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Image Theory, Social Identity, and Social Dominance: Structural Characteristics and Individual Motives Underlying International Images

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The present study provides an empirical test of international relations image theory and extends the theory by emphasizing that individuals' social identity and social dominance motives contribute to such images. One hundred forty-five Lebanese participants completed a survey that assessed their perceptions of U.S.-Lebanese relations, the images they have of the United States, their social identities, and their social dominance orientations. Participants were more likely to hold the barbarian image of the United States than the enemy, imperialist, or ally images. Participants also tended to perceive the United States as having relatively superior power, inferior cultural status, and goals that are incompatible with those of Lebanon. Consistent with image theory predictions, this constellation of structural perceptions was associated with stronger endorsement of the barbarian image. Furthermore, participants were more likely to endorse the barbarian image of the United States the more they identified with Arabs and Palestinians, the less they identified with Christians and the Western world, and the lower their social dominance orientation. Results highlight the importance of considering both structural characteristics and individual motives underlying international images and demonstrate the need for scholars to move beyond the enemy image of nations when describing international relations.

KEY WORDS: International Images, Social Identity, Social Dominance

Current international tensions between the United States and Arab nations have prompted scholars to attempt to explain the origins of the conflict and to estimate the potential economic, political, and social ramifications of the actions taken by the United States in the “war on terrorism” (Beck, 2002; Stanton, 2002; Unger, 2002). The perspectives of other nations and their images of the United States, whether the nations are directly involved in the conflict or merely observing the United States in action, are crucial factors in understanding and predicting their reactions to the United States and the potential outcomes of U.S. military action. International relations theory in political science, particularly international relations image theory, directly applies to the current “war on terrorism” and can be used to understand the perceptions that nation states have of the United States, and potentially the immediate and long-term effects of those perceptions on foreign policy decisions directed toward the United States. The present study provides an empirical test of the main assumptions of international relations image theory within a Lebanese sample by assessing the relationship between their perceptions of U.S.-Lebanese relations and the specific images they have of the United States. The study also extends image theory to investigate the potential role of social identity and social dominance motives in contributing to such international images.

International relations scholars have examined the origins and consequences of the images that nation states hold of each other, particularly in the context of international conflict (Boulding, 1956, 1959; Jervis, 1970). A more formal theory of international images includes a detailed explanation of the cognitive perceptions of group relations and the resulting images and strategic responses associated with these perceptions (Cottam, 1977; Herrmann, 1985; Herrmann, Tetlock, & Visser, 1999). Image theory is a theory of strategic decision making that identifies the primary judgments guiding international images, or stereotypes, and the selection of international policies. Image theorists suggest that ideas about other actors in world affairs are organized into group schemas, or images, with well-defined cognitive elements. These images are organized in a systematic way, comprised of cognitions and beliefs regarding the target nation’s motives, leadership, and primary characteristics. Understanding these images requires understanding the context of intergroup relations from which these beliefs and stereotypes directly derive. According to image theory, the structural features of international relations play an important role in determining the specific images countries have of one another. Images, or stereotypes of other nations, stem from perceived relationships between nations and serve to justify a nation’s desired reaction or treatment toward another nation. For example, an appraisal of an international relationship that results in perceived threat to one’s own nation, much like that of the U.S. appraisal of Iraq, may lead to an inclination to attack the target nation. Because attacking another nation without sufficient justification is inconsistent with a positive, moral self-image, it needs to be justified in order to rectify an

imbalance between self-image and negative behavior. An image of the other nation as the enemy arises to validate such a behavioral inclination.

Structural Features of International Relations and Associated Images

Three critical structural features of perceived international relationships that lead to associated images are: (1) goal compatibility, (2) relative power/capability, and (3) relative cultural status, or sophistication. These three dimensions determine threat or opportunity appraisals of the other nation, which then generate behavioral tendencies toward the nation and evoke specific cognitive schema, or images of that nation. Several possible images stem from perceived international relations, and each image has unique components that characterize it (Herrmann & Fischerkeller, 1995; Herrmann, Voss, Schooler, & Ciarrochi, 1997).

International relations scholars have focused most of their attention on identifying and describing the attributes of the *enemy image* and its effects on policy choice. With the enemy image, one considers the other nation as evil, opportunistic, and motivated by self-interest. The nation's leaders are also assumed to be highly capable, but untrustworthy. The enemy image results when an international relationship is characterized by intense competition (i.e., goal incompatibility), comparable capability/power, and comparable cultural status. Such a perceived relationship generates threat in the perceiver and prompts the inclination to deal with the threat by attack or at least containment. Considering the other nation as an enemy loosens moral restrictions against containment and attack and justifies such behavior.

