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Alternating dominance: Social categorization, group formation and the problem of borders

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In his opening introduction, Moghaddam (this volume) points to the fact of recurring dictatorships, that is, when a dictatorial regime is overthrown only for another dictatorial regime to take its place. In this opening introduction, I would like to point out that democratic governance may not be sufficient to eradicate this issue. I would like to argue that democratic societies afford a similar alternating dominance structure through the formation of coalitions. I would like to suggest that democratic coalitions often take the form of alternating dominance structures, where the will of those who dominate at a certain point in a given society is imposed on society at large for a given constitutionally prescribed tenure, only to be displaced by another dominating coalition at a subsequent point in time. This is particularly the case when a political party wins with an absolute majority and is able to govern without the need for a cross-party coalition.

Realistic conflict theory (LeVine & Campbell, 1972) suggests that human beings competed for resources in the environment for evolutionary adaptation, and formed coalitions to obtain resources to secure their own survival. The coalition strategy seems to have been adaptive for the human species (Van Vugt, Roberts & Hardy, 2007), and indeed we also observe that many democratic countries rely on coalition governments to undertake their national operations. I would argue that this provides the psychological cocktail explaining the gamut of influence in cycles of dominance, be they democratic, dictatorial, or any other form. Malta's 'golden soldiers' mock sticker album provides an apt illustration. Malta is a democratic republic and a full EU member state. Following a landslide victory in 2013 over the governing Nationalist Party, the Malta Labour Party was criticised by the opposition one year later for handing lucrative posts to over 200 officials of the party in an effort to wipe out remnants of the previous administration. This may seem justifiable in that any new government will need to undertake administrative changes if it is to implement reforms. But it also seems that exercises of dominance are not confined to dictatorships.

Democracy is often valued to an ideal, along the lines of: if citizens are genuinely extended political participation rights, they will exercise these rights responsibly and that in doing so, they assume a degree of control over their fate which would lead to higher levels of social and psychological wellbeing (Ward, 1996). In other words, active democracy should make citizens happier. I would like to argue, however, that this idealistic portrayal of democratic governance is misguided and that democracy, in itself, is no sure recipe for a happy citizenry. What seemingly marks out democracy from other forms of governance is the self-correcting mechanism that democracies have in place for displacing a governing regime or coalition. In democracies, the power to remove politicians from office is extended to the public rather than to another supreme leader. Oftentimes this turns out to be a preferable strategy in the longer term as it can avoid the necessity of hard power tactics to remove some revolutionary leaders from office (though not necessarily always, e.g. the Ukrainian revolution of 2014) (Sammut & Bauer, 2011). I would also like to argue that recurring dictatorship is, in itself, not necessarily a failing mechanism. Dictators often come into power through revolutions that rely strongly on the exercise of hard power. A dictator gains power by beating and displacing a previous regime. Subsequently, a dictator may be removed in a subsequent revolution that sees somebody else rise to the top spot. In this way, revolutions that put certain dictators in place may be considered successful. The example of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi is illustrative. Colonel Gaddafi seized power in Libya in 1969 through a coup d'état that dispelled the monarchic rule of King Idris of Libya. Given no other mechanism was in place to remove King Idris from power, Colonel Gaddafi's coup in 1969 was successful inasmuch as it instituted a new rule. Subsequently, Gaddafi was himself overthrown and executed in another successful revolution in 2011 that sought primarily to displace him from power.

What this example makes clear is that dictatorial governance relies on revolutions involving the use of hard power to a much greater extent than democratic forms of governance. This does not mean that democratic governance is necessarily immune to exercises of dominance by the powerful. Nor that it necessarily increases the wellbeing of all citizens. Nor that democratically elected leaders are necessarily the best citizens to lead the country and that they always necessarily do the right things when in power. Nor, indeed, that the electorate always makes the right choice in electing the right person to office. Indeed, many well functioning democracies have in place term limits defining the maximum number of years a particular individual may wield power, regardless of how well they have executed their task as leaders or how ill equipped a new president elect may be for the task. The US president, for instance, cannot hold office for more than two terms. By contrast, monarchic forms of governance put in place leaders for generations, who can only be overthrown through acts of war. Many dictatorships seemingly follow the same protocol (e.g. North Korea) on the assumption that a good and effective leader stays in power to execute their task for as long as they can and for the benefit of all. Democratic systems do not make this assumption and readily sacrifice effective governance for a rotating system of power. However effective a US president is, she or he will not serve more than two terms.

