

Symposium: Child Suicide Bombers

By [Jamie Glazov](#)

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Jihadists worldwide are increasingly using [children as suicide bombers](#). What explains this inhumane and obscene tactic practiced by Islamo-Fascists? To discuss this issue with us today, Frontpage Symposium has assembled a distinguished panel. Our guests today are:



Nancy Kobrin, a psycho-analyst, Arabist, and counter-terrorism expert.



David Gutmann, emeritus professor of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences at Northwestern University Medical School in Chicago.



Joanie Lachkar, a licensed Marriage and Family therapist in private practice in Brentwood and Tarzana, California, who teaches psychoanalysis and is the author of *How to Talk to a Narcissist* (2007), *The Many Faces of Abuse: Treating the Emotional Abuse of High - Functioning Women* (1998), and *The Narcissistic/Borderline Couple: A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Marital Treatment* (2nd Edition) (1992).

Dr. Lachkar speaks nationally and recently presented, "The Psychopathology of Terrorism" at the International Psychohistorical Association. She is an affiliate member of the Southern California Psychoanalytic Institute, an adjunct professor at Mount Saint Mary's College, a psychohistorian, and is on the editorial board of the *Journal of Emotional Abuse*.

And ...



Dr. Anat Berko, Lt. Col. (Ret), a research fellow at the International Policy Institute for Counter Terrorism (ICT) at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya, where she also lectures at the Center's Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Security. She holds a Ph.D. in Criminology and serves as Lieutenant Colonel in the Israeli Defense Forces. An expert in terrorism, especially suicide terrorism, she conducts research for the National Security Council. She is the author of the new book *The Path to Paradise: The Inner World of Suicide Bombers and Their Dispatchers*.

FP: Nancy Kobrin, Dr. Anat Berko, David Gutmann and Joanie Lachkar, welcome to Frontpage Symposium.

Empirical reality suggests that infanticide is deeply intertwined with Islamic jihad. Al Qaeda is using children as suicide bombers in Iraq. A sing-along film glorifying suicide bombers was recently handed out to British Muslim children. Several months ago a suicide bomber struck a bus carrying schoolchildren at a military base in northwestern Pakistan, wounding at least five children. Last October, in Karachi, jihadists booby-trapped a baby with explosives and tried to hand it to Bhutto. Bhutto did not take the baby and was not harmed by the blast that killed 130 people. We know that many Muslim parents, like Umm Nidal, are overjoyed when their little children blow themselves up.

Dr. Kobrin, let's begin with you. What forces are at play here? Why children?

Kobrin: Jamie, this might come as a shock to you but in Arab Muslim culture children are considered the “jewels” of the family. Why then this huge contradiction – blowing up their own “jewels,” using them as proxies to say nothing of the real victims – the ‘infidel infants’?

While it is obvious that a baby represents life and hope, psychologically a baby also represents the essence of human needs and vulnerability because a baby is completely dependent when born.

By choosing a baby as their proxy, the jihadis unwittingly reveal how they feel about themselves. They identify with the baby but in a nefarious way, that is, the jihadis feel themselves to be babies.

The jihadis cannot tolerate life. They immerse themselves in a death cult. The baby reminds the jihadis unconsciously of their own unmet needs. As macho as they claim to be, the dirty little secret is that they wish to be taken care of like a baby. They are unconsciously envious of a baby. The telling sign of envy is attacking and destroying.

If children are the “jewels”, why would Umm Nidal, a prominent Palestinian mother Hamas representative in the parliament, send three of her six sons on suicide missions against Israel?

Here the psychological concept of splitting might be helpful. On the one hand, the baby is over-idealized and on the other ‘unconscious’ hand, the baby (now a grown son) arouses great hatred and envy in the devalued female.

In a shame honor culture of deprivation, the veneration of the male “jewel” has this dark underside.

Mariam Farahat, a devalued female, gained her *kunya*, “Umm Nidal” i.e. her honorific by giving birth to her first son Nidal, lit. mother of Nidal, mother of “struggle.” She gained cultural prestige because she had none. Craving more prestige, she murders in the name of honor.

Lest we forget, Umm Nidal grew up under the death threat of the honor killing, more accurately called *honor murder* by Phyllis Chesler who writes brilliantly about this cultural tragedy and crime. Umm Nidal internalized male hatred of the female as self-hatred. She overcompensates for her inferiority by becoming more jihadi than the jihadis. But then, she was brainwashed to murder at an early age. Though, of course, not all Palestinian mothers buy the program.