The enemy image and spiral model of interaction dominated the analysis of the U.S-Soviet images during the cold war period and continue to be applied when political scientists, analysts, and psychologists describe relations between Arab countries in the Middle East and the United States (Beck, 2002). Although the enemy image has historically been used to describe most conflicts between nations, using this image in such a broad, generalized way to describe all international conflicts is inaccurate in several cases and fails to capture the complex variation in images used in different contexts. Using the enemy image as a general image ultimately limits a complete analysis of international relations and limits our ability to predict international behavior.

Image theorists have identified four additional images that are particularly relevant to international relations (Herrmann & Fischerkeller, 1995). Like the enemy image, each image arises from a unique combination of the three dimensions of goal compatibility, relative power/capability, and relative cultural status. By examining the full range of possible images, we can acquire greater explanatory and predictive ability in international settings. In addition to the enemy image, the ally, barbarian, imperialist, and dependent (colonial) images can result from specific configurations of perceived international relations. A summary of

perceived structural relations and international images predicted by image theory is presented in Table 1.

When an international relationship is defined by positive goal interdependence, similar capability, and similar cultural status, an *ally image* results. While an enemy image serves to justify attack and conflict escalation with another nation equal in power and status, an ally image serves a comparable function in facilitating cooperation with another nation when that other nation has equal power and status but is not threatening. Perceiving the other nation as good, altruistic, and noble with full public support for its leaders facilitates the inclination to cooperate. Provided that nations perceive the international relationship the same way, the enemy and ally stereotypes are mirror images of each other (Bronfenbrenner, 1961).

Other images stem from mutually incompatible goal interdependence between nations that differ in power and status, thus are asymmetric in their appraisals. One such asymmetric relationship is the situation in which one's own nation perceives itself as culturally superior, but vastly weaker in capability than a comparison nation. Here, one's resources and position are severely threatened by the other nation and that nation is perceived as a potential invader. In this situation, there is no immediate chance of fighting such a powerful adversary; therefore, the inclination is toward insulating oneself from the other nation

Table 1. Images of Other Nations as a Function of Goal Compatibility, Relative Status, and Relative Power

Relationship Pattern of Other Nation	Image of Other Nation
Goal compatibility Status Equal Power Equal	Ally
Goal incompatibility Status Equal Power Equal	Enemy
Goal incompatibility Status Lower Power Lower	Dependent
Goal incompatibility Status Lower Power Higher	Barbarian
Goal incompatibility Status Higher Power Higher	Imperialist

Note. Although it is possible that different configurations of the structural features of international relations could produce additional images, the specific relationship patterns and images we emphasize here are those identified by image theorists that are most likely to arise from different configurations of the international context (Herrmann & Fischerkeller, 1995). For purposes of the present study, we are only concerned with those images previously discussed by image theorists.

by appeasing them, at least until capabilities change in one's favor. The tension between reacting passively or cowardly at the risk of sacrificing one's values or goals, and reacting actively at the risk of annihilation, is resolved by constructing an image of the stronger nation in which appeasement is the only correct and prudent course of action. The resulting *barbarian image* portrays the other nation as destructive, intimidating, and irrational, led by highly emotional leaders who could obliterate one's own nation at the slightest provocation.

A second asymmetric appraisal pattern exists when one's own nation perceives itself as much stronger than another nation and as having higher cultural status, thereby yielding an opportunity for one's nation to take control and exploit the other to achieve one's own goals. However, because such exploitation is not considered morally correct, an image of the other nation as dependent arises to balance these moral constraints. The *dependent image* characterizes the other nation as vulnerable, disorganized, and generally ineffective, incapable of taking care of itself and in strong need of guidance and direction. This dependent image lessens moral inhibitions against dominance, control, and exploitation and permits one's own nation to interpret the domination as helping rather than harming the other nation.

The complement to the dependent image arises when one's nation perceives another nation as much more powerful and culturally superior. Given the other nation's superior capabilities, one's own nation cannot feasibly directly attack them, but could resist their presence via indirect means such as sabotage or more directly through revolution or rebellion. The *imperialist image* of the other nation results to justify these resistance tendencies. The imperialist image pictures them as controlling, exploitative, and dominating. It also includes the beliefs that some people in one's own nation have sold out to the imperialist nation and have been used for the imperialist's benefit. This image serves to validate passive resistance to or active revolt against the imperialist regime.