In a sense, therefore, democratic systems are more conservative when it comes to assumptions regarding effective leadership. Democracies assume that the leaders they put in place will necessarily need to be removed from power at some point. Actually, this exercise may detract from achieving certain goals. It is hard for any democratic leader to implement long-term plans for the country that take longer to execute than the constitutionally mandated term, as the leader will need to face the electorate and obtain a new mandate at some point along the way. It is difficult to obtain a renewed mandate on the back of half-baked national projects. Democratically elected leaders need to limit their activities to medium-term or short-term plans that will provide results by the time the leader or party faces the ballot again. Monarchies and dictatorships are not similarly inhibited, which also means that they stand to be potentially more effective in implementing long-term plans. This, in itself, may be desirable in certain cases. But democracies seemingly prevent this to avoid having to oust a leader through the use of hard power. However bad a leader turns out to be, however much the majority may have erred in choosing the right leader at election time, the citizenry gets an automatic opportunity to right its wrongs without recourse to hard power. All it needs to do if it is wrong, or if things go wrong along the way, is wait for the next available opportunity, which is constitutionally guaranteed. This is the self-correcting mechanism that democracies afford their citizens. The human inclinations of both leaders and followers do not change across the various systems of governance. None is guaranteed to offer a good outcome at all times. What changes is the requirement of the use of force to dispel a leader once they are popularly deemed ineffective. In turn, what democracy requires is responsible political participation on the part of citizens to ensure less error over time. In other words, the more actualized a democracy is (Moghaddam, this volume), the more likely the citizenry should be to put in place a leader that genuinely serves the interests of all, as well as the more likely it should be to dispel a leader should they fail in this task. The question that I want to raise at this point, however, concerns the extent to which common subjects are suitably equipped for this democratic task.

Q: Are citizens psychologically equipped for actualized democracy?

What I would like to question at this point, is to what extent do the psychological characteristics identified by Moghaddam (this volume) form part of our evolved human nature to the extent that we could reasonably aspire for human beings to operate according to these characteristics? In other words, have human beings evolved to operate democratically to the extent that they could, in matters of governance, put in place a societal system of actualized democracy? Or does human psychology stand in the way of achieving this end?

The Psychological citizen

Moghaddam (this volume) lists nine virtues associated with the psychological citizen who is capable of actualized democracy, namely (i) a capacity for self-doubt, (ii) the questioning of sacred beliefs, (iii) the ability to revise opinions in light of evidence, (iv) the ability to understand others who are different from us, (v) the ability to learn from others who are different from us, (vi) the ability to seek information from the outside, (vii) openness to new experiences, (viii) the ability to create new experiences for others, and (ix) the convergence on principles of right and wrong. In what follows, I proceed to review some psychological evidence that, whilst not exhaustive, seems to suggest that these attributes might not be readily crafted into human nature.

In a study concerning the debate over the merits of religiosity, science and atheism, Sammut & Gaskell (2010) identified three types of perspectives amongst both believers and nonbelievers that varied in their treatment of opposing perspectives, which they termed metalogical, dialogical, and monological perspectives. Metalogical perspectives entertained the possibility that their beliefs could be wrong even if they themselves did not believe so. According to the authors, what marked metalogical perspectives from the other two was *self-doubt*, that neither dialogical nor monological perspectives demonstrated. Dialogical perspectives granted that others have the right to believe whatever they wanted to believe even if it was wrong. But they never doubted the veracity of their own beliefs. Monological perspectives, which are typically closed-minded (Rokeach, 1951a, 1951b), considered others' diverging views to be wrong and in need of active correction.

