character traits. Such enculturation can be understood by three themes regarding the emotional and cultural spheres of one’s life (Armon-Jones, 1986).

(i) Emotions are always about something, that is, reactions to the concrete world of observed behaviors, patterns of practices, and social settings (Harré, 1986, p. 4). Such reactions transcend one's subjective psychic states. To feel fear is to react to a perceived threat, sensing danger to oneself, or to those with whom one is emotionally attached. In like measure, experiences of anger, rage, or bitterness constitute embodied reactions to the perceived behaviors—past, present or future—of others. Even for those emotional reactions that trigger psycho-physiological processes, such as sudden fright, such reactions are not reducible completely to such processes.

(ii) Immersion in a cultural community influences one's emotional reactions significantly. Such immersion includes the impact of shared values, beliefs, and expectations on one's emotional responses. Through development of socialization skills, one's emotional habitus is formed, which means one acquires tendencies to react emotionally in ways that largely conform to the culture's norms. For example, as girls and boys become encultured in a particular religious community, they acquire the skills of proper emotional reactions to rituals, ceremonies, and sermons. Such enculturation reveals the impact of social identity. According to intergroup emotions theory, one's emotional experiences are determined more by a sense of social identity, based on the identity category that defines their sense of self, than by interpersonal dynamics (Miller et al., 2004; Smith, 1993). Researchers have shown that the emotions determined by one's affiliation in a particular categorical group, such as a faith tradition, differ from those activated by interpersonal relationships (Mackie & Smith, 1998; Van Zomeren et al., 2010). Additionally, the types of categorization-based emotions tend to be shared among members of a given categorical group, which shows that categorization-based emotions are based on group—rather than individual-level appraisals (Crisp et al., 2007).

(iii) From such enculturation, an emotional experience has a prescriptive function regarding the standards for evaluation by one's community. Certain emotions are expected, encouraged, and sometimes rewarded under particular social situations. The emotions reflect the culturally sanctioned normalized value judgments, in which case emotions vary with such judgements. For example, in certain non-Western societies, the emotional experiences of individuals represent a sense of the relationship between a person and an event involving other people (Lutz, 1986).

C. Emotional Contagion. With this enculturation of emotions in society, the emotionally charged performances spread like a contagion from individuals to individuals and groups to groups.² Emotional contagion occurs through a process of social mimicry, where one emotional response to witnessing someone's behavior, such as physical violence, triggers a similar emotional response in individuals or groups.³ Certain emotions are given social primacy in specific settings; the emotions tend to be anticipated, expected, and normalized. Certain shared emotions take on a normative quality; under the appropriate conditions, such emotions are encouraged, expected, and validated (Heaney, 2011, p. 271). For example, a public expression of grief—bowed head, somber tone and possibly tearing-up—is expected when attending a funeral. A violation of such expectation, such as in the form of boisterous laughter, would prompt others

² Regarding the force of public performances, Pierre Bourdieu writes: “Symbolic force, that of a performative utterance, and especially of an order, is a form of power which is exercised on bodies, directly, and as if by magic, without any physical constraint; but the magic works only on the basis of previously constituted disposition is, which it ‘triggers’ like springs” (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 169).

³ According to Hatfield, Cacioppo and Rapson, emotional contagion consists of “the phenomenon of having one person's emotions and related behaviors directly trigger similar emotions and behaviors in other people. Emotions can be shared across individuals in many different ways both implicitly and explicitly. For instance, conscious reasoning, analysis and imagination have all been found to contribute to the phenomenon” (Hatfield et al., 1993, pp. 96-97).

to express disapproval or scorn for the offender. The inherently contextual aspects of emotional contagion imply a social geography of emotions, according to which certain public spaces are tied socially to norms for exhibiting emotions (Davidson & Milligan, 2004).