Some empirical support for image theory in general and these five images in particular exists in both the political science and social psychology literatures. The images themselves have been shown to include unique, detailed clusters of cognitive schema, and to impact information processing and policy preferences in a variety of intergroup settings (Alexander, Brewer, & Herrmann, 1999; Brewer & Alexander, 2002; Herrmann et al., 1997). These studies also indicate that different patterns of perceived intergroup relationships elicit consistent images of other groups and the adoption of particular response strategies. That is, perceptions of goal compatibility and the relative status and power of another group combine in specific ways to create particular stereotypes about the other group's characteristics and evoke assumptions about that group's intentions and motivations. Furthermore, image theory work at the international level indicates a clear connection between the image of another nation and one's strategic policy choice vis-à-vis that nation (Herrmann & Fischerkeller, 1995). Given the close link between international images and policy choice, it is imperative during times of

intense conflict, such as with the current U.S. “war on terrorism,” to identify accurately the images that other nations hold of the United States in order to potentially understand and predict other nations’ reactions to U.S. foreign policy and the potential outcomes of U.S. political strategies.

Perceived Structure of International Relations and Images of the United States

Image theorists have attempted to document the images that the United States, Iran, Iraq, and the former Soviet Union have had of each other at different times in history. This has been accomplished primarily through archival methods and the content analysis of statements made by public officials from these countries about the other nation states (Herrmann & Fischerkeller, 1995). Historically, the United States tended to view the former Soviet Union during the cold war as an enemy (Silverstein, 1989; White, 1991), whereas the U.S. images of Iraq and Iran have vacillated between enemy and dependent images. While the former Soviet Union consistently perceived the United States with the enemy image, the Iranian and Iraqi images of the United States shifted from the ally in the early 1970s to the imperialist image, which is thought to have held for the last three decades (Herrmann & Fischerkeller, 1995). Strategic analyses further indicate a pattern of foreign policy consistent with these respective images. The U.S. view of the Soviets as enemies was associated with containment initiatives throughout the cold war, while the strategies used by the United States in dealing with Iran and Iraq have included a mix between containment and intervention during the last 30 years. Iran and Iraq have tended to respond to the United States by deterring U.S. intervention and presence in their own regions.

Although central to our understanding of international politics, most of the work on international images to date has been conducted with discourse and content analyses, typically assessed with qualitative methods and performed retrospectively. A more direct, quantitative, and current examination of international perceptions and the associated images during the heat of an international conflict, such as America’s “war on terrorism,” may lead to an even more accurate understanding of international cognition and behavior.

Given the current situation, there are four possible relationship patterns and associated images that Arab nations could have of the United States (i.e., ally, enemy, imperialist, and barbarian).¹ Although the imperialist image of the United States by Iran and Iraq has been most recently documented by image theorists, other images are possible, given certain patterns of perceived international relations. An examination of the current images of the United States held by Arab populations may reveal a pattern of relations and images historically consistent with the imperialist image or may reflect an entirely different pattern of intergroup

¹ Because the U.S. superpower is perceived as having more power than the Arab nations, a dependent image of the United States is unlikely to be found in these nations.

relations altogether. If a given Arab population perceives the goals of the United States as incompatible with its own, the power of the United States as stronger than its own, and the U.S. culture as more sophisticated, then the imperialist image should be the most commonly held stereotype about the United States. If, however, the principles and values of U.S. culture are perceived to be inferior, as Lewis (1990) suggested in his examination of the roots of anti-American sentiment among Muslim populations, then they should have a barbarian image of the United States rather than an imperialist image. One goal of the present study is to directly examine the current, perceived structural characteristics of international relations and to determine if they relate to the images that an Arab population has of the United States. If perceptions of American cultural inferiority do indeed predominate in our Arab sample, as we would expect based on Lewis's (1990) analysis, then of the four images most relevant to U.S. relations with Arab countries, we predict the barbarian image will be the strongest.

Social Identity and Social Dominance Motives

Most work on image theory has focused on international and intergroup images as a result of the perceived structure of intergroup relations (i.e., goal compatibility, power, and cultural status), within broad social and political contexts. Although perceptions of intergroup relations and their corresponding images are generated within broader contexts, they are held by *individuals* within a given society, be they political elites or members of a population. These individual perceptions are assumed to be objective assessments of the nature of relations between groups. However, as they are human cognitive processes, they are potentially malleable and possibly influenced by individual factors, such as individual motivations for perceiving group relations in certain ways. Examining the relevant individual motivations that impact perceptions of intergroup relations advances the explanatory and predictive power of image theory by offering a potential account for intragroup variations in images of other nations within the shared context of a given society. Understanding these individual variations is important for predicting international policy and decision making, as public opinion in democratic and nondemocratic countries alike can potentially influence the political behaviors of elites. Two motivational factors that may be particularly relevant for shaping the group perceptions that underlie images are individuals' needs for positive social identity and social dominance.

