Political Psychology in the Arab Region: A Commentary on Navigating Research in Unstable Contexts

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The Arab region consists of 22 countries, most of which gained some form of independence from different forms of colonial rule between the 1920's and 1970's. Many of these countries have experienced deep social, political, and psychological struggle and transformations (Gelvin, 2016). These include war, mass migration, military occupation, political schisms, and other "rapid societal changes" (Smith et al., 2019). This has, in turn, introduced, instability and insecurity, as well as domestic and international polarization and reactionary conservatism to the region. We argue that these characteristics stem from legacies of colonialism and imperialism and have led to ongoing domestic-international power struggles, authoritarianism, and politicization of religion in modern times (Harb, 2016; Pratto et al., 2014). The Arab region has attracted the attention of the media, as well as scholars of history (Khalidi, 1991), sociology (Hanafi, 2012), political science (Jamal & Tessler, 2008), anthropology (Deeb & Winegar, 2015), and other disciplines. However, social psychological analyses of the Arab region remain scarce. Perhaps more importantly, a modern political psychology of the Arab

region has been slow to attract local students interested in pursuing topics of justice, conflict and politics in the region.

In this chapter we provide a brief overview of the historical context, present, and future directions of political psychology in the Arab region. We reflexively recognize our positions as Lebanese academics trained in Western institutions and working in English, and acknowledge that the following therefore possibly represents a limited perspective on the topic, although every effort has been made to counterbalance our reflexive viewpoints with those of researchers in other positions.

A Brief History and Review of Political Psychology in the Region

Exploration of political psychological topics in the Arab region can be traced back to the 14th century at least, in Ibn Khaldun's (1377) systematic investigation of social cohesion, intergroup conflict, and their interactions with sedentary vs. nomadic lifestyles. Such works continue to inform contemporary Arab social science, but they are often over-emphasized and applied uncritically due to the relative dearth of contemporary social research (see Hanafi & Arvanitis, 2014, 2015; Hanafi, 2018).

Pre-colonial, non-academic, and non-psychological works of relevance to political psychology are beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is worth mentioning that theorizing on the questions political psychology poses as a field has a long and rich history in the Arab region. We note works of political psychological significance from outside the academy (e.g. social identity and violence by Amin Maalouf in 1998), and a substantial portion of current studies on the Arab world consists of grey literature, such as unpublished theses and reports published by development organizations and think-tanks (e.g. Harb, 2010; Harb & Saab, 2014). This is likely due to a greater emphasis on and funding for applied and development related work in these

nations. Moreover, a larger research body from other disciplines (e.g. anthropology, political science) examines political psychological topics, although interdisciplinary collaborations with psychologists are limited (Zebian et al., 2007; El-Amine, 2009).

Psychology as a formal discipline first emerged in the Arab world in Egypt, in the early 20th century (Ibrahim, 2013). Early research focused on psychoanalysis, education, and learning (Prothtro & Melikian, 1955). The mid-20th century saw rising interest in political psychological topics, based primarily on psychoanalysis (El-Rawy, 1947) or sociology (Prothro & Melikian, 1953; Shuval, 1956; Tannous, 1942). The first earnest social/political psychological literature relating to Arabs may have appeared in the 1949 edition of the Egyptian Journal of Psychology, where three separate articles discussed various aspects of war, peace, and the warrior (Chafe'l, 1949; Ibrahim, 1949; Cazeneuve, 1949). Then, in the mid-1950's, Terry Prothro, based at the American University of Beirut (AUB) in Lebanon, published a series of papers on stereotypes in the "Near East" (e.g., Prothro, 1954; Prothro & Melikian, 1954), outgroup attitudes (Prothro, 1955), social/political attitudes (Prothro & Keehn, 1956), stereotypes (Prothro & Keehn, 1957), and chosen goals (political or otherwise; Melikian & Prothro, 1957). Additional work was published on political attitudes (Keehn, 1955), authoritarianism and prejudice (Diab, 1959), nationalism (Macleod, 1959), group affiliations (Melikian & Diab, 1959), and stereotypes and immigration (De La Roque, 1960). Some reviews (e.g., Malika, 1994; Sanchez-Sosa & Riveros, 2007; Zebian, et al., 2007) have shown that the amount of (social) psychological research on the Arab region produced in Arabic or other languages (English or French) is limited. A preliminary search on the PsycInfo database[1] found approximately 300 publications related to political