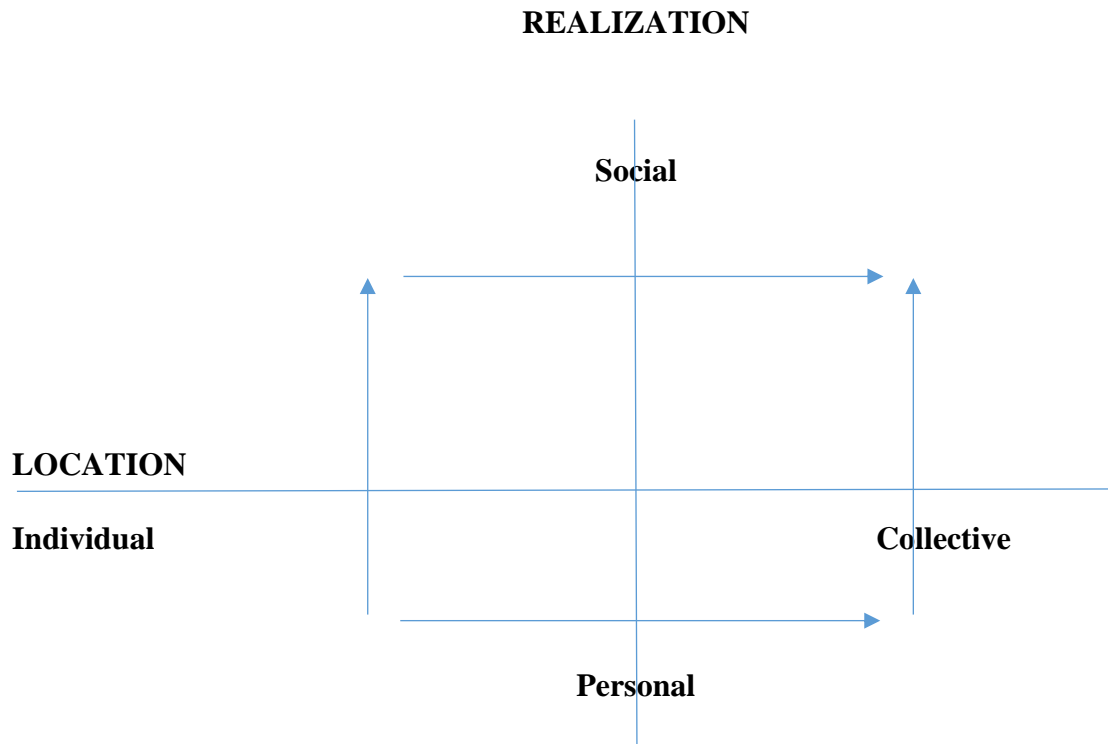
Emotional contagion need not require direct observation of someone's emotional behavior. Speeches of political leaders, public demonstrations, and social media feeds can trigger it, many of which showcase intense positive or negative emotions (Kramer et al., 2012). In many conflict contexts, emotional contagion is evident in many media stories about the threats of enemy attack. From a socio-functional approach to threats, different groups pose distinct types of threats, which evoke definitive and functional emotional reactions based on the need to protect group resources or social structures. Stories of fear, hatred, and anger are often intensified with reference to the collective memory that ancestors have of past tragedies. Such stories can put individuals in a fever pitch of rage that can promote calls for violence against the enemy (Hatfield & Rapson, 1986, pp. 130-2). In some conflict contexts, such memory seems to foster a chronic a sense of intra-group bonding driven by a share fear of a perceived enemy. In such cases, the shared chronic fear of an enemy attack can be habituated through various socialization processes (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 219-222).⁴ For example, in Israeli society the shared perceptions of a threatening enemy and threatened allies are elevated to cardinal categories that define the social-political order of the Middle East (Bar-Tal, 2001). Such emotions have the effect of motivating calls for vigilance vanquishing the enemy.

With stories of the enemy's evil-doings come emotionally charged glorifications of the nation's heroes. The nation's generals are likened to gods, the flag evokes a sense of collective

⁴ As Daniel Bar-Tal writes, shared emotions are "the stimulator, interpreter, motivator, energizer, director, and controllers of various social-psychological processes related to the dynamics of the intractable conflict" (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 213).

pride, and they sing national hymns with religious fervor. In war-time propaganda, a victorious battle becomes consecrated, as if rising symbolically above the tide of sequential events to be fixed in mythic time. In such a battle, the warriors are worshipped for their love of country and steely control of their innermost sentiments, such as fear. The warrior is expected to complete the mission despite pain, fear, personal hatred of superiors, or risks to personal safety.

In sum, social emotions are moralistic, enculturated, and contagious. All of which raises a question about the nature of an emotional experience regarding how it is manifested and even where it is located. One does not *have* a moral emotion; a moral emotion is not reducible to a private psychic state sealed off from one's social life. Moral emotions do not retain a fixed "location" as either individualistic or collectivist. One experiences a moral emotion through its "movement" back and forth, depending on changes in the social settings, influential forces, and perceptions. To capture this variability of such emotions, I offer a model that undermines the conventional dichotomy in the realization and location of a moral emotion. The model consists of a two-dimension Vygotsky space, which is an abstraction of a moral emotion's possible locations and possible manifestations (Harré, 1984, p. 113). This space is defined by two dimensions: first, a dimension of location of emotion on a continuum of the individual or collective domains, and second, a dimension of the ways in which an emotion is manifested on a continuum of social and the personal.