In a paper discussing Moscovici's (1961/2008) study of the social representations of psychoanalysis in France, Duveen (2008) notes that the liberal group, characterised by the voluntary association of independently minded individuals, sought the diffusion of their ideas and in this exercise promoted solidarity. According to Duveen, this group, as opposed to the other two, was marked by a sceptical intelligence and a polemical social representation that *questioned dogmatic belief* in a way that neither communists nor catholics achieved.

Lord, Ross & Lepper (1979) conducted an experiment with subjects who expressed themselves for or against capital punishment. Subjects were exposed to two studies with different methodologies, one supporting and one opposing the conclusion that capital punishment deterred crime, which they were required to critique. Subjects were more critical of the methods used in the study that did not match their initial beliefs than they were of the one that confirmed them. The authors concluded that subjects' differential evaluation of the two studies was based on rational heuristics, but that the use of these heuristics was dependent on the conclusions of the study not its methods. Subjects' attitudes following exposure became more polarized, indicating that subjects seek to *refute scientific evidence* that goes contrary to their beliefs (Kunda, 1990).

In a study concerning the Muslim community in London, Sammut & Sartawi (2012) documented an *attribution of ignorance* made by some Muslims relative to other Muslims who practiced a different interpretation of Islam than the subjects did. And in a recent study by Sammut, Bezzina & Sartawi (2015) investigating attributions of knowledge and ignorance,

regarding an issue of concern in the subjects' own society and a remote issue concerning a distant country, the authors found that in all conditions subjects attributed more knowledge to those who agreed with them and more ignorance to those who disagreed with them even when considering a remote issue with which they were largely unfamiliar. These findings are in line with the theory of *naïve realism* (Ross & Ward, 1996), which posits that individuals assume their perspectives to be objective whereas others' discrepant views are seen as irrational, misinformed or biased.

The manner by which groups isolate themselves from outside influences, in an effort to preserve their own views and silence oppositional perspectives, has been noted in Janis's (1982) work on *groupthink*. This refers to a psychological process by which a group gravitates towards closed-mindedness, overestimates its own resources and exercises pressure towards consensus in an effort to preserve group cohesion.

With regards to social relations with different others, acculturation research has documented preferences for *assimilation* rather than integration of migrants in various countries (Van Oudenhoven, Ward & Masgoret, 2006; Zick, Wagner, Van Dick & Petzel, 2001), suggesting that many individuals are more interested in others adopting their ways rather than them opening themselves up to new experiences. Sammut (2012) suggests that the form acculturation takes hinges on the variable propensity to relate with the perspective of another, which, as detailed above, is a characteristic of metalogical perspectives alone and wholly absent in monological ones.

Finally, Sammut, Tsirogianni & Moghaddam (2013) have argued against the universality of social values due to the fact that these are intrinsically embedded in the sociocultural context of their production. Consequently, to use the authors' example, a security effort by one is tantamount to an act of aggression for another.

Psychological research thus seems to suggest that the odds are stacked up against citizens fulfilling the virtues outlined by Moghaddam (this volume) that are requisite for achieving actualized democracy. By contrast, research has documented just the opposite. This does not mean that human beings are incapable of conducting their activities in line with Moghaddam's identified characteristics. For instance, Sammut & Gaskell's (2010) study documented closed-minded perspectives that are not open to question their own beliefs. However, it also documented instances of open-mindedness where respondents effectively did question their own beliefs and demonstrate self-doubt. The studies reviewed in this section simply suggest that these characteristics are variable in human nature and that human subjects have been documented to do the opposite of what Moghaddam suggests is required for achieving actualised democracy. This variability is in itself adaptive in evolutionary terms. To carry on with the same example, the variable human capacity for closed/open-mindedness enables different human subjects to act differently in different circumstances, and some of these behaviours will pay off in certain circumstances. It might be the case that in certain situations, it pays an individual to be closed-minded in one domain and open-minded in another domain, depending on the circumstances and the consequences involved. For instance, a scientist pondering feedback after presenting results