[1] The search included keywords such as social, political psychology, conflict, intergroup, among other related terms, as well as a listing of all 22 Arab nations.

psychology on the Arab region from 1960 till mid-2020[2]. More recently, a selective review of literature between 2000 and 2015 found that out of 144 social psychological articles published in Arabic and on the Arab world, a small minority were related to political psychology (Saab et al., 2020).

Unsurprisingly, a large body of work conducted in unstable regions with ongoing conflict, such as the Arab world, has focused on issues of mental health and well-being, particularly examining the link between conflict and trauma (e.g., Hammad & Tribe, 2020; Jabbar et al, 2019; Khamis, 2019; Kira et al., 2019). Political psychological research published in international journals— has covered social, national, and religious identity (Alfadhli et al., 2009;Kreidie & Monroe, 2002), intergroup relations/conflict (Djeriouat & Mullet, 2013; Kelman & Cohen, 1976; Levin et al., 2013), authoritarianism (Brandt & Henry, 2012; Kira et al., 2017; Sadowski et al., 2019), support for or engagement in political violence(Jasko et al., 2020; Scull et al., 2020; Levin et al., 2016), collective action (Ayanian & Tausch, 2016; Saab et al., 2017), social dominance (Henry et al., 2005; Stewart et al., 2016), and issues pertaining to refugees (Masterson & Lehman, 2020; Saab et al., 2017). However, the published research in any one of these areas is insufficient. The majority of these studies have focused on a select number of countries only[3], most likely corresponding to the presence of social/political psychologists based there and the differential emphasis on basic research of multiple different academic systems and languages (e.g., American, French).

[2] A significant number of these papers have been authored by scholars from fields outside of psychology, particularly political science (e.g., Jamal & Tessler, 2008), and/or work on topics related to the field, such as military psychology (e.g., Mironova, 2019).

[3] The PsycInfo review mentioned above shows that most research has been conducted in the Levant (Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq), and English publications were especially concentrated in Lebanon (see also, Saab et al., 2020).

This is not to say that the study of Arab populations in general is uncommon; on the contrary, we would likely find double the amount of papers on or related to Arabs or the Arab region outside the region itself (e.g., Kteily et al., 2016; Kteily & Bruneau, 2017). Most of this research examines Arabs as immigrants/refugees in western countries, and generally in relation to a narrow range of topics such as political violence, integration, and gender, with an over-emphasis on Islam, terrorism, and the war of civilizations worldview, or attitudes toward and perceptions of Arabs. For instance, numerous papers have examined American and other Western attitudes toward the Iraq invasion (e.g., Crowson, 2009; McFarland, 2005), but hardly any have examined attitudes and perceptions of Iraqis themselves on the US invasion of Iraq (see Fischer et al., 2008 for exceptions). As another example, the presence of refugees and immigrants in the West has attracted a wide range of scholarly interest examining trauma, adaptation/acculturation, threat perceptions, and other issues, among both migrant and host communities (e.g., Berry, 2015; Louis et al., 2013; Reijerse et al., 2013). But most of the world's refugees and immigrants reside in non-Western countries (UNHCR, 2017), and these groups remain largely under-studied.

Studying the political psychology of Arab peoples living in the Arab region would not only be beneficial to the development of Arab societies in the long term, and help produce and enrich indigenous knowledge of the area, but might also lead to the discovery of theoretical and empirical innovations, limitations, and extensions to the culturally-bound (e.g., Rad et al., 2018) Western political psychology. For Arab scholars, reclaiming psychological research foci from Western-based agendas and coloniality would better serve the region and would further enrich the discipline's corpus and better assist the field and communities facing similar problems across

the Global South. This can be achieved by challenging modern disciplinary structures that deter attempts at equalizing and decolonizing the field (Bou Zeineddine et al, under review).