Acting out murder is legitimated through brutal cultural practices buttressed by religious ideologies, which *terrorize their own into submission*.

For Islam, there is the added problem of “contraction,” black and white polarizing thinking, which runs throughout the Koran, the Hadith, and the Sira. This ‘ideological’ splitting makes it nearly impossible to establish balance, to achieve moderation. (cf. *The Submission of Women and Slaves: Islamic Duality*, vol. 11, Center for the Study of Political Islam, 2007). Why? Because in my opinion, this Koranic duality uncannily dovetails with psychological splitting, yielding a lethal combination. Arab Muslim culture is out of control. In the Palestinian case, that is why the Israelis built the *geder hafradah* – the fence of separation, in order to set a concrete boundary because the Palestinian culture lacks internal psychological boundaries. They don't know how to contain their murderous rage. The fence has significantly deterred and foiled suicide bombings thus far.

Berko: Thank you, my friend Jamie, for the opportunity to take part in such an important and relevant discussion. Dr. Lachkar has very clearly and painfully described the despicable exploitation of children in terrorist attacks by Al Qaida as well as other Islamic organizations. Dr. Kobrin analyzed the phenomenon from a psychological and Arabist's point of view in a fascinating and thought-provoking way. I would like to return to 'Umm Nidal', described as a model of self-sacrificing motherhood. She "rejoices" that her children became 'shaheeds' one after the other and demonstrates her joy publicly as a tool to enlist suicide terrorists. In a research project carried out with my colleague, Prof. Edna Erez, Palestinian women, including mothers, were interviewed. We reached the conclusion that we were dealing with gender oppression of these women. The mother whose son has become a 'shaheed' is

supposed to break out in cries of joy in front of the television cameras and her elementary right, so basic and human, to mourn the death of her child is taken from her. The bereaved mother is forced to take part in the "show" required by the Palestinian ethos because she has no choice. If she doesn't "play the game" that is expected from her in spite of having lost her dearest possession, she will lose the prestige and financial reward that are customary in these situations. A journalist in the foreign press told me that in interviews he had with mothers of 'shaheeds' he very often witnessed the total breakdown of the mothers, shouting and cursing the dispatchers of their children, the moment the cameras were switched off.

I recently talked with Palestinian youths who took part in terrorist attacks on Israeli targets and each one of them emphasized that they had been told to hide the matter from their parents.

The mother of a 'shaheed' like the example of Umm Nidal becomes the "ultimate collective mother" and refusal by her to take on the role diminishes the memory of her son or daughter, since such a refusal would mean the loss of the honor and prestige due to her and the death of her beloved child would be meaningless. Even women who have themselves carried out terrorist attacks do not wish that their sons or daughters become 'shaheeds'.

When speaking of suicide terrorists one usually refers to them as "smart bombs". However, in the case of children who are sent to blow themselves up, a cleric from the Islamic Jihad movement referred to them as 'stupid bombs' and emphasized that there is no point in sending children on suicide missions because "they don't understand anything and simply blow themselves up without killing anyone."

Lachkar: I agree with Dr. Kobrin's view that in Arab Muslim counties children are viewed as the "jewels" of the family to be sacrificed as "Shaheeds," but in modern day Islamic culture I would expand the concept to Arab children being seen as internal reproductive time bombs -- bomb producers.

In psychodynamics terms, we might describe this as children having part object functions, not being children to be loved or cherished, but to be used/misused/abused as a cultural self serving object (as are the mothers and women). One might refer to this as "reverse love," children not loved for their accomplishments, or who they are, but as objects to provide honor to ward off shame and by making them into sacrificial objects--'shaheeds'.

Dr. Berko explains how outwardly mothers are pre-programmed and pre-scripted to express their delight with jubilation and joy that their children have done honor

killings, but this is not all black and white. The public display (false self) of joy might be a far cry from private display (true self) -- grief, sadness, and mourning. Few know what really goes on in the hearts of the mothers.

This brings me to a question: what makes individuals/groups bond with pain? This is known as conformity, which is very common in shame cultures. In many of my earlier contributions, I have described Islamic terrorists as having very similar characteristics and defenses as the borderline personality disorders. Of course we cannot analyze or diagnose all terrorists, but the ones who bond with pain/death who are destructive/self sacrificing, and are dominated by such defenses as control, domination, envy, unresolved oedipal issues, I find very striking to the borderline personality or what I refer to as the "abandoned orphan theme". "As bad as the pain is it is better than the black hole, the emptiness, the void. I will mutilate myself, or I will do anything to provide meaning to the meaninglessness" (Lachkar, 1992, 1998. 2004, 2008).