at a conference would do well to be open-minded with regards to the feedback itself, but closed-minded with regards to peripheral issues that could arguably have influenced the source of feedback itself, for example, the colour of the shirt the presenter was wearing on the day. This would amount to variability at the individual level. Such variability could also exist at the social level, meaning that in certain circumstances those who demonstrate open-mindedness in some domain gain a relative advantage over those demonstrating closed-mindedness in that domain, or vice-versa. For instance, an open-minded foot soldier at war may gain an advantage through befriending citizens who could provide vital intelligence. In other circumstances, a closed-minded foot soldier who finds herself ambushed may execute her task more effectively by avoiding distractions and treating everyone around as suspect. If open-mindedness pays off, then those who demonstrate open-mindedness gain an adaptive edge. If closed-mindedness pays off, those who demonstrate closed-mindedness do.

The success of any of the characteristics outlined is contingent on the circumstances and context in which they manifest, and some will be more successful than others depending on the nature of the circumstances and context. Which is to say that these characteristics are not virtues in themselves, in an objective sense. They are virtues only given certain societal conditions in which these characteristics pay off. The question that essentially ensues given this line of thinking is what societal conditions need to be in place such that individuals will resort to these virtues rather than their opposites, which, as we have seen, they are very capable of doing. Consequently, we need to consider at this point what societal conditions foster the exercising of acts, or virtues, that could instantiate actualized democracy. It is to this issue that we now turn.

Societal conditions for positive outcomes

The search for societal conditions that require implementation to bring out the best in citizens is a longstanding concern in the social sciences. Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis, for instance, posits that in situations where there is equal group status across different groups, the adoption of common goals, intergroup cooperation and authority support, intergroup prejudice is diminished and positive relational outcomes ensue (Pettigrew, 1998). Similarly, Habermas (1989) argues that the modern public sphere needs to ensure that debate is open and accessible to all, that issues discussed need to be of public interest, that inequalities of status need to be disregarded and that participants should be able to decide as peers. In these conditions, genuine dialogue could ensue that would see decisions made in the public interest rather than to advance private concerns (Jovchelovitch, 2007).

Moghaddam (this volume) lists three societal pre-requisites for actualised democracy to fruition. First, according to Moghaddam, leadership needs to support the movement towards actualised democracy. Social identity theorists have suggested, however, that leadership is a function of the prototypical identity attributes endorsed in a leader by a social group (Hogg, 2001). The leader acquires the opportunity to become a

leader due to the fact that group members identify with a particular member of the group more than they do with others by virtue of them noting that this member is more prototypical of the identity features associated with that group, more so than others. In other words, for a leader to steer a social group towards actualized democracy, actualized democracy attributes would need to be held as prototypical features of the leader amongst that particular group. The individual member of that group who best embodies those attributes would have a better likelihood of being selected as leader, or to exercise influence to become leader, than any other member of that group. In other words, if a certain group identified with authoritarian rather than democratic tendencies, then authoritarian features would be held as prototypical for that group and the individual who approximates those features best would gain an advantage in making leader.

Moghaddam's second point concerns political opportunity to create a movement. Moghaddam notes that this can be thwarted by 'mini-dictators' (Moghaddam, 2013) who see 'political opportunity' and 'continued dictatorship as best means of protecting their own interests'. In other words, the opportunity for achieving one or another form of governance may be curtailed by the actions of some who actualise an alternative form of governance that they consider better suited in realising their interests. This is in line with the predicates of Realistic Conflict Theory (LeVine & Campbell, 1972) and hinges on social representations of governance that describe how particular collective projects may be achieved (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999). For some, social representations of political governance include authoritative procedures that ensure that good governance is actualised. For others, this may not be the case. Individuals can only be expected to participate in a democracy movement insofar as they understand that actualised democracy best serves their interests. If they understand that other forms of government serve their interests better given the circumstances they find themselves in, then they can be expected to endorse such alternative forms and thwart indeed any movement towards democracy. Whether it is one or the other that effectively succeeds depends not least on the material conditions in which the movement is proposed, the interests of whom it seeks to advance, and the social representations of political governance that individuals use to gauge their understanding of what means facilitate which ends in matters of governance.