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), a social psychological theory of intergroup behavior, suggests that one's identity is invested in groups to which one belongs, and people are therefore motivated to sustain their own positive identity and sense of self-worth by ensuring that their in-group is positively distinct from relevant out-groups. Positive distinctiveness can be achieved by favoring the in-group over relevant out-groups in intergroup attitudes and beliefs. One implication of this theoretical perspective is that the more closely one's identity is tied

to membership in a particular group, the more meaningful group membership should be to one's self-image, and the more motivated individuals should be to maintain the group's positive distinctiveness in order to sustain a positive social identity. That is, although all individuals may be motivated to some extent by identity needs to favor their own group over other groups, these identity needs should be particularly strong for those individuals whose self-image is more closely tied to the image of their group. We would expect these individuals with strong group identification to seek an especially favorable image of their group relative to other groups. This reasoning can be easily extended from the realm of intergroup relations to the realm of international relations. When people's identities are invested in national groups to which they belong, people are motivated to sustain a positive social identity by ensuring that their nation is positively distinct from other nations. Positive distinctiveness can be achieved by using international images to favor the in-group nation over relevant out-group nations. Given that individuals may be motivated by desires for positive social identity to bolster the image of the in-group nation relative to an out-group nation, one's degree of identification with the national group, as described by social identity theory, is highly relevant to image theory.

In the Middle East, cultural and religious identities are an important feature of one's self-definition and overall worldview. Some have argued that the clash between the Western world and the Arab, Muslim worlds is no less than a "clash of civilizations," pitting the religious and political values of the West against those of the East (Huntington, 1993; Lewis, 1990). To the extent that religious and cultural identities have been mobilized for political ends in the Middle East, we would expect these identities to influence the image that people in Arab countries have of the West. Specifically, those who identify strongly with Arabs, Palestinians, and Muslims may be motivated by desires for a positive social identity to exhibit *stronger* endorsement of the barbarian image. By contrast, we would expect pro-Western orientations to have opposite effects on images of the United States. Specifically, we would expect those who identify strongly with Christians and the Western world to exhibit *weaker* endorsement of the barbarian image.

In addition to social identity, a second individual difference variable that may contribute to intragroup variance in specific images is the preference for group-based inequality and hierarchy in a given society. According to social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), individuals differ in the degree to which they favor social inequality and hierarchy. Those with a high social dominance orientation (SDO) desire group inequality and support existing status differences between groups in society. In the service of their desires to maintain social hierarchy, those high in SDO tend to favor more powerful groups in society (Levin, Federico, Sidanius, & Rabinowitz, 2002), to identify more strongly with these groups, and to disidentify from less powerful groups (Levin & Sidanius, 1999). In the conflict between the Arab and Western worlds, the United States has military and economic capabilities superior to Arab countries. Given these power

dynamics, we expect SDO to be positively associated with a pro-Western orientation. Specifically, we expect those who have high levels of SDO, like those high in Christian and Western identification, to exhibit *weaker* endorsement of the barbarian image of the United States.

The Present Research

The current study was designed to test several predictions derived from image theory, social identity theory, and social dominance theory among a Middle Eastern population.² Specifically, we developed and administered a questionnaire to assess Lebanese students' perceived international relationships and images of the United States, as well as their cultural and religious identities and social dominance orientations. Due to its geographical location, religious diversity, and its ideological position at an East-West crossroads, Lebanon offers a particularly compelling arena in which to study both the structural and individual factors relevant to international images. The current U.S. actions in the Middle East make the structural components of U.S.-Lebanese relations highly salient to members of this population, which provides a rich context for directly testing image theory predictions regarding the relationship between structural perceptions and international images. Moreover, a diverse population with strong cultural and religious divisions and identities, such as the one Lebanon affords, provides the individual variability necessary to examine how social identities and dominance motives relate to image theory components. The religious diversity in Lebanon is reflected in its 17 legally recognized religions, all of whose holidays are observed by the government. Furthermore, Christians, although fewer in number in Lebanon (23%) compared to Muslims (70%), are higher in status (see Seaver, 2000) and more pro-Western in their orientation (Henry, Sidanius, Levin, & Pratto, 2002). As such, we expected to find a great deal of variability in perceptions of the structural relations between Lebanon and the United States and in images of the United States, as well as degrees of social identity and social dominance within this population. Our primary purpose in using a Lebanese sample is not to investigate the specific images that all Lebanese hold of the United States, but rather to examine whether the images held by a sample of the population are related to structural perceptions in ways that image theory would predict, and to individual motives in ways that would be anticipated by social identity and social dominance theories.

