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The Evolution of Political Legitimacy: Socioeconomic Development and Human Needs¹

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1 Introduction

This article offers a theoretical perspective regarding how and why the foundations of political support may evolve over time. Monarchs, empires, chieftains, dictatorships, presidents and prime ministers have at one time or another enjoyed popular political support. Justifications for this political support has included divine right, hereditary rule, customary traditions, and the performance of rituals. Some societies still recognize these justifications, but dominant reasons for political support now include democracy, elections, representation, accountability, and the rule of law. Why have the justifications for political support changed over time? Moreover, is it possible to predict a continuum along which justifications are likely to progress? The answer provided in this article is that foundations of political support evolve depending on how socioeconomic development alters the importance of different areas of human needs. This perspective helps explain why societies with divergent cultural and historic backgrounds often follow similar political trajectories as they develop. It provides an accompanying explanation for why different groups within the same society may diverge in their level of support for the same governing authorities. The evolutionary analogy arises from the observation that governing authorities must adapt to gradually changing public needs if they wish to retain political support and survive. Authorities unable or unwilling to adapt when faced with steadily changing popular needs, gradually loose support and increase the likelihood of losing an election or facing a popular rebellion or uprising.

This 'political needs theory' is primarily based on models developed by Maslow (1943, 1954) and Alderfer (1972). Other theorists such as Max-Neef play an important contributing role, but the structure of the needs continuum outlined in this article is primarily adapted from work by Maslow and Alderfer. Maslow outlines five areas: physiological needs for survival such as food and water; safety and stability needs for protection, familiarity, and predictability; belongingness or love needs for mutually supportive interpersonal relations, a place in a group, affection, and acceptance; esteem needs for self-respect, the respect of others, a sense of worth or value, freedom, and autonomy; and self-actualization needs for personal growth, self-fulfillment, and achieving one's full potential. Alderfer built upon Maslow's model, but simplified the model into three need categories by reducing overlaps between Maslow's five areas. Alderfer's three areas are: existence desires for basic sustenance, personal security, and physical survival; relatedness desires for affection, mutual acceptance, recognition, and interpersonal relationships; and growth desires for capacity development, curiosity, and personal growth. Political needs theory keeps Maslow's original five categories, but recognizes the crossovers identified by Alderfer. The model therefore has five major areas and four minor areas of needs, with the minor areas consisting of a mix of needs from the preceding

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and following major areas. This creates a model of needs that is more of a continuum than either Maslow's or Alderfer's theoretical frameworks.

Physiological	Safety	Belongingness	Esteem	Personal Growth
Sustenance	Stability	Acceptance	Equality	Self-Actualization
Subsistence	Security	Relatedness	Respect	Fulfilment

Political needs theory parallels individual human growth, broader trends of socioeconomic development, and the evolution of humankind. These three strands are interwoven to explain how justifications of political support have evolved over time. At the individual level of development, children are born with physiological needs and quickly develop a desire for safety and belongingness, but needs for self-esteem and self-actualization emerge later. Socioeconomic development often follows a comparable trajectory, with governmental aims that meet earlier physiological and safety needs usually receiving priority over later esteem and self-actualization needs. For example, most societies with limited resources tend to prioritize the construction of water systems or electrical grids over museums or parks. The former satisfy physiological needs while the latter satisfy self-actualization and leisure needs. From a broader evolutionary point of view, Maslow (1954: 147-148) argued that later needs are associated with later stages of evolutionary development. We share earlier physiological and safety needs with most creatures, affection and esteem needs with fewer animals, while self-actualization needs appear almost exclusively human (Maslow 1954: 147). Max-Neef (1991: 27) similarly pointed out that freedom and identity needs probably emerged later in our evolutionary timeline. He argued that “fundamental human needs change with the pace of human evolution” and are “entwined with the evolution of the species” (Max-Neef 1991: 27-28). According to political needs theory, foundational changes to the justifications of political support result from this intersection between individual growth, socioeconomic development, and the evolution of humankind. These historical transformations occur slowly and gradually, often emerging as intergenerational shifts in values and priorities, and usually require a prolonged timeframe to acquire critical mass in a population. One reason for this is that children and adolescents, much more so than adults, are engaged in an ongoing process of socialization and acclimatization to their surroundings and circumstances. The conditions and unsatisfied needs during this formative period have the greatest influence on which areas of needs people tend to be more concerned about later in life.

1.1 Clarifications

The distinction between needs and wants is often unclear and confused. While this article is not primarily focused on the differences between needs and wants, a brief explanation may be useful. A need is a necessity, while a want is a preference. This means that unsatisfied needs have genuine negative consequences, while wants can remain unsatisfied without serious negative ramifications. For example, we *need* nourishment because without it we die, but we may *want* different types of food as a matter of preference. The fact that a preferred food is not obtained results only in that want being unsatisfied. As long as some variety of adequate nourishment is obtained, this physiological need is satisfied and malnutrition or death are averted. The same distinction can be made for other areas, but the negative consequences of unsatisfied needs progressively decrease in severity and urgency as we move along the continuum to later and less concrete needs.

Using broad areas of needs alongside imprecise crossover categories lacks specificity, so some method of ranking specific needs is required to operationalize political needs theory. Two criteria can be applied to determine where specific needs can be located along the continuum: the severity and urgency of their negative consequences if unsatisfied. First, the more severe the consequences, the earlier those needs appear along the continuum. Second, the quicker the negative consequences arise, the earlier the associated needs appear on the continuum. These two criteria allow specific needs within the same areas to be sequentially ranked. For example, air, water, and food are all physiological needs because they are necessary for physical survival. The negative consequences of these needs remaining unsatisfied is ultimately death. However, death occurs fastest without air, quite rapidly without water, and generally takes the longest without food. Therefore within the physiological needs area, air would be prioritized first, water second, and food third. This allows specific needs to be ranked, and facilitates particular needs being more important in some cultures or conditions. For example, in societies without official social security or welfare programs, family and friend networks are expected to be much more closely linked with physiological and safety needs than in societies that provide these programs. These two criteria for placing specific needs along the continuum allows for unique models to be developed that match the conditions of different societies. It also enables more specificity for developing testable theoretical models because it focuses attention on particular needs rather than broad areas.