The next point is the belief that terrorism is the pathway to peace, and that believers will be rewarded in after life. This collective dream or collective group fantasy is what bonds/binds and hold the Muslim community together. Arab unification/solidarity is the dream every leader puts forth to their people, any intruder is viewed as an interloper or trespasser into the sacred space. Israel, a small country disrupts Arab unity. In analytic terms we refer to this as fusion the inability to separate and individuate from the mother. Islam Uber Allas. Maintaining a group identify becomes a more pervasive force that life itself, "I'll do anything to follow the laws of the Koran and Hadith. When people are deprived long enough they will opt for death or anything that comes after it. Or anything that comes after it.

Gutmann: Drs. Kobrin, Lachkar and Berko have focused on the motives of Arab mothers whose children have died as suicide bombers. There is not much that I can add to their insightful discussion. Instead, I will consider the motives that could be driving the young bombers themselves, particularly those who are pre-teens, emerging from the latency period of development.

The developmental cycles of young boys move them from the early position of "Mother's child," to their installation as "Father's Son," when they accept patriarchal discipline and instruction. However, pubertal development, and early sexual maturation shakes up this comfortable arrangement, and confronts Arab boys with women - the objects of their eruptive sexual appetites. This can be a frightening confrontation. Arab folklore and culture portrays women as untrustworthy, predatory towards men, but also necessary to them. Paradoxically then, the developmental advance towards sexual maturity entails a regression back to the infantile position of Mother's rather than Father's son. The father is no longer viewed exclusively as a

mentor, but as a sexual rival, and the boy is once again dependent upon the dangerous women for satisfaction - this time of his sexual appetites. The proud Arab boy must beg the despised yet frightening woman for her favors.

The confrontation with women, and with their own dependency on them, can provoke those emotional states - shame and humiliation - that are most noxious to Arab males. Typically, Arab men deal with shame by denying the fear and the unacceptable desires that provoke it. They deny fear through acts of bravado - by seeking out rather than running away from frightening occasions; and our young Shaheeds may deny their desire for unacceptable and unobtainable pleasures by punishing and even destroying the body, the flesh that is the source of their illicit desires.

The Bravado requirement, and the need to mortify, even destroy, rebellious pubertal flesh are currently met, in the Muslim world, by what has been called the "Cult of Death," and its glorification of martyrdom. All these elements - the cultural, the physiological and the psychological combine, for too many kids, in the act of suicide bombing.

Kobrin: Dr. Gutmann sketches out well the developmental dilemma, which the young boys encounter. The rage, which circulates throughout the group and the wider society has been so inculcated and ingrained to be externalized that the power dynamics within the group are vicious and predatory.

The process begins early and even a cleric refers to them as stupid bombs in a hostile manner as Dr. Berko points out. Her work on the handlers underscores the viciousness of the group to one of its own - the suicide bomber who is both victimizer and victim. This duality is crazy-making as it is denied by the group and it is the essence of honor-based violence.

A report was recently released on honor murder called "Crimes of the Community: Honor-based Violence in the UK" by the Centre for Social Cohesion. Geo-mapping was done. Quoting Nazir Afzal: "If you had a map of the UK showing the location of Islamist groups -- or terrorist cells -- and you had another map showing the incidence of honor-based violence and you overlaid them you would find that they were a mirror; they would be almost identical. It could be that this is simply because this is where South Asians live or it could be something else --it could suggest that there is a strong link between these two attitudes." (p.86)

Where there is honor murder, one will find the recruitment and production of suicide bombers. Why? Dr. Lachkar has given the answer -- babies and children are used as "objects". They are not valued in their own right and responded to with recognition of

their own needs. They are brutally manipulated.

Just think of the cultural practice of distributing candy at the wedding celebration of the shaheed with ummi (the mother) rejoicing. A sweet treat is literally ingested in celebrating maiming and mass murder. Through manipulating the senses of a child, especially taste, the community programs create future shaheeds in their culture of death -- as well as in the cultural attitude of shamaata Ar. shamatan, taking pleasure in the misfortune of others.

Berko: Thank you to my colleagues for the erudite discussion and to you Jamie for providing a place for this kind of discussion. In one of the interviews that I conducted in prison with a serial suicide bomber dispatcher, he told me proudly: “From the age of 10, we are no longer children, we are men and able to do anything...”