We first examine the perceived structural relationships and specific images that the Lebanese in our sample have of Americans. In general, we expect our Lebanese participants to perceive the United States as primarily having relatively

² For studies that examine other aspects of intergroup relations using this sample, see Henry, Sidanius, Levin, & Pratto (in press); Levin, Henry, Pratto, & Sidanius (2003); Sidanius, Henry, Pratto, & Levin (2004).

superior power, inferior cultural status, and incompatible goals (*Hypothesis 1*), rendering the strongest image they have of the nation to be a barbarian image (*Hypothesis 2*). We also examine the effects of perceived goal compatibility and relative status and power on the images they hold of the United States. Specifically, those who view the United States as having higher power, lower status, and higher goal incompatibility are expected to endorse the barbarian image more strongly than participants who do not hold this pattern of structural perceptions (*Hypothesis 3*). Furthermore, the lower the perceived cultural status of the United States among those who perceive the nation to have higher power and incompatible goals with Lebanon, the more strongly they are expected to endorse the barbarian image of the United States (*Hypothesis 4*).

In addition to examining images as a function of perceived structural characteristics, we also examine the extent to which these images are driven by social identity and social dominance motives. We expect that, independent of the effects of structural perceptions, the barbarian image will be endorsed more strongly by those higher in identification with Arabs, Palestinians, and Muslims, lower in identification with Christians and the West, and lower in social dominance orientation (*Hypothesis 5*).

Method

Participants

To examine the perceived intergroup relations and images held by the Lebanese toward the United States, and to assess the impact of social identity and social dominance motives on these beliefs, a questionnaire was distributed to a random sample of 596 out of 5808 possible graduate and undergraduate student mailboxes at the American University of Beirut in the late fall of 2001. The cover letter to the questionnaire indicated that participation was voluntary and anonymous. One hundred and forty-five questionnaires were completed, yielding a response rate of 24%. Response rates for mail-in questionnaires typically range from 10% to 50% (Weisberg, Krosnick, & Bowen, 1996). Of the 145 participants, 63 indicated that they belong to one of the Muslim religious communities (Sunnite or Shiite), 61 indicated that they belong to one of the Christian communities (Maronite, Catholic, or Orthodox), 11 identified themselves as Druze, eight indicated that they belong to some other religious community, and two did not provide any information about their religious background. There were 67 male and 78 female participants ranging in age from 17 to 34 years, with a median age of 20. This sample was selected not merely as a means of convenience, but because of the strong political involvement of the students at the American University of Beirut. Students at this particular institution are highly aware of international political issues and represent several different demographic and political perspectives.

Measures

Questionnaire items assessed respondents' perceptions of the structure of relations between the United States and Lebanon (i.e., goal compatibility, relative power, and relative cultural status), their images of the United States (i.e., ally, enemy, barbarian, and imperialist), their identification with Arabs, Palestinians, the Western world, their religious group (e.g., Muslim, Christian), and their level of social dominance orientation.

Perceived structure of international relations. The survey contained questions about perceived goal incompatibility, relative power, and relative status of the United States compared to Lebanon. These relationship dimensions were assessed by items on which participants selected one among a series of alternative descriptions that represented their perception. *Goal incompatibility* was measured by asking respondents which of the following response categories best captures their feelings toward the "war on terrorism": (1) the war benefits both the Lebanese and Americans; (2) the war benefits Americans without hurting the Lebanese; (3) the war harms both the Lebanese and Americans; or (4) the war benefits Americans at the expense of the Lebanese (higher numbers reflect increasing goal incompatibility). *Relative power of the United States* was measured by asking respondents which of the following alternatives best describes the difference they perceive between Americans and the Lebanese in terms of their economic strength: (1) the Lebanese are much wealthier than Americans; (2) the Lebanese have somewhat more money than Americans; (3) Americans and the Lebanese are equal in terms of economic power; (4) Americans have somewhat more money than the Lebanese; or (5) Americans are much wealthier than the Lebanese (higher numbers reflect greater relative power of the United States). As an additional measure of perceived relative power, participants were asked to report their perceptions of the relative military strength of the United States and Lebanon. All participants (i.e., 100%) reported that Americans have a stronger military than the Lebanese. Due to this lack of variance, this variable was not included in the analyses. Finally, *relative status of the United States* was measured by asking respondents which of the following options best reflects how they perceive the cultures of Americans and the Lebanese: (1) the Lebanese culture is far superior to the American culture; (2) the Lebanese culture is somewhat better than the American culture; (3) the Lebanese and American cultures are equal; (4) the American culture is somewhat better than the Lebanese culture; or (5) the American culture is far superior to the Lebanese culture (higher numbers reflect greater relative cultural status of the United States).