1.2 Exceptions and Limitations

A continuum of needs is a conceptual framework for understanding human behavior and what motivates particular actions. It is not rigidly fixed, there are numerous exceptions, boundaries between areas of needs often overlap, and regressions to earlier areas is possible (Maslow 1954: 98-100). While people tend to increasingly focus on later needs as earlier ones are gradually satisfied, not everyone follows the same trajectory, and both the satisfaction of earlier needs and the emergence of later needs happen gradually (Maslow 1954: 100-101). One area of needs is often dominant, but people frequently have needs from multiple areas simultaneously, behaviors can be motivated by multiple needs, and some behaviors are not motivated by needs at all (Maslow 1954: 102-103; Max-Neef 1991: 17-18). Political needs theory is not intended to explain every minuscule variation in political support, but is instead a very broad perspective that looks at overall long term trends. While the need continuum is not intended to be culturally specific, and there may be some superficial differences between cultures, humans around the world have more in common than they have differences (Maslow 1954: 101-102; Max-Neef 1991: 18). It is anticipated that the model presented in this article can be readily adapted, using the two criteria of severity and urgency, to the particular circumstances and conditions of different cultures.

Adapting models of human needs from psychology to political science requires matching individual human needs with their political equivalents. The ease and acceptability of making these transitions ranges from reasonably straightforward to exceptionally contentious. Difficulties increase when moving from earlier and more palpable needs to later and less tangible needs. For instance, while it might be reasonably acceptable to argue that individual needs for water could be satisfied by the construction and maintenance of water system infrastructure, it is perhaps more difficult to argue that individual needs for self-esteem are satisfied by political equality and recognition. It is important to keep these limitations and exceptions in mind, remembering that political needs theory presents a broad viewpoint for understanding historical trends and societal developments. The theory cannot explain all

aspects and nuances of political support, but it is nonetheless useful for providing insights into how and why the foundations of support gradually evolve.

One final important clarification must be made. The continuum of human needs is not a linear one-way path, and backward regressions are possible. Societies as well as individuals can move backwards along the continuum if earlier needs areas are no longer adequately satisfied. Events such as natural disasters, droughts, wars, terrorist attacks, and economic declines can increase concern for earlier physiological or safety needs. These events focus attention on areas of needs that were perhaps previously taken for granted. A coup or shift in power may result in a previously dominant group suddenly being denied rights or privileges. They may consequently regress from focusing on self-actualization to being concerned with esteem or belongings needs. This article presents the continuum of needs as a linear pathway for the sake of explanatory simplicity, but it is important to remember that situations are rarely as straightforward and societies may sometimes go in the opposite direction.

2 A Continuum of Human Needs

The following sections sequentially outline the different areas of needs, associated levels of socioeconomic development, and their effects on individuals and political support. Each section starts with an introduction of the general area of needs and some parallels between the different theoretical models. This is followed by an explanation of the kind of societies or levels of socioeconomic development in which these needs are expected to be predominant. Each section examines what people may expect from their governing authorities at that stage, and what this implies for the evolution of political support. The main sections are punctuated with brief discussions about crossovers between the different need areas.

2.1 Physiological, Subsistence, and Existence Needs

The earliest needs are those essential for physical survival, which Maslow (1954: 80-84) calls physiological needs, Alderfer (1972: 102-112) includes within existence desires, and Max-Neef (1991: 27-37) refers to as subsistence needs. These involve having sufficient food, water, sleep, and similarly basic necessities. Alderfer (1972: 25) also places physical threats not involving social interactions within his existence desires category. The point is that the “most basic need is to survive”, and all others are subordinate to this requirement (Bay 1968: 248). People who chronically lack physiological needs tend to focus considerable attention and effort on obtaining them, often forgetting about other concerns (Maslow 1954: 82). Even people who would otherwise view needs in a more holistic sense recognize the preponderant nature of subsistence needs (Max-Neef 1991: 17).

Physiological and sustenance needs are most prevalent in the least socioeconomically developed countries of the world. These are the countries categorized as having ‘low human development’ by the Human Development Index (UNDP 2010: 145-146), ‘failed or blocked’ political and economic transformation by the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2008), or as ‘low-income food-deficit countries’ by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO 2010: 12-13). Countries such as Ethiopia, Myanmar, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, and Zimbabwe meet many of these criteria. Life in these societies could be described as “poor, nasty, brutish, and short” (Hobbes 1994 [1668]: XIII, ch 13, para 9). People experience repeated famines, protracted crises, poor standards of living, high levels of deprivation, and large segments of the population often struggle to survive.