Figure 1*Vygotsky space of Emotions*

One axis of such a space consists of the personal-social continuum of the emotion's realization, that is, how it is manifested. Yet, under certain conditions, one's personal (individualistic) realization blends with socialization processes subject to changing experiences, circumstances, and normative practices. For example, the prolonged grief over the death of a loved one can represent an individual's pain that is manifested during private moments without outward expression. While in other contexts it is displayed outwardly, such as through crying while looking at a picture of the deceased. Grief is neither always private, nor always public.

In a radically different context, a nation's shared sorrow at learning that their valiant heroes experienced a major defeat on the battlefield can be manifested differently over time.

While the first few days after such a defeat may include the public display of sorrow with participation at a funeral procession to honor such heroes, in later years such sorrow can be exhibited through construction of monuments and museum displays. And such institutionalization of a nation's emotion depends on if the nation was ultimately defeated.

The model's second axis consists of a continuum of the emotion's location. As moral emotions are manifested through speech acts, gestures, and physical markers, they are variously individualistic and collectivist. For example, the collective sorrow that a nation experiences in the early days of a military defeat can become magnified for some people as they learn their loved ones died in battle. Under such conditions, the individual-collective location changes with such a realization. In such a case, one's individualistic manifestation of an emotion could intensify even as the collectivist emotion of sorrow recedes.

2. Affect Power

The social emotions presented are interlinked with the expression of political power. This has been demonstrated by a growing number of scholars in international relations. Rejecting attempts by classical realism to reduce decision making by political leaders to a rational calculation of costs and benefits, the architects of this turn towards emotions have shown a nation's collective anger, revenge, and fear can impact decisions regarding war and peace. In particular, such emotions are tied strongly to the invocation of national symbols (S. Kaufman, 2006). In war's lead-up or aftermath, the invocation by conflict protagonists of iconic symbols—flags, anthems, parades—serves as an emotional reaffirmation of the glories of the nation's past, seeking to induce civilians to sacrifice in the 'good violence' against the nation's foes. Even pacifist symbols, such as religious crosses, stars and crescents, have been charged with warlike meanings about the moral imperatives to vanquish enemies. With the militaristic symbols of war,

the category of the enemy is experienced with emotional intensity regarding a sense of fear, contempt, and repulsion.

Of course, political theorists of the past recognize the centrality of mass emotions in political power. Thomas Hobbes found that human beings are driven by negative emotions such as jealousy, greed, and anger. For Hobbes, the political leaders—the Leviathan—must suppress their natural urge to act on such emotions by instilling fear in their political subjects. Hobbes found inspiration in Niccolò Machiavelli’s declaration that the prince should rule through cruelty or kindness, although it is “better to be feared than loved if you cannot be both” (Machiavelli, 2005, pp. 55-56). In stark contrast, Jean Jacques Rousseau adopted the idyllic notion of the state of nature where inhabitants are gentle, honest, and happy.

Recent contributors to this resurrection in emotions give special attention to the power that influences, and is influenced by, a nation’s emotional consciousness during times of interstate war (Maéva and Sangar, 2018). A leading figure in this emotional turn, Richard Lebow shows how many interstate wars are driven by the lure of revenge. Such revenge is driven by a collective anger the nation has lost its international standing, typically because of losing territory from a previous war (Lebow, 2010, pp. 185 and 202). With such wars of revenge, emotional sentiments contort political leaders’ rational deliberation about war’s costs and benefits.

Besides revenge, many interstate wars are intensified by the nation’s sense of honor that is violated and shame that is felt.⁵ In particular, a sense of collective disgrace at a nation’s past military defeats serves as a prelude to many cases of mass violence.⁶ For example, in the early

⁵ I thank Jonathan Kotra for his research findings on these important figures in international relations.

⁶ Donald Kagan describes this sense of national disgrace in the prelude to war “as the search for fame and glory; the desire to escape shame, disgrace and embarrassment; the wish to avenge a wrong and thereby to restore one’s reputation; the determination to behave in accordance with

days of World War II, Adolf Hitler rationalized his military campaign against France as redress for Germany's humiliation from the terms of the Versailles Treaty. For the Allies, the United States entered this war with a sense of national disgrace over Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, which U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt characterized as an "unprovoked and dastardly attack." Following World War II, the honor-shame dynamic drove many revolutionary movements in Africa and Asia that sought liberation from colonial domination. These revolutionary leaders captured the collective fury of colonized people, as they railed against colonial rulers for having stolen their material property, natural resources, and collective soul. Such fury is conjoined with a love of the nation that seems as natural as one's religion or even one's skin color (Anderson 1983, p. 143). For example, Mao Zedong invoked repeatedly the national disgrace of "The Century of Humiliation," when Western military forces defeated the Qing forces in the First Opium War in 1842. Mao Zedong invoked China's historic vulnerability to Western powers in the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. The nation's lament over "The Century of Humiliation" continues to this day.

