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The Psychopathology of Terrorism: A Cultural V-Spot

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Do terrorists have a psychological condition? Where do psychoanalysis and psychohistory meet? Do we have the right to diagnose a group of people from our Western couches? I believe the answer is yes. To penetrate these seemingly impermeable borders, we must take into account aspects such as (1) childrearing practices, ideology, mythology, and (2) psychodynamics such as shame, guilt, envy, jealousy, control/domination, and dependency, and how they are qualitatively and culturally experienced. Now there are some who proclaim that terrorists are highly intelligent, sane, very focused, and use terror as a political weapon to achieve their geopolitical aims. It is noteworthy to mention there is a difference between a political/ Islamic Fascist Muslim and a religious Muslim. In this article, I am introducing the concept of the “V-spot” (vulnerable spot), a unique term I devised for couple therapy to describe what happens when partners “push each other’s buttons.” In psychological terms this is known as the archaic injury. It is suggested that cultures also share collective group myths and fantasies based on early unresolved archaic injuries or “V-spots” very much like couples we see in clinical practice.

In noting the parallels between marital and political conflict, the first point I would like to make is that cultures/nations (like couples and individuals) also have V-spots/ archaic injuries traumatically bonded through wars, loss, or a lifetime of governmental violations of human rights abuse keeping them forever embroiled in endless feuds. Not a far cry from couples who engage in painful destructive on-going interactions that go on and on round and round without reaching any conflict resolution. In many of my earlier writings I have referred to this as “the dance.”

The second point I would like to make is the psychological link between terrorism and mental illness. Is there such a thing as a cultural V-spot? More specifically the parallels I see between terrorists and the borderline personality disorder as having striking similarities to the borderline personality disorder. Both share many of the defenses mechanism such as splitting, projection, projective identification, shame, blame, guilt, envy, jealousy, control/submission and domination. The most pervasive trait is the dominance of envy, shame, abandonment and annihilation anxieties. Through a process of projective identification, they project a state of total paralysis (as opposed to ordinary fear (Mason, personal communication 2005). Although abusers we see in our practices are not terrorists, abusive partners can also project into their spouses a state of absolute terror (Lachkar, 1998). “If you don’t do as I say, I will cut your off financially and beat you to pieces.”

WHAT OTHERS HAVE WRITTEN

Tarek Heggy in *The Arab Mind (2005)* suggests that Arab defects are culturally induced. Heggy argues these deficiencies develop over time as a combination of cultural attributes deriving from historical, political, economic, social and educational factors which like any acquired attributes are amenable to change. Lloyd de Mause (2006) in his recent article makes reference to “Psychology of Terrorism” by Clark McCauley, “The Psychological Issues in Understanding Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism,” in Chris E. Stout, Ed claiming that “Terrorists are not psychopaths that “30 years of research has found little evidence that terrorists are suffering from psychopathology. DeMause refutes Clark McCauley’s statement in that “30 years of research finding very little evidence that terrorists are suffering from psychopathology” (cited in Lachkar, 2006, p. 311). To go along with this preposterous “research” as clinicians and psychohistorians would be joining in a collusive bond or folie a deux.

In contrast to the popular view, DeMause (2002), Korbin (forthcoming), and Lachkar (2002c, 2006) argue that terrorists actually do suffer from severe mental illness.

Kobrin goes as far as to describe them as psychotic. More specifically, I am stating that terrorists share many of the same attributes, states, traits, and characteristics of borderline patients we observe in clinical practice. In “Primitive Defenses in the Middle East,” I discussed the most dominant defenses as mentioned earlier including paranoid anxiety, a predominance of envy, magical thing, omnipotent denial, grandiosity, and massive depression splitting, projection, projective identification, abandonment anxiety, magical thinking, omnipotent denial and depression

HOW THIS WORK CAME ABOUT

My interest in psychohistory began with my first couple, “The Arab-Israeli Conflict: (Lachkar, 1983, 1991) wherein battles between Arabs and Jews appeared to have striking similarities to conflicts I observed in clinical practice. Here, I ventured into psychohistory delving into the Middle East, examining the historical, mythological, psychological, and religious past and of the Arabs and Jews. I saw Jews and Arabs as a Narcissistic/Borderline Couple (not a real couple” real couple” of course, but a mythological or” biblical” couple). The marriage between these two fields led to two books, *The Narcissistic/Borderline Couples: A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Marital Treatment* Lachkar, 1992, 2003 2nd Edition

A key point I would like to make is that just as couples “think” they are battling over sex, money, or custody (external events), the issues are really over self-identity, boundaries, dependency needs, rivalry, betrayal, abandonment anxiety, and entitlement fantasies. Similarly, contentions in the Middle East are not really over land or occupied territories, but over shame, control/domination, victimization, saving face, betrayal, oedipal rivals, and Oedipal rivals, and self-identity. The confluence of psychoanalysis and psychohistory led me to consider that we have a universal need to master over pre-oedipal rivals (relational or political) and to preserve our self-identity or the collective group identity. The preservation of the self or the collective group self becomes more pervasive than life itself (Lachkar, 2004).

