Affective Politics after 9/11

Todd H. Hall and Andrew A.G. Ross

Abstract Affect and emotion are key elements of our lived experience as human beings but currently play little role in how we theorize actorhood in international relations. We offer six amendments for integrating affective dynamics into existing conceptions of individual-level actorhood in IR. From these amendments emerge the theoretical micro-foundations upon which we build propositions concerning potential collective-level affective dynamics and political strategies. We illustrate the analytical payoff of our proposals by examining the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001. By amending existing understandings of actorhood to include human affective experience, we can integrate and make sense of a variety of psychological, social, and political consequences stemming from the attacks, both within the United States and internationally.

> A cataclysm occurs. The senses reel. In that moment of supreme definition we capture in our imagination an event's full significance. Over time, it is not that the memory of it fades, exactly … The emotional impact is replaced by a sentiment which, because it is more calm, seems more rational. But paradoxically it can be less rational, because the calm is not the product of a changed analysis, but the effluxion of time … So it was with 11 September 2001.
>
> —Tony Blair[1]

There is a subjectively felt dimension to human experience, spanning the slight twinges of intuition to the tumult of strong passions. Such feelings evince embodied mental states and affective dynamics often outside our control. Although these affective phenomena are key elements of our lived existence, neither of the two currently prevailing conceptualizations of actorhood in IR explicitly takes them into account. Rationalist approaches posit actors with fixed, complete, and transitively ordered preferences who act upon beliefs about the options available in a given situation to best realize their goals. Constructivists, by contrast, theorize actors who behave according to social norms, practices, or identities. In their view, the very capacity for political actorhood is socially constructed. While possessing important differences,

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1. Blair 2010, 341.

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both approaches share a cognitivist outlook that, by focusing almost exclusively on beliefs, thoughts, and knowledge, virtually disembodies its actors.

We propose a series of amendments for integrating affective experience into existing understandings of actorhood in IR. Beginning at the individual level, we distinguish between two basic varieties of affective experience on the basis of subjectively felt intensity—high and low—and identify their latent sources of activation in concerns, dispositions, and the capacity for affective mirroring. While taking these affective processes into account does not automatically invalidate the insights of rational choice or constructivism, it does uncover additional channels through which the external environment can shape beliefs and preferences, color judgment, focus attention, and elicit action.

Although we take the individual as our fundamental theoretical building block for heuristic purposes, adequately addressing the impact of affective dynamics in IR entails further tracing how they are woven into the collective entities that populate international politics. Affective experience has important social dimensions; theorizing these requires more than simply scaling-up, as if groups experienced affective responses in a manner analogous to individuals. We therefore offer a second stage of theorizing that delineates pathways for collective affective experience: bottom-up through shared concerns and dispositions, horizontally across individuals through contagion, and top-down as a result of social harmonizing processes. These pathways also form the conditions of possibility for two important collective-level phenomena: affective waves and emergent collective solidarities.

But endowing actors with affect does not strip from them the potential for strategic behavior. Individual and collective affective dynamics make distinct forms of strategic intervention possible. Actors may seek to play upon others' emotions; provoke politically advantageous emotional responses; or sow long-term affective attachments, sensitivities, and allegiances. Affective dynamics shape not only preferences, beliefs, and motivations, but also political-strategic opportunities.

While our goal is primarily programmatic, we offer an illustrative application of our amendments as a means to coherently order the multitude of responses to 11 September 2001 (9/11) attacks. The attacks generated an affective wave whose effects can be found in the reactions, choices, political opportunities, and strategies observable in their immediate aftermath, as well as more long-term shifts in the political environment.

We use the term *affective dynamics* to denote the range of ways embodied mental processes and the felt dimensions of human experience influence thought and behavior. When affective dynamics enter consciousness we recognize them as *feelings*, but they may also operate as *biases* at levels of intensity below conscious awareness.[2] *Intensity* refers to the subjectively felt strength of an affective response. Like the experience of sound—which can range from deafeningly loud to virtually inaudible—so too the feeling of affective experience can vary significantly in intensity. We

2. Damasio 2010, 174–75.

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reserve the term *emotion* for socially recognized, structured episodes of affectively valenced response, such as joy or fear. Emotions, in this definition, constitute a subcategory of patterned affective reactions. We use the word *preferences*—long the purview of rationalist approaches—to describe consciously known wants pertaining to specific outcomes.

Affective Dynamics and Actorhood

Individual-Level Affective Experience

Strong affective reactions can upset the trajectory of our thoughts and behavior. Outrage, panic, and euphoria are extreme responses that can derail prior plans, monopolize attention, and make it seem as if we are beside ourselves. Such *high-intensity affective experiences* deluge us with feeling as not only our physical state but also our very goals rapidly shift. Strong anger responses, for example, do not just produce physiological and expressive reactions such as glaring, muscle-tension, and fist clenching; they spur us to aggressively redress perceived offenses. Likewise, intense fear does not just beget an increased heart rate and trembling; it generates an immediate and overwhelming drive to mitigate or escape a perceived threat.[3]

Indeed, high-intensity affective reactions—those that flood our consciousness with feeling—are significant for their ability to temporarily hijack our thoughts, desires, attention, and energies in response to situational factors. As Griffith explains, such "irruptive motivations" are "not derived from standing general goals by means-ends reasoning. They occur in response to certain immediate circumstances … they frequently disrupt longer-term plans."[4] Policy-makers are not immune to these effects; for instance, as Mercer argues, strong emotional responses—amplified by surprise—played a key role in changing US intentions and plans in favor of protecting South Korea at the outbreak of the Korean War.[5]

On the surface, this disruptive nature may appear maladaptive. However, evolutionary psychologists suggest that we are endowed with certain affective programs —"inherited behavior potentials"—because they better prepared our ancestors to respond to threats by grabbing attention with affective alarms and instantaneously marshaling their physiological and cognitive resources.[6] Others, such as economist Robert Frank, have further claimed that emotional responses also helped our species to deal with commitment problems and thus promote cooperation. Anger, for example, works as a commitment to incur the costs of punishing another and thus can mitigate defection.[7]

3. See Lazarus 1991, 217–33, 236; and Ortony, Clore, and Collins 1988, 148.
4. Griffiths 1997, 243.
5. Mercer 2013.
6. Panksepp and Biven 2012, 42–44.
7. Frank 1988.

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Regardless of their possible evolutionary roles, high-intensity responses generally signal the impact of situational variables on a concern important to us—our physical safety, dignity, or values—and prepare us to react accordingly.[8] Although the assessment that concerns are involved need not be a conscious one,[9] the resulting affective responses frequently enter—if not commandeer—conscious awareness. By doing so, they can temporarily thrust other concerns into the background—overturning an actor's conscious hierarchy of preferences—and even drive us to behavior we would not ordinarily display (e.g., road rage). Because high-intensity responses are typically episodic and temporary in nature, an actor may subsequently regret actions taken under their influence after that influence subsides.

High-intensity responses also color the decision-making process. As Elster describes, they play a "dual role," altering both "the reward parameters for rational choice" and "the ability to make rational choices within those parameters."[10] Apart from reordering preferences, high-intensity affective responses can dramatically alter feelings of urgency, reorient attentional focus, and affect information processing;[11] they also facilitate the recollection of memories formed in like emotional states.[12] To wit, actors experiencing outrage may suddenly find their attention dominated by the perceived source of provocation, experience memories of similar events flooding their mind, feel overwhelmingly motivated to lash out, and thus drastically discount the future consequences or normative implications of their behavior.

High-intensity responses can additionally produce *spillover effects*, whereby strong felt reactions generated by one event or object color behavior toward unrelated stimuli by virtue of superficial resemblance or the timing of exposure.[13] For example, anger during one's commute might bleed into the treatment of co-workers at a morning meeting, or compassion elicited by a natural disaster might carry over into diplomatic negotiations. Some accounts even suggest the mobility of diffuse affective "excitations" not specifically tied to any one type of emotion.[14] As affective excitations transfer from one object to another, their emotional manifestations may also change form: feelings of fear toward a stronger party, for instance, might transmute into expressions of anger at a weaker one. Spillover occurs despite the lack of cognitive connection between its initial source and subsequent target, and yet it carries the potential to shape preferences, perceptions, and action.

