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**SOME PSYCHOANALYTIC VIEWS ON NARCISSISSTIC LEADERS
AND THEIR ROLES IN LARGE-GROUP PROCESSES**

By

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On June 1, 2002, about nine months after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush unveiled new policy guidelines for the United States that included military pre-emption, showing “strength beyond challenge,” taking unilateral action, and extending “democracy, liberty, and security *to all* regions” (Bush, 2002; italics added). From a psychological point of view it is easy to see that these policy guidelines reflect omnipotence and entitlement as well as a link between an acute massive shared trauma (the September 11 attacks on American soil) and an ideological response to it (Volkan, 2006). We can also wonder if the president’s personality organization and motivations coming from his internal world influenced these guidelines. In any case, in just a few years time we would witness the limits of omnipotence and entitlement.

People are usually interested in their political leaders’ personality characteristics that *can be observed*—their thinking and feeling patterns, habitual behavior, modes of speech and physical gestures. If a social crisis occurs or a catastrophic event takes place, the population’s interest in the political leader’s personality, among and outside of the leader’s followers, increases. In times of crises and terror followers’ shared expectations, conscious or unconscious, distort their perception of the leader’s personality characteristics. For example, under such circumstances, as they search for a savior to ease their anxiety, the followers may see omnipotent characteristics in the leader. However, if the leader cannot help the followers differentiate where the real dangers end and where the fantasized dangers begin, a split takes place between those who continue to

contaminate the leader's personality characteristics with omnipotence and those who now may see the leader as weak or arrogant, as someone who cannot ease shared anxiety. Proper separation between the two types of dangers, even when realistic danger exists and even increases, does not cause as much anxiety as when the public trust in the leader's ability to evaluate and communicate what is real and what is fantasized is eroded (Volkan, 2004). The population on both sides of the split now focuses even more on an examination of the leader as a person and his or her personality characteristics. This situation now exists in the United States.

As deadly events continue in Iraq, there is more and more interest in President George Bush's personality organization, not only in the United States, but in many areas of the world. I suspect that many books will be written about President's Bush's personal motivations for going to Iraq and about his handling of the "war on terrorism." Such a book written by a psychoanalyst, Justin Frank (2004), a controversial one, already exists. In spite of the interest in this topic, historians, political scientists, and scholars *in general* minimize the role of leaders' personalities when they investigate major world events and the rationale for political leaders' decision-making in relation to such events. This is especially true concerning unconscious aspects.

Often political leaders themselves deny the possibility that their habitual way of behaving, thinking, feeling or their more hidden internal psychological motivations may give direction to events that begin major historical processes. One example comes from a dialogue between David Ben Gurion, considered the "father" of the state of Israel, and the Israeli historian Yehoshua Arieli. Apparently, Ben Gurion asked Arieli whether the personalities of political leaders were important in history. Arieli responded by saying

that the answer depended on many factors such as the times, historical conditions, the social and political system, and, of course, the individual's stature in government; his answer was a qualified "yes." Ben Gurion, however, interrupted Arieli by stating that history is made by the nation, not by leaders (Malkin and Zhahor, 1992). I would have taken Arieli's side in his dramatic encounter with the legendary Israeli leader.

One reason for minimizing the role of a leader's personality in scholarly essays on historical or political processes—in spite of the general interest in this topic by people in the street, especially during times of crises or of lingering shared anxiety about societal welfare—may be due to the dominant role of the so-called "rational actor" models in international and domestic affairs, which support the assumption that a political leader's decision-making is logical and unaffected by psychological factors, especially within countries where democratic principles prevail. (For a review of such models see: Barner-Barry and Rosenwein, 1985; Volkan et al, 1998.) President Bush and those around him have already maintained that decades from now when historians, political scientists, and other scholars look back at the war in Iraq they will appreciate why the United States was involved in it and why it was carried out as it was. The implication here is that future historians, political scientists, and other scholars will examine the war in Iraq from the point of view of a "rational actor" model. I think that this assumption is true, even though I also believe that some books will be written that illustrate how Bush's personal psychological motivations influenced him to pursue "omnipotent" goals. Be that as it may, the examination of this historical event—at this time we do not yet know how it will end—by focusing on logical evaluations of rationalized assumptions, will remain the

routine method of understanding the incredible human tragedies associated with the war in Iraq.