What is the character of this political power that affects the nation's sentiments? To address this question, we should avoid the tendency exhibited in some academic quarters in objectifying political power. For classical realists in international relations, political power is real, measurable, and subject to rational controls by free-thinking agents. Power is virtually axiomatic to the existence of the state; states survive or perish based on how they acquire, secure, retain, use, share, or lose power in their relations with other states (Morgenthau, 1985, Chapter

certain moral ideals. Although concepts of what is honorable and dishonorable can vary over time and place, sometimes superficially and sometimes deeply, and although other people's ideas of honor, especially those of an earlier time, can seem silly or outmoded, such surface variations often conceal a fundamental similarity or even identity" (1997).

1).⁷ Like a commodity, state power can be possessed, owned, manipulated, and transferred, as least according to classical realists.

This objectification of political power, or power generally, is mistaken. I offer a pragmatic perspective that locates political power in fields of practices. As Pierre Bourdieu notes, a field creates the landscape of practices that are guided by socially sanctioned norms, such as explicit rules of the organization, commands by institutions directors, and public principles that guide the institution's operations (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In general, a field of practice is a macro-space of interactions influenced by external social norms and internal tendencies for the player to act in certain ways. The political field is both a field of forces in which individuals or groups can influence, and it is also a field of struggles over access to such forces regarding who has and does not have access to such forces (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 171).⁸ So, the power of political leaders to impact the national mood comprises fields of practices.

The fields of practice associated with affect power are determined by the three factors presented above regarding social emotions. For example, the practices of instilling fear, hatred, and anger among the nation's population in the lead-up to war reveal three themes of morality, enculturation, and contagion that define social emotions.

First, the sort of emotions that reflect the affect power of conflict protagonists are steeped in moral sentiments. These emotions are deeply moralistic. In times of war, many political

⁷ There is an element of triviality in the claim that power relations define international relations. The notion that states interact with each other through the capacity to exert a force—social, political or economic—is like claiming that states interact as a result of their capacity to interact, that is, a capacity to exert a force.

⁸ Pierre Bourdieu writes that any political field “produces an effect of censorship by limiting the universe of political discourse, and thereby the universe of what is politically thinkable, to the finite space of discourses capable of being produced or reproduced within the limits of the political problematic” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 172).

leaders rejoice in the expression of love for the nation, adoration for heroes, and proclamations of the just cause. The agent of such power rationalizes their power with a strong sense of being self-righteous, that their motives are pure, the cause is just, and their decisions are morally sound. Not reducible to a rational calculus of costs and benefits, such self-righteousness is charged with emotional meaning. Second, such political power to affect the nation's mood becomes enculturated through repetition of threat narratives that draw upon normative positions of 'us' and 'them.' As the enemy's threats become repeated in narratives of their brutality, they are positioned as inherently vicious. Such positioning stands in stark contrast to the essential virtue of the ingroup nation, which is evident in 'our' just cause and in the acts of good violence. Such a polarity of positioning is layered in emotionally charged images that invoke hate, loathing, and anger at the enemy (Sy et al., 2005). Third, the force of such affect power by the nation's leaders can spread like a contagion through society. For example, political dictators proclaiming the just cause in the war against an enemy routinely proclaim their love of the nation and hatred of the enemy. Sometimes, such leaders portray themselves as the nation's moral compass where "their" love of the nation and hate for the enemy is taken to mimic the emotional sentiments of the nation. With such mimicry, the political leaders represent the nation's emotional surrogates.

Consider state-sponsored propaganda designed to galvanize public support for the just cause, to prepare them for the sacrifices that lay ahead, and to take up arms against the nation's foe (Dojčinović, 2012, pp. 26-27). Such propaganda combines rhetorical trickery and emotionally riveting imagery. Such a combination in at least four techniques: (1) the enemy's malice can 'spread' from one or a few persons to many, until an entire group is stigmatized as dangerous, threatening, or depraved. (2) A single episode recounted of a perpetrator's action to

his/her intentions, character traits, or essential being; (3) a transition from neutral ‘factual’ information about the perpetrator’s actions to normative judgments; (4) a transition from the past to the present, or from the present to the future. Through such techniques, a story about one person is extended to another, from one person’s character traits to another’s traits, and from some individuals of a group to the group itself.