When people “have their hands full struggling to survive”, they rarely have the time or energy required to evaluate their governing authorities (Bay 1968: 247). As Davies (1991: 397) puts it, “poor citizens are too busy staying alive to become politicized”. Extreme deprivation or acute starvation makes people compliant and politically apathetic because “lethargy and weakness are powerful deterrents against strong action” (Keys et al. 1950: 785). An extensive study of human starvation, based on controlled experiments as well as case studies from around the world, demonstrated that unsatisfied physiological needs take priority and dominate human behavior (Keys et al. 1950). During famines and near starvation, “all thought and activity turn toward food, other normal activities are repressed or eliminated” (Keys et al. 1950: 784-785). Social niceties are dropped, property rights are disregarded, and crime increases (Keys et al. 1950: 784-785). Interpersonal relationships also become less important, intolerance and self-centeredness increase, and people become unsociable and reluctant to participate in group activities (Keys et al. 1950: 836-838). Volunteers in the Minnesota starvation experiment confessed that “their humanitarian concern for the welfare of mankind had become elusive and difficult to maintain” (Keys et al. 1950: 838). In short, a starving population probably lacks the societal cohesiveness, physical and cognitive energy, and community engagement necessary for active political participation.

One of the most politically relevant findings from the Minnesota experiment is that interest in making policies and rules declines considerably on a semi-starvation diet (Keys et al. 1950: 836-837). It was only after the volunteers were being fed regularly again that they began to care about the rules and regulations governing them: “No longer were the men willing to accept without question the formation of policy by those responsible for conducting the experiment. They insisted that the rules and regulations make good sense to them” (Keys et al. 1950: 838). Tolerance, sociability, enthusiasm, and concern for others only reemerged in subjects after their diets had returned to normal for some time (Keys et al. 1950: 838). Evidence from natural and experimental famines support what political needs theory predicts: critically malnourished people are generally less interested in political participation. The ramifications for political support are telling, even if objectionable to people who have never experienced near-starvation. Democracy, loosely defined as a system where the public gets a say in how they are governed, is not likely to be a top priority for people with critically unsatisfied physiological needs. It requires compromise, a sense of community, deliberation and toleration between conflicting interests, respect for the rule of law, and active participation. People on a near-starvation diet were shown to be lacking or deficient in their ability to achieve these requirements. The time and resources dedicated to democratic elections, campaigns, procedures, and debates are likely to be perceived as wasteful when large segments of the population are malnourished or dying from starvation. People are more likely to support governing authorities that quickly and successfully provide necessities such as food, water, shelter and medicine.

It is important to note that the degree of political apathy depends upon the degree of physiological deprivation. Political turmoil is unlikely if the level of deprivation denies people the energy to rebel. However, political unrest and demonstrations, which any pragmatic definition of political participation must include, are often triggered by temporary food shortages and sudden price increases (Keys et al. 1950: 785). There are two possible reasons for this. First, when food supplies go from readily available to less obtainable in a relatively short period, people still have the physical energy to rebel. Second, although starvation is not chronic under these circumstances, subsistence needs are nevertheless threatened and survival becomes more precarious. The likelihood of political action increases because physiological needs have dire consequences if they remain unsatisfied.

The focus of collective mobilizations regarding sustenance needs has changed alongside societal and political transformations. For example in sixteenth century Europe, political power was concentrated in smaller subnational smaller units, such as city states, and semi-autonomous provinces (Tilly 1976: 371). Food riots during this period were most often directed at these local authorities, individuals and organizations. Local government actors were seen as more responsible for food markets and had greater control over distribution channels. By about mid-nineteenth century, political power in Europe had shifted towards the state, markets had expanded to be nationwide, and food distribution was increasingly controlled by the state to feed industrializing population centers. As could be expected, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed national authorities in Europe increasingly becoming the focus of popular uprisings triggered by food shortages (Tilly 1976: 373-374). The altered political landscape meant that when physiological needs were threatened, collective action was more often directed at national rather subnational authorities. The focus of political support had changed.

2.2 Mix of Physiological and Safety Needs

Insufficiencies and rapid price increases of physiological necessities are linked to safety desires. A shortage of subsistence requirements, even a perceived shortage, increases uncertainty and anxiety regarding the future. Whereas chronically starving people are concerned with immediately satisfying subsistence needs, people facing shortages or sudden price increases are concerned with longer term security of physiological necessities. People with this particular mix of physiological and safety needs are expected to be predominant in societies not experiencing famine at present, but that have perhaps faced deprivation recently or have not yet ensured their food security. Governing authorities overseeing people at this stage can usually gain political support by securing and distributing subsistence requirements for the population, encouraging agricultural development, subsidizing basic foodstuffs, or constructing housing and shelter. The most advantageous actions will depend on environmental factors, specific sociocultural circumstances, and which physiological needs are least satisfied or secure. For example, while governing authorities in Beijing during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) ensured “food never became the focus of political action”, authorities in Europe during the same period were recurrently challenged by food riots (Li and Dray-Novey 1999: 993). One of the main differences was that people in Beijing knew that food distribution and storage was extensively and carefully managed by the authorities, while authorities in Europe took a more hands-off approach, making society more vulnerable to fluctuations in the food supply. The level of perceived security and future stability regarding physiological necessities is often a major factor influencing the degree of political support people grant their governing authorities.

2.3 Protection, Safety, and Stability Needs

After physiological needs come what Maslow (1954: 84-89) refers to as safety needs, Max-Neef (1991: 32-36) refers to as protection needs, while Alderfer (1972: 25) still views as part of existence desires. This area deals both with needs for immediate physical safety and security, as well as longer term needs for stability and welfare. The physical security and protection aspect entails a desire to avoid shocks, threats, violence, injury, illness, and danger (Maslow 1954: 85). The stability aspects entail a desire for organization, structure, familiarity, consistency, dependability, and predictability (Maslow 1954: 86-88). Safety and stability needs are more complex than this, but these two are two useful broad typologies. The essence

of this area of needs is a desire to feel one's safety and welfare are assured, and that this condition will continue into the future.