Epistemological and Theoretical Challenges

The conventional approach to research today is to rely on existing literature to build new hypotheses and research procedures. This endeavor becomes difficult when the literature pertaining to specific contexts is scarce. In some cases, researchers could rely on work done on the region (or similar contexts) by other disciplines, but some more nuanced topics are directly tied to political psychology and may not exist outside the subfield. More often than not, however, the field has witnessed an almost "uncritical acceptance of theories and findings from mainstream psychology" (Zebian et al., 2007, p. 114) that oftentimes present theoretical frameworks that are not culturally grounded. In a sense, this reflects the continued impact of the West on regional academia (Vora, 2018), despite its formal withdrawal as colonizer.

Simply applying Western literature and perspectives to contexts that do not match in demographic, cultural, or psychological characteristics (Boyden, 2001; Burgess & Steenkamp, 2006) may lead to output that is not particularly relevant to the region or that does not expand on existing literature or do much in the way of informing the field (Abou-Hatab, 1997; Galioun, 1997). On the other hand, scholars who are aware of the misfit may find themselves struggling to develop a cohesive research or theoretical trajectory from the ground up, in the absence of foundational literature, interdisciplinary collaboration, and satisfactory training (especially in inductive and exploratory methods, which are not typically prioritized in most Western psychology programs). It is even more challenging to get recognition and awareness of such novel indigenously-produced research in international mainstream publications (Bou Zeineddine et al., under review).

Additionally, some topics that are highly relevant to Arab countries remain severely under-theorized. Topics around corruption, sectarianism, repressive governance, and modern slavery are particularly salient in this region (e.g. Bou Zeineddine et al., under review), and yet receive relatively little attention in mainstream political psychology. Taking the case of corruption as an example, research shows that countries in the West suffer from a great degree of oligarchic and other forms of corrupt influence on politics, most of which is formalized within those political systems (e.g., legal lobbying, campaign financing rules, etc., e.g., Gilens & Page, 2014). Such corruption often escapes adequate analysis and interpretation, as legalized modes of special interest influence are neither systematically investigated nor included in measures such as the commonly used Corruption Perceptions Index. Without examining variations across very different polities, such as those in the Arab world, we could not systematically investigate the roles of factors such as structural institutional permissiveness, or the normative and moral-psychological implications of legalized vs. proscribed political influence practices.

Another example is that of collective action, where past literature had examined normative action in developed countries, overlooking non-normative action in authoritarian and repressive contexts (for exceptions, see Ayanian & Tausch, 2016; Ayanian et al., 2020). Different factors than those typically researched (e.g., perceived risks, repressive regimes, party loyalty) could significantly shape motivations for engagement and consequences of such participation. Such gaps in the literature could be better filled with greater attention to the comparative politics of different nations, whereby research would be enriched and validated through broader conceptualization and operationalization of the phenomena that encompass a variety of contexts.

Failures of generalization of commonly researched topics and well-established theories is another problem stemming from the relatively little attention paid to the political psychology of Arab nations. Studies have repeatedly shown that hegemonic psychology based on Western, educated, industrialized, and democratic (WEIRD) samples by WEIRD authors often fails to generalize due to contextual and cultural differences (Henrich et al., 2010; Rad et al., 2018). This is a problem for political psychology specifically, when nuanced analysis of contexts' political systems, structures, institutions, and norms is essential to proper design and interpretation of research (Bou Zeineddine & Pratto, 2017).

For instance, most studies on acculturation (Berry, 1997) – including those who have looked at Arab immigrants as subjects of study – assume that the possibility of permanent settlement for migrant communities exists (e.g., Sayegh & Lasry, 1993). In the Arab world, however, acquiring citizenship or permanent residency is incredibly rare, and therefore questions of belongingness, social cohesion, integration, or assimilation take on a different meaning for Arab migrant populations within the region, some of whom may be third-generation residents/refugees in another Arab and culturally similar state (Andreouli & Figgou, 2019; Fargues, 2011). An examination of migrant processes at this level would thus require a deep revision of dominant theory on acculturation to include the diversity and heterogeneity of the experiences of migration. Interdisciplinary collaboration, greater attention to political psychological data and theory from beyond the formal academic field in the region, greater reliance on critical comparative research within the Arab region, the Global South, and globally, and more effective indigenous research production, distribution, and application, would all help address these challenges. However, beginning to address the epistemological and theoretical

challenges in Arab political psychology is also necessarily contingent on methodological and social, political, and cultural constraints.