Based on the myths of the Jews and the Arabs, Jews being “God’s Chosen” people, and the special child of God, and Arab, the abandoned orphans or the split off child of God, I tentatively diagnosed the Jews as having a collective narcissistic diagnosis and Arabs a collective borderline one, very similar to couples. It has always been very baffling why people stay bonded to pain, why groups, nations, couples and individuals stay in painful, conflictual relations, and even when peace or conflict resolution are offered, they are refuted. The answer may lie in childhood experiences emanating from early trauma. This compelled me to study what it is that binds these groups in ongoing, circular, painful, on-going destructive battles that make conflict resolution virtually impossible. I think that Fairbairn more than anyone helps us understand why people will forever stay bonded to a bad internal object and forever stay faithfully loyal to it This may sound a bit grandiose, but without sounding too narcissistic myself, if I could understand Arabs and Jews why not other battling relationships?

DEFINING THE V-SPOT

The concept of the “The V-Spot” or “vulnerable spot” is a unique term I devised for couple therapy to describe the most sensitive area of emotional vulnerability. It is the raw spot of early childhood traumatic experience that gets aroused when one partner triggers an emotional sensitive spot in the other. The V-spot is designed to parallel the G-spot (the G-spot equals pleasure; the V-spot equals pain). In fact, it is the title of my new book, *The V-Spot: Healing Your Vulnerable Spot from the Trauma of Emotional Abuse*. It is marked by the slightest provocation one wrong word/movement and it’s off. It blows! It is the epicenter of our most fragile area known in psychoanalytic literature as the “archaic injury,” a product of early trauma that one unwittingly holds onto and keeps throughout adult life. I like the term because it is more user friendly than “archaic injury” and makes it easier to pinpoint the exact area of vulnerability of pain and trauma that people relentlessly hold onto. Now let us turn to the myths.

THE MYTHS (THE CHOSEN VS ORPHAN/DISPLACED CHILD)

In my earlier work, I postulated to two reoccurring myths in the Bible and the Koran that has had significance in fueling the Arab-Israeli conflict First, the myth of the Jews as "God's Chosen People," providing them with a narcissistic collective diagnosis, and to the Arabs as abandoned/orphan-child, a collective borderline diagnosis. Stemming from these mythic origins and oedipal rivals are age-old sentiments, passions, and feelings that continually resurface giving rise to many shared, collective group-fantasies. If there is such a thing as a cultural "V-spot" or collective archaic injury , might suggest that Isaac was the narcissistic entitled child given the birthright, whereas Ishmael, the abandoned one sent off to the desert, who later became the abandoned child victimized by his fate. So Jews got the "good breast" the land of Milk and Honey, wherein the Arabs got the "bad breast," the dry barren one, leaving both groups in a state of endless rivalry and unsolvable conflicts.

THE CULTURAL V-SPOT

Could we say that the Arabs have never reconciled or come to terms with loss or mourned for what they felt was their basic entitlement? By the way, mourning is one aspect grossly overlooked in the psychohistorical literature (Kobrin, 2002). What follows is a more current example of what I refer to as a cultural V-spot, a group traumatic event that people mutually share and never forget.

When Gaza settlers were forced from their homes as residents of Netzer Hazana (LA Times, A 12), Yuval and his family were some of the last remaining settlers to leave. Instead of mourning the loss and realizing he must leave his home, he and others sat around waiting for some miracle. So instead of packing, they began to cook, play guitar, and engage in sing-a-long songs.

The psychohistorian might interpret leaving Gaza not as an external event representing the loss of homes, but, commemorating the burning of the first and second Jewish Temples an experience the Jews never recovered from. So now we have a double V-spot. First the trauma of having your Temple burned down by non-Jews and later to be betrayed by your own people. In the final blow, Israeli soldiers finally arrive at Yuval's home and personally pull him and his family out by force. Let me take a moment to define a narcissistic/borderline relationship

DEFINING A NARCISSISTIC/BORDERLINE RELATIONSHIP

In narcissistic/borderline couples I describe what happens when a narcissist and a borderline join together in a marital bond or "bind," how each one stirs up some unresolved conflict in the other, and how each identify or over-identify with that which is being projected into them. These are two personality types who enter into a psychological "dance" who consciously or unconsciously stir up highly charged feelings that fulfills many early unresolved conflicts in the other interactions that go round and round on and on without ever reaching any conflict resolution. Even when it is reaching it is sabotaged or destroyed. The revelation is that each partner needs the other to play out his or hers own personal relational drama. It is suggested that a person with a borderline character is inclined to attract as an object choice a narcissistic personality.