The origin of “rational actor” models goes back to August L. von Rochau’s (1853) description of *Realpolitik*. Such models, under different names, dominated thinking about political decision-making throughout the twentieth century, especially during the height of the Cold War, and still dominate how we analyze ethnic, national, religious and ideological large groups’ interactions with their leaders. These models focus on a rational calculation of cost and benefits; even theoretically such models are based on a number of working assumptions. Rational calculations are also often used in political propaganda, which influences the public—even the scholars—to turn their attention toward logically explained data and avoid disturbing psychological considerations.

Political leaders do rationally process a great deal of data and information in the process of making decisions about policy and propaganda in international and domestic affairs, including what they perceive to be in the national interests, personal interest to maintain their power or keep their approval rating high, the “will of the people,” the designs of foreign enemies, or domestic opposition. In fact, on many occasions, when there are few alternatives before the leader and the available information is concise and accurate, the issues at hand may be handled without the interference of psychological factors; when the decision-maker’s internal world is calm, rational-actor models can be sufficient to explain his or her choices, and there is little need to probe into hidden psychological influences. However, when political decisions are made under especially complex or stressful conditions for the leader or for the large group he or she leads (i.e., national, ethnic, religious, ideological), rational actor models of political decision-making

often fall short as satisfactory explanations. At such times, leaders, according to their personality and especially their own internal psychological *organization* behind their personality characteristics, may tame or inflame various political or diplomatic processes.

Furthermore, when leaders' internal worlds are agitated due to their own personal perceptions, their macro political decisions may become "personalized"—that is, leaders may unconsciously equate the political or diplomatic circumstances at hand with an unresolved personal conflict, or may otherwise be influenced by personal desires and inhibitions, strong emotions, and unconscious fantasies. Indeed, during certain critical moments, a single person's internal psychological organization can definitely shape historic decisions, and with long-ranging consequences—even in countries such as the United States, where governmental systems of checks and balances substantially protect political processes from individual leaders' personality organizations. It is in such moments that a leader's personality proves to be what the distinguished political theoretician Robert Tucker has called "a decisive trifle" (Tucker, 1973, p. xi).

It is generally when an ethnic, national, religious or ideological large group is *regressed* (Volkan, 2001, 2004, 2006) that the "fit" between a large group and a political leader with exaggerated self-love (narcissism) is likely to be strongest: the narcissistic leader's belief in his or her own superior power, intelligence and omnipotence creates comfort for the regressed large group and an illusion of safety. Thus, the followers use the narcissistic leader's personality as an "antidote" for shared anxiety. In turn, narcissistic leaders utilize the dependency and adoration of their regressed followers as one way to protect and maintain their grandiosity and hide their own dependency needs. Leaders are then inclined to manipulate, in an exaggerated manner, the societal and

political signs of large-group regression (Volkan, 2001) consciously, but more importantly, unconsciously. The shared psychological processes of members of a large group dovetail with the internal psychological processes of narcissistic leaders. They, in turn, tame or inflame large-group regression along with its signs or symptoms. However, there may also be occasions when narcissistic leaders bypass the “wishes” of the large group and make decisions that can lead to the initiation of some historical process, even drastic ones. In this case what counts primarily is not the “fit” between leader and followers, but the leaders’ own attempts to find solutions for their inner demands by using the historical arena.

The relationship between political leaders and their followers is rather like a busy street. In normal times, the traffic—information and political decision-making as well as other means of influence—flows smoothly in both directions between the leaders’ influence and the public’s awareness. Naturally, the flow is sometimes greater in one direction and sometimes in the other, as at rush hour on a busy highway. At other times, however, for one reason or another, the street is officially declared “one-way” from leader to public, as seen in the political propaganda of totalitarian regimes. Even in democratic countries, during times of crisis and terror as witnessed following September 11, 2001 in the U.S.A., there was more focus on the “traffic” traveling from the leader/government to the public, since the public was seeking a “savior” to protect them.

In this chapter, I will first define what I mean by the term “large group” and its regression and then illustrate the “fit” between a leader with narcissistic personality organization and the leader’s regressed followers, and how such a leader manipulates the signs and symptoms of large-group regression and becomes “reparative” or “destructive.”