Challenges in Research Production

The scant number of academic programs in social/political psychology in Arab countries is one reason for the low number of local scholars specializing in the field or students hoping to train in it.[4] Compounding this problem, many Western institutions have begun offshoring their campuses in the Middle East, and hiring mostly Western faculty for their programs (Miller-Idriss et al., 2011). Moreover, the instability of the region, and its relative lack of development, mean that researchers face lack of recognition as well as concerns about their safety, financial and career security, and civil liberties. Thus, brain drain, through the emigration of researchers to Western nations (e.g. Shabana, 2020), also impacts the potential for local research production. Furthermore, those few scholars residing in the Arab region face methodological constraints that severely handicap their work, including difficulties in acquiring samples (described below), coping with the probability of dramatic and rapid sociopolitical change when designing and implementing research studies, research assistantship (RA) support, regional collaborators, funding, and advanced research training.

Many topics that would be particularly novel, salient, or generative to study in the Arab world, require elaborate approaches and methods[5] like in-depth analyses, qualitative work, numerous pilot studies, translations, and a combination of mixed methods that allow for more

[4] Although exact numbers are unavailable, the authors estimate the presence of under 50 Arab social psychologists working in/on the region, only a portion of which researching topics related to political psychology (see Saab et al., 2020, for an estimate of psychologists publishing in the Arabic language).

[5] In a study examining relations between refugees and host communities in Lebanon, researchers have relied on a review of multiple previous data reports published by UNHCR and other organizations that work with Syrian refugees in Lebanon (e.g., VASYR, 2017), to compensate for the scarce academic research.

culturally sensitive research (Moghaddam et al., 2003). Unfortunately, and based on our personal experiences with conducting sensitive research in these contexts, these designs take more time and resources than most scholars have, in an era that demands multiple studies in publications to be deemed worthwhile (e.g. Adams et al., 2018).

Moreover, regional instability requires flexibility and a certain amount of comfort with uncertainty. In October 2019, Lebanon witnessed a popular uprising against corrupt political leadership and the country's economic deterioration (Amnesty, 2020). Several ongoing projects on intergroup relations had to pause work and reassess their questions and goals. During the long periods needed to develop studies, sudden shifts in political and social conditions would either inhibit/interrupt access to the researched population or freedom to conduct the research (e.g., activists imprisoned, explosions, populations displaced, scholars threatened or attacked) or invalidate the concepts or scales included in the study. Such challenges hinder the development of strong (or any) research institutions, infrastructure, or local personnel that can promote long-term research in the area.

Furthermore, most Arab academic institutions are teaching-focused, and across all Arab states, only seven universities offer Master's degrees and four offer doctoral degrees in social psychology (Saab et al., 2020). This translates to less institutional support for research, particularly ones involving intricate theories, methodologies, and analyses, in terms of funding, time, incentives, or RA's, while still pushing scholars to publish (preferably in international outlets). In many cases, scholars resort to collaborative, cross-cultural projects, which oftentimes allow for little input from on-site local collaborators. More importantly, they rely on direct translations of survey measures that have been set by central international teams. These collaborative projects can be useful but are often exploitative and hegemonic in their approach

and organization (e.g., Hanafi & Arvanitis, 2014) and cannot stand alone as primary sources of literature on the region.

Reliance on college samples or online sampling portals (e.g., Mechanical Turk), despite the shortcomings of each methodology (Henrich et al., 2010; Sheehan, 2018), has aided researchers in obtaining large samples of data quickly and inexpensively for decades. However, most online sampling portals do not service the Arab world and, to the best of our knowledge, many Arab universities do not provide institutional forms of encouragement (e.g., course credit) for student participation – thus rendering even these "convenient" sampling techniques unattainable.