Distinguishing between physical safety and economic stability demonstrates how particular needs can be prioritized within the same general area. The negative consequences of unsatisfied physical safety are more urgent and severe than unsatisfied economic stability needs. If both problems are affecting the majority of a society, governing authorities are expected to gain more political support from ensuring physical safety. Once physical safety is reasonably well assured, governing authorities seeking support would do well to focus on economic progress. Singer (2011: 301-303) has found that human rights issues and terrorism consistently trump the importance of economic issues. This supports the political needs hypothesis that physical safety would usually come before economic stability in the needs continuum.

Physical security needs are particularly salient in societies that experience protracted conflicts, sustained economic turmoil, or both. Failed states such as Chad, Afghanistan, Iraq, or the Democratic Republic of Congo are illustrative examples. Their ongoing wars and conflicts make the present unsafe and the future uncertain. The human rights abuses, discriminatory actions, unfair treatment, and arbitrary decision-making that frequently occur in failed states contribute to feeling unsafe, insecure, anxious and uncertain about the future. Children that live through wars and violent conflicts may lose one or both parents, witness violence or death, experience rape or beatings, become slaves or prostitutes, be imprisoned or forced to flee, or become a child soldier and commit atrocities themselves (Barbara 1997: 169-175). People who experience violent conflict while growing up often display increased socially and emotionally dysfunctional behavior later in life, and can become aggressive and socially withdrawn (Machel 2000: 23-24; Machel 1996: 50). Cambodian children that witnessed wartime atrocities during Pol Pot's regime have been diagnosed with high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder up to three, six, or even twelve years later (Kinzie et al. 1989; Sack et al. 1993; Sack et al. 1999). Even after peace is restored and traumatized people live in safe surroundings, they are more concerned about security and more easily lose their sense of safety. When faced with new threats, previously traumatized refugees from different cultures were found to lose their subjective sense of safety more rapidly compared with control groups, even though they were now living in safe surroundings (Kinzie et al. 2002). People who grow up without adequate security, or lived through an extended period of violence or armed conflict, tend to remain more focused on safety needs than people who have known nothing but safety and security. Obtaining political support from people that have experienced war, widespread armed conflict, violence or other atrocities often depends upon assuring their desire for safety and security. When the conflict is still fresh, and has perhaps not entirely ceased, authorities that can restore peace and order without provoking further hostilities are likely to be praised. Governing authorities that successfully restore peace may be seen as saviors and are likely to retain the support of people who experienced the worst of the violence, even long after the society has undergone significant changes and peacetime development. The younger generation that grows up during later peaceful periods may however not support these authorities to the same degree because their underlying needs structures will be different.

People in stable and peaceful societies may occasionally have some unsatisfied physical safety needs, but they are usually less acute or arise because of sudden shocks. Social neuroscience studies have found that people who grow up in large cities are negatively affected by increased incidences of interpersonal aggression, humiliation, and other social threats (Lederbogen et al. 2011: 598). Experiencing these conditions during childhood and adolescence affects brain

chemistry, increases the likelihood of anxiety and mood disorders, and reduces the capacity to deal with socially stressful situations (Lederbogen et al. 2011: 598). The longer the time spent in the city, and the larger the city, the more extreme the influence. In stable and internally peaceful societies, safety needs are more likely to be threatened by sudden shocks. The 9/11 terrorist attacks provide an illustrative example. Americans surveyed in 2001 and 2002 who perceived a greater threat of future terrorist attacks were more likely to support the curtailment of civil liberties and invasive antiterrorism measures (Huddy et al. 2005: 603-604). Terrorism was the dominant issue in the 2004 election, trumping the economy and the Iraq war. Abramson et al. (2007: 218-219) argue that Bush won this election because he was perceived as a stronger leader, more willing and capable of fighting terrorism to ensure personal safety and national security. People who feel threatened are more likely to allow or want a protective government, even if this entails less freedoms and rights. This represents a decreased concern for liberties associated with self-actualization needs in favor of increased protections to satisfy safety needs.

Although threat perception is often linked to political support for national security and military intervention, not everyone reacts in the same way. People lacking a preexisting sense of safety are considerably more likely to support protective government policies when faced with new security threats (Huddy et al. 2007: 135;150). Feelings of anxiety, as opposed to a perceived threat, also decrease support for strong leaders and military intervention, as people want to avoid the dangerous and insecure situations that might arise from more confrontational policies (Huddy et al. 2005: 605). The same security risk may therefore result in different responses depending on how secure a person feels, or the degree to which their safety and protection needs are fulfilled before the emergence of a threat. This can make it extremely difficult to gain the political support of an entire population, since the same actions and policies will receive varying degrees of support from different groups in society. The following two paragraphs deal with issues of longer term economic stability rather than shorter term physical safety.

Economic stability needs include desires for steady income or employment, reasonably low levels of inflation, and a predictable economic future. The specific concerns people have regarding this subset of safety needs will differ depending on economic statuses and circumstances, but people faced with unpredictable employment or income usually feel less secure about the future (Sverke et al. 2002: 242). Secure employment provides a predictable routine and structured life, the income enables buying necessities, and the future looks more secure with a steady job or income. Families faced with uncertain economic situations have poorer communication, less affective involvement, and are more often dysfunctional (Larson et al. 1994: 140-142). Children of unemployed parents have increased behavioral and physical health problems, with parental unemployment during early childhood having the greatest impact (Ström 2003: 416-422). There is also strong evidence for a link between unemployment and higher risk of divorce (Ström 2003: 408). Job insecurity and unemployment therefore result in a less stable home life, less affectionate interpersonal relations, as well as decreased overall physical and mental wellbeing (Larson et al. 1994; Ström 2003). So along with undermining people's sense of security, some unsatisfied safety and stability needs may limit opportunities for the satisfaction of later belongingness and love needs.