For example, in the prelude to the genocidal violence of 1994 in Rwanda, Hutu extremists implemented a propaganda campaign that advanced a dominant narrative about Tutsi wickedness. This campaign included character assassinations of individual Tutsis, stories of past atrocities, and narratives of Tutsi plans for conquest. The affect power of such a narrative is obvious in the repulsive animal images of Rwandan Tutsis as vermin, snakes, and cockroaches. A Hutu-controlled journal called *Kangura* published the following so-called history of Tutsi domination.

The first inhabitants of Rwanda were the Twa, followed by the Hutu in the 7th century. A long time after, the Tutsi infiltrated and quickly took power by a system of vassalage based on the cow. Power was monarchical and feudal, and the other ethnic groups were reduced to servitude; abused at will and exploited without mercy. The regime was oppressive and bloody. For example, the queen mother Kanjogera, in order to rise from her seat, would lean on two swords planed in the shoulders of two Hutu children (Chrétien et al., 1995, p. 110).

This text moves from the historical concepts of vassalage and servitude to the more repulsive images of the evil queen mother striking Hutu children with her swords. Such imagery castigates Tutsis as degenerates, and establishes the immoral imperative to protect the nation’s good—meaning “pure”—people. One Hutu killer who was later imprisoned for his crimes

rationalized his actions as follows: “We called them ‘cockroaches,’ an insect that chews up clothing and nests in it, so you have to squash them hard to get rid of them. We didn’t want any more Tutsis on the land” (Hatzfeld, 2005, p. 231).

Affect power is situated in the micro-processes of all social relations in a political space.⁹ In any social encounter, certain individuals are socially positioned in ways that affords them a certain power over others. To accentuate this point, I offer a model designed to integrate moral emotion with affect power, as presented in Figure 2.

⁹ While Michel Foucault does directly address the notion of affect power, his notion that power is infused in all social relations, in the micro-processes of interactions, is perfectly suited for affect power (see Foucault, 1990, p. 94).

Figure 2

Vygotsky Space of Affect Power

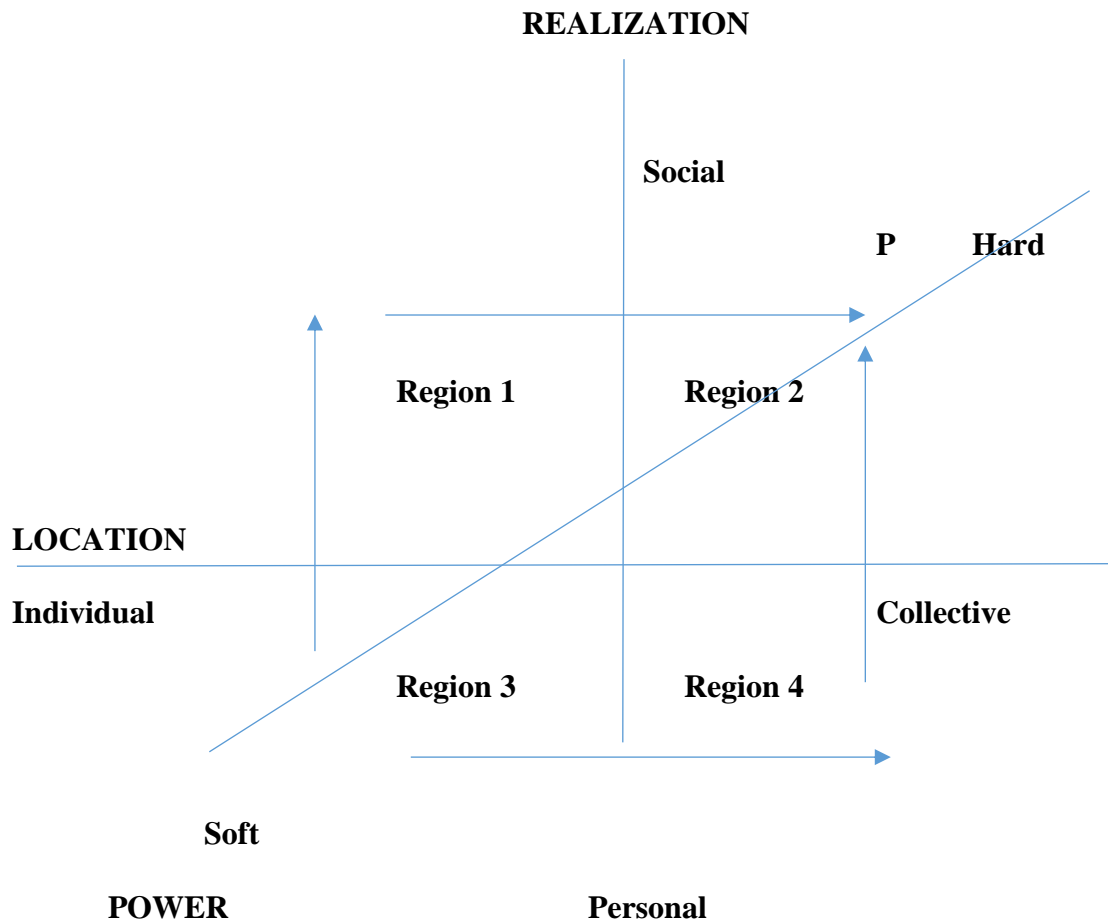


Figure 1 captures the location and realization of social emotions, whereas Figure 2 includes the third dimension of power in a political field. Again, such power constitutes a contested capacity to influence others in a political field.