High-intensity affective responses and their effects currently exist outside the scope of mainstream understandings of actorhood—at best appearing as exogenous phantasms that intrude upon the normal operations of decision-making and choice. Most rationalist models treat preferences as constant for the duration of an

8. Frijda 1988, 351.
9. See LeDoux 1996; Öhman and Weins 2004; and Zajonc 1980 and 1994, 293–97.
10. Elster 1999, 165.
11. See McDermott 2004; and Crawford 2000, 137–45.
12. Bower and Cohen 1982.
13. Lerner and Keltner 2000, 473–93.
14. See Murphy and Zajonc 1993, 723–39; and Zillmann 1996.

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interaction.[15] Constructivists allow for changes in identities and norms, but primarily through gradual processes of socialization.[16] Neither captures and accounts for the effects these sudden, yet temporary, affective upheavals can have on preferences, judgment, and behavior.

But affective processes are not always so conspicuous. Feeling and affect play a role in our judgments and behavior even when they don't manifest themselves as high-intensity responses. In fact, without *low-intensity* varieties of affective experience—more faintly felt forms such as "gut feelings" or twinges and even processes active at levels below consciously felt awareness—we would find even the simplest of decisions quite difficult.

Consider the oft-cited case of a man called Elliot who had suffered brain damage in a manner that reduced his ability to feel emotion. Although perfectly able to lay out options, assess their consequences, and understand their implications, he was unable to choose among them. Damasio, the neuroscientist who examined him, explains that "Elliot's reasoning prevented him from assigning different values to different options, and made his decision-making landscape hopelessly flat."[17] Without access to affect, Elliot had no impetus to choice or action. How we feel is integral to knowing what we want and how much we want it. As Frijda argues, "cognitive reasoning may argue that a particular event could lead to loss of money or health or life, but so what? What is wrong with death, other than it is disliked?"[18] Lacking affective experience, we lose the basis for determining what it is we want in the first place.[19]

Affective dynamics not only supply the felt basis for preferences but also contribute to the real-world functioning of many mechanisms cited by constructivists. Consider the "shame" at work in social influence, the "we feeling" of security communities, the "outrage" invoked by taboo violation, or the "anxiety" of ontological insecurity—all reference dynamics laden with affect.[20] The affective dimension of these mechanisms plays a crucial role.[21] Strip normative concerns of their affective component and one is left with a psychopathic actor. As Haidt explains, "psychopaths show a general poverty of affective reactions, particularly those that would be triggered by the suffering of others (remorse, sympathy), condemnation by others (shame, embarrassment), or attachment to others (love, grief)." Psychopaths are quite aware of what constitutes normatively correct behavior, but, as Haidt notes, "they simply do not care."[22] Affective dynamics motivate adherence—even attention—to the most basic of norms.

15. See Frieden 1999, 42; and Morrow 1994, 19.
16. Johnston 2008.
17. Damasio 1994, 51.
18. Frijda 1994, 200.
19. See McDermott 2004 and Mercer 2005.
20. See Johnston 2008, 79–88; Adler and Barnett 1998, 8; Tannenwald 1999, 453, 456; Mitzen 2006, 346; and Steele 2008.
21. Beer et al. 2003.
22. Haidt 2001, 824.

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In short, key rationalist and constructivist concepts lose their real-world potency without affective motors. For preferences, affective responses can provide the feelings—missing in the example of Elliot—informing our wants. For norms, they can supply a feeling of "correctness" that drives claims of right or wrong, at times even in the absence of an ability to articulate a specific moral logic.[23] Outrage, fear, and other high-intensity responses may upend our thoughts and actions, but without affective dynamics operating at lower intensities we would find life quite difficult to navigate. Low-intensity affective responses guide us by instilling our perceptions, attitudes, and thoughts with subjective valences.[24] But crucially, even these more subtle affective reactions entail effects that deviate from the expectations of existing approaches.

Consider the impact of feelings on judgments. To form judgments, people rely upon not only external information but also subjectively felt reactions experienced as "intuition" or "gut feelings." Hall and Yarhi-Milo argue, for instance, that low-intensity affective responses alter judgments of sincerity among leaders—in some cases having a larger effect than hard evidence.[25] Alternately, examining diplomacy during the 1905–1906 Moroccan Crisis, Kaufmann posits that the felt salience of personally delivered information gave it a greater impact.[26] And felt reactions can also shape an actor's judgments about the accuracy of reasoned argumentation.[27] As Mercer suggests when discussing the difficulty of persuading terrorists, "passionate actors defeat attempts at persuasion not only with their selection and interpretation of evidence, but also with the certainty that comes with passion."[28] All suggest a role for low-intensity affective factors presently outside the purview of rationalist and constructivist theorizing.

Or take the experience of risk. Prospect theory argues that tolerance for risk shifts depending on whether the same outcomes are framed in terms of losses or gains—a claim inspiring important challenges to rationalism in IR.[29] Recent research, however, points to the importance of affective reactions—not just high-intensity terror responses, but subtle, low-intensity feelings of fear evoked by possible losses—as responsible for the human experience of risk.[30] It is one thing to cognitively understand the probability of an undesirable outcome, quite another to feel it. As one set of researchers puts it, when emotions and cognitive beliefs concerning risks diverge, the "emotional reactions often drive behavior."[31] The affective reaction to an imagined outcome, such as a terrorist attack—as opposed to the Bayesian updating concerning actual consequences or statistical likelihood—can thus have an outsized

23. Ibid.
24. Ortony, Clore, and Collins 1988.
25. Hall and Yarhi-Milo 2012.
26. Kaufmann 1994.
27. Crawford 2000, 149–50.
28. Mercer 2010, 25.
29. See McDermott 1998; and Levy 2002.
30. See Kahneman 2011, 363–74; Loewenstein et al. 2001; and Slovic et al. 2004.
31. Loewenstein et al. 2001, 267.

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influence on decision making.[32] Affective responses can even generate "probability neglect," whereby actors focus on an outcome because of its affective salience and thereby become "inattentive to the fact that it is unlikely to occur."[33]

The affective dynamics we have outlined not only depart from the expectations of dominant models but also signal the existence of a distinctively *felt* influence on—even basis for—belief and judgment irreducible to and sometimes even at odds with cognitive knowledge. As two psychologists note, "interventions attempting to change feelings by encouraging [an individual] to 'know better' or 'know more' many not always work in the long run, because 'feeling it' … refers to a *qualitatively* distinct meaning level."[34]

Low-intensity affective processes work in further ways neither rationalist nor constructivist approaches are currently equipped to assess. Moods—such as optimism, general apprehension, or detached melancholy—can influence perceptions, judgments, and motivations even without awareness of their effects. For instance, individuals in depressed moods are more likely to accept risk, recall negative memories, and want to avoid interaction with others.[35] Affective dynamics may even nudge our choices and steer attention as biases we do not consciously register. Valenced low-intensity affective process can color perceptions of completely unconnected objects, even when below conscious awareness.[36] Low-intensity affective processes—whether global moods or specific reactions—can therefore also have spillover effects.

Disaggregating affective dynamics in this manner helps order existing work on emotions and affect within IR. Granted, distinguishing between high- and low-intensity affective experience for heuristic purposes artificially dichotomizes what in reality is a continuum in felt intensity ranging from extreme emotional reactions to processes operating below conscious awareness. But this distinction helps conceptually organize a disparate body of work. Existing research on topics such as severe emotional stress during crises[37] and specific strong emotional reactions felt by leaders[38] address the effects of high-intensity affective responses. Conversely, work on emotional salience and motivated biases,[39] behavior toward risk,[40] even the intersection between emotion and rationality[41] contribute to explicating the role of lower-intensity affective dynamics.

Nothing here implies a blanket normative assessment of any one type of affective response. High-intensity affective responses may be disruptive, but under certain circumstances such disruptions can be life saving. Low-intensity affective processes

32. See Slovic et al. 2004, 317; and Kahneman 2011, 326–27.
33. Sunstein 2003, 122.
34. Samoilov and Goldfried 2000, 375.
35. See Kliger and Levy 2003; Lewis et al. 2005; and Gendolla 2000.
36. Zajonc 2000, 54.
37. See Lebow 1981; and Holsti 1989.
38. See Saurette 2006; Hymans 2006; Blight 1990; and Löwenheim and Heimann 2008.
39. Kaufmann 1994.
40. McDermott 2004.
41. See ibid. and Mercer 2005.