Finally, Moghaddam notes that certain psychological skills are needed for individuals to become democratic citizens. We have dealt with this point above. In essence, once again, psychology seems to suggest that the odds are stacked up against the achievement of actualized democracy even when considering these societal conditions. An illustrative example regarding female participation in the workforce may serve to highlight some of these issues.

Raising the employment rate of women in the labour-force is an identified target for the European Commission's growth strategy. At face value, there is very little to argue against this strategy and various member states have implemented policies such as child-care provisions and tax incentives to achieve this end. The logic for this is that with increased female participation in the labour force, aside from greater gender equality, a

country can achieve more in terms of productivity due to the fact that there would be more workers producing. This raises a country's Gross Domestic Product [GDP], improves the trade balance between imports and exports, and should generally lead to a stronger economy that should improve the wellbeing of its citizens. However, public opinion may well be contrarian, as in the case of Malta. Malta consistently ranks amongst the lowest in female participation in the labour force. Studies have suggested (Abela, 2000) that this might be due to the fact that the Maltese place a strong cultural value on child-oriented families. Abela (2000) reports that in Malta, being a housewife is rated as fulfilling as being gainfully employed for over 80% of women in the population. Consequently, whilst Europe in general stands to gain from implementing female-friendly measures at work that address gender-based discrimination and increase productivity, women themselves might not perceive this to be in line with their social values. This is not because they are oppressed or discriminated against, but because these measures designed to increase their own wellbeing effectively run counter to their own conceptions of the good life, as Sammut, Tsirogianni & Moghaddam (2013) have claimed with regards to the cultural relativity of social values.

My point here is that actualized democracy is prone to a similar contestation, in that whilst we generally recognise it as a superior form of governance, this very view may be ethnocentric and in line with Western conceptions of good governance. In principle and practice, this conception is open to challenge by alternative social representations of what good governance effectively entails in prescribed contexts. As Moghaddam aptly notes, the social representation 'would have to become culturally correct' (p. 12). This social representation of democracy is therefore in competition with other forms and first needs to prevail before it can be actualised. One also needs to consider the specific form democracy could take in different contexts and what specific parameters of democracy might be prescribed. Some that are contested within European democracies, for instance, are far-right, communist, fascist, Muslim and anarchist parties. Not every Western democracy happily extends recognition and participation rights to these movements. At the time of writing, the German constitutional court is contemplating banning the National Democratic Party (NPD) in Germany, a party representing far-right sympathizers, following a petition filed by Germany's federal states claiming that the party undermined German democracy. The political ostracization by Western nations of democratically elected Hamas in Palestine in 2006 provides a telling example that not all democracies are effectively regarded in the same way. The recent UN appointment of Sarraj as interim prime minister in Libya put in place a deal rejected by both the internationally recognised government in Tobruk as well as the rival government in Tripoli. The exercise of democracy thus seemingly requires certain caveats in many nations that openly hail democratic governance. It seems, therefore, that the locus of intervention for achieving actualised democracy is its social representation, which if accepted by the public could bring about actualized democracy in practice. This brings me to my next point concerning psychology's understanding of the public.

Theories of the public

Before delving into the issue of social representation, it is worth considering in further depth our understanding of the public, on which the capacity for social representations to take root hinges. It seems that the social sciences present two diametrically opposed views concerning the capabilities of the public. On the one hand, tracing their roots to the crowd theories of Le Bon and Tarde and more recently emerging in viral theories of the mind (Dawkins, 1993; Sperber, 1990), the public can be thought of as passive and ignorant and open to contagion and manipulation by the competent few. On the other hand, recent theories of crowd psychology argue for the collective potential residing in crowds that gains expression in social movements (Reicher, 1984, 2001). The Occupy Wall Street movement, the Ukrainian Euromaidan revolution or the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi in Tunisia that precipitated the Arab spring, provide examples of celebrated social movements that suggest the crowd can be a catalyst for positive societal change.