Indeed, in the patriarchal Muslim society, the children are on the bottom rung and when speaking of children it is impossible to differentiate them from the housebound women who are repressed at every step of their lives. This suppression to the death is described by Dr. Kobrin. An 'unfortunately uttered word' to a strange man, that may be no more than a greeting “Hello” may cost a young woman her life.

The Muslim mother cannot successfully fulfill her principal role of a mother, to protect the lives of her children, the children she bore and gave life to. This right is taken from her and her children become clay in the hands of strangers to mold as they wish. The mother of a ‘shaheed’ whom I interviewed in the past, expressed herself thus. “They (the dispatchers of the suicide bombers) send their own children to study in universities abroad at a cost borne by the Palestinian public, while my child was sent to explode himself. We are very angry about this.” We should never forget that for parents everywhere, even when we speak of more mature youth, he will always be “his mother’s child.

The awful thing is the exposure of the children to lives permeated with violence, as one of the Palestinian dignitaries I met, described it: “The sight of blood doesn’t affect our children...” he explained. They watch the slaughter of a lamb to celebrate a family occasion and see blood spurting out all over as the animal dies, so “blood is not strange to them”. He even chuckled and asked: “Are your children (western children) able to watch the slaughter of a lamb without fainting?” That is in addition to the sharp transition to celebration in which large quantities of ‘baklava’ (sweet cakes) are consumed with other sweet treats by guests after a ‘shaheed’ explodes himself and kills other innocent people anywhere in the world. Such experiences have a deep formative affect on their lives.

There is also the aspect of learning through emulation for these children whose cultural heroes are bloodthirsty terrorists. Youths who were involved in acts of terror told me that as young children they would play in the streets, with their faces masked and if a child was lucky he would be given "a rifle to shoot with" by one of the older activists.

In addition to all this is an indoctrinating system of education that preaches 'Istishad', (self-sacrifice) and fighting the 'infidel' wherever he may be, so that the result is children who have no right of choice, but to 'be a shaheed or not to be at all.'

Lachkar: The developmental aspects Dr. Gutmann describes among Muslim sons is in sharp contrast to our sons in the West. Healthy development occurs when the son is allowed the space and time to bond with the material object mother and later moves away and separates from her by use of transitional objects and the transitional space. He then is allowed to form an identification with the father. In doing so, he does not destroy the image of mother -- he merely seeks to triumphantly overcome his pre-oedipal issues by seeking his own male identity.

Donald Winnicott reminds us of the importance of the use or misuse of transitional objects and transitional space -- and how this can lead to concrete thinking fueling the primitive mind to act out aggression and violence as opposed to abstractly thinking or fantasizing about it. In other words, the abstract mind doesn't have to "do it" as opposed to the concrete mind that has to enact because in childhood these men were never allowed to express themselves. The Arab boy is left hungry, needy and emotionally deprived, leaving him always object-seeking but never object attaining.

Dr. Kobrin offers a great example the misuse of transitional objects in the Muslim world by reminding us of the English school teacher who was in the Sudan. She got persecuted and received death threats because she permitted the kids to name a teddy bear Muhammad.

This type of reaction shows that the Muslim community doesn't understand the use of a transitional object -- aggression and impulses that are scary for kids. If we take the concept a step further, we can see how violence, blood and terrorism is an enactment of fantasy in the most primitive sense. The concrete mind cannot differentiate between the act of doing and the act of fantasy about "doing."

Now this leads us to Dr. Berko's discussion of blood and how the exposure of the children to the sight of blood doesn't affect them.. In general terms, we all know that blood has its magical, mystical and spiritual meaning, a representation of life, birth, a

rite of passage, a celebration, childbirth, but blood could also get transformed into death and killings, a perverse use of blood.

In order to understand the destructive nature here, we might want to turn to Melanie Klein's (1927) concept of criminality in children. One of her greatest contributions in play therapy was to allow the freedom and space to develop fantasy life in children. She recognized children have all kinds of sadistic fantasies to mutilate, destroy, kill but not to enact them as eventually they gradually learn to differentiate (enactments from fantasy). She emphasizes how criminals ward off anxiety by blocking out guilt emanating from the superego, an aspect missing in the mind of a criminal. In my articles, books and publications [I have extended this concept](#) to abusers, criminals and terrorists. As an example, in comparing the primitive mind to the abstract mind, Abraham realized early on that he did not actually have to sacrifice Isaac, and he was told by God that he could substitute a ram.