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may provide a sense of value necessary for adjudicating preferences and normative positions, but also can bias judgment and stubbornly defy cognitive assessments to their contrary. High-intensity responses may speak to more drastic changes, but even low-intensity ones entail subtle yet significant consequences for our choices and interactions. In different ways, both constitute sources of variation in judgment and behavior that rationalist and constructivist approaches have yet to assimilate adequately.

Sources of Affective Response at the Individual Level

Parsing the variety of affective experience helps provide conceptual order, but leaves unanswered the question of what triggers affective responses. Although affective reactions can vary wildly—within and across individuals—the activation of affective dynamics is not random.

Affective responses can result when actors perceive situational factors to touch upon significant concerns. *Concerns* are what we care about—objects, values, and goals that will, when meaningfully implicated in a situation, elicit emotions. Unlike preferences in rationalist accounts, concerns constitute loci of affective investment. One's family or nation may be a concern—and as such a possible object of preferences, but not a preference itself. And depending on the situation, concerns can evoke any variety of different emotions.[42] A concern for one's family can generate either joy (when reunited) or fear (when threatened). But in the absence of emotion-inducing circumstances, concerns may exist within us without attracting our attention. And the hierarchy of concerns is not inviolable: if a deeply held concern engenders a high-intensity response, the salience of other concerns may suddenly fade.

Affective responses can also be triggered by an actor's *affective dispositions*—latent propensities for certain stimuli to trigger particular affective responses. While concerns implicate a variety of different emotional reactions, dispositions link stimuli to very specific responses.[43] For example, one can have the disposition to feel extreme dislike, even hatred toward something, as Churchill reportedly did toward communism.[44] A disposition is not a felt state in itself but a particular internalized sensitivity. As Frijda notes, "being frightened by a dog and being afraid of dogs is not the same thing. The distinction corresponds with that between occurrent states [affective responses] and inclinations or dispositions."[45] And yet the content of an actor's dispositions greatly influences the circumstances under which an affective response will occur. The disposition of being afraid of dogs may generate low-intensity reactions, such as an aversive cringe, or stronger emotions, such as outright terror. These affective dispositions are distinct from, and may conflict with, cognitive beliefs: for instance, an actor may regard a certain aversion as wrong or silly and yet

42. Frijda 1988, 351.
43. Ibid.
44. Costigliola 2012, 52.
45. Frijda 2000, 64.

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be unable to overcome it. There is some evidence that racial and other cultural biases can operate in this fashion; even individuals who consciously deny racial prejudices may react less sympathetically to racially marked images.[46] And while we can seek to ameliorate their effects, such dispositions are not as easily amenable to conscious updating as the beliefs described in cognitivist approaches.

Affective dispositions and concerns are durable but not static, and shift in response to prior and ongoing affective experience.[47] They reflect the embodied memory of previously felt reactions to specific objects, actors, or circumstances. Such dispositions and concerns may accrue imperceptibly through repeated low-intensity reactions and experiences. Psychologists have long noted the "exposure effect" by which the affective effects of benign exposure increase an individual's preference for an object without even being cognizant of having previously encountered it.[48] Extended exposure to a pool of negative associations—for example, through entertainment and news media—may cultivate aversive dispositions, including subtle racial and cultural biases. Conversely, a single high-intensity emotional reaction may also be sufficient to sear an individual with a durable affective disposition. For instance, one traumatic experience with a dog may leave a person with a perpetual fear of all canines.[49] Both pathways carry significance for IR, whether in terms of national sentiments seeded through long-term exposure to national symbols, or in the form of affective scars borne of intense reactions to events such as war or ethnic conflict.

A further source of affective stimulation is *mirroring*. Far from being purely internal, affective states find outward manifestation in the form of corresponding expressive displays, such as the flushed face of shame or the furrowed brow of anger. These displays can, in turn, influence the affective experience of those exposed to them. When people observe emotional expressions in others, their brains initiate the neural and bodily responses associated with the observed emotions. The result is a complex process of transpersonal simulation in which we accumulate through experience neural and visceral changes that become the basis for affective states and responses. Through these mirroring processes, we not only receive others' emotions but emulate and transmit them in turn.[50]

Concerns, dispositions, and mirroring are not the only sources of affective response, and actors can experience affective changes endogenously, as a result of rumination or biochemical fluctuations. But these three sources are of greatest interest for IR scholars because they constitute key points of contact where observable situational variables can trigger affective experience.

46. Phelps and Thomas 2003, 747–53.
47. Damasio 1994, 165–201.
48. Kunst-Wilson and Zajonc 1980.
49. LeDoux 1996, 203.
50. See, for example, Iacoboni 2008; and Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia 2008. Pertaining to IR, see Ross 2014.

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Amendments to Understandings of Actorhood at the Individual Level

1. Individuals possess the capacity for reason, reflection, and strategic and normatively guided behavior, but these capacities are largely unmotivated and directionless without affective dynamics.
2. Low-intensity affective dynamics not only inform preferences and normative appraisals but also exert subtle, yet significant influences on judgment and perception.
3. High-intensity affective reactions, although generally short lived, are capable of drastically reorienting attention, priorities, and behavior, even spilling over onto unrelated situations or objects.
4. Affective experience in many (but not all) cases is a function of perceived external stimuli intersecting with specific pre-existing affective dispositions or concerns.
5. Affective reactions and experiences can reshape pre-existing affective dispositions and concerns, even without an actor's awareness.
6. Individuals are endowed with both an expressive repertoire for conveying internal affective experience and the ability to subjectively mirror the affective states of others.

The Challenge of Collective Dynamics

Much of what interests IR scholars occurs at the level of the state and other corporate actors, where theorizing affective experience constitutes a significant challenge. Rationalist and mainstream constructivist approaches face little difficulty speaking to this level because they conceptualize states as sites of preferences, identities, or other similarly disembodied abstractions. Some accounts emphasize that states consist of affect-capable individuals: as Jacques Hymans writes, "states are not gigantic calculating machines; they are hierarchically organized groups of emotional people."[51] But even such views still must overcome the "multi-body" problem when attempting to scale up to the collective level—how can an embodied phenomenon such as affective experience have a collective dimension? While IR scholars have been willing to accept beliefs, volitions, and even values and identities as attributes of collectives, ascribing affect and emotions to anything but individuals has remained a bridge too far.[52]

Theorizing how collective affective experience can emerge from the interaction of properties at the individual level avoids the problems plaguing efforts to transpose individual-level theories of affect and emotion onto collective actors. Rather

51. Hymans 2010, 462.
52. Wendt 2004, 312–13.

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than looking for ways to apply individual-level theories of affect and emotion to pre-existing groups, we can theorize how elements initially conceptualized at the individual level—dispositions, concerns, mirroring—also permit both high- and low-intensity affective experience to be shared across actors and thereby assume a collective dimension.

First, by sharing key dispositions or concerns, individuals may experience a consonant affective reaction in a *bottom-up* fashion. IR scholars have already suggested such processes are at play when concerns related to pre-existing group identities form the basis of common emotional responses. Such an approach addresses the multi-body problem by focusing on the group within the individual.[53] Sasley, drawing on intergroup emotions theory, postulates that "the group becomes part of the individual, who then reacts not as that individual but as a member of the group, and individual members of the group converge on the same emotions, so that we can speak of a 'single' prototypical emotion."[54] The nation-state offers an especially important magnet for concern, and may impel individuals to respond with similar emotions to the losses, achievements, or insults that befall their polity. But alternative sites of affective investment also exist, including religious groups, ethnic groups, nations, or even normative and epistemic communities. Moreover, dispositions and concerns—such as specific values, attachments, or desires—can be homologous across individuals and thus capable of eliciting shared affective responses even in the absence of explicitly shared identities.

While such a solution provides the important possibility for spontaneous affective consonance among individuals, it omits mechanisms of *horizontal affective transmission* that belie the notion of an interpersonal divide. Individuals may not only share similar affective experience because of common dispositions or concerns—their affective experiences themselves may afford processes of contagion.[55] Horizontal transmission occurs when affective displays, symbols, and discourses circulate across actors to generate affective responses.