Despite the examples presented above of war-time propaganda, affect power is not always nefarious, malicious, or destructive. Such power is not equivalent to domination.

Consider the practices of soft power in a minister's sermons to her congregation. The feelings of joy in celebrating a wedding or sorrow in shared grief during a funeral carry with them a capacity to bring people together by intensifying bonds among participating members of the community. Such emotions are situated in region 2, which reflects a collectivist location and social manifestation. The symbolic message of such practices is that "we" walk through life together by sharing our laughter and tears as we walk through life together, step by step and arm in arm without fear or loathing of "you." In a protracted violent conflict, I believe certain practices of peacebuilding reflect a positive emotion of compassion (Rothbart & Allen, 2019). Such practices are represented in the model in region 2.

3. Case Studies

The close juxtaposition of moral emotions and political power offers important implications for structural violence. Such violence is driven by mechanisms of power designed to solidify or enhance structural inequities of various social-political systems. Such mechanisms are depersonalized; they operate regardless of the intentionality of individual leaders, administrators, or bureaucrats. Johan Galtung identifies four mechanisms of power (Galtung, 1975). First, exploitation, that consists of the capacity to generate systematic distraction of net benefits, as in cases of managers expropriating the financial resources their workers deserve. Second, penetration, that refers to a capacity to get 'under the skin' of those doing the exploiting by contorting the consciousness of the underdogs. Third, fragmentation, which refers to the power to separate the exploited population groups from one another, to diminish their capacity to act together in ways that enhance their collective strength. Fourth, marginalization, which is the capacity of the exploiters to create a classification system for a rank ordering—socially and

politically—of the population groups, while ensuring the categorical supremacy of society’s top dogs.

Such mechanisms of structural violence have a social-psychological dimension that includes an emotional realm. Certain instruments of power exploit emotional vulnerabilities regarding their weaknesses, desires, tendencies, and aspirations. One insidious form of power is a capacity to manipulate the thought processes of others, to deceptively induce them to “voluntarily” act in ways that serve the agents’ best interests and against those of the deceived group. Psychological power comes in many forms, where an individual or group can coerce, cajole, compel, or threaten others. Such power comes in techniques designed to blind, deceive, and distort the thoughts of large population groups. I offer two case studies of this emotion-power entanglement.

A. Case study of systemic humiliation. This is one form of state-power designed to exploit the psyche of a targeted population group and diminish their self-esteem through a poisonous self-debasement (Lukes, 2005, pp. 27-28). The technique of manufactured degradation and self-degradation of such a group includes fabricated images of their incompetence, ignorance, or worthlessness. Such imagery illustrates the insidious force of systemic humiliation. The impact of such a force goes beyond the psychological pain associated with an individual’s insults. With systemic humiliation, the targeted group members are cast as lesser beings, as if carrying a taint that cannot be removed by donning new clothes, amassing wealth, or exhibiting unusual talents. Such degradation is manufactured to position, or re-position, such group members as diminished people.¹⁰ In other words, systems of humiliation cause violence to their

¹⁰ In general, one’s position represents one’s place in a social or political order as determined by the set of moral rights and obligations afforded to them in relation to others (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003, chapter 1).

social or political existence by maligning their position in society. They are cast as being unworthy of the rights, esteem, and status others enjoy. A racial, religious, or nationalistic group who feel inferior to high power groups are less likely to complain, obstruct, resist, or rebel against authority figures, or so the agents of degradation think. The targeted group members might even contribute to their own debasement by exhibiting discriminatory behavior against other members of their group. Such techniques are rationalized by appeals to the universal norms of decency, civility, or security that all right-thinking people cherish.

Psychologists have shown that such debasement can be painful. Recent studies of neuro-processing confirm this correlation between social rejection and psychic pain as a prelude to aggression. In these studies, a group of experimental subjects were induced to experience social exclusion similar to what occurs in ethnic bigotry. When these subjects experienced feelings of being forcibly ostracized from a social group, the regions activated in the brain are associated with a painful *physical* injury. These regions are the anterior cingulate cortex and the anterior insula (Eisenberger, 2012; Eisenberger et al., 2003). In sum, a system of humiliation consists of instruments of affect power designed to foster a sense of inferiority in a population for garnering their obedience, cooperation, or even their complicity in the overall stability of the high power group.