Job insecurity correlates with decreased commitment to, and trust in, employing organizations (Sverke et al. 2002: 249-251), but also has wider political implications. Governing authorities that oversee lackluster economic progress and growth generally lose political support (Kotzian 2011: 31-33). Analyzing data from 31 countries, Singer notes that poor voters care more about

economic issues than rich ones, and “economic issues remain more widely seen as important in newer, poorer democracies than in developed ones” (Singer 2011: 302). People in newer and poorer democracies are likely to be more focused on unsatisfied economic stability needs. Even within stable economies, “a personal feeling of economic insecurity” results in people being more concerned about economic issues (Singer 2011: 303). As would be expected, economic concerns become increasingly important as growth slows and unemployment rises (Singer 2011: 301-303). Despite differences between countries, the economy remains important for political support at most levels of development because it relates broadly to quality of life and standards of living. Even at later stages of socioeconomic development, when people are more likely to be focused on self-actualization, a stable economic situation gives people the extra time and money required to pursue their unique passions and interests.

2.4 Mix of Protection and Belongingness Needs

The social aspects of safety, or the safety arising from belonging to groups, implies that the sequential order of needs is not rigidly fixed. There is a certain amount of crossover between stability or safety needs and belongingness or relatedness needs. Physical security is often easier when people work together, which is essentially the story of our evolution as a species. Maslow (1954: 87) points out that safety needs are best satisfied when people are members of a “peaceful, smoothly running, good society”. Perhaps noticing the same relationship, Max-Neef (1991: 32) defines both protection and affection needs as involving solidarity. Davies (1963: 33) points out that perceived threats to safety and physiological needs –such as occurs during wars, economic crises, and natural disasters– can also foster a greater sense of in-group solidarity. Terrorist attacks have similar affects, increasing solidarity within the threatened group, but decreasing acceptance of outside groups. Alderfer (1972: 25) recognized the close link between safety and interpersonal relations, but placed safety involving social interaction within his relatedness desires category, and nonsocial safety needs within his existence category.

The relationship between safety and belongingness needs is highly dependent upon group identities. While external threats can increase in-group belongingness, they can also decrease acceptance of out-groups. Huddy et al. (2005: 594) point out that one of “the most pervasive and powerful effects of threat is to increase intolerance, prejudice, ethnocentrism, and xenophobia”. Leaders often invoke national security and solidarity versus external groups in an attempt to rally political support. Although this may enhance solidarity in the short term, Max-Neef (1991: 33) notes that pretexts of ensuring societal safety and protection often impairs the satisfaction of other later needs, such as freedom, understanding, and participation. Divisive intergroup approaches to politics will be especially damaging in societies already divided along ethnic, linguistic, or religious lines. Leaders may gain political support from their own group members by denouncing other groups and acting to protect their own group, but at the expense of increasing hostilities between rival groups within a polity. Only after the different groups no longer fear or distrust each other can belongingness needs be satisfied nationally. Well-established stability and safety needs act as necessary, but not sufficient, precursors for the widespread sense of national belongingness required for the peaceful cooperation and political integration of different groups.

2.5 Belongingness, Affection, and Relatedness Needs

The next area of needs is what Maslow (1954: 89-90) calls belongingness or love needs, Alderfer (1972: 113-123) refers to as relatedness desires, and Max-Neef (1991: 32-36) calls

affection and participation needs. These social relatedness desires involve mutually satisfying interpersonal relations with significant others and key social groups (Alderfer 1972: 114). They include desires for mutual respect, sharing, acceptance, and understanding (Alderfer 1972: 10). Maslow (1954: 89) describes them as a desire for a place within a group and “affectionate relations with people in general”. Social belongingness needs include the desire for people to “get together, be together, and stay together” (Davies 1963: 31). This area of needs is also related to what Max-Neef (1991: 32-36) calls understanding and identity needs, because they involve relating to other people and belonging to groups distinguished by sharing common languages, religions, customs, history, or values. This area of needs is united by themes of social interaction, mutual acceptance, and group membership. As a result, it is highly relevant to political issues of citizenship, identity, and tolerance.

The fulfillment of belongingness or relatedness needs is inhibited by social rejection, victimization, and bullying because these social acts deny people social acceptance. An extensive meta-analysis of studies covering 1979 to 1997 revealed that the maladjustment effects from victimization include depression and loneliness (Hawker and Boulton 2000: 451). Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) of the brain suggests that social rejection activates “some of the same neural machinery recruited in the experience of physical pain” (Eisenberger et al. 2003: 290-291). This social pain can occur with even the mildest forms of implicit or explicit exclusion (Eisenberger et al. 2003: 291), demonstrating that humans are highly sensitive to social acceptance and belonging. People or groups that are systematically excluded or discriminated against by governments or the broader society are likely experience similar feelings of victimization, rejection, and social pain. Governing authorities that exclude or discriminate against particular groups hinder the satisfaction of their wider belongingness desires, and are unlikely to gain their political support.

Socially or politically excluded groups cannot fully satisfy their wider belongingness needs when their governing authorities enact discriminatory or exclusionist policies. Analysis of the Ethnic Power Relations dataset, covering 155 countries from 1946 to 2005, provides an unambiguous link between the exclusion of groups and antigovernment rebellion (Cederman et al. 2010; Wimmer and Cederman 2009). Findings establish an “unequivocal relationship between the degree of access to state power and the likelihood of armed rebellion” (Cederman et al. 2010: 114). The degree to which groups are politically excluded determines their level of motivation, however this is a necessary rather than sufficient condition for rebellion. The likelihood of conflict increases with group size, mobilization capacity, a recent power loss, and experiences with past conflicts (Cederman et al. 2010: 106-108). Ethnic diversity on its own therefore does not necessarily result in conflict (Wimmer and Cederman 2009: 335). Implications for political support arise from a crossover between belongingness and earlier needs. If a politically dominant group excludes other groups from political decision making, this may hinder the excluded group’s ability to secure physiological and safety needs. This is especially true in poorer countries without welfare systems or sufficient economic opportunities outside government control.