These social effects are rooted in attributes already accorded to individuals. Because humans both outwardly express affective reactions and internally mirror those of others, we can share affective experiences through social interaction. Not only bodily expressions but also symbolic displays, emotional discourse, and selected imagery can facilitate the transmission of affective states. Engaging in protest activities, for example, can expose people to shared emotional stimuli and other participants' expressive displays, both of which can generate patterns of affective response.[56] Media communications can have similar effects, exposing dispersed audiences to a common stock of affect-inducing events, symbols, and narratives. While microsociologists have typically privileged face-to-face interactions as emotionally

53. See Löwenheim and Heimann 2008; Mercer 2006; and Sasley 2011.
54. Sasley 2011, 454.
55. Stein 2013, 208.
56. Collins 2004.

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significant, communications technologies are giving rise to increasingly powerful channels of dispersed affective elicitation.[57] From diplomacy and deliberation to protest and the use of violence, many of the embodied social practices embedded within the phenomena studied in IR contain the potential to engender politically significant, collective-level affective responses.[58]

Social forces can also harmonize—even discipline—affective reactions in a *top-down* fashion. These processes can occur through the diffuse influence of social expectations and norms. Within international relations, for instance, feminist work has demonstrated that military masculinities cultivate particular emotional norms.[59] Although actors never have complete control over their own affective reactions, they can nevertheless seek to suppress certain responses and project others. We can regulate emotional response in various ways, from shifting attention away from the eliciting stimulus to inducing a particular affective state by reframing our assessment of a situation and its impact on concerns.[60] Indeed, the threat of guilt or shame should norms of emotional display be violated can be a potent motivator for such self-discipline. And while performing an emotion is not the same as spontaneously experiencing it, psychologists have demonstrated that such performances can actually generate corresponding feelings.[61] In this manner, affective experience may be brought more closely into alignment with shared social expectations, thus generating similar patterns of observed response.

Top-down harmonization may also work in more situationally specific ways by enveloping actors in discourses and practices privileging certain affective expressions. In times of crisis, for example, specific patterns of emotional response may be imbued with cultural legitimacy and political acceptance. Emma Hutchison argues that, in response to the 2002 Bali bombing, Australian political figures and media sought to "align individual emotions with the wider emotionally charged social discourses that ultimately narrated and gave meaning to the catastrophe."[62] Social discourses of emotion, affectively laden public expressions, and practices of narration can work to enhance particular affective responses while discouraging others—or depoliticizing them as belonging to the personal realm. For example, German enthusiasm for war in 1914 was much less widespread than previously assumed, and the "myth" of its prevalence resulted from representations within the conservative nationalist press.[63] Such representations both encouraged further displays of enthusiasm and sidelined other affective reactions—such as fear and sadness as loved ones were sent to war—as private and lacking political import. As Crawford argues, such

57. Castells 2009.
58. Bially Mattern 2011.
59. Cohn 1987.
60. Gross 1998.
61. Ekman 2003.
62. Hutchison 2010, 74.
63. Verhey 2000.

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dynamics can become institutionalized over time, as they are "written on the body politic, with political consequences."[64]

These three pathways—*bottom-up, horizontal,* and *top-down*—form possible sources of collective affective experience. Such experience entails particular affective responses shared across individuals with all their attendant consequences. But it also can give rise to two more specific, politically important phenomena: *affective waves* and *emergent collective solidarities*. The pathways to collective affective experience are not mutually exclusive, and when in agreement they can produce amplifying feedback effects to generate *affective waves* across a population. An event that elicits similar strong emotions across individuals, for example, may produce spontaneous public expression, in turn facilitating transmission, social articulation, and further intensification. The resultant environment exerts further social pressure on actors to engage in shared affective displays and practices, and thus harmonize their own affective experience. The product is a collective, high-intensity affective response capable of overriding pre-existing goals and concerns. However, high-intensity affective responses are difficult to sustain over time and thus subside without further stimulation. Consequently, these waves generally crest—creating windows of political opportunity—and then dissipate. But the political atmosphere will not fully regress to its original baseline, for the wave will leave dispositions and concerns altered in its wake. This dynamic helps explain the pattern of euphoria that created new possibilities at the end of the Cold War, or fear and anger after 9/11.

Alternately, collective affective experience may stimulate *emergent collective solidarities*. Whereas social identity theories tend to begin with familiar social groups and then ask how and why members of that group come to share certain emotional responses, we suggest shared affective experience can occur due to bottom-up or horizontal processes not directly shaped by pre-existing identities. Alongside the emotions people feel toward their state or religious community, they may experience transmissions of affect connecting them to co-participants in social protest movements or media communications transcending national allegiances. While we are unlikely to find pre-existing social groups whose members all possess exactly the same pattern of affective response, we may well find emergent constellations of affective expression temporarily giving rise to politically relevant solidarities. Instead of pre-existing groups generating shared affect, we should look to shared affective experience as generating the motives and affinities that constitute new groupings. Therefore the common affective bases of transnational human rights groups or terrorist organizations may be not a product of collective actorhood but its catalyst, fuel, and glue.

Collective affective experience exists because individual-level properties and social constellations interact to create pathways (bottom-up, horizontal, top-down) to shared expression and resonance. These pathways also form the conditions of possibility for collective phenomena not outlined in existing theories. Affective waves

64. Crawford 2009, 279.

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involve a cresting and dissipation of motivation, attention, and urgency not fully correlated with the variables shaping behavior in rationalist or constructivist approaches. Emergent collective solidarities require suspending fidelity to familiar units of analysis to assess how affective responses can give rise to new identifications. And all these collective phenomena can shape the environment political actors navigate, providing opportunities, constraints, and pressures on their behavior.

Affective Politics

Individual and collective affective dynamics not only influence how actors perceive and behave but also form part of the strategic context they confront. As Mercer has observed, strategy requires understanding how emotion can shape actors' thoughts and behavior.[65] Our proposed amendments and their collective-level implications establish the conditions of possibility for four forms of strategic political behavior: calibration, manipulation, cultivation, and display.

Calibration occurs when actors craft their own political behavior with an eye toward the possible affective state of others. Actors' attention and goals fluctuate with their affective state, and calibration is the matching of political strategies to these fluctuations. Variance in affective states can create windows in which certain policies or behaviors become propitious. In July 1914, for instance, the Austro-Hungarian government deliberately approached the German Kaiser when his emotional state seemed most conducive to receiving support: its representative was advised to meet him "in the current moment while he is still appalled by the bloody deed in Sarajevo, [so he] will give us every assurance and stay the course up to war."[66] Calibration may also involve avoiding certain approaches when affective conditions are unfavorable, as when West Germany chose not to push for diplomatic relations with Israel in the early 1950s because it saw the aftermath of the Holocaust as still too raw.[67] Calibration incorporates the affect of others—including its temporal vicissitudes—as a strategic parameter.

Manipulation, by contrast, seeks to intentionally elicit a high-intensity affective response by playing upon existing dispositions and concerns. This strategy aims to harness for political purposes the potential of high-intensity affective responses to center attention, override competing concerns, and motivate action. For example, leaders may seek to manipulate public affective responses to gain support for desired policies, such as mobilizing by "fear mongering" or manipulating information.[68] Alternately, state actors may set their sights on the constituents of counterparts: to incite outrage in France—a "red rag to the Gallic bull"—and instigate war, Bismarck famously doctored a telegram to appear as if the French ambassador

65. Mercer 2013.
66. Angelow 2000, 445.
67. Vogel 1967, 98.
68. Mearsheimer 2011.

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to Germany had been insulted.[69] Manipulation is widespread—be it terrorists aiming to provoke, humanitarian NGOs hoping to induce compassion, or diplomats seeking advantage in negotiations.[70] It can be aimed at individuals or seek collective-level responses, even affective waves. Whichever form it takes, manipulation works by rendering issues, situations, or actors in a manner geared to elicit a particular affective reaction; its success greatly hinges on its ability to activate pre-existing dispositions or invoke or threaten concerns. Manipulation need not be cynical; the manipulating party may share the feelings it endeavors to evoke in others.