On the one hand, these difficulties could lead to the opportune reliance on more diverse and representative samples, outside student and online communities, to achieve closer approximations of the pulse of a society (e.g., Alfadhli et al., 2019; Ayanian & Tausch, 2016). On the other hand, accessing a wider range of individuals presents its own set of challenges, starting with the logistics of collecting representative data (Harb, 2016). Certain communities (e.g., low-skilled migrant workers in Gulf countries) are almost impossible to access, either due to their geographic or living conditions (e.g., low-skilled migrant workers in Gulf countries; Joshi et al. 2011) or due to the presence of violence (Ford et al., 2009). Some countries do not possess updated population data or may not be willing to part with census information, thereby preventing a proper procedure of random sampling. In nationally diverse regions, such as the Gulf, where some residents are not proficient in English or Arabic, researchers must also assess the feasibility of translating measures into multiple languages or foregoing certain groups altogether. Snowballing techniques or other forms of convenience sampling are also not always effective, particularly in communities that place little value on the usefulness of academic studies

or are wary of their intentions. Under these sampling constraints, building new theories that typically rely on appropriate samples becomes more difficult (Sue, 1993), especially in countries with heavy handed measures of population control and monitoring, in the absence of appropriate support and funding, and with reviewers applying different standards regarding sampling for Western vs non-Western studies (e.g., Bou Zeineddine et al., under review).

Furthermore, in attempting to reach community members representing various backgrounds, social strata, and perspectives, the need for culturally valid measures becomes more crucial. Merely translating scales developed with WEIRD societies in mind is not sufficient. According to Zebian et al. (2007), many Arab-based studies included noncollege students, while over half the measures used were originally developed with non-Arab– and student– samples in mind. Of course, there is sometimes quite a bit to be gained from pre-existing scales (Kennedy, 2005), but direct or literal translations that falsely assume constructs and phrases are universally understood in similar ways neglect cultural variations and the need for more culturally appropriate adaptations (Werner & Campbell, 2001). Current recommendations include incorporating qualitative methods into the measurement process, focusing on more culturally appropriate translations, and ending the sole reliance on post-hoc psychometric assessments of measures (Kennedy, 2005). This process requires time and resources from researchers, however. Moreover, aside from the possibility that nonstudent samples (of varying age, SES, literacy, and background) may not share similar experiences (especially in political psychology), they are also less likely to have had much experience or familiarity with participating in studies, thereby impacting how they understand and react to instruments, how much trust they place in the objectivity and confidentiality of studies, how safe they feel about engaging in sensitive topics, and consequently, how candidly they respond

(Sultana, 2007). Reaching larger samples in many countries requires community, government, and participant support and cooperation, which are particularly difficult to attain when it comes to questions perceived to threaten the political status quo. We elaborate on this next.

Social, Political, and Ethical Challenges

Research on human participants, particularly members of vulnerable populations, requires a long list of ethical considerations, including privacy, confidentiality, and the protection of participants (Sales & Folkman, 2000). Research in unstable and conflict-ridden settings brings about additional considerations beyond those of institutional ethical boards (see Moss et al., 2019). This includes genuine efforts to collaborate locally, engage continuously with communities, and ensure that the research benefits communities, directly or indirectly (Ford et al., 2009; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2013).

In some cases, institutionally-approved studies may still be delayed or prohibited by governments or local parties, who are not obligated to cite their reasons (Warwick, 1993). For example, in a multi-year media study in the region, one measure assesses levels of trust in media outlets. This question was permitted (or at least slipped under the radar) in Egypt in 2015 but was not allowed to be asked again in 2019 (Media Use in the Middle East, 2019). In another example, a survey assessing political attitudes of Egyptians residing in the Gulf towards their home country caught the attention of the Egyptian embassy, who reached out to the main researcher and asked them to modify the survey if they wished to continue collecting data. In Lebanon, one of the authors was advised to remove certain questions to avoid catching the attention – and ire – of certain political parties in the country. These restrictions occur often enough to hinder the process of data collection on questions of varying political sensitivity (Harb, 2016). Additionally, legalized religious and cultural sensitivities mean that, in some countries, many topics (e.g.

homosexuality, regime repression) cannot even be mentioned as examples (e.g., in instruments assessing support for minority rights), much less be the primary topic of examination. Conducting such studies (e.g. on underground sexual minority communities) directly and seriously jeopardizes participants' as well as researchers' security and freedoms. Researchers have noted that inequities in the systems of knowledge production are not just lingering modern-colonial hegemony or issues with material resource deprivations, but also are intimately connected to the authoritarian and illiberal regimes found in most of this region's countries, and the tight norms they foster (e.g., Hanafi, 2016).

