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Abstract. This article describes how psychological balance theories might be applied to generate hypotheses about political events in Cambodia since the Paris Accords of 1991.

One of the most common, popular, and intuitively appealing hypothetical constructs employed to shed light on social attitudes and behavior among allies and adversaries is that of balance. By inferring homeostatic tendencies of hypothetico-deductive logic for cognitive, emotional, motivational, and behavioral dynamics between, within, and among social actors--a biologized categorical imperative, as it were--one allegedly can make higher order and well-supported inferences about social phenomena. With an armamentarium of related constructs--including dissonance, congruity, and consistency --one might make inferences about social actors A, B, and C such as follows: (1) if A and B each support C, they are more likely to support each other; (2) if A and C are allies, and B and C are adversaries, A is more likely to be an adversary of B; (3) if A and B are adversaries, and B and C are adversaries, then A and C are more likely to be allies; (4) if A and B are adversaries, as this adversarial relationship is exacerbated, C is viewed as ally or adversary by A and B less for other attributes than those relevant to resolving the A-B conflict successfully.

What might this rather facile approach suggest about political events in Cambodia since the 1991 Paris Accords, especially the so-called coup recently instituted by Second Prime Minister Hun Sen, the alleged implosion among remnants of the Khmer Rouge, the escape to freedom of First Prime Minister Norodom Ranariddh? Just one example from the perspective of some Khmer Rouge leaders.

Khmer Rouge forces are becoming militarily and politically marginalized. What to do? Hun Sen and Prince Ranariddh are adversaries. By exacerbating this conflict, the Khmer Rouge might induce approach behavior towards it by both sides that obviates its role in the death of over one million Cambodians between 1975 and 1979. As either side increases its approach behavior, the other side must increase its approach behavior even more, exacerbate the conflict even further towards its adversary, or both. Approach behavior might involve amnesty or small penalties in return for support in attacking or weakening one's adversary. In fact, exacerbating the conflict could well result in weakening both adversaries and comparatively strengthening the Khmer Rouge. Even a resolution of the conflict by one adversary militarily and politically defeating the other would create the opportunity for the losing side to join the Khmer Rouge as allies in a perpetuation of a seemingly intractable conflict. The consequences seemingly would be a win-win-win situation. The only threat to such a rosy future would be for the Hun Sen and Ranariddh (or royalist) sides to join together as de facto allies, not the putative ones they have been from the 1993 elections until recently. Then they could increasingly marginalize or even politically and militarily destroy the Khmer Rouge. Khmer Rouge security policy options based on balance theory would be evaluated largely in terms of how unlikely this last consequence would be. (A last-gasp Khmer Rouge effort based on balance theory might involve inducing a Vietnamese attack on Cambodia, a multilateral military intervention by the UN or--even more unlikely--by the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN], or the threat of some Third Force--or would that be Fourth Force?)

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The psychological balance theories have a number of weaknesses that should cause hesitation before security specialists trained in the wiles of political psychology hit the playing field. (1) There are so many components making up an overall psychological set towards a social actor that it is by no means a simple task to identify those towards which balance theories can be applied: attitudes, beliefs, opinions, visceral reactions, central amygdala nucleus functioning, memories, various group, interpersonal, organizational or field variables? (2) There is the matter of balance within balance theories. There are a host of variables that color whether or not, for example, attitudes will correlate with seemingly consistent, congruent, or assonant behaviors. (3) And there is the fact that the homogeneity of social actors concerning international security issues is much less--politically and psychologically--than implied by psychological balance theories. (a) Politically. In the Cambodian example, Hun Sen was once a Khmer Rouge commander, then a prime minister of a Vietnamese-supported Cambodian government, now, perhaps, an avatar of Cambodian nationalism or a base will to power. Hun Sen's current supporters include thousands of former Khmer Rouge soldiers and some political officials. Ranariddh and his father Sihanouk were once allies with the Khmer Rouge and a so-called democratic force against the Hun Sen government and have continued through the years to receive support from North Korea and the People's Republic of China. Ranariddh himself seems to have problems maintaining support of his father. Khmer Rouge leaders, whom the United States Government (USG)--among others--desires to defuse, dismantle, and place on trial for war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity, were for years politically supported by the USG as part of the legitimate government of Cambodia after the Vietnamese invaded the latter in 1979. And, of course, there are and have been many disparate cliques and factions within the forces of each of the above, and the simultaneous holding of contradictory beliefs, opinions, and feelings within individuals. (b) Psychologically. Psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, and humanistic-existential approaches to personality and social psychology all suggest complicating factors variously termed as follows: unconscious, dissociation, asymmetry, extinction, desynchrony, state dependent learning, regression, deindividuation, and hidden observers confronting the practical value of balance theories.

On balance, balance theories serve as a useful macromolecular vehicle to understand trends, patterns, and options. However, as one addresses specific cases or--as some postmodernists might posit--as the subjugating truths of balance discourse is objectified, as the cultural discourse of balance is unmasked through deconstructive practices, balance becomes unbalanced and subverted. And in the political world, as the elite continue their charade of balance, too often others bear the brunt of the consequences and fall down. (See Brown, R. (1965.) The principle of consistency in attitude change. In R. Brown. *Social Psychology*. NY: The Free Press, pp. 549-609; Erlanger, S. (July 28, 1997.) Asians are cool to Albright on Cambodians and Burmese. *The New York Times*, p. A3; Kinder, D.R. (1981.) Balance theory and political person perception: Asymmetry in beliefs about political leaders. *Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International*; Mydans, S. (July 27, 1997.) Khmer Rouge say Pol Pot is tried and sentenced. *The New York Times*, p. 4Y; Visser, M. (1994.) Policy voting, projection and persuasion: An application of balance theory to electoral behavior. *Political Psychology*, 15, 699-711.) (Keywords: Balance, Cognitive Dissonance, Conflict, Congruity, Consistency, Coping, Perception Management, Policy, Praxis, Social Cognition.)