Alternatively, *cultivation* aims to alter the underlying structure of affective dispositions and concerns within a target actor or group. Its objective is to instill lasting fears, hatreds, sympathies, affections, or loyalties. Affective dispositions and concerns—within individuals and across societies—can constitute resources for emotional mobilization as well as barriers and sources of political constraint. In the absence of major shocks, such dispositions change only gradually. Scholarship on nation building points to the importance of cultivating affective connections with particular symbols and values.[71] By inculcating citizens through myriad pathways—education, national ritual, propaganda—with love for their state, the state cultivates a citizenry that can be called upon with emotional appeals for fidelity and self-sacrifice. Although most obvious in state-citizen relations, cultivation is also a tool available to states vis-à-vis the populations of their counterparts (e.g., soft power campaigns), or even non-state actors (e.g., radical madrasas). Cultivation is a long-term strategy seeking to transform the affective landscape for political ends, molding future individual and collective bottom-up responses. In contradistinction to constructivist accounts of socialization, cultivation works to embed propensities toward feelings, not just notions of appropriateness or habits.

Finally, *display* is the strategy of outwardly projecting the image of an emotional reaction or affective disposition to influence a target. As actors realize that the expression of emotions or affect conveys meaning about beliefs, values, or likely future actions, they can also perform such displays for strategic purposes. Hitler was reportedly a master of such behavior: one account tells of his demanding time to work himself into a rage before meeting a foreign dignitary.[72] This strategy is not limited to the individual level. Hall argues that Chinese officials have at times collectively performed a "diplomacy of anger" to constitute the issue of Taiwan as sensitive and volatile.[73] Actors engaging in such displays may be feigning affect, may have worked themselves up into feeling something, or may be entirely sincere. What is important is that they see strategic value in visibly displaying emotion—either to shape perceptions or provoke emotions in others.

Although these four types of strategic behavior capture some core elements of affectively oriented political activities, they are not exhaustive. Whether latent affective

69. Wetzel 2003, 158.
70. See Kydd and Walter 2006; Busby 2007; and Solomon 1995.
71. Dekker, Malova, and Hoogendoorn 2003, 351.
72. Irving 1978, 120.
73. Hall 2011.

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dispositions or high-intensity responses, affective elements form an integral part of the political landscape strategic actors navigate. Not simply a backdrop for or motor of political behavior, these affective dynamics may themselves be targets for strategic intervention.

In sum, our amendments to existing understandings of actorhood incorporate previously overlooked phenomena at the individual level—such as shifts in motivation and attention—and form the basis for pathways to collective affective experience and emergent collective dynamics. Together, individual and collective dimensions of affective experience supply opportunities and constraints within the political realm, creating the conditions of possibility for affectively oriented strategies. Affective dynamics not only influence the decisions and behaviors of leaders but also structure the larger social and political context these actors creatively engage. By thus amending our understandings of actorhood to include affective experience, we can make sense of processes at work across a disparate range of international political developments. To illustrate, we turn to the impact of the 9/11 attacks.

Affect, Affective Politics, and 9/11

9/11 was an emotionally salient event that generated an affective shock wave. Its initial points of impact were the myriad affective responses of individuals—elite and mass, in the United States and across the globe—who watched as events unfolded in real time. But these individual responses quickly assumed collective dimensions as they found expression in and were amplified through social interactions, public displays, and the media. The consequences of this wave were multiple: in the United States, shifting concerns opened political windows for new policies, and affective reactions spilled over onto targets such as Iraq; internationally, collective identifications spontaneously emerged across disparate actors to generate support; and, both domestically and globally, policy-makers reoriented political strategies to capitalize on the new affective environment. While this wave of high-intensity responses subsided, its affective consequences persisted in the form of lower-intensity feelings and moods, reordered concerns, and new or intensified dispositions.

Empirically, this account can be evaluated not just in terms of its ability to make sense of a diverse range of political outcomes, but also by the presence or absence of corroborating evidence left in the form of self-reports, public discourse and displays, and the observations of contemporaries. This approach is not substantively different from that employed by research on preferences, norms, and identities—entities whose existence can be posited only by examining their observable implications. Indeed, the expressive correlates of affective experience are among the behavioral manifestations that make such seemingly unobservable phenomena visible.[74]

74. We thank Jonathan Mercer for this point.

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By viewing 9/11 as the source of an affective wave with corollary consequences, we offer a new means of understanding its impact. The pieces of data we assemble are not in themselves novel, and we draw readily upon extant research in the areas of public opinion, policy, and domestic and international political behavior. Until now, however, this work has approached the affective dimensions of 9/11 in a piecemeal fashion, extracting singular aspects of a multi-dimensional affective event—and static elements of an ongoing process—without considering larger interconnections and implications.

9/11 Produced an Affective Wave

In the United States, 9/11 triggered a range of high-intensity affective responses, especially fear. In the months following the attacks, polls indicated that more than half of Americans felt 9/11 had "shaken [their] own sense of personal safety and security" either "some" or a "great deal." Nearly half reported feeling anxious and worried "very often" or "sometimes," and more than 30 percent said the same for feeling scared and frightened.[75] But the attacks also produced sadness, with one poll reporting that 9/11 had "affected Americans emotionally… Seven out of ten Americans, including almost six out of ten men, say that they have cried."[76] And the attacks also correlated with an increase in self-reported "aggression, anger, and hostility."[77] In the month directly after 9/11, almost a third of Americans reported often feeling anger.[78] Fear, sadness, and anger were not uniform responses, but they were widely shared—not just among residents of New York and Washington, but also more broadly.[79]

Policy-makers reported comparable high-intensity affective responses. President George Bush recalls: "My first reaction was outrage … My blood was boiling. We were going to find out who did this and kick their ass."[80] In addition to anger, Bush recounts feeling the "agony and despair" of those who jumped to their deaths from the twin towers: "I had the most powerful job in the world, yet I felt powerless to help them."[81] In his memoirs, Bush also relates choking up at various times following 9/11; both Rumsfeld and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice corroborate his self-reports.[82] Rice and Rumsfeld report having similar reactions themselves: Rice admits to being "shaken to [her] core" and in "a virtual state of shock for two days after 9/11," and Rumsfeld spoke of "haunting" memories, "impossible to

75. Huddy, Feldman, Taber, and Lahav 2005, 597.
76. Gallup News Service, "Attack on America: Review of Public Opinion," 17 September 2001. Available at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/4906/Attack-America-Review-Public-Opinion.aspx>. Accessed 3 April 2013.
77. Carnagey and Anderson 2007, 122.
78. Greenberg, Craighill, and Greenberg 2004.
79. Silver et al. 2002, 1235.
80. Bush 2010, 127–28.
81. Ibid., 131.
82. Ibid., Rumsfeld 2011, 351; and Rice 2011, 82.

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get out of [his] mind."[83] CIA Director George Tenet, in contrast, recounts that the emotional impact hit him afterwards: "I missed my own emotional buildup … [some time later] I went out in front of our house, sat down in my favorite Adirondack chair, and just lost it."[84] Even recognizing that these reports may pander to public expectations, we would have to ascribe psychopathic traits to these officials to argue the attacks had no affective impact on them.

Because poll data and post-hoc self-reports provide only isolated snapshots of discrete emotions, however, they cannot offer a full picture of how affective responses assumed more collective dimensions. For one, subjective reports tend to abstract personal emotion from the public concerns giving rise to them. Affective responses were widely shared in part because they were the synthetic product of both a triggering event and a constellation of deep concerns—family, friends, and nation—held in common by many Americans.

These bottom-up reactions became intertwined with horizontal processes of diffusion. For example, reports suggest that a large majority of Americans reported displaying the American flag on their person, car, or home.[85] The public deployment of national symbols thus helped to direct affective reactions toward certain forms of solidarity. By saturating the social environment with symbols linked to preexisting and long-cultivated affective dispositions, such expressive acts further intensified, channeled, and disciplined emotional experience. Complex mixtures of shock, incredulity, disbelief, and simple affective upheaval were thereby steered through social processes into the more familiar shared emotions of grief, fear, and outrage.[86]

Mirroring processes further amplified the effects of publicly expressed affective symbols. Although we cannot gain access to the subconscious dimensions of mirroring, we can infer these processes from the public expressions sustained by various media.[87] Collins notes that photographic and television coverage sustained a process of emotional contagion by "focusing on those individuals in the crowds who were crying, were choking back tears, or otherwise were showing themselves as being overwhelmed by emotion."[88] Media sources also amplified messages of anger, with newspaper headlines including titles like "Outrage," "Massacre," and "Bastards!" As Kahneman elucidates, media-generated anxieties can themselves become the basis of an affect-amplifying dynamic: "the emotional reaction becomes a story in itself, prompting additional coverage in the media, which in turn creates greater concern and involvement."[89] Rather than diminishing as the eliciting event receded in time, affective responses were thus amplified by ongoing communicative practices.