More important than why and how they attract one another is what it is that keeps/bonds them together, whereas two narcissists or two borderlines do not make it, do not "do the dance," because of their dynamics and defenses, but when paired, these opposing types appear to maintain a bond. I then give myself special permission to trespass into these other love bonds, starting with abusive relationships which led to cross cultural love bonds. Since this paper equates terrorism with the borderline personality disorder, let us take a moment to describe the borderline and then the narcissist.

THE BORDERLINE

The borderline is the one dominated by shame/blame defenses, persecutory, abandonment anxieties, and such primitive defenses as splitting, projection, projective identification, omnipotent denial and magical thinking. Borderline patients often form parasitic bonds to maintain some semblance of relatedness (addictions, abusive relations, suicidal threats, and psychosomatic illness). Because the borderline does not have much of a sense of self, they tend to fuse, collude or go along with their objects. "I'll do anything, just don't leave me!" Unlike the narcissist, the borderline does not feel entitled, is continually questioning his/her identity, and will do anything to prove they exist. The bonding with a painful object often becomes the replacement for an intimate attachment to offset internal deadness. "When I mutilate myself, it hurts, but at least I know I'm alive." For a short while, the borderline will comply, submit, but when threatened or betrayed will suddenly lash out with threatened, borderlines tend to lash out with retaliatory responses (Lachkar, 1992, 1998), and will spend the rest of their remaining lives reinventing, getting back, getting even to those who have betrayed or abandoned them (real or imagined). As a consequence the borderline personality has poor impulse control, poor reality testing, impaired judgment, and cannot learn from experience (ego defect). Borderlines frequently perpetuate the cycle by repeating the same traumatic experience never learning from experience.

Melanie Klein's, contribution Criminal Tendencies In Normal Children, (1934), shows that through play, children using tiny dolls, men, women, animals, cars, and trains in play therapy mutilate, cut, beat, slice, destroy them, and repeat the same hostile sadistic acts again and again. She recognizes that children have the desire and impulse to destroy, cut up mommy's breast, mutilate daddy's penis, and through play therapy the child early on learns the difference between the act of "doing" from the act of fantasizing about "doing" it. I believe this point that criminals, murderers, torturers and terrorists have a much diminished fantasy life, unable to distinguish between reality and fantasy and therefore have to "do it" rather than fantasize about "doing it" (beheading bodily mutilations, severing limbs, gouging eyes, etc.

THE NARCISSIST

The narcissist is the one who has excessive entitlement fantasies, exaggerated sense of self, is preoccupied with self, is dominated by such defenses as guilt, idealization, omnipotence, grandiosity, and when not properly mirrored will withdraw. They value such things as fame, physical beauty, wealth, material positions, and power. The narcissist feels he belongs to a privileged class, is the entitlement lover, the special child of God, or as Freud referred to as "His Majesty the Narcissist." When narcissistically hurt or injured they will withdraw, isolate themselves, and relentlessly hold on/ harbor resentment toward the one who personally injured them (archaic injury" or the "V-spot." "Hmmm, it looks like you gained a few pounds." The narcissist is overly preoccupied with self, and when not properly admired, appreciated, or given a sufficient amount of attention they will withdraw and isolate the self in a kind of narcissistic retreat. They are characterized by a lack of empathy devoid of sensitivity and to the attunement needs, and feelings of others. The most common archaic injury is the mother who usurped this special baby from the "thrown," a high chair position to make way for a new sibling. Often the narcissist will spend the rest of his life in a kind of narcissistic nostalgia, yearning/longing to recapture the time when mommy and baby were one living in harmony and symbiotic bliss. This is commonly referred to as the original archaic injury or narcissistic injury. In yearning to recreate the early memorable experience of being mother's special child, the narcissist will then spend the rest of his life living a kind of "narcissistic nostalgia," yearning to go back to the time when mommy and baby were one in total symbiotic bliss and harmony. Any threat or reminder of this early trauma triggers profound feelings of not feeling special or being "the only one." A common statement concern addressing the mental status of a terrorist is that many are highly skilled and educated **men. Why would then intelligent brilliant men also known as "masterminds" do such brainless things? This brings us to the discussion of the ego which helps explain what happens to the ego when it gets overwhelmed and why bright people do or say "stupid things." "I know you want to get married honey, but marriage is only a piece of paper!"**

THE EGO AND ITS DYSFUNCTIONALITY. What happens to the ego gets overwhelmed it goes into total fragmentation or “ego default.” This helps us understand why intelligent people do stupid things. This leads us to a brief description of the ego and what happens to the thought process or rational thinking when the ego gets flooded or overwhelmed with persecutory anxiety.