Images of the United States. Images of the United States were assessed with 12 statements using 7-point Likert-type response scales (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), written to reflect three different components specific to each of the four images (i.e., ally, enemy, barbarian, and imperialist). These components were intended to differentiate the images in terms of typical behaviors, motiva-

tions, intentions, decision-making strategies, and leadership characteristics of the United States. One of the ally, enemy, and barbarian items was dropped due to low correlations with the other items measuring the image. The two-item ally, enemy, and barbarian scales exhibited adequate reliability ($\alpha = .55, .53, .54$, respectively), as did the three-item imperialist scale ($\alpha = .57$). The following questions for each image were averaged and combined into scales. *Ally*: “Most Americans are working hard for peaceful international relations” and “Americans care only about their own interests and not about all of us” (reverse-coded). *Enemy*: “Americans cannot be trusted because they know how to trick you” and “Americans have no hostile intentions toward the Lebanese” (reverse-coded). *Barbarian*: “Violence is out of control in the American society” and “Power in the hands of Americans is a dangerous thing.” *Imperialist*: “Some Lebanese have ‘sold out’ to Americans and have allowed themselves to be used for furthering the American agenda”; and “Americans are arrogant and are convinced they are superior to others”; and “Americans exploit the Lebanese for resources and keep all the profits for themselves.”

Social identifications. To assess the degree to which respondents identify with Arabs, Palestinians, and the Western world, they were asked (1) how strongly they identify with each of the cultures, and (2) how close they feel to each culture on 7-point Likert-type scales (1 = not at all, 7 = very strongly or very close). Responses on the two questions for each participant were scaled to form a mean identification score, with good reliability (Arab identification: $\alpha = .88$; Palestinian identification: $\alpha = .93$; Western identification: $\alpha = .87$). To assess the degree to which respondents identify with their self-reported religious community (i.e., Muslim, Christian), participants were asked how strongly they identify with other members of their religious community (1 = not at all, 7 = very strongly), how important their religion is to their identity (1 = not at all, 7 = very important), how often they think of themselves in terms of their religious beliefs (1 = not at all, 7 = very often), and how close they feel toward other members of their religious community (1 = not at all, 7 = very close). Responses to the four questions were combined to form reliable scales among both Muslims ($\alpha = .93$) and Christians ($\alpha = .80$), the two largest religious groups in our sample and in Lebanon as a whole.

Social dominance orientation. A 16-item scale was used to measure participants' levels of social dominance orientation (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Responses to the 16 statements were made on 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree) Likert-type scales. Items were scaled such that higher scores indicate greater levels of SDO. Sample items are as follows: “Some groups of people are just more worthy than others”; “Superior groups should dominate inferior groups”; “Group equality should be our ideal” (reverse-coded); and “No one group should dominate in society” (reverse-coded). The 16 statements were combined into a reliable scale ($\alpha = .88$).

Results

Perceived Structure of International Relations and Images of the United States

To assess the number of Lebanese participants who perceive the United States as having relatively superior power and inferior cultural status, we created three categories for the relative power variable (1 = Lebanese are much or somewhat wealthier than Americans, 2 = economic power is equal, 3 = Americans are much or somewhat wealthier than the Lebanese), and three categories for the relative status variable (1 = Lebanese culture is far or somewhat superior to American culture, 2 = cultures are equal, 3 = American culture is far or somewhat superior to Lebanese culture). The frequencies within each of these response categories were then examined in a cross-tabulation analysis. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, most people perceived the United States to be higher in power (95%) and lower in status (74%) compared to Lebanon. The percent of people who perceived the United States to be *both* higher in power and lower in status than Lebanon (70%) exceeded the percent of people in all of the other combinations of relative power and status. Of all of the people who perceived the United States to be both higher in power and lower in status, 37% also perceived the United States to be high in goal incompatibility (i.e., perceived that the “war on terrorism” benefits Americans at the expense of the Lebanese). Another 23% perceived that the war harms both countries. Only 17% perceived that the war benefits Americans without hurting the Lebanese, and 23% perceived that the war benefits both countries (i.e., low goal incompatibility). Altogether, the most frequent combination of structural perception categories was the high power/low status/incompatible goals category.

To determine which of the four images received the strongest endorsement by the Lebanese sample, we performed a repeated-measures ANOVA with four images as the repeated measures (ally, enemy, barbarian, imperialist). As predicted by Hypothesis 2, the strongest image was the barbarian image ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.36$), followed by the imperialist image ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 1.22$) and the enemy image ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 1.51$). Participants were least likely to perceive Americans as allies ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 1.42$), Wilks' $\lambda = .49$, $F(3, 135) = 47.21$, $p < .001$ (paired-samples t-tests indicated that all pairwise comparisons were statistically significant, $p < .05$).

In order to test Hypothesis 3 (i.e., those who perceive the United States as having a combination of superior power, inferior cultural status, and incompatible goals are more likely to view the United States with a barbarian image), we first selected all the people who viewed the United States as having higher power/low status/incompatible goals. In an independent-samples t-test, we then compared their endorsement of the barbarian image to the endorsement of the barbarian image among everyone else. As expected, we found that those who viewed the United States as having higher power/low status/high goal incompatibility

($M = 5.58$, $SD = .90$) endorsed the barbarian image to a greater extent than did everyone else ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 1.45$), $t(136) = 2.31$, $p < .05$.