83. See Rice 2011, 72, 82; and Rumsfeld 2011, 351.
84. Tenet 2007, 172.
85. Morgan, Wisneski, and Skitka 2011, 450.
86. Holland 2009.
87. See Gadarian 2010; and Spigel 2004.
88. Collins 2004, 67.
89. Kahneman 2011, 142.

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The attacks of 9/11 therefore produced a constellation of affectively significant stimuli and expressive displays that together swelled into an affective wave. Recognizing these patterns of affective response does not negate the personal significance the event held for each observer. And yet, even as the event activated divergent dispositions and connections, certain among those achieved greater degrees of public focus. The prior existence of shared concerns meant that fear and anger were common responses to a national security threat, but public expression made those emotions the subject of intersubjective mirroring and public veneration.

Internationally, the attacks of 9/11 triggered multiple spontaneous outpourings of sympathy. In Britain, there were candle-lit gatherings in front of the US embassy; a changing of the guards to the American national anthem at Buckingham Palace attended by thousands; and a memorial service at St. Paul's Cathedral relayed by loudspeaker to thousands assembled outside who "linked arms and sobbed inconsolably."[90] Correspondingly, the British government enjoyed backing from 70 percent of its citizens willing to support military action.[91] In Canada, where newspapers also reported "vigils springing up all over the country," the government had 80 percent of the public endorsing its choice to offer the United States military assistance.[92] Sympathy in France was famously captured by *Le Monde's* headline "We Are All Americans," a sentiment echoed by the 96 percent of French polled who professed solidarity with the United States.[93] Across various European capitals, individuals assembled for memorial services, publicly lit candles, or placed flowers at the gates of American embassies.[94]

These spontaneous expressions of sympathy constituted emergent solidarities across disparate international actors. As Powell later recalled, "The African states, every alphabet organization, regional organization you can think of … all came on board and expressed solidarity and support for the United States—parades of sympathy in Paris, London, and Ottawa and around the world."[95] Outside Western allies, similar expressions were visible even in states not traditionally allied with the United States: Moscow, Beijing, and Tehran, for example, were host to public displays of mourning and solidarity.[96] Although responses differed where pre-existing

90. *Daily Mail*, 15 September 2001, 2, 4.

91. Gallup News Service, "Reaction to the Attacks on America," 2 October 2001. Available at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/4903/Reaction-Attacks-America.aspx>. Accessed 3 April 2013.

92. *The Globe and Mail*, 14 September 2001, A14; and Canadian Press News Wire, "More than 80 Percent of Canadians Endorsed to Some Degree Ottawa's Decision to Offer Military Support to the United States in the War Against Afghanistan's Ruling Taliban, a Poll Suggests," 28 October 2001.

93. Associated Press, "World Goes on Terror Alert," 12 September 2001; and Gallup News Service, "Reaction to Attacks on America," 2 October 2001.

94. Gallup News Service, "Reaction to the Attacks on America," 2 October 2001.

95. Former Secretary of State, Colin Powell, telephone interview with author, 7 January 2009.

96. Associated Press, "Conferences, Concerts, Sports Matches Canceled as World Mourns US Terror Attacks," 12 September 2001; *The Evening Standard*, 14 September 2001, 5; Associated Press, "Chinese Hold Vigil to Mourn US Victims," 23 September 2001; and BBC Worldwide Monitoring, "Iran: Candle-lit Gathering in Tehran," 14 September 2001.

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dispositions produced displays of happiness and gloating,[97] the appearance of sympathy across such diverse quarters suggests that the affective wave generated unconventional solidarities even in actors not linked by pre-existing cultural or political identifications.

Prevailing Concerns and Political Windows

Within the United States, the affective wave following 9/11 opened political windows as concerns about security took center stage. In the months after 9/11, polls indicated that over 85 percent of Americans were either "very" or "somewhat" concerned about another attack. More than two-thirds of Americans also reported being somewhat or very concerned that "they, a friend, or a relative might be a victim." A "sizeable minority" of Americans believed themselves to be personally at risk from a terrorist attack, despite "the vanishingly small" probability involved.[98] 9/11 provoked intense affective responses that reshaped public estimates of risk—and, in turn, altered behavior, as significant numbers of Americans changed their transportation choices and personal habits accordingly.[99]

Importantly, leaders also reacted in a similarly hypersensitive manner. Rice relates: "Every day since has been September 12 … every day our overwhelming preoccupation was to avoid another attack."[100] The event became a "preoccupation" especially for those on the front lines. As Tenet states, "the one thing so many people have missed about the CIA and 9/11 … is that it was personal for us."[101] This affective salience attached to the attacks meant that for the US government, possibility, not probability, would play an important role in guiding subsequent counterterrorist efforts. Vice President Richard Cheney stated that "if there's a 1 percent chance that Pakistani scientists are helping al-Qaeda build or develop a nuclear weapon, we have to treat it as a certainty in terms of our response." "It's not about our analysis," he stated, but about "our response."[102] For both ordinary Americans and leaders, then, affective responses appeared to confirm the expectations of probability neglect—whereby the affective salience of an outcome trumps analysis of its likelihood of occurring.[103]

This swell of anxiety was politically consequential because it re-set the baseline of public support for government spending in counterterrorism.[104] Public and elite reactions were mutually reinforcing—leaders felt few hesitations in funding the new

97. See UPI, "Mideast Reactions Mixed," 11 September 2001; and John Pomfret, "In China, Anti-US Sentiment Unfettered," *Washington Post*, 14 September 2001, A26.
98. Huddy and Feldman 2011, 457–58.
99. See Floyd et al. 2004.
100. Rice 2011, 79.
101. Tenet 2007, 173.
102. Suskind 2006, 62.
103. Sunstein 2003, 122. Mueller estimates the probability of successful nuclear terrorism as closer to one in thirty-five million. Mueller 2010, 2.
104. See Gross, Aday, and Brewer 2004, 57; and Chanley 2002, 478.

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"war" on terror; money began flowing rapidly into counterterrorism. Priest and Arkin describe the Bush administration's allocation requests as "bolder than anything anyone on Capitol Hill could remember receiving: 'and such sums as necessary for an indefinite period of time.'" One staffer on the House Appropriations Committee "likened the first post-9/11 supplemental budget to 'a repeal of the Constitution.'"[105] Mueller and Stewart powerfully argue that the US government and public over-reacted to the events of 9/11 and that the one trillion dollar expansion in US homeland security spending was unwarranted and extraordinarily wasteful.[106] Foregrounding affective dynamics suggests, however, that it was virtually impossible for the US government to respond to the event in a completely restrained manner.

The affective upheaval following 9/11 also opened new political windows by altering public attitudes toward seemingly settled norms of civil and human rights. Although various scholars describe changing normative orientations toward torture,[107] comprehensive data from prior to 9/11 to substantiate such claims is lacking. Nevertheless, polls do show significant shifts in attitudes toward other counterterrorism practices. Surveys from late 2001 suggest increases as high as fifty percentage points from four to six years earlier in the number of Americans believing they would need to "give up some freedoms or civil liberties in order to combat terrorism."[108] High numbers also supported the extralegal assassination of known terrorists (79 percent, a jump of twenty-five percentage points over three years prior), and of the leaders of countries harboring terrorists (52 percent, an increase of seventeen points over a question concerning assassinating leaders a decade earlier).[109] Moreover, experimental evidence suggests that the national, ethnic, and racial identity of counterterrorism targets increased public tolerance for security screening and certain rights violations.[110] This context helps to explain how the Bush administration could rapidly expand its legal powers to detain and interrogate terrorist suspects.

At elite levels, outrage at the attacks also fueled a desire for revenge. Rumsfeld reports Bush as wanting to "unleash unholy hell."[111] Such feelings—combined with a hypersensitive fear of future attacks—arguably helped contribute to justifying counterterrorism practices that might otherwise have been regarded as morally or legally transgressive. As Liberman notes, Bush implies a retributive motive when considering whether to waterboard Khalid Sheikh Mohammed: "I thought about my meeting with Danny Pearl's widow … I thought about the 2,973 people stolen from their families by al Qaeda on 9/11. And I thought about my duty to protect

105. Priest and Arkin 2011, 3.
106. Mueller and Stewart 2012, 107.
107. See McKeown 2009; and Jackson 2007.
108. Huddy, Khatib, and Capelos 2002, 431.
109. See Gallup News Service, "Impact of the Attacks on America," 8 October 2001. Available at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/4972/Impact-Attacks-America.aspx>. Accessed 23 April 2013; Gallup/CCFR Survey, October 1998; and Great American TV Poll #5, February 1991; both available at <http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html>. Accessed 2 April 2014.
110. Brooks and Manza 2013, 84–107.
111. Rumsfeld 2011, 359.