The relationship between leader and crowd transpires as a similarly problematic one in psychological terms. Indeed, theories of leadership can also be typified along the same line delineating the crowd. On the one hand, personality theories of leadership suggest that certain individuals command disproportionate amounts of charisma relative to others, which propels them to positions of power (Moscovici, 1985). On the other hand, social identity theory [SIT] based theories of leadership argue that leaders are put in place and recognised as charismatic by virtue of their prototypical features endorsed by a group (Hogg, 2001). These marked distinctions in the psychology of crowds and leaders point to certain issues in conceiving of a right set of circumstances for achieving effective citizenry in line with Moghaddam's predicates of actualized democracy. I would like to argue that the success of any one form of governance depends on the expectations of the outcomes of the political exercise held by participating actors. In other words, the success of any form of governance lies in the eyes of the beholder based on prevalent social representations of that exercise itself, rather than any political condition or strategy in itself. A further point to note is the issue of participation, which is the entry point in matters of governance. Lack of participation in the political process, either through non-recognition or voluntary abstention, means that individuals abscond, leaving the business of governance to others who seize the opportunity to swing power their way. The first impediment to actualized democracy is thus political participation itself. Moghaddam is right then, to extend the focus to the psychological capacities of citizens in implementing and sustaining actualized democracies. In my view, though, this leads to a bone of contention, as I proceed to detail hereunder.

The idea of actualized democracy is itself a social representation of a particular form of political governance. For a start, it distinguishes actualized democracy from other social representations of democracy that are not similarly actualized. One could also talk of other forms of actualized political governance that are not democratic, such as actualised dictatorship or actualized communism. What I mean to allude here is that any such

representation is based on an understanding of what challenges are supposedly acceptable and warranted in a given country to oust a dominant regime. It hinges on a particular social representation of the crowd, and Moghaddam's suggestion is in line with a SIT approach to the crowd. It extends agency to the public who through participation are able to *actualize* democracy in practice rather than entertain it as a mere ideal or postulate it in a rhetorical exercise.

The question that ensues out of considering democratic governance in this way is whether it transpires as an adaptive strategy for human societies. This point can be contested, as whilst we hold democratic principles as an ideal in the Western world, we find plenty of examples where alternative forms of leadership, or crowd participation, are largely uncontested. Take for instance some of the main religious organisations. The Catholic Church still operates on the assumption of an enlightened leader (the Pope) put in place through the spiritual intervention of the Holy Spirit on a mass of cardinals appointed for the task. The Pope's authority is not questionable through democratic participation. Or take for instance the operations carried out by the military. These rely on unquestioned obedience for effectiveness, rather than a democratic exchange of alternative views by generals and foot-soldiers tasked with undertaking operations. Feedback may well be regarded a virtue in the military, but senior officials are not democratically elected. The same occurs in judicial institutions, where appointed individuals may serve for decades at the highest level of the judiciary. Clearly, even in democratic countries, alternative ways for appointing people to high-power positions retain a lot of currency.

Recursive model of political participation

I would like to propose a simple point here: that human nature is variable and that we find examples in human nature where both democratic as well as authoritarian-based decisions prove useful. This point suggests that humans have evolved a variable capacity for relating with others in structures of dominance. This variability would have paid off over evolutionary time contingent on particular social circumstances, much like different attachment strategies have paid off for different individuals depending on sociogenetic circumstances (Belsky, 1997; Chisholm, 1996). I would also like to propose that, consequently, actualised democracy is indeed a viable and achievable form of governance for human societies and that it could well presently provide an adaptive edge given the realities of contemporary methods of warfare (Moghaddam, 2008). Of course, only evolutionary time will tell whether this is indeed the case. However, for this to happen, the social representation of actualised democracy and the practices it entails require a broader understanding of social psychological characteristics, with which the human species seems to be endowed, for it to be realisable. I would like to propose a 4-step model by which actualised democracy could gain traction over competing forms (such as alternating democracy, or alternating dominance) and take firmer root. The model runs as follows (Figure 1):