Furthermore, to the extent that the relative power of the United States is perceived to be high and goals to be incompatible, we predicted in Hypothesis 4 that the more people perceive the United States to have lower relative cultural status, the more strongly they will endorse the barbarian image. As expected, when we selected those people who perceived higher U.S. power and high goal incompatibility ($n = 42$), we found that the correlation between perceived status and the barbarian image was significantly negative ($r = -.37$, $p < .05$): The lower the perceived cultural status of the United States among those who perceived the United States to have higher power and incompatible goals with Lebanon, the greater the endorsement of the barbarian image.

Social Identity and Social Dominance Motives

To test whether the barbarian image of the United States would be endorsed more strongly by those higher in identification with Arabs, Palestinians, and Muslims, lower in identification with Christians and the West, and lower in social dominance orientation, we computed the partial correlations between the barbarian image on the one hand, and each identification variable and SDO on the other hand, controlling for perceived status, power, and goal incompatibility. These partial correlations, as well as the product-moment correlations, can be found in Table 2. The correlations of the barbarian image with Muslim and Christian identification were run separately for Muslims and Christians, respectively. All other analyses included members of all religious groups. Consistent with Hypothesis 5, results indicated that, beyond the effects of relative status, power, and goal incompatibility, the barbarian image was endorsed more strongly by those higher in identification with Arabs (partial $r = .27$, $p < .01$) and Palestinians (partial $r = .32$, $p < .001$), lower in identification with Christians (partial $r = -.29$, $p < .05$) and the West (partial $r = -.30$, $p = .001$), and lower in social dominance orientation (partial $r = -.31$, $p = .001$). Contrary to expectations, however, the barbarian image

Table 2. Correlations between Individual Orientations and the Barbarian Image of the U.S., and Partial Correlations Controlling for Relative Power, Status, and Goal Incompatibility of the U.S.

Individual Orientation	r	Partial r
Arab Identification	.32***	.27**
Palestinian Identification	.39***	.32***
Muslim Identification	.19+	.06
Christian Identification	-.30*	-.29*
Western Identification	-.38***	-.30***
Social Dominance Orientation	-.30***	-.31***

+ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

was not endorsed more strongly by those higher in Muslim identification (partial $r = .06, p > .10$).

Overall, it appears that both cultural and ethnic identities and social dominance orientation contribute to the barbarian image that the Lebanese participants have of the United States. However, there is not strong evidence that the structural perceptions mediate the relationships between the identification and dominance variables and the barbarian image. The significant direct relationships between the identification and dominance variables and the barbarian image (as indicated by the product-moment correlations in Table 2) were largely unaffected when the effects of the structural perceptions were controlled for in the partial correlations. These findings demonstrate the powerful effects of social identity and social dominance motives on international images, beyond the effects of the structural perceptions highlighted by image theorists.

Discussion

The results from this investigation of Lebanese images of the United States lend support to image theory predictions regarding the specific patterns of international relation perceptions that lead to specific international images, and extend image theory by highlighting individual motives that make independent contributions to these images. Specifically, consistent with Hypotheses 1 and 2, Lebanese participants in this sample tended to perceive the United States as primarily having relatively superior power, inferior cultural status, and incompatible goals, and the strongest image they had of the United States was a barbarian image. While a note of caution is needed about making general statements regarding the mean levels of perceptions and images held by the entire Lebanese population based on our particular sample, our main objective with this research was to examine the general ways in which structural and individual processes are related to international images. Using a sample from such a diverse population as the Lebanese aided us in achieving this objective. Specifically, consistent with Hypothesis 3, those who perceived the United States to have higher power, lower status, and more incompatible goals endorsed the barbarian image more strongly than those who did not hold this pattern of structural perceptions. Furthermore, when we held two of these structural perceptions constant (i.e., high power and goal incompatibility) and examined the relationship between status perceptions and endorsement of the barbarian image, we found that perceptions of lower cultural status of the United States were associated with stronger endorsement of the barbarian image, as predicted in Hypothesis 4. These results offer solid empirical support for the notion that characteristics of the intergroup context (i.e., the three primary structural features of relative power, relative status, and goal incompatibility) are central to generating specific international images, as image theorists propose.

These results have important theoretical and practical implications. The theoretical significance of these findings is that they link international images directly

to individual differences in structural perceptions rather than to the shared context of the society in which the individual resides. That is, rather than being a “universal” cognitive process attributed to states via elite perceptions, the formation of international images appears to vary across individuals and, more importantly, endorsement of these images is reliably predicted by individual differences in perceptions of the structure of international relations. The practical significance of these findings is that they imply that one way to change international images is to alter perceptions of the relative power, status, and goal incompatibility of countries in relation to one another. Because the image a nation projects is a determining factor in whether and how easily a nation achieves its goals (Jervis, 1970), manipulating the perceptual features that underlie images can help a nation reach its goals. For example, efforts are currently underway in the United States to revamp the way it promotes foreign policies abroad, especially among predominantly Islamic countries, in order to counter growing anti-American sentiment overseas (Dao, 2002). Our results suggest that these efforts to promote the image of the United States abroad should consider the influence of structural perceptions of international relations on such international images.