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the country from another act of terror. 'Damn right,' I said."[112] The result was a changed landscape of internal practices concerning civil liberties and human rights that some argue amounted to a "norm regress."[113] As Cofer Black, director of the CIA's counterterrorist center, testified, "there was 'before' 9/11 and 'after' 9/11 … After 9/11 the gloves come off."[114]

The Affective Wave Spills Over

One instance of spillover was the migration of counterterrorism from fighting al Qaeda to invading Iraq. Although 9/11 conceivably provided a platform for neoconservatives to pursue long-standing goals in the Middle East, the implementation of those goals still required popular acquiescence.[115] Just weeks after 9/11, support for war against Iraq jumped a dramatic twenty-nine percentage points compared to eight months earlier.[116] In other words, affective spillover onto attitudes toward Iraq occurred *prior* to Bush administration efforts to facilitate such connections—and in no small part motivated by a desire to lash out.[117] Investigations focused on the administration's efforts to sell the war overlook the fact that affective spillover had already rendered the US public ready buyers.[118]

The high levels of affect also spilled over into a dramatic upsurge of support for and trust in the US government, further loosening political constraints. Bush's approval rating "catapulted to unprecedented heights" jumping almost 40 percentage points after 9/11 to 90 percent.[119] Other officials, such as Rumsfeld and Powell, experienced similar boosts.[120] Trust in the government went from 30 percent before the attacks to 64 percent afterward; even the military, CIA, and FBI experienced increased public confidence. As Gaines points out, such an outcome "is quite puzzling … given the manifest failure of government to prevent terrorists from killing thousands."[121]

While rally effects are nothing new to IR,[122] there is still no agreement on the mechanisms generating rally-round-the-flag behavior after 9/11. One school holds that fear of death—as a result of 9/11 confronting individuals with their own mortality—led the public to seek solace in patriotic and nationalistic attitudes.[123] Others argue that post-9/11 feelings of anger drove support for a president seen to

112. See Liberman 2014, 48; and Bush 2010, 170.
113. McKeown 2009.
114. "Unclassified: Testimony of Cofer Black," *Intelligence Resource Program, Federation of American Scientists*. 26 September 2002. Available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/2002_hr>. Accessed 24 April 2013.
115. Solomon 2013.
116. Woods 2012, 50.
117. See Carnagey and Anderson 2007; and Liberman and Skitka 2013.
118. Carnagey and Anderson 2007.
119. Gaines 2002, 531.
120. Ibid., 533–34.
121. Ibid., 535.
122. Mueller 1970.
123. Yum and Schenck-Hamlin 2005.

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embody the capacity to retaliate.[124] A third—and not entirely exclusive—explanation holds that it was Bush's ability to meet emotional needs that won over public support.[125] While not adjudicating among these claims, the key point is that affective spillover plays a central role in each, as feelings of fear, anger, or anxiety translated into strong positive feelings of attachment.

A further manifestation of affective spillover concerns the rise of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab sentiment after the attacks. In the immediate aftermath, over half of Americans reported "unfavorable attitudes toward Muslim and Arab Americans," while hate crimes against Muslims in the United States jumped seventeen-fold.[126] As one set of scholars notes, "the moral outrage people experienced in association with 9/11 clearly spilled over to affect not only those specifically responsible for the attacks (i.e., al Qaeda), but also other groups that were at best only symbolically associated with the source of threat."[127]

Affective Strategies

The affective wave in turn created a new context for affective politics. The most obvious strategy was manipulation, and many studies of the post-9/11 period have noted how key Bush administration officials sustained public fears by citing the specter of al Qaeda, the devastation of Ground Zero, and the uncertainty over weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in Iraq. This element of manipulation is epitomized by Tom Ridge's intonations that White House officials may have sought political advantage prior to elections by pushing for more aggressive use of the color-coded threat levels developed by the Department of Homeland Security.[128]

Manipulating public fears also featured in efforts to mobilize support for military intervention in Iraq. Scholars variously have argued Bush administration officials misrepresented evidence, controlled the flow of information, altered institutional incentives, and practiced rhetorical coercion.[129] As Solomon observes, however, many available studies posit the efficacy of certain discourses in ways that imply affective mechanisms without explicitly theorizing them.[130] Taking affective dynamics into account explicitly points us to the ways key administration claims—that Iraq was connected to al Qaeda, was linked to 9/11, or in possession of WMD—mustered public backing by tapping into the affective residues of 9/11. The Bush administration's efforts sought to invoke and channel the affective salience of 9/11 and play up ongoing fears; they also worked to appeal to and redirect lingering moral

124. Lambert et al. 2010.
125. Schubert, Stewart, and Curran 2002, 576.
126. Skitka et al. 2009, 66–67.
127. Ibid., 69.
128. *New York Times*, 6 September 2009, WK7.
129. See Mearsheimer 2011, 49–55; Western 2009; Kaufmann 2009; Westen 2008; Masters and Alexander 2008; and Krebs and Lobasz 2007.
130. Solomon 2012, 911.

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outrage. As Liberman and Skitka find in their survey of poll data, "desires to avenge 9/11 substantially heightened support for war against Iraq in early 2002."[131]

Notably, many of the US reactions appear consistent with what the architects of the 9/11 attacks aimed to achieve. Kydd and Walter argue al Qaeda sought to gain international support by "goading" the United States into an overreaction.[132] Indeed, Osama bin Laden boasted of being able to "provoke and bait" the Bush administration.[133] As Lake notes, while the rational response would have been moderation, "a key problem is how to maintain this stance in the face of national anger, continued fear, and further attempts by the terrorists to provoke the target."[134] The 9/11 attacks were themselves an attempt at affective manipulation.

The affective politics of 9/11 were not, however, confined to manipulation alone. Aware of public sensitivities associated with the attacks, Bush administration officials sought to calibrate their own statements to resonate with public sentiment. One study notes that one of Bush's early speeches succeeded because it "reassured people and channeled their anger."[135] Calibration was likely a combination of intentional framing and more experimental discoveries. At an event at Ground Zero, Bush improvised: "I can hear you. The rest of the world hears you."[136] The response galvanized political support by mirroring the crowd's sentiments.

Leaders around the world also calibrated their reactions to the affective climate in the United States, with many engaged in overt displays of sympathy. British Prime Minister Tony Blair was arguably one of the most active in this regard, visiting the United States shortly after the attacks to convey condolences. As one "senior State Department official" later commented, "he knew precisely how to reach out to the American president and the American people in their hour of need."[137] By Blair's own admission, his was a strategy of calibration to influence US behavior: "My concern throughout was to make sure America felt embraced and supported … The fear, but above all the sense of anger and outrage, would be enormous. How it was channeled would be a product… [in part] of how the outside world expressed its sympathy and also its readiness to share responsibility."[138]

Blair was not alone in his displays. The People's Republic of China (PRC) rapidly drafted a message of condolences and offered support. Wu Jianmin, a former PRC diplomat, also describes a strategic logic of calibration and display behind PRC behavior: "When a person is in their most desperate plight, if you express sympathy and condolences to them, they will not forget it … As you can see, diplomacy not

131. See Liberman 2006; and Liberman and Skitka 2008, 26.
132. Kydd and Walter 2006, 69–70.
133. See "Full Transcript of bin Ladin's Speech," *Aljazeera* (Internet ed.), 1 November 2004; and "The Solution," SITE Intelligence Group. September 2007. Available at <http://counterterrorismblog.org/site-resources/images/SITE-OBL-transcript.pdf>. Accessed 22 September 2014.
134. Lake 2002, 23. On fear and terrorism, see Ruby 2012.
135. Schubert, Stewart, and Curran 2002, 578.
136. Saurette, 2006, 518.
137. Coughlin 2006, 163.
138. Blair 2010, 352.