These concepts of the ego are very well developed in the work of Freud, Klein and Bion. Melanie Klein’s work is particularly significant because she notes that one of the most pervasive features that occur in the paranoid schizoid position is the splitting of the ego whereby one sees good or bad. Not a far cry from terrorists who view the world as all good or all evil. Allah is good and United States is Satan and evil. Another salient feature is envy the desire to destroy that which is most desired or enviable (referred to by Klein as primitive envy). “I want the breast, therefore I so attack it.” I want the woman therefore I will demean and brutalize her.” I want peace, therefore I shall create terror.” Ogden in a paper suggests that suggests that terrorists have a borderline personality disorder. Of course we can’t talk about all terrorists. With all of this the first thing that goes is the ego. The ego is the seat of consciousness, the superior agent responsible for memory, perception, judgement, reality testing and thinking. It is the mediating agent that provides entree to the unconscious. Rational thinking goes down the drain.

It is okay for you to make fun of us to say the Holocaust never existed to say , but it is not okay for us to make draw cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed.

If I were to say to you, I think I am Marilyn Monroe, you can quickly sum detect a faulty incapacitated ego. The task of the ego is to observe/mediate preserve a true picture of the external world by eliminating old memory traces left by earlier impressions and perceptions. The ego is an amazing apparatus, often not user friendly in that it resists what it “knows. The ego absorbs information, integrates it and learns how to sort out good from

bad, what is helpful or what is destructive. It has its own internal agent with the capacity to seek out the real from the unreal through the process of reality testing, although many authors offer detail accounts of ego fragmentation or “ego weakness.”

PSYCHODYNAMICS AND QUALITATIVE DIFFERENCES

Is it fair to say Islam is a borderline society? **The response to this question is not so simple; but is astonishing how they seem to share many of the same traits, states and characteristics as the borderline personality disorder (splitting, projection, projective identification, magical thinking, shame/blame, envy, paranoia, obsessive idealization of God). Later I will describe the borderline and also the narcissist since they do share a certain grandiosity and overly sense of entitlement. Governmental abuses and violations must extend beyond the political parameters to encompass the emotional borders with the appreciation of variants between their psychodynamics.** One main omission is shame. In fact Middle Eastern and Asian societies are considered to be shame cultures (Berton, Lachkar, 1997), as opposed to Germany who is a guilt society. These differences are important considerations. Take for example the meaning of self. What self expression means in the West has completely different meaning in Middle Eastern and Asian societies (the “we self” vs. the “me self”). What dependency represents in Japan (amae) has completely different meaning in our culture. Some have referred to Asian and Middle Eastern societies as shame cultures.

In analyzing group fantasies around acts of terrorism, I am particularly impressed with Robins and Post (1998) in *Political Paranoia* who view terrorist acts as a perverse way of connecting to the world. They maintain that innocent people are fueled by paranoid delusional leaders who glom onto a piece of reality to “justify” their causes— e.g., the enviable or “evil” American. Paranoids have enemies; they do not have rivals or adversaries. Enemies are not to be defeated or compromised, but destroyed. People who are paranoid tend to project their hatred and hostility onto others, and they believe their lies are the truth. Leaders like Hussein, Arafat, Milosevic, Bin Laden, under the guise of

religion, or “the good cause,” act out their most heinous crimes. Thus their grandiose schemes and omnipotent fantasy find a way to project terror into their objects (us). We become paralyzed not just fearful but terrorized.. After studying such tyrannical leaders such as Hitler, Stalin, Ayatollah Khomeini they find that projection and paranoia and are common denominators. If they are projecting what is it they are projecting? Shame? Guilt? Envy. Envy is the most salient feature of the borderline personality.

Since many Arab leaders are a product of traumatic childhoods severe deprivation, it likely that they defend against shame by projecting their shameful “dirty” immoral or “bad boy” parts into their external objects to rid themselves of their internal “badness.” These authors note that to accomplish their mission, they have to invent or create imaginary enemies to persecute and oppress. Lloyd reminds us throughout his work of “war leaders who are poison containers (projection objects/fusion with powerful parents) which he claims is a defense against punishing parent and necessary to defend against inner depression. Another dominant feature is shame. Shame is the preoccupation with what others think and has to do with conformity. Those who fail to comply with the groups’ ideologies are ousted from the group as “infidels.” Shame is persecutory in nature and is associated with isolation and fear of annihilation by the group.

Peter Loewenberg (1986) displays the understanding of group projection in his article, “The Kristallnacht as a Public Degradation in Ritual” illustrates how the Nazi’s had to evacuate onto the Jews their own dirty parts by projecting onto the Jews as filthy, infectious, parasites to rid themselves of their bad internal introjects that Jews were ruining German purity. The same paranoid strain may be applied to the enemies of Islam that the infidels are viewed as dangerous invaders into Arab harmony and anyone who intrudes into this space will infect and contaminate them.