Ample references to systemic humiliation are found in the writings of scholars, authors and activists exposing the patterns of racism. For example, Franz Fanon examined the pernicious impact of manufactured inferiority induced by colonial white society, linking Blackness to images of animals, slaves, or beasts (Fanon, 1967, p. 98). In his Letter from a Birmingham Jail, M. L. King reveals the manufactured debasement Jim Crow laws fostered, with the effect of creating among Negroes a “degenerating sense of Nobodiness” in the eyes of Whites. Malcolm X

implored Blacks to expunge from their souls the poison of inferiority they received and ingested from the hands of White Supremacists; he called on Blacks to realize the truth of their supremacy. Cornell West offers a graphic image of this poisonous self-debasement as follows: “To Niggerize a people is to make them afraid and ashamed and scared and intimidated, so that they are deferential to the powers that be” (2014, p. 15).

Consider the practice of racial profiling, which police officers often defend as a valuable technique for apprehending potential criminals. The evidence that young black male youths receive harsh treatment from local police officers is quite compelling. Many studies offer similar findings of mistreatment (Brunson, 2007; Carr et al., 2007). For example, one study of inner city black youths living in St. Louis revealed accounts of unwarranted physical assaults by police officers (Gau & Brunson, 2010). In another study, 90 black men from Georgia were asked about their experiences with police. More than half of them, that is 50, recounted negative experiences (English et al., 2017, p. 193-194). Their testimonies described verbal abuse such as name calling and threats, physical abuse, and unfair arrests. They expressed anger for being treated unfairly combined with feelings of being over-powered by racialized practices. Such feelings are illustrated in the following testimony:

I felt like you know when I was approached and uh, arrested. I felt like I was uh, what’s the word to look for, it, it was excessive force . . . I uh tried to ask questions about why I was being approached and I was physically a . . . a . . . abused. Because of that . . . you know I was uh, considered as being a smart ass and uh, thrown on the . . . thrown on the concrete and scratched. You know, face pressed down into the asphalt, and you know, scratched my face up and everything, and, and thrown in the car and arrested. And I just felt like it’s definitely because I was black.

Former police officer, Tony Gaskew validated this testimony of strategic humiliation by admitting his invisible job was to humiliate young black men. Superiors instructed him “to humiliate their family, friends, and community either by legal fear of arrest and asset forfeiture, or by the most powerful weapon in my arsenal: planting cultural doubt. That is, doubt in your ability to trust family and friends and doubt in their ability to trust you” (Gaskew, 2014, p. 90).

Such humiliation is both individualistic and collective; particular Black men experience it and others who strongly object to this practice as an assault on ‘our’ people. In Figure 2, this is captured by locating such emotion in both region 1 (individual experience) and 2 (collective experience).

To be sure, not all cases of systemic humiliation lead to a sense of shame experienced by the targeted individuals. Some cases are so subtle and disguised that even the degraded group members are unaware of their subjugation. Consider the processes of categorical erasure, where certain targeted individuals are physically present in a social space but socially invisible. They are seen as bodies that move, but not socially recognized as worthy of esteem. Such positioning constitutes a form of categorical erasure within a social environment. In some social environments, such erasure can have lethal consequences.

Consider the treatment of female patients in health care. Women experience a categorical erasure in health care in clinical research studies, preventive treatments, and medical care services. Yet, many of them are unaware of such erasure and lack the emotions the cases of racial profiling experienced above. In particular, there is overwhelming evidence of sex-differences in the frequency, causes, and intensity of coronary heart disease (CHD). This disease strikes women at a higher rate than men. In 2017, about one in every 16 women aged 20 and older has this disease, representing 6.2% of this population group. Also, CHD is the leading

cause of death among women in the US; CHD caused one in every five female deaths in 2017 (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018: Saving Lives, Protecting People, <https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/women.htm>). The cumulative risk of women between the ages of 50 and 94 of dying from CHD is 31%. Within CHD, 42% of women who have acute coronary syndrome will die within one year. In contrast, 24% of men who have this syndrome will die within one year (American Heart Association, 2017).