[Insert Figure 1 here]

As Moghaddam notes, values, attitudes, motivations, needs, relationships, problem-solving strategies and authority relations take longer to change than formal law. I would argue that this is due to the fact that these are social representation-based practices that need to make sense before they can be effectively put in place (Wagner, 2015). Without the sensibility criterion, given a particular sociocultural context, these strategies fail to gain traction even though they might be looked up to as an ideal, as in the female participation example noted earlier. In the model outlined, *political participation* constitutes the behavioural entry point by which citizens actively participate in the political process in ways that make sense to them, given the social representations of good governance that they subscribe to. For instance, in democratic countries, individuals participate in the political process by voting. For this to happen, however, citizens will need to understand that voting is an effective method of political participation with tangible outcomes, such as electing a good leader for the country. This exercise may be thwarted if certain other social representations take root, such as that voting is a waste of time if all candidates across all parties are perceived as corruptible and equally bad. Conversely, in societies where social representations of good governance entail a revolution to put in place a supremely charismatic individual, political participation will involve taking up arms against the dominant regime. In essence, the behavioural act involved in political participation serves to achieve *political representation*, the next step in our model. Political representation is the outcome of participation that puts certain representatives in place and not others. Again, this could be a democratic exercise where citizens appoint representatives in parliament, or a hard power exercise where leaders representing the strongest regime seize power. Political representation in its turn, hinges on *social identification*. Citizens support leaders who they perceive to embody the prototypical features they themselves value and aspire to. The leaders or representatives they fight for, or vote for, are those individuals who followers consider to be best equipped for executing the task they want achieved. These prototypical features in themselves, that serve the purposes of social identification, constitute a *social representation* of what features are required to achieve good governance, as we have seen. This social representation justifies particular forms of political participation and warrants particular political acts (e.g. voting or taking up arms).

Social representation, in this 4-step process model, transpires as the locus of intervention in a dynamic cycle of social dominance. It is unreasonable to expect that actualised democracy can take root if not supported by a system of understanding by which the human characteristics that enable it can be exploited and other similarly natural human characteristics disavowed. In human psychology, as we have seen, there seems to be potential for both. But certain characteristics make actualised democracy viable whilst certain others impede it. For actualised democracy to take root, those characteristics that enable it need to be valued over others in such a way that they are legitimated in a social

context over others. A social representation that grants these features legitimacy is required and once in place, such a representation could stimulate a form of political participation that is democratically representative of the diversity of human life. This would enable participants to truly identify with the political process to the extent that they would seek political representation by electing leaders who demonstrate the prototypical attributes associated with actualized democracy.

Conclusion: The Psychological Basis of 3rd order change

People with the right skills create institutions by electing who they regard as the right leaders into power. For this to happen, certain citizens need to acquire the space to exercise a set of skills meaningfully, they need to be supported in doing so, and ultimately they need to prevail. For those who grow up in Western democracies, it is relatively easy to endorse democratic governance as an ideal. In Western countries, democratic governance has seemingly spared many of us from the negative effects associated with alternative forms of governance such as dictatorships, authoritarian leadership, and communism. This success seems to be due to the self-correcting mechanism noted at the outset, which has enabled European and American publics to overthrow politicians who fell out of favour without the need for bloodshed. But democracy is in itself not an anti-dote to war, or to the exercise of power and dominance. Nor is it a magic bullet to everlasting peace or a panacea for happiness and wellbeing. As Moghaddam (this volume) notes, psychology can put into effect powerful tools in favour of the pro-democracy forces. This requires psychology itself to become political in instituting a particular social representation of democratic governance and in this process, to supplant competing others. The first task is therefore to ensure that the social representation of actualized democracy prevails. In this exercise, the study of dynamics of social influence and the outcomes of clashing social representations emerge as pre-eminent concerns for future scholarship (Sammut & Bauer, 2011).

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