By revealing the nature of the structural perceptions and images of the United States held by a sample of diverse people in an Arab country, these findings also emphasize the need for researchers and analysts to consider the wide range of negative international images that exists and to move beyond the enemy image when discussing and examining international perceptions. While the predominant image of the United States held by other Arab countries (i.e., Iran, Iraq) is thought to be the imperialist image (Herrmann & Fischerkeller, 1995), the current work indicates that, at least within a sample of the Lebanese population, a barbarian image of the United States predominates. The relative strength of the images held of the United States, with the barbarian image being the strongest and the ally image being the weakest, emphasizes the importance of examining the full range of potential international images, particularly the need to consider the relative strength of different negative images of other countries. The potential variability of negative images that Middle Eastern populations may have of the United States is clearly demonstrated with the Lebanese sample studied here. Recognizing and appreciating the complexity of such international images is of both theoretical and practical importance to the study of international and intergroup relations.

Furthermore, not only were structural perceptions of the international situation important in fostering images, but motivations of the individual perceiver also contributed to these images, independent of structural perceptions. Specifically, social identity and social dominance motives played an important role in generating the barbarian image of the United States. The more participants identified with Arabs and Palestinians, and the less they identified with Christians and the Western world, the more they endorsed the barbarian image. These results imply that individuals with strong cultural and/or religious identification may be motivated by desires for a positive social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) to hold a specific type of negative image about an out-group, even above and beyond

power, status and goal perceptions. If holding specific images of out-groups does in fact serve a specific social identity function for the individual, then another way to change international images may be to emphasize the characteristics shared by people in different countries in order to create a common in-group identity. According to Gaertner and Dovidio's (2000) common in-group identity model of intergroup relations, one way to reduce conflict between members of different groups is to heighten the salience of a common superordinate identity. However, in order to achieve a viable common in-group identity, citizens of all countries must feel that they are equally valued members of the larger global community. Until this happens, the development of a viable common in-group identity is an unlikely solution to international conflict.

Participants' levels of SDO were also directly related to the images they held of the United States, independent of their intergroup structural perceptions: The lower one's level of SDO, the more likely the participant was to endorse the barbarian image of the United States. Individuals low in SDO may endorse the barbarian image of the United States because they perceive the nation as promoting hierarchy-enhancing platforms, platforms that do not encourage the equality in international relations that they value. Consistent with social dominance theory's thesis, then, one way in which low SDO members of less powerful groups (i.e., the Lebanese in this case) may oppose the system of hierarchy in which their group is disadvantaged is by having more negative images of dominant groups like Americans, compared to their high SDO counterparts. On the other hand, high SDO individuals who desire more inegalitarian social systems may have more positive images of powerful nations as a way to promote the existing hierarchical structure of international relations. Therefore, from a social dominance perspective, holding specific images of out-groups may serve to fulfill individuals' desires for group-based dominance. If this is the case, then those who wish to improve international images of the United States must consider the ways in which people's desires to attenuate existing power differences between the United States and Arab nations influence their endorsement of these images.

With its emphasis on both intergroup and individual-level factors that contribute to international stereotypes, this investigation extends international relations image theory. At the intergroup level, perceived intergroup relations are an important component of international images, with structural perceptions contributing directly to international stereotypes. At the individual level of analysis, one's individual degree of group identity and social dominance orientation contribute to images, even after one's perceptions of international relations are taken into account. Not only may international images serve to justify strategic decision making and behavioral tendencies toward other nations, as image theorists suggest, but images may serve individual needs for positive social identity and group-based dominance as well. If individuals with strong social identities or strong social dominance orientations have vested interests in endorsing a particular negative image of another nation, this image may be especially difficult to modify. Developing alternative ways to fulfill individuals' social dominance and

social identity needs may help to shift negative international images to more positive ones.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of integrating the individual level of analysis into international relations image theory and of applying social psychological theories of intergroup conflict to international phenomena in general. Taking a social psychological perspective that combines a cognitive assessment of international relations with intergroup-relevant individual attributes offers a more complete picture of the factors driving international images than would exist if we merely examined structural perceptions of international relations alone, as image theorists typically do. Altogether, incorporating individual motives with structural perceptions of international relations in future research should facilitate a better understanding of the images that nations have of one another, as well as the effects of those images on foreign policy decisions.

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