If communication is a two-way street, the leader with a narcissistic personality organization often sends more traffic from the leader/government to the public than the other way around. Since we still need the test of time to evaluate President George W. Bush's personal motivations—when or if substantial data about them becomes available—in this chapter my examples will come from those political leaders who are long gone and about whom we do possess enough material to make psychological formulations without too many “countertransference” reactions.

What is a “large group?”

Beginning with Sigmund Freud (1921), many psychoanalysts wrote about mass psychology and examined political propaganda, wars and post-war conditions. This is a vast topic and will not be reviewed in detail here (for a review, see: Volkan, 2004). Because of their clinical interests, psychoanalysts in general focused more on examining small groups and the psychodynamics involved when seven to fifteen individuals got together for a series of meetings. Wilfred Bion's work (1959) is among the best known of such studies. A “small group” with a definite leader, a structured task, and an awareness of time evolves as a “work group” and performs the task with an adaptation to reality. When such a group's security is threatened or when it is not given a realistic and structured task, it begins to function according to certain “basic assumptions,” which were described in detail by Bion.

In psychoanalytic literature the term “large group” sometimes refers to 30 to 150 members who meet regularly in order to deal with a given task. When the task given to such “large groups” is unstructured and vague by design, the “large group” regresses. At

this time, observers notice increased anxiety, chaos, and panic among its members (Turquet, 1975; Rice, 1965, 1969). Otto Kernberg (2003a, b) noted that in order to escape its panicky atmosphere, regressed “large groups” exhibit narcissistic or paranoid characteristics and reorganize themselves by sharing and utilizing primitive mental mechanisms. Kernberg states that whether a panic-stricken “large group” will evolve narcissistic or paranoid reorganization depends on the existing socio-cultural environment, realistic external pressures, and constraints affecting the members’ economic, social or political well-being. Kernberg’s description of narcissistic reorganization of chaotic regressed “large groups” corresponds to Bion’s (1961) observations of “dependent basic assumption” small groups. “Large groups” in their attempts at narcissistic reorganization seek an omnipotent narcissistic leader, idealizing this leader while acting out a “parasitic dependency” (Kernberg, 2003a, p. 685). Kernberg’s description of paranoid reorganization of chaotic regressed “large groups,” on the other hand, corresponds to Bion’s (1961) “fight-flight basic assumption” small groups. If the group’s reorganization is in the paranoid direction, the “large group” seeks a leader who is hyper-suspicious and ready to fight against enemies as they are defined by the leader or the followers.

Kernberg uses the term “large group” when he refers to groups composed of 30 to 150 individuals. He uses the term “crowds” when he refers to spectators at a big sports event or large theatrical performance. He reminds us that there are no “empirical studies” on regression in “unstructured crowds” (Kernberg, 2003a, p. 687). But, he describes how during some festive occasions unstructured crowds can disintegrate and become panic-stricken. He also mentions disorganization in crowds after natural disasters and then

speaks of mass movements, societal and cultural processes. Kernberg primarily illustrates the emergence of aggression in small groups, “large groups,” crowds and societies when regression and disorganization sets in. “The dread of the consequences of such aggression mobilizes defenses of a narcissistic or paranoid kind” (Kernberg, 2003a, p. 687).

In this chapter my focus is on ethnic, national or religious groups and I use the term *large group* only to refer to tens, hundreds of thousands, or even millions of individuals. Paraphrasing Erik Erikson’s (1956) statement about personal identity, I use the phrase *large group identity* to refer to a group that shares a permanent sense of sameness while also sharing certain similar characteristics with other large groups. Ethnic, national or religious large-group psychodynamics are different from the psychodynamics of small groups, “large groups” (composed of 30 to 150 people), or crowds. For example, a crowd in a football stadium becomes a group and remains so just before, during and perhaps soon after the sports event. On the other hand, let us consider an ethnic large group. The membership in such a group begins in childhood. For practical purposes, the identity of such a large group functions as a “second skin” for every member, most of whom will never see each other or even be at the same location during their lifetimes. Furthermore, each individual’s *core* personal identity is intertwined with the large-group identity, and mental images of the group’s history, myths, songs, food, dance, heroes or martyrs connect them at all times. Members also, in general, share certain projections whereby they label “others” enemies or allies. (For details see Volkan, 1988, 1999, 2004.)