CULTURAL RELATIVISM

There are two way to look at culture. One way is from within and the other is from without (cross-cultural), and the other is looking from without (transcultural). Some critics of human rights abuses attribute to cultural relativism. They argue that there are traditions, laws, ideologies that justify the aggression (as long as it is rooted in culture and religion). Endleman (1989) disputes this argument claiming that there is no society in which oedipal involvement is absent, and the mother is the primary object to the young infant. He distinguishes the transcultural from the more commonly used term, "cross-cultural." The term "transcultural" attests to the position that basic psychic universalities are applicable to all human beings. Needless to say, cultural traditions are not to be neglected, but aggression and mistreatment of women, children and basic human rights are not to be condoned. This brings up the question often asked, who are we to say our childrearing practices are better, that democracy is better. We might also question how much research and studies on infant/child development in Bagdad or Saudia Arabia has been done? Even the concept of Amae in Japanese societies defies all infant developmental studies in terms of the natural sequence of development toward separation-individuation (Berton and Lachkar 1997). To assist us we must turn to the concept of cultural relativism. Now let us talk about terrorism as a borderline pathology but first I have to give you some background.

CHILDREARING PRACTICES

According to deMause, the roots of terrorism are inextricably linked to childrearing practices, and is a result an abundance of screaming neglected abandoned orphans. He offers a chilling account of life in Islamic fundamentalist societies filled with violence, cruelty, and sexual exploitation of children. These are familiar themes in countries that do not stress the importance of healthy child development. Even though others may repute this, one would wonder how many studies on infant/child development have been done in Baghdad. Saudi Arabia?

This paper supports the position that both parents are responsible for the child's development and ego or self identity. It also holds that the Oedipus complex is universal

and that all children go through the similar states of development as prescribed by Western psychologists. Ideally, the mother provides the nurturing and protective capacity while the father helps the child separate and individuate. In the Winnicottian sense, it is the father who provides the “holding environment” and the “transitional space” to help wean the child away from mother to the outer world (Winnicott, 1965). But if the father is absent, or if the holding environment is damaged or defected, the child’s momentum to drive forward during crucial phases of the separation process becomes thwarted. In addition, the proclivity toward borderline organization is greatly increased. It is noteworthy that children raised in neglectful, abusive, traumatic environments grow up with defective bonding relations and stay forever connected to the “Mother of Pain,” forming relational bonds that are destructive and painful (traumatic bonding). This takes us to the heart of the matter. As horrific as the pain is, it is preferable to a black hole (Grotstein, 1990). The emptiness is often experienced by the borderline as a black hole, the epicenter of the conflict—anything that gives them some semblance of belonging. “At least I know I am alive. I feel excited. I have meaning and purpose to my life. Better to be an addict, a killer, a rapist, a terrorist, than to vanish into the abyss!”

Kaufman (LA Times B13) states” there is something psychologically profound about Hamas abducting an Israeli soldier. Perhaps without the soldier in their midst, the Palestinians in and of themselves feel no existential purpose.....” What would they do without the perpetual agony of conflict with Israel?

Fairbairn more than anyone helps explain why people stay bonded and loyal to their bad internal objects (the rejecting object, the unavailable object, the enviable object, the rejecting object. See below the chart on Pain). Melanie Klein expanded on the destructive nature of envy, that is, the need to destroy that which is most enviable, desirable, or unattainable. She claims that children who grow up healthy grow up thinking the world is a good, happy and healthy place (the “good breast”). On the other hand, children who grow up with abuse, deprivation/privation, and abandonment grow up thinking the world is bad, dark, dangerous, and persecutory place (the “bad breast”). This

leads to splitting. One could say Allah Mother is worthless. What follow is is a wonderful illustration of envy written in an earlier work as The Psychological Love Dance between Osama and “She America” (Kobrin and Lachkar, 2002) This is not a far cry from couples traumatically bonded in marital conflict.

THE PATHOLOGICAL 'LOVE DANCE'

Osama and 'She' AmericaOsama views the US as the Great Satan, the evil partner responsible for all the wrong doings in the world. So envious is Osama of America that he confuses America (his wife) with a piece of property to be owned and controlled. But America has her own life, and because she chooses not to be submissive, suicide bombers and terrorists must destroy her. Because she is the exciting object she is also the “threatening” one (the dangerous enviable domineering materialistic America who intrudes and disrupts Arab unity). Osama submitted his holy self to Allah, yet his other self maintains a lustful attachment with “HER,” America.