The combination of political exclusion and low socioeconomic development is a volatile mix. In their worldwide study, Wimmer and Cederman (2009: 329) found that per capita GDP is as consistently related to conflict as political exclusion. This finding is extremely robust and “excluded groups across all income levels are three times more likely to initiate conflict against the state as compared with included groups that enjoy representation at the center” (Cederman et al. 2010: 106). Lower income countries have a higher risk of violent intergroup conflict because the effects of political exclusion are more substantive and pronounced (Cederman et

al. 2010: 106). Poorer countries often have inadequate or nonexistent welfare systems, and securing resources and necessities is more highly related to having control of the state apparatus. Unsatisfied national belongingness needs in poorer countries increases the likelihood of intergroup conflict because it reduces access to physiological needs. In more common political terms, these are conflicts about control of land and resources arising from discrimination and inequitable distribution. The probability of intergroup conflict decreases by about half a percentage for each percentage increase in income (Hegre and Sambanis 2006: 524). People in richer countries are more able to satisfy their physiological and safety needs without having governmental control, making the consequences of political exclusion less critical.

If political exclusion remains entrenched, power sharing seems impossible, and economic growth is insufficient, marginalized groups may increasingly desire greater independence from the political center. A strategy of political decentralization is often seen as a way to reduce ethnic conflict by granting previously excluded groups greater control over their regional political, social, and economic affairs (Lijphart 1977; Lustick et al. 2004). Yet this encourages the emergence of regional parties, which often reinforce ethnic identities to gain political support, pass legislation harmful to local minorities, mobilize groups to engage in ethnic conflict, and use resources provided by decentralization to exacerbate hostilities (Brancati 2006: 657-660). Political decentralization can therefore be a dangerous state-building strategy, especially when territorial and ethnic boundaries coincide. In more centralized political systems, the statewide or national parties do not have as much of a divisive effect because they must seek broader support from all significant segments of the national community (Brancati 2006: 658-659). This suggests that satisfying belongingness needs at the national level, by including all groups within political decision making, is a potentially effective strategy for fostering peace and stability.

2.6 Mix of Belongingness and Esteem Needs

Belongingness and esteem needs can be difficult to distinguish because esteem sometimes depends upon reactions from other people or groups. Maslow (1954: 90) explains that esteem needs include a socially derived subset of desires for reputation, prestige, status, recognition, attention, importance, appreciation, and “the esteem of others”. Alderfer (1972: 25-26) similarly recognizes that some esteem needs rely on assessments and reactions from others, and places these within relatedness desires. This crossover between the two areas is due in part to the fact that belongingness needs entail the acceptance of others, which provides social confirmation and recognition that in turn enhances self-esteem. People want to feel like their voice counts and their opinions matter to political decision making, and this is not possible until they are welcomed as full members of society.

Despite the close linkages, evidence supports placing belongingness before esteem along the continuum. Studies have demonstrated that higher levels of social connectedness tend to lead to greater self-esteem (Lee and Robbins 1998: 343; Williams and Galliher 2006: 869). Social connectedness is related to belongingness, and refers to one’s personal self-conception, and is affected by the quality and quantity of social relationships during adolescence and early development (Lee and Robbins 1995: 233;238-239). It acts as a proxy for some aspects of belongingness needs satisfaction. Poor interpersonal relationships and social rejection during early childhood and adolescence impedes social connectedness. Repeated studies have also consistently correlated bullying and social rejection with lower self-esteem amongst victims (Hawker and Boulton 2000: 451). Political acceptance and equal citizenship help satisfy

belongingness needs, but they are also prerequisites for effective political participation and the satisfaction of esteem needs.

2.7 Esteem, Respect, Freedom, and Autonomy Needs

The next area of needs include Maslow's (1954: 90-91) esteem needs, some aspects of Alderfer's (1972: 10-11) relatedness desires, and Max-Neef's (1991: 33) freedom needs. Alderfer (1972: 26) points out that esteem needs depend upon "autonomous self-fulfilling activity" that does not rely on reactions from others. Maslow's (1954: 90) more independent—as opposed to his more socially dependent—subset of esteem needs are concerned with strength, dominance, achievement, adequacy, mastery, competence, and confidence. People with these needs have "a strong desire to be regarded as equal in worth, value, and dignity" (Davies 1963: 47). They desire to feel respected, proficient, competent and in control, which may lead to marginalized and oppressed groups seeking freedom or autonomy. Maslow (1954: 90) hints at the political implications of esteem needs when he explains that they entail a desire "for independence and freedom", suggesting that unsatisfied esteem needs could lead to subjugated or persecuted people feeling dissatisfied and rebellious. Max-Neef (1991: 33) also points out that freedom needs may lead to dissent or insurrection if these desires are salient but unmet.

Esteem needs are likely to be least satisfied in societies or groups that are subjugated or repressed, but whose earlier needs are relatively well fulfilled. It is at this stage that self-determination, self-reliance, and self-governance become increasingly important. Max-Neef (1991: 60-61) argues that developing nations' dependence on developed countries results in unsatisfied freedom needs. The reliance on foreign capital investments, imposed economic structural adjustments, and cultural disregard leave some people from developing nations feeling indignant. Esteem needs would have been similarly unsatisfied in many colonized countries that did not have the freedom, autonomy, or control over their own affairs. The movement towards democracy often reflects an effort to assert independence from rule by outgroups or overthrow oppressive and authoritarian forms of governance. The struggle for universal suffrage is one of the best examples of disenfranchised groups seeking to be treated equally and respected (Davies 1963: 51). The ongoing Arab Spring uprisings could also be interpreted as a case of societies reaching a stage where esteem needs have become predominant amongst large segments of the population. This stage in the evolution of political support is often aided by a strong and cohesive group identity because the usually more unified political voice demands greater attention.