Gutmann: The contributions of this panel show how complex ties between the potential suicide-bomber and his mother can lead to his apocalyptic act.

Paradoxically, the boy's fatal act helps him resolve - at least, in anticipation - several of the dilemmas posed by his eruptive pubescent sexuality. For starters, the suicidal act undoes the unsettling development towards puberty that his body imposed, and restores to him the illusion of control: "I can shake up the world at MY command, at my schedule, and for my own purposes." Thus, even as he blows his offending body to bloody shreds, the young Shaheed perhaps acts to restore the illusion of control, as well as the lost pre-Oedipal Nirvana, of union with the mother.

Death in this scenario is not the end, but a transitional state - the precondition for rebirth: once freed from his grossly sexual body, the boy imagines that he can restore the lost maternal symbiosis - represented in fantasy as a flock of ministering but essentially asexual virgins - in ways that are acceptable to the mother, to the father and to Allah.

Paradoxically, the assembly of Virgins that he is promised in Paradise are what Drs. Kobrin and Lachkar might term "transitional objects" - but now the transition is away from the father's world of adult men. In death the young Shaheed goes back, via the virgins, towards the mother, rather than away from her.

Thus, the inner worlds of the mother and the son combine around the fantasies of pre-genital union and nurture. My graduate student's interviews with Arab village women revealed how discontented they were in their marriages to overbearing husbands. The only men who have truly loved them were their pre-pubertal sons. In the mother's

fantasy, the son's suicidal act adds to her prestige, but also restores the lost, precious bond. The candies that the gratified mother lavishes on the community represent not only her pride ("My son, the mass murderer") but also symbolize the nurture that she is ready to bestow on the son who has, by his suicidal act, been restored to her.

Kobrin: The tragedy of this is that no one in these Arab Muslim cultures has any opportunity to taste real freedom, not sweets tied to blood lust and death. All four of us are returning to the tight control of the female which has devastating effects for the males who nonetheless remain unwilling to examine that they too live under a death threat though of a different kind.

The child suicide bomber symbolizes and embodies their own terrors, which they attempt to destroy through a child. When you see Hamas or Hezbollah and the mass rallies of enraged males and the absence of females, it is a literal and concrete representation of displaced rage from their early childhoods outwards on to an enemy, yet the true enemy has been the war within themselves all along. They learn to project outwards and thereby never have to assume responsibility.

As Dr. Berko has stressed there is no opportunity for the mother to protect the child, which is her primary task. The child grows up terrified and history repeats itself. Dr. Lachkar makes the important point that when there is no environment for play, something dreadful happens to the mind. The child begins to take his thoughts to equal reality; he or she mistakes his thoughts of violence for reality. It's a no-brainer that they then act out their rage in a violently concrete way. Dr. Gutmann gives a wonderful interpretation of the 72 virgins – I had not thought of them in that way but I absolutely agree and this is not standard fare that one hears in counter terrorism studies but certainly it behooves us to move beyond the surface of the apocalyptic fantasies of martyrdom.

People are more alike than they are different – no matter what culture. In our age of multiculturalism we have disregarded our essential humanity. If there are readers who think that our psychological thinking and research can't be brought to bear on Middle Eastern cultures, I would suggest Abdulwahab Bouhdiba's *Sexuality in Islam*. He gives the Oedipal complex another name but suffice it to say, that the developmental task is even more arduous given the milieu described above -- the male has to kill off the image of his mother in order to mature. Bouhdiba wrote that in 1975. It is no wonder that its males would invent female and child suicide bombers.

Berko: I feel a profound need to express my admiration for the depth of this scholarly discussion. For years, Dr. Kobrin has addressed the symbiotic bond between mother

and son, a tie which is very difficult to unravel. Perhaps, real separation is only achieved in ceasing to be, by explosion.

Dr. Lachkar states: "The concrete mind cannot differentiate between the act of doing and the act of fantasy about 'doing'."

Consequently, the fantasy leads the boy to daydreams about how different things will be when he explodes. The change will be in his immediate surroundings and, principally, in himself because the image in his mind is the poster of the 'shaheed' – with him, himself, starring as the local hero, the avenger, who has committed an act that transforms him into a man. There is an idealization of his image in his eyes and in those around him.

It cannot be ignored that among the youths who turn to terror there are those who feel the need to prove their masculinity and the concept of masculinity is different in the Moslem world from that of the West. It has to be externalized and is bound by the dictates of gender roles.