MUSLIMS AS AN ORPHAN SOCIETY

The Koran makes many references to orphans. Many leaders in Muslim world have been orphaned. The Prophet Mohammad himself was an orphan, as were many leaders in the Muslim world, including Yisar Arafat and .Saddam. Both had very traumatic childhoods. It is therefore easy for innocent Muslims to form identification with powerful leaders who offer the group fantasy of being the ‘good daddy,’ the messiah or messianic savior to a group of abandoned screaming babies. The abandonment aspects are particularly significant in terms of understanding how many abandoned babies in the Arab world find compensation in bonding or forming an identification with such who not only concretize the mythology but are the ones that perpetuate the conflict.

Moussaoui presents a perfect profile for the upbringing of a terrorist. His mother was undernourished and physically and emotionally ill while he was in utero, and his father was a violent alcoholic who abused the family and finally abandoned them (LA Times, A5). Sann Hussein al-Tikriti was born April 18, 1937, a village of mud-brick huts outside Tikrit, a backwater north of Baghdad. Biographers describe Hussein's parents as dirt-poor farmers. Others say he was a member from the "petit bourgeoisie." Hussein's father is said to have died before his birth. Saddam was not wanted by his mother. He was then raised by a terrorist Uncle. His mother rejected him at birth and farmed him out to others to care for him. Saddam was never breast fed by his mother, grew up with severe maternal deprivation, and adopted the posture of "myself against the world." His mother remarried. His earliest influence was with his Uncle Khagrallah Tulfah, an army officer stripped of rank by the British after he joined a failed 1941 coup. Not having a father, Hussein's apparently formed an intense identification with his Uncle and tried to please him. Taking the 10-year old Hussein to Baghdad, the older man became his guide through the political maelstrom of postwar Iraq. According to the same reporter, Tulfah had definite theories about Iraqi society. He made them part of the boy's political education. Later, Tulfah expounded on them in a pamphlet, "Three Whom God Should Not Have Created: Persians, Jews and Flies."

IDENTIFICATION WITH LEADERS

Earlier I mentioned how many leaders in the Muslim world were abandoned orphans (ranging from Ishmael to the Prophet Mohammed). It is striking how many experienced horrific abusive childhoods. Saddam Hussein and Arafat are good examples of children who were raised by violent caretakers after the loss or death of a parent. Bin Laden, for example, was one of fifteen children by one of ten wives, and another 35 siblings from his father's other wives: He occasionally met his father not even to have the occasion of being abused by him. Like many Arab youths in polygamist societies there are many children and the father is perceived as absent.

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Later, Tulfah expounded on them in a pamphlet, "Three Whom God Should Not Have Created: Persians, Jews and Flies." To compare let's take Stalin's and Hitler's father, even though they were violent drunks and abusive, their fathers were still perceived as having a strong presence. When an Arab man takes another woman, she doesn't live with the former wife and her husband, but in another house, or tent, and there she raises her children. Every group of children rotates not around the father but around the mother.

The husband may go there once a week or once a month. If she is not the preferred one, her children will never meet or play with their father. Allah becomes the symbolic father that fills the void, the black hole and becomes the replacement for him. Distorted as this may seem, as bad as Hitler and Stalin's fathers were, at least, for Hitler, their sexuality was there. German and Russian women had never been imposed veils and chadors.

Zacarias Moussaoui, the terrorist on trial and pleaded guilty for the September 9/11 plot. His profile fits with many other terrorists in the Muslim world. Moussaoui ran away from a violent alcoholic father. Young, vulnerable, insecure, isolated, made him perfect prey for recruits looking for young Muslim men to join Jihad. Like many other susceptible young Muslim men looking for something to become part of something. Psychohistorians and governmental analysts are continually trying to understand why such young susceptible boys become terrorists and why others identify and idealize them. I

believe the answer lies in group psychology and the psychodynamics of cults. Paul R. Martin (LA Times, p. A 4 2006), an expert on cults, reports Moussaoui presents the classic case of a susceptible young man brainwashed by Islamic radicals in London during the mid-1990's who get swept away by the seduction of the recruits who offer them power, prestige, and a sense of belonging or any promise or semblance of bonding (Lachkar 1993; Mayer 1993, pp. 332–348), even if it means loss, death, self-destruction or self-sacrifice. “I am no longer an outcast!” The Jihad offers a perfect container for someone like Moussaoui to translocate pent up rage and hatred. In order to maintain this bond, people in groups who are dominated by primitive defenses, need to find an enemy to project their badness into. Israel is the projected target or any country that supports Israel. “Israel is our enemy! They are the interlopers into Arab unification and symbiotic harmony between our brotherhood. We must get rid of them and drive the Jews into the sea! Not all leaders reinforce aggression; Gandhi, for one, was a champion of “peace for all.” Leaders who are the most likely to survive and who inflame the conflict and aggression are the ones who best perpetuate the group's ideologies, mythologies, and collective group fantasies.