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only cannot simply exclude human nature, but at times human nature is a key factor in guiding the correct diplomatic decision."[139] And Russia, for its part, launched a veritable sympathy assault. President Vladimir Putin was the first to call to offer his condolences and subsequently went on national television to proclaim: "we are with you, we entirely and fully share and experience your pain. We support you."[140] That both Russia and the PRC quickly sought to link the 9/11 attacks to their own domestic struggles suggests the calculated motives behind such a strategy of display.[141]

After-Affects

The 9/11 attacks also had a more lasting impact. While the affective intensity dissipated in the weeks, months, and years following the attacks, the political strategies discussed here helped to extend those responses through time. Frequent memorials also provided an ongoing engine for public expressions of emotion, recalling high-intensity responses from late 2001 in lower-intensity echoes by circulating affectively resonant symbols of that period.[142] Indeed, the memorialization of 9/11 has become its own industry, from kitsch memorabilia to the barrage of narratives in television and film generated by Hollywood.[143] Building on Crawford's analysis, we could say such practices have effectively "institutionalized" certain affective responses to the attacks.[144] These practices in turn constitute the seeds of political cultivation for particular dispositions and concerns in a new generation of Americans too young to remember the attacks themselves.

To better understand the longer-term impact of 9/11, we need to examine the low-intensity undercurrents and dispositions left in its wake. Initial reactions have subsided but still have not returned to their original baselines. Poll data suggest, for example, a lasting mood of anxiety: almost six years later, 47 percent of Americans still reported being "very or somewhat worried about being personally harmed by terrorists."[145] And while the belief that Americans needed to sacrifice civil liberties had diminished by almost thirty percentage points by 2007, it still remained eleven percentage points higher than a decade prior.[146]

Reactions to subsequent terrorist attacks also indicate the extent to which dispositions remained sensitive. For example, a 2005 report in the *New York Times* noted that, although the "frantic alarm" of 9/11 had been replaced by "low-grade anxiety," the London bombings revealed how easily more active fears were

139. Wu 2007, 346.
140. Vladimir Putin, "It Is a Brazen Challenge to the Whole Humanity," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 12 September 2001, 3.
141. Hall 2012.
142. Collins 2004, 67.
143. Sturken 2007.
144. Crawford 2009, 279.
145. Woods 2011, 215.
146. Skitka et al. 2009, 66.

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restored.[147] Similar dynamics affected popular responses to the 2013 bombings at the Boston Marathon. As a Boston-based expert in anxiety disorders reflected, Americans were more affected by the Marathon bombings because "we're all imprinted by what happened twelve years ago."[148] While the overt fears of terrorism subsided in the years following 9/11, anxieties persisting at lower levels of intensity, and their corollary dispositions, linger like exposed nerves.

Value Amended

By amending existing understandings of actorhood to include human affective experience, we can begin to more fully account for the myriad consequences of 9/11. The attacks generated a high-intensity affective wave felt across public and elite levels, domestically and internationally. This shock wave rippled through a multitude of social practices that, in turn, channeled public energy toward familiar symbols and recognizable forms of grief and outrage. These affective responses also generated new demands and anxieties, spilled over to other targets, and created windows of opportunity for strategies of affective calibration, manipulation, and display.

Rationalist skeptics might argue that our analysis is largely explicable as a story of Bayesian updating: the attacks supplied new information, and actors correspondingly updated their beliefs resulting in increased demands for security. As time passed without further major attacks, beliefs readjusted to a diminished perception of threat without returning to pre-attack levels. But such an account fails to capture affective spillover. The emotions elicited by 9/11 colored attitudes toward actors or targets connected only by superficial similarity, such as Arab-Americans or Iraq. Furthermore, a Bayesian approach misses how affective reactions can influence the salience of beliefs even in the absence of new information. To illustrate, repeated references by US policy-makers to 9/11 helped to keep political windows open by fueling affective reactions even without offering new information.[149]

Most importantly, a Bayesian approach fits multiple outcomes. Post hoc one can certainly posit low prior beliefs about the likelihood of terrorist attacks and attribute strong levels of significance to 9/11 in ways that correspond to the large belief shifts we observed. But one could imagine positing a priori other values for those variables resulting in little shift at all. That al Qaeda wanted to attack the United States was no secret, and 9/11 could have been interpreted as an "aberration"[150]—a one-time, low-tech exploitation of existing weaknesses in a manner virtually impossible to replicate once known. It is by taking into account the affective impact of the attacks—collapsing towers broadcast in real time and their emotional aftermath—and the

147. *New York Times,* 8 July 2005, A1.
148. *USA TODAY*, 16 April 2013, A1.
149. Westen 2008, 364–67.
150. Mueller 2002.

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subsequent affective wave these elicited that we can better hone our expectations of a massive reaction, or even "overreaction."[151]

Constructivists might argue what really matters is how the US response was discursively articulated into the "war on terror." Croft writes: "Terrorism is not a more common event than deaths through cancer or traffic accidents … But it feels different. That is the power of discourse."[152] And yet, by emphasizing feeling, Croft also describes the power of affect. While constructivists have pointed to the role of agents in shaping the meaning of crises or critical junctures like 9/11,[153] such accounts miss how the ascendancy of particular discourses may correspond to their ability to articulate, channel, and make sense of already-existing affective responses. Moreover, by privileging more incremental forms of socialization, constructivists also overlook both accelerated forms of affectively induced normative change—for example, how anger and fear can rapidly eclipse prior concerns about civil rights—and emergent forms of solidarity—such as the new constellations of transnational sympathy engendered by the attacks. Placed against a backdrop of shared outrage after 9/11, it is not difficult to comprehend how the "language of medieval conflict—of finding al Qaeda and putting their 'heads on sticks'… soon caught on around [the US] government, mustering aggression."[154] Discourses may be disembodied; their appeal is not.

Conclusion

International politics are a distinctly human endeavor; our theories of international relations should reflect this fact. Rationalist approaches have highlighted the strategic, instrumental side of political actorhood, constructivists its discursive and socially constituted dimensions. Both offer important insights but remain incomplete, for they neglect the influence of affect and emotions on international political behavior. Rather than recite familiar claims that "emotions matter," we point a way forward with amendments that provide greater clarity concerning the range, sources of variance, and consequences of affective experience. And while these amendments begin at the individual level, their implications extend to collective dynamics and strategic state behavior on the international stage.

Affective dynamics are integral to the signal events of international relations. We chose to examine 9/11 but could have equally focused on the passions at work in the events of 1789, 1848, 1914, or 1989. Revolutions, mass wars, and social upheavals—these watershed moments engender change, and common sense would seem to tell us emotions are involved. And yet the field of IR has little to say about how affective reactions take hold and alter existing patterns of social and political behavior. In answer, we outline the qualities of high-intensity affective responses and how—

151. Sunstein 2003, 133.
152. Croft 2006, 286. See also Jackson 2005.
153. Widmaier 2007.
154. Suskind 2006, 21.

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through pathways to collective affective experience—these can forge affective waves and emergent solidarities capable of unsettling old norms and social structures to open new political windows.

But affective dynamics extend beyond moments of upheaval; they are also woven into the quotidian processes and practices of international politics. Of particular relevance are the effects we sketch out in relation to low-intensity responses, ingrained dispositions, and enduring concerns. Positive dispositions and the responses they engender can act as glue, binding alliances, institutions, and allegiances even as their original impetus fades. Alternately, negative dispositions and low-intensity reactions such as disdain or anxiety can impede trust and cement rivalries—even where interests would predict cooperation. More broadly, moods and biases at low levels of intensity can form strong subsurface currents exerting effects on everyday flows of diplomatic negotiation and foreign policy-making.

Our intention is less doctrinal than programmatic: to prompt a reevaluation of the place of the embodied, emotional, human elements of experience in our theories of international relations. Some may find it easy to integrate elements of what we propose as tweaks or minor additions to existing models. For example, accommodating low-intensity biases or specific dispositions may require little more than adjusting a few equations. Other elements, however, may prove more radical and therefore require a substantial rethinking of basic ontological assumptions. Can rationalist models fully accommodate the fluidity of affective contagion or the surprise of spillover? Can constructivisms focused on the content and meaning of political discourse be pushed to capture how it resonates on a felt level? We nail our amendments on the door of a discipline that has largely overlooked affective dynamics not to provide the last word but rather to provoke new questions.

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