Strong positive national identities can enhance individual self-esteem, but they can also result in dangerous and violent competition between groups. A meta-analysis of 40 studies suggest that groups successful at competitive intergroup discrimination tend to have enhanced social identity, which subsequently increases the self-esteem of people with that identity (Rubin and Hewstone 1998: 57-58). In other words, successes or failures of a group or group members often fosters greater self-esteem and a more positive self-conception of people sharing the same identity (Tamir 1993: 73;96). Another meta-analysis of 34 studies found that individuals with higher self-esteem tend to show more in-group bias, meaning that they view their group more positively and discriminate against outgroups more frequently than people with lower self-esteem (Aberson et al. 2000: 170). Successful intergroup rivalry therefore leads to higher collective esteem, which can in turn leads to greater degree of bias against other groups. This suggests societies with strong identities will tend to discount criticisms of their own group, but focus more on the negative aspects of other groups.

Governing authorities can gain political support if they encourage positive self-conceptions amongst group members. There are at least two preconditions for most successfully gaining political support in this way. First, governing authorities must usually be perceived as belonging to or sharing an identity with the members of the ethnic, national, or other group from which they wish to gain support. In other words, people must think the leader is either one of them or be perceived as genuinely sympathetic to their interests. Promoting positive self-conceptions amongst a group is more effective when the promoter is a member or advocate of that group. Second, the group from which support is sought must be at a stage of development where esteem needs are salient but relatively unsatisfied. A strategy of encouraging positive group identity would not be as effective for gaining political support when most members of the group are malnourished and focused on satisfying chronic sustenance needs. Nevertheless, under the right conditions, promoting positive in-group identities and discounting the achievements of rival groups can be a very effective way of bolstering political support. Societal problems can be blamed on outgroups, which has the double effect of increasing in-group self-esteem and discounting the achievements of out-groups. This strategy of gaining political support is not without its risks, however. Strengthening collective self-esteem “is often accomplished in competitive and violent ways” that result in unsympathetic viewpoints towards outgroups (Spinner-Halev and Theiss-Morse 2003: 522). If taken to the extreme this increases the likelihood of armed conflicts and economic instability, which undermines the satisfaction of safety and security needs, potentially sending affected societies backwards along the needs continuum.

Societies must find ways to maintain their collective esteem while avoiding violent conflict and regressing to focusing on earlier safety and stability needs. After analyzing 515 different studies covering a broad range of demographic and geographic contexts, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006: 766) found clear evidence that intergroup contact substantially reduces prejudice. These effects typically generalize beyond immediately involved individuals, resulting in less prejudice towards other outgroups not directly involved in the contact (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006: 766). In other words, the more interaction people have with different cultures, beliefs, ethnicities, and groups the more tolerant and accepting they tend to become. Allowing or encouraging intergroup interactions may therefore shift the foundations of political support from exclusive in-groups to a plurality of groups. This is one of the essential pillars of nation-building, where people from differentiated groups are encouraged to identify with a common nationality. On the other hand, if national identities are overemphasized it can lead to international rivalries and start the whole destructive cycle again at the international level. This is why the long-term success of the European Union, regarding broad political support for the project, depends largely upon developing a common European identity.

2.8 Mix of Self-Esteem and Self-Actualization Needs

Esteem needs function as both prerequisites and facilitators for the emergence of self-actualization needs. There is also considerable overlap between nonsocial aspects esteem and many activities associated with self-actualization. Alderfer (1972: 25-26) recognized this and combined nonsocial esteem needs involving “autonomous, self-fulfilling activity” within growth desires. These are the subset of esteem needs that do not rely on external recognition from others, but instead rely on an internal sense of accomplishment and proficiency. This internal sense of mastery, competence, or adequacy instills the confidence necessary to push the boundaries of personal growth and fulfill self-actualization needs. Yet even with a high degree of internal self-esteem, there may be societal limitations that hinder the fulfillment of self-actualization needs. For example, restricted freedom of expression may prevent artists,

authors, and activists from realizing their self-actualization desires. Limited freedom of movement may prevent athletes, business people, and performers from traveling to pursue professional or personal growth opportunities. People need these kinds of liberties and rights before they can freely pursue their individual passions and interests without interference. It is at this transitional stage in a society's development, when people are ready for more autonomy and starting to pursue their self-actualization needs, that individual civil and political rights become increasingly important. Political support under these conditions will begin depending upon the ability of governing authorities to lift restrictions and instill a greater sense of equality, respect, autonomy, and freedom amongst the population.

2.9 Growth and Self-Actualization Needs

The last area deals with what Maslow (1954: 91-92) calls self-actualization needs and Alderfer (1954: 132-143) defines as growth desires. Some elements of what Max-Neef (1991: 32-33) categorizes as creation and freedom needs fit within this area as well. Maslow (1954: 91-92) defines self-actualization as the "desire for self-fulfillment" or "to become more and more what one is". This is unique to each person, since growth or actualization needs are concerned with individual capabilities, special capacities, and distinctive interests. Alderfer (1972: 20) defines growth desires as seeking to harness capabilities and develop personal talents, but he emphasizes that societal and environmental factors and restrictions limit what people can pursue at any given time. Alderfer (1972: 16) ordered his categories along a continuum based on their concreteness, and asserted that growth needs are the least concrete or verifiable. Self-actualization needs are extremely intangible and abstract because they can entail the pursuit of very dissimilar activities and interests for different people.