This means that the masculine identity is often not formed beyond a sense of ambivalence towards the father, the omnipotent patriarch, with whom the youth wish to identify, on one hand, and, on the other, the father who oppresses the mother and her children. Sometimes that father also marries a younger woman and rejects the older wife and her children causing competitiveness between them for the father's affection. Bin Laden is the son of the Syrian woman his father rejected. This created many unsolved dilemmas for him. He was torn from his mother and didn't really win his father's affection as he wasn't the son of the preferred wife.

Dr. Gutmann addressed the dilemmas that erupt with pubescent sexuality. His description of the youth's sense of ability to shock the world by his actions is accurate and I agree with this determination. This sense of omnipotence has often been described to me by youths who were apprehended on their way to carrying out suicide attacks. They sense a passing from anonymity and marginal existence in the shadow of those other significant people in their lives (father, brother, friends and others), as they move to the center of the stage and determine who will live and who will die. They have described the feeling that they have taken on the role of Allah, that they suddenly experience total omnipotence when their lives had formerly been paved with failures and impotence.

The 'shaheed' brings himself and his family many rewards and with his death he still contributes to its wellbeing. They will be highly honored and will be saved from the agonies of the grave after their death, according to the belief of the potential 'shaheed'.

One of the interesting things that arose in my discussions with the Palestinian youths who had been on their way to suicide missions was their disenchantment and saying "anyway my dying won't change anything". It will all be just the same, except for the promise of going to heaven where all that was forbidden will be allowed. In contrast, the young Palestinian women say, "anyway, everyone dies in the end, so what does it matter when....?"

The exhilaration of feeling unique that these boys and girls experience when they turn to terror can be compared to the feelings of western youngsters when they discover their capabilities in various fields of endeavor like the arts, academics, sports etc.

On one hand, there is the desire to leave the herd, to feel different, but on the other hand, what the act of murder and suicide finally expresses is not uniqueness but rather yielding to the dictates of the culture of terror and death. Victor Frankel spoke of man's search for meaning in his life. The concept of meaningfulness serves as resource for facing life's difficulties. Prof. Moshe Addad and Dr. Hannah Himi developed the subject and even addressed the giving of meaning to death. Youngsters who are directed towards terror attach mystic, material and physical significance to life after death and their desire for it increases with the approach of the time for the act of terror they are about to commit.

These youngsters are often caught up in a feeling of existential emptiness and frustration that prevents them from taking responsibility. Thinking like a victim becomes chronic and with its intensification the victim transforms into the aggressor. This brings us back to what we discussed earlier. In a society where the individual is not valued, there is not place for his "I" or "myself". Suddenly a way opens up to be special, if not in his lifetime, then after his death, or in a different life as a 'shaheed'. This is the significance of life and principally of death according to "Isteshad" [self sacrifice].

Thank you, Jamie, my friend, for holding this absorbing and erudite discussion. Thanks to my colleagues for enriching us with their knowledge and experience.

Bravo.

Lachkar: In one of my recent publications, "The Psychopathology of Terrorism: A Cultural V-Spot," Fall, 2006, Vol 34, No 2, issue of *The Journal of Psychohistory* (among others), I refer to Islam as an orphan/misplaced society, a group of abandoned "screaming babies" (of course not real orphans rather mythological/Biblical ones). This misplaced society led to how Arabs have striking similarities to borderline

personality disorders. Indeed, they exhibit many of the same traits, states and characteristics -- including such defenses as victimization, self-sacrifice, bonding with pain, shame, self-destruction.

This is not a far cry from borderline patients in clinical practice who when feeling betrayed or abandoned will spend the rest of their lives getting even, getting back or retaliating. Revenge becomes a more pervasive force than life itself. The reference is to a group of people who collectively not only feel deprived but *become* the deprivation -- enacting the same traumatic experience again and again.

In my book *The Narcissistic/Borderline Couple* (1992, 2004, 2008), I refer to this as "the dance" -- how these individuals go round and round without ever reaching any conflict resolution. The only thing that drives them is not life but death. In death they will finally reach their salvation for being "good Muslims," as the good breast-feeding mommies await them.

Thank you Jamie and colleagues for allowing us the space to integrate our psychoanalytic backgrounds into current political affairs with the hope it will open our minds to a new way of understanding the present-day conflict we are in.

FP: Nancy Kobrin, Dr. Anat Berko, David Gutmann and Joanie Lachkar, thank you for joining Frontpage Symposium.

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