Just as individual can identify with certain abusive destructive partners in a domestic relationship, people in groups can identify with destructive leaders. At the macro level, a paranoid leader may not be a far cry from a partner in a domestic relationship. Groups form a “trance,” an intense identification with a delusional leader that reinforces the group's mythological fantasies. However, in reality there is a duality; the leader who can be cruel and sadistic can also be loving and kind. Aggression and cruelty reinforce the libidinal ties in the group as long as there are outsiders onto whom envy can be projected. Often these are charismatic, albeit pathologically disturbed, leaders who are paranoid and/or schizophrenic. They offer the group collective fantasy or mythological fantasy of being “savior daddy.” Classic examples of such leaders are Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic. Milosevic, for instance, is a pathological narcissist with antisocial features, a fascist, and a psychopath (Doder 1999).

Leaders who play out the pervading myths express the group's dysfunctionality and form a most powerful and intimate connection with the group. The leader knows how to

play on the group's omnipresent fear of imminent danger (real or imagined) from outside forces. In regressive dependency groups, the dominant features are blame, attack, retaliation, getting back at any cost. Themes such as "Drive the Jews into the Sea," "Return to the Land of Milk and Honey," "Land for Peace," "Save Serbia," are too familiar themes. When tensions surge, members resort to shame/blame, fight/flight, and scapegoating. The group searches for an enemy to blame and a leader/messiah who will save the group from calamity.

Plagued by this way of thinking, the psychohistorian might ask such questions as: How can a country like Germany, so heavily invested in morality, Christian values, and orderliness, suddenly create a sea of horror, a flood of blood, diarrhea and filth? Similarly, how can a country such as Japan, so invested in saving face, in displaying obedience and respect for elders, suddenly engage in unspeakable brutalities and atrocities with the Chinese and Koreans.

ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

No discussion about the Middle East would be complete without mention of the position of women in the Muslim world. Unfortunately, this would require another paper, nevertheless the role of women in the Middle East is well known, that their subjugation and submission to men is still widespread. The Koran teaches men to have authority over women because Allah had made man to superior. She has no rights, no vote and very little self esteem. In Iraq, many women live in virtual terror since several women activists, businesswomen, or those who dressed immodestly have been attacked and killed.

*"Women are your fields, go to them into your field as you please.
(Koran, 2:2223).*

Women's issues are not only prevalent in the Middle East, they are universal concerns. According to Kernberg, (1994) masochism is more prevalent among men. Men

tend to form identification with the mother which creates deep rooted fears and threats to their masculinity. Men who feel insecure/inadequate worry is that that they will become like mother, and vigorously defends against this is two ways: through the disparagement of her or by grandiosity' blowing up their own masculinity, becoming tough, powerful, aggressive, and for the most part unemotional and insensitive. Kernberg (1994) claims that men tend to be more sadistic in nature than women. Freud's claim was that the little girl is a failed boy, the grown woman, a kind of castrated man (Gay, 1988, p. 519) and therefore had a watered down superego and were less aggressive.

Women around the world carry very different perceptions as to the meaning of abuse: what constitutes abuse? In Saudi Arabia, Muslim women view American women as being abused and sexually exploited by having to live in isolation, without extended families providing a community, by their domains of single family dwellings, by having to work while raising a family, by having to live in a society increasingly dominated by a drug culture, climbing divorce rates, where suicide and murder. Conversely, American women view these Muslim women as being abused by having to be submissive to men, treated as second class citizens, in other words, seen as men's possessions or "cattle."

In noting the differences between American and Muslim women, an American woman will be hard pressed to understand a Saudi Arabian woman who, for example, has a child taken away from her. In the United States, the American woman would fight to her last breath for her child; yet, in Saudi Arabia the woman will deal with her loss within her own group, using the group as a "container" to ward off her pain either through repression or denial. Subject to systematic discrimination by cultural customs that relegate her to an inferior and unequal status, she will accept her "fate." In Middle Eastern and Eastern cultures, cultural transgressions are enacted masochistically with the child's either extreme compliance and submission or extreme aggression and violence toward parents or others ("hard work" sacrificial self, or the "saving" face" self neurotically externalized in sadistic or perverse fashions (Nakikuki, 1994).

CONCLUSION 1

If a Muslim advocates peace they are considered as traitors someone fighting against peace and betraying God (Allah). If they confront the hypocrisy, they are ridiculed, shamed, ostracized or even killed. If they advocate peace they are admonished for being infidels. This presents a bitter paradox. We can continue diplomacy, with dialogues, face to face discussion meetings with the enemy. Lastly, is to enter peace through the back door, bonding with the enemy through art, music, books, food, fashion, stories, and dance. The Muslims can suppress art and creativity in their country, but no way can they obliterate it here. Other than China under the rule of the Qin/Gh'ing Dynasty, no other country oppressed their people as much by shutting down all artistic endeavors.