It is difficult to make any generalizations about people focused on self-actualization needs, since they are fulfilled in unique ways depending on personal capabilities and interests. Inglehart (1990: 66) has nevertheless found that values in advanced industrial societies have been gradually shifting from materialist to postmaterialist values, which are more focused on self-expression and quality of life needs associated with personal growth and self-actualization. Inglehart (1990: 68) explains that the emergence of postmaterialist values is a long-term intergenerational process, since basic value structures arise from the socioeconomic conditions during early adolescence and childhood. Wealthy industrialized societies are likely to have the highest proportions of people focused on self-actualization needs, since many people in these societies grew up with their earlier needs mostly satisfied. Yet this still says very little about what motivates people with needs structures predominantly focused on self-actualization. Some may engage in politics, either within government institutions or through other avenues, as a way to satisfy their self-actualization needs (Davies 1963: 56-60). They may feel active political engagement is their "mission in life" or that it is a "responsibility, duty, or obligation" to look out for the good of humankind or their society (Maslow 1954: 211-212). Other people may gain fulfillment from encouraging cultural and artistic pursuits (Wiepking 2010: 13). Self-actualizing people seek fulfillment through a diversity of pastimes or activities, often joining a multitude of groups based on these interests and pastimes.

Governing authorities may find it difficult to maintain high levels of political support in wealthy postindustrial societies because of increased levels of diversity and heterogeneity. Less developed societies are often extremely diverse as well, but not in the same way or to the same extent. Both postindustrial and less developed societies are often ethnically, religiously, or linguistically diverse. However, new economic sectors emerge as an economy industrializes, each often giving rise to its own trade unions and special interest groups. As general wealth

levels increase, people are more secure about their welfare, and have more time for leisure activities and pursuing their interests. This leads to innumerable groups and clubs focused around particular activities and interests, each with their own sets of political priorities. As the diversity of conflicting political values and priorities increases, the probability of governing authorities satisfying any particular group's needs declines. Bird watchers' desire for forest conservation conflicts with loggers' economic interests, athletes and artists compete for limited government funding, employers desire market liberalization while workers desire employment protections, the rich desire lower taxes while the poor desire increased social security, renewable energy firms desire startup capital while fossil fuel firms desire to keep their subsidies. Everywhere one looks in wealthy postindustrial societies there is another special interest group pursuing its particular priorities. Compromises are often struck that fail to adequately appease all, or even most, of the different groups. Frustration with politicians, government, and the political system is therefore likely to increase as society becomes more multicultural and heterogeneous. Compounding the problem, self-actualizing people are usually tolerant and accepting of others, "regardless of class, education, political belief, race, or color" (Maslow 1954: 206-208; 220). This means multiculturalism, pluralism, and individual rights will generally be accepted as positive values in societies where self-actualization needs are predominant. People may have passionate beliefs and preferences about the direction governance, and want to take action, but are often thwarted by pressure from opposing groups. As these frustrations and disappointments accumulate over time, people may start to lose trust in established political actors and institutions. This could be perceived as increased political apathy, but is probably better described as political frustration. That is, people's self-actualization needs, and their associated political preferences and priorities, are repeatedly frustrated in a system saturated with a multitude of conflicting group interests.

One generalization that can be made about political support in post-industrial societies, is that it often depends on what governing authorities refrain from doing, rather than the actions they do perform. People focused on self-actualization desire to be left alone so they can pursue their unique passions, achieve their aspirations, and develop their talents. They can "get aroused when state action threatens realization of their particular individual or group values", but may otherwise appear politically uninterested (Davies 1963: 54-55). People may not get extremely politically engaged if socioeconomic conditions remain good, politicians behave themselves, and society continues to run smoothly. Authorities will be expected to effectively provide baseline conditions and essential public services necessary for maintaining achieved levels of needs satisfaction. However, people will want them to do so without restricting or infringing upon liberties and freedoms that facilitate self-actualization activities. An area where people may find common ground is the reduction of taxes, so that more time and money is available for pursuits related to self-actualization (Davies 1963: 55-56). Taxes and governmental inefficiencies take resources away from citizens that they might prefer to direct towards more self-fulfilling areas that develop personal talents. If reduced tax revenue forces governments to cut back spending in other areas, such as education or social security programs, this is likely to create political cleavages between the differentially affected groups.

3 Conclusion

The political needs theory discussed in this article draws upon theories of human needs from psychology. This provides a behavioral perspective that helps explain how changing conditions motivate different values and preferences. It was argued that the evolution of political support depends upon socioeconomic development and changing conditions influencing the relative importance of different areas of needs. Research supports the argument

that conditions during early adolescence and childhood affect which needs a person considers important later in life. People that grow up in failed states, developing economies, or industrialized societies are likely to have very different needs and concerns. Their priorities and interests differ according to prevalent levels of deprivation and standards of living during their formative years. Socioeconomic development is a long-term intergenerational process, and changes to the underpinnings of political support will therefore occur gradually. Political needs theory presents a general tendency or approximate trajectory along which many societies have developed. The continuum is not intended to be fixed or rigid. Unanticipated deviations are likely since unique societal conditions and events will often cause unpredictable exceptions, or even backwards regressions along the continuum. The sections that discusses crossovers between areas of needs were also intended to illustrate a certain degree of transitional fluidity. The theory outlined in this article is nevertheless useful because it can be applied to a wide range of societies at different stages of development. With further operationalization, empirical validation, and modification, political needs theory has the potential to become an even more powerful tool for understanding the dynamics of political support.

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