The problems with sensitive questions in a politically unstable region go beyond institutional (and non-institutional) sensitivities and support, however. Participant perception and apprehension about studies' possible purposes interfere heavily with the quality and validity of data. Outside WEIRD "overstudied" populations, the norms of data collection – confidentiality, anonymity, expectations of candidness, proper interpretation of measures– are not familiar to the average (or target) underrepresented participant (Zebian et al., 2007). Specifically, reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality may not sufficiently persuade individuals to engage with questions about their loyalty or support for regimes, political ideologies, or sectarian groups, or about controversial opinions (Sue, 1993). Participant fears range from ostracization to deportation, imprisonment, or worse, on accounts of incitement. At the very least, we would expect higher rates of socially desirable responses, similar to what is documented among ethnic minority groups and within countries of relatively lower affluence (Johnson & Van de Vijver, 2003). Furthermore, project affiliations or sources of funding could also trigger suspicion and evasion by target communities. Relatedly, non-local researchers could be perceived as modern proxies of colonialism – another means to influence the region into fulfilling a certain agenda –

or carriers of misguided and misinformed racist perceptions about communities they know little about (Warwick, 1993).

Furthermore, in societies heavily divided by sectarianism, factionalism, and political ideology, even local researchers could be perceived as "the other side" or pushing their personal agendas, and/or untrustworthy with potentially incriminating information. On the other hand, participants may be right to question how researchers' power, positionality, and socially constructed biases might shape what and how questions are asked, responded to, and interpreted (Binns, 2006; Kram, 1988). Particular communities that are subjected to heavier research (e.g., those in refugee camps) have grown weary of engaging with questions more relevant to Western academia than the community's actual concerns, and disappointment when promises of social change go unfulfilled (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2013). Arab scholars must be aware of how their socioeconomic status, education, cultural, religious and political influences and personal goals color their own perceptions as well as the community's hesitation to cooperate. Addressing these issues requires critical, sensitive, reflexive, and inclusive approaches to research.

A notable observation of the PsycInfo search mentioned earlier is that an almost equal number of publications (on Palestinian samples mostly) has emerged from Israeli scholars alone compared to all other Arab publications. While some might argue that data emerging from these endeavors can enrich our understanding of a group that would have otherwise been severely understudied, it remains problematic in several ways. First, there is the practical and very controversial question of whether this is considered *research within Arab regions*, when this is in reality a settler-colonial context, in a land occupied by Israelis (Beinin & Stein, 2006). Second, the Arab-Israeli conflict has shaped attitudes and perceptions between the two groups for almost a century (Lesch, 2018). Although some Israeli academics have expressed support for the

Arab/Palestinian cause, some even explicitly protesting the occupation, they still likely carry some of their society's perspectives and biases, which would inevitably shape research design and interpretation, while leaving Palestinian voices outside the conversation (Binns, 2006). This power imbalance between researcher and subject must be counterpoised by more contributions from within the Arab academic community.

Finally, as an issue of moral responsibility, many Arab scholars abide by the boycott of Israeli academic institutions complicit in violations of Palestinian rights (Hermez & Soukarieh, 2013). Additionally, collaboration with Israeli institutions and travel to Israel are prohibited for most Arab citizens. Hence, multi-national projects including Israeli collaborations and international conferences held in Israel effectively exclude Arab scholars.