So what do we do with terrorists and leaders that support acts of terror and human rights violations? There are no simple answers. Psychohistory ventures beyond the political, social and historical aspects to help explain the unconscious motivational forces. We may not have the answers about how to negotiate with a terrorist or paranoid leaders, but what I have attempting to illustrate in this article is a discussion about the borderline personality as presenting one of the most difficult therapeutic challenges, and hopefully this understanding can lead to new ways to bond with our enemy.

First, because of the tendency to bond with pain (internal bad objects), there is the bizarre tendency to reject anything good that is offered, and even when it is accepted it is never enough. They become insatiable. More drugs, more food, more sex, more land! "More! More! Give an inch they'll take a mile." Secondly, because of the tendency to distort, project and reliance on magical thinking, promises are never a promise. It is the will of Allah! Inshallah! Thirdly, unlike the narcissist, borderlines do not respond to empathy, interpretation, compassion and they often confuse empathy with weakness. They need strict boundaries, hard objects and tough love to provide the containment they require (as opposed to the narcissist who responds more to mirroring). Lastly they suffer from ego dysfunctionality. Any reminder of betrayal/abandonment can stir up early reminders of

immense emotional trauma. Furthermore, they will twist, distort, self sacrifice, retaliate, get even or do anything at any cost to prove they exist.

In 2000, Arafat rejected a good offer for a West Bank/Gaza Strip Palestinian state and billions of dollars in compensation at both the Camp David summit and in the Clinton plan. Instead, he led the Palestinians to five more years of disastrous war, which not only left them with more casualties but also with a wrecked infrastructure and shattered international image.

On a more positive note this is in no way this should hinder our continual efforts for peace negotiation, through diplomacy, negotiations, and peace dialogues. We must continue our efforts to bond, through culture exchanges, dance, music, art, cooking fashion, etc. Most importantly, to continue our support for women, children and human rights throughout the Arab world. And when representatives from both sides do meet, the mediators of these panels and should first and foremost address their mutual cultural V-spots!

Where Inshallah was ego shall be!

CONCLUSION 2

Does the key to understanding the Arab-Israeli Conflict go back to ancient Biblical times. Have only time and space changed? Has the Arab-Israeli conflict had a set of emotional configurations which remain the same? Is each new "trauma" or "injury" but a reminder or a reenactment of the original experience, as in the Biblical stories, like a post-traumatic stress disorder? Mythologically speaking, Arabs are viewed as the dark children of God, the split off brothers of the Jews. Unlike Jews, the myth implies that Arabs were cheated out of their birthright, a special experience with God. Both Arabs and share similar defenses, both may feel displaced, and abandoned, but how that abandonment

experienced or acted out is what accounts for their pervasive differences. Again, not all Arabs and Jews adhere to these myths, but the ones who do are the directors and choreographers of their own wars, both real and fantasized.

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Military sources said this latest act comes barely 12 hours after the LTTE, in a similar incident, executed another crime at Muslim Colony, Kaduruwela, Polonnaruwa: killing a three-year-old infant while he was with his mother.

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Because there are no simple answers, we must go beyond the conventional, the obvious, and the observable to explain the motivational forces in history. Psychohistory ventures further into the political, social, and psychocultural aspects of history and reviews such intra-psychic unconscious motivations as primitive defenses, unresolved oedipal conflicts, and other psychodynamics.

Chart: Bonding to the Pain

WHY DO COUPLES, GROUPS STAY IN PAINFUL CONFLICTUAL RELATIONSHIPS? BONDING TO THE PAIN

- As bad as the pain it is better to bond to the pain that face the void, the black hole, the emptiness.
- People who have had traumatic experience are programmed to bond with a painful internal object that is familiar.
- It is better to bond in pain then to have to face the void, the black hole, the emptiness.
- Pain stirs up an amalgam of unresolved infantile issues
- Pain becomes highly eroticized/sexualized
- Pain is familiar (familiar internal bad object)
- Pain is confusing. The lover who can be cruel and sadistic can also be loving and kind.
- Pain is linked to internal part of self one wants to destroy/rid of Internal/External Abusers
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Internal/External Objects/ Attachments to Objects

There can always be someone who abuses you, but there can also be a part of yourself that also mistreats and abuses you.

Bad Internal Objects

The Wronged Self

The Insatiable Self

The Craving Self

The Lost Self

The Betrayed Self

Bad External Objects

Rejecting Object

Depriving Object

Unavailable Object

Withholding Object

Painful Object (The Mother of Pain)

Idealized Object

Sadistic Object

These terms are abstracted from Klein (1957) and Fairbairn (1940)