However, many physicians continue to erroneously believe in gender neutrality regarding the treatment of CHD, which reflects “de-gendered” health care for this disease. This belief is conjoined with the tacit understanding men represent the standard frame of reference for diagnosing and treating CHD. This male-dominated standardization is evident in medical studies, which has led to women being routinely underrepresented in clinical trials (Xhyheri & Bugiardini, 2010, p. 227-228). Regarding their treatment, women undergo fewer medical procedures in the health care system for CHD than men. For example, men are more likely to be admitted to coronary care units where women exhibit the same set of symptoms (Xhyheri & Bugiardini, 2010, p. 232). Also, men are twice as likely as women to receive certain medical treatments after being diagnosed for CHD, even though women show symptoms for this disease as often (Ayanian & Epstein, 1991).

B. Rage. One form of affect power increasingly common among political pundits, activists, and politicians is righteous rage. We have witnessed such rage among right-wing radio hosts such as Rush Limbaugh and Alex Jones railing on democratic political figures. In 2016, Presidential Candidate Donald Trump induced a collective rage among his jeering supporters with chants “Lock her up!” Left-wing activities also display this emotion, as illustrated by the recent protests against the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. The display of

righteous rage is exhibited by a few protestors who destroyed property, looted stores, and physically confronted police and the National Guard. As one protester laments, “I’m angry, I’m sad, I’m sick, I’m scared for my children” (*Washington Post*, June 4, 2020, p. B1).

The activists that exhibit rage in a public space garner political capital to induce potential compatriots to act. Such a performative comes with a political force, like a contagion, that sweeps over like-minded or like-feeling people. Such a force reflects the activists’ political capital to mobilize others in a shared struggle. As a result, networks are formed, resources gathered, and strategies developed. In cases of outright political rebellion, the emotional contagion includes disdain, righteous indignation, or hatred. A public expression of rage has normative import, as if to convey the message, “If you are not angry, you’re not paying attention.” This message implies the political opponents of the enraged person exhibit willful ignorance to the injustice in “our” midst. In certain respects, the enraged person is perceived to be immune to refutation. Nobody else can challenge ‘my’ suffering, which tacitly presents a sense of infallibility to their explanation. A person who appears sincere about their rage acquires a rhetorical authority about their political stance. In other words, their rage reflects an entanglement of the so-called inward emotions and outward behavior in a political struggle. This inner-outer duality is confusingly blended in the expression of affect power.

Rage can be institutionalized. For some grass-roots movements seeking social justice, rage defines their identity. For example, in the United States the Righteous Rage Institute for Social Justice adopts the mission “to create an educational pathway and pipeline of emerging Social Justice Leaders and Grassroots Community Organizers” (Accessed June 1, 2020. <https://operations.du.edu/irise/project-righteousrageinstitute>). For activists of this institute, their rage is both politicized in their mission and rationalized by their sense of moral indignation at

patterns of systemic injustice that target certain population groups. This social group defines themselves as enraged righteously in seeking to combat systems of oppression. This integration of individual “subjective” emotions and universal norms for justice illustrate the emotion-power entanglement. The righteous rage conveys a sense of being both objective given its grounding in the presumable reality of social injustice and subjectively embodied among those who are enraged. Such embodiment adds to the sense of authenticity of the experience, as if the enraged person experiences the injustice in ‘my’ soul, body, and very being. Such emotional expressions have emotional capital, which refers to the capacity to exert an influence through the display of emotions (Heaney, 2019, p. 234). In recent years, certain political figures have sought to harness increased emotional capital for garnering political capital. As Jonathan Heaney writes: “there is a new emotional logic operating within the field of politics, and . . . this is based upon the transformation or conversion of emotional capital to political capital (Heaney, 2019, p. 234).

Conclusion

We should abandon the conventional assumption that the realm of emotions of actors engaged in protracted violent conflict is fundamentally walled off from their power relations. In public spaces, moral emotions such as hatred, anger, and disdain can spread like a contagion among the conflict actors and their supporters. State governments can manufacture such a force artificially, as illustrated in the mechanisms for systemic humiliation. In reaction to such governmental campaigns, the enraged victim of such targeted humiliation can garner political capital through emotionally charged rhetoric that induces, motivates, and mobilizes their followers. All of which reflect the impact of affect power.

The implications of these findings for conflict analysis are significant. They include:

(1) Structurally violent systems have an emotional dimension.

(2) The power relations among actors engaged in a protracted violent conflict are entangled with the sociality of emotions, which means the political life of conflict actors impacts their emotional experiences and such experiences carry a political force.

(3) The sociality of emotions is definable by three elements—the moralistic import of social emotions, their enculturation, and their contagion force.

(4) In settings of protracted violence, such a force has political import.

(5) State governments can exploit such a contagion in their campaigns to contort the thought processes and emotional life of targeted population groups.

(6) For the low power group members, such a force is realized in the emotional contagion of public performatives.

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