The Future of Political Psychology in the Arab Region

The concern over the potential harm that Western biases could cause has sometimes led to the drastic solution of avoiding research endeavors in the Global South altogether (Sultana, 2007). This is an unfortunate choice, particularly when properly conducted research can potentially inform advocacy and policy change (Ford et al., 2009). The challenges presented in this chapter are not meant to be discouraging, but rather cautionary. Perhaps best practice does not have to incorporate an all-or-nothing approach, but one that recognizes cultural and political sensitivities, inequalities, and the positionality and role of researchers (Bhatia, 2019). And despite the challenges in conducting political psychological research in the Arab region, there are promising signs of progress.

It is worth reminding that the region is overflowing with academic and public policy groups that tackle violence, politics, and security studies from various disciplines, although psychological perspectives are often excluded from the discourse. The primary responsibility to

bridge this gap and include political psychology in the conversation falls on political psychologists themselves. Local scholars must collaborate together and reach out to other academic and policy groups to create a well-rounded understanding of the region. International scholars must understand the challenges that unstable, conservative, and authoritarian contexts pose, while encouraging and appreciating innovative and unconventional approaches to research in the region. The growing recognition of the roles of critical, indigenous, discursive, and liberation psychology in challenging traditional approaches and navigating diverse contexts is a positive move in that direction (Andreouli & Figgou, 2019; Bhatia, 2019; Nesbitt-Larking & Kinnvall, 2012).

Another positive development to this end is the rapidly growing number of Arab and Arab-based social/political psychologists, particularly in the past two decades. The authors are also aware of (or are contributing to) various ongoing projects examining a wide range of topics, such as collective action, social dominance and resistance, collective memory, norms, gender, region-based migrant and refugee communities, as well as changes in political attitudes and values over time (e.g., Adra et al., 2019; Albzour et al., 2019; Ayanian et al., 2020; Badaan et al., 2020; Bou Zeineddine & Qumseya, under review).

Furthermore, political psychologists have begun seeking out several large-scale survey projects emerging from other disciplines. The Arab Barometer (2006 – present), the Arab Opinion Index (2011 – present), and the Media in the Middle East survey (2013 – present) focus on political opinion and/or media polling, across up to 12 Arab countries each. Additionally, some Arab countries have participated in international studies like the World Values Survey (2010 - present), which includes various social-political measures. These data are valuable, but

until recently, have been underutilized, particularly in exploring processes and models that are relevant to the field.

Nevertheless, the road ahead remains long and hard. The field should take a step back, avoid the blind adoption of constructs and theories based on Western samples and contexts, invest in the gradual growth of critical indigenous psychology, and reform the systems of knowledge production it relies on (Bou Zeineddine et al., under review). Arab political psychologists need breathing room to work, political space within which they can examine their own societies critically. But until international relations and domestic politics align to allow this, Arab scholars need to innovate, adapt, and collaborate with regional and international scholars on potentially arduous approaches to research..

A certain degree of hybridity (Hanafi & Arvanitis, 2014) entails fluency in both local and "international" research concerns, practices, and ideas, and flexible use of this larger toolbox. Such hybridity can be difficult to maintain, especially for researchers living in diaspora, working in foreign languages, or unable to return to their countries. It can be equally difficult for scholars isolated from the international mainstream literature (e.g., through linguistic barriers). Leveraging the small numbers of researchers in the field to forge strong professional networks across national and linguistic boundaries could be an adequate approach to maintaining hybridity, but is contingent on there being at least *some* local political psychologists, a fact that is not true in many Arab countries, and a precarious and potentially ephemeral reality in others. Importing Western faculty is not the answer in the long term (Miller-Idriss & Hanauer, 2011). Training more Arab political psychologists, setting up a regional political psychology working group or association, expanding Arab psychology programs so psychologists can work locally and begin training others in turn, engaging in political activism in favor of freedom of speech

and academic freedom and good governance, are all essential, if difficult, avenues political psychologists must take.

Both international and Arab researchers must also recognize the richness and value of the context and prioritize topics that are most pressing for the region, even if potentially disruptive of the field. The cultural and political diversity in the region, and the limitations in Western theories and perspectives, demand a wide range of political psychological research that comes from listening to the concerns and needs of the community itself (Chatty et al., 2005) and reflecting in nuanced and systematic ways on what this community can teach all of us about the diversity of human experiences.

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