Under certain external conditions, large ethnic, national or religious groups also regress. When large-group regression sets in, the ethnic, religious or national large groups

become involved in certain processes that serve to maintain, protect and repair their identities. What Kernberg wrote about the mobilization of narcissistic or paranoid defenses and the search for narcissistic or paranoid leaders in all kinds of groups, crowds and masses, is also applicable to the regression of ethnic, national or religious groups. Since such large groups have their own specific characteristics, often built upon a centuries-old continuum, the examination of the signs and symptoms of their regression should also include psychological processes that are *specific* to such large groups. Political leaders will consciously or unconsciously manipulate such specific signs and symptoms, to secure the large-group identity in peaceful or destructive ways.

Large-group regression

Temporary or lasting *individual regressions* after a traumatic external event are often clearly observable. For many weeks following September 11, 2001, a woman who lived outside New York City, for example, found herself eating only macaroni and cheese. The woman's eating behavior represented a personal regression—macaroni and cheese is a dish commonly eaten by American children, and in fact, when the woman was a child, her mother used to give her some whenever she felt anxious. After September 11, the daughter knew intellectually that her mother, who lived in New York City, had survived the World Trade Center attack, but unconsciously she feared that she had died or had come close to death. By eating only macaroni and cheese, the daughter was exhibiting a regression that kept her mother “alive.” Some weeks later, her mother came to visit, and after actually seeing her, the daughter gave up obsessively eating macaroni and cheese. She now “knew” that her mother was alive. Less drastic regressions and

progressions are also part of normal daily life for most of us. It is only when regression becomes stubborn and long-lasting that we speak of psychological difficulties.

For the focus of this chapter, I now turn my attention to *regression in large groups* when a majority of group members are exposed to a massive trauma that produces shared anxieties, expectations, and thought and action patterns. Some signs of large-group regression have been known since Freud (1921). Robert Waelder (1971) wrote that Freud's theories are mostly applicable to regressed groups where group members lose their individuality and rally blindly around their leader. We also know that within regressed groups, *severe* splits occur between those who follow the leader and those who oppose (usually secretly) the leader. For example, during the large-group regression under the dictator Enver Hoxha, Albanians were divided into "good" families and families with "black spots" (Volkan, 2004). The regressed followers also sharply separate themselves from other (enemy) groups, experience magical thinking and focus on minor differences that separate the group from "others" (Volkan, 2001).

Some signs of regressed groups lead to the creation of societal processes that are very *specific* to the group in question. Here I will refer only to key specific signs and symptoms: the exaggerated reactivations of groups' "chosen glories," "chosen traumas" and "purification."

Chosen glories are the shared mental representations of events and heroes which, when activated, increase self-esteem among group members. Such events and the persons associated with them are heavily mythologized over time and these mental representations become large-group markers. Chosen glories are passed on to succeeding generations through transgenerational transmissions made in parent/teacher-child

interactions and through participation in ritualistic ceremonies recalling past successful events. They link children of a large group with each other and with their group, and the children experience increased self-esteem by being associated with such glories.

In times of stress, war or war-like situations when the large group is regressed, political leaders may exaggerate chosen glories and use them to mobilize the masses. During the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein depended heavily on chosen glories and even associated himself with Sultan Saladin who had defeated the Christian crusaders in the 12th century. Through the reactivation of a past event and a past hero, Saddam aimed to create the illusion that a similar triumphal destiny was awaiting his people and that, like Saladin, he was a hero. It did not matter to Saddam that Saladin was not an Arab, but a Kurd, and ruled from Egypt rather than Iraq. However, both Saladin and Saddam were born in Tikrit. This was enough for Saddam to associate himself with the glory of Saladin. All that mattered was that the foreign invaders had been defeated in the past and would be defeated again.

Chosen trauma refers to the mental representation of an event that has caused a large group to face drastic losses, feel helpless and victimized by another group, and share a humiliating injury (Volkan, 1992; Volkan and Itzkowitz, 1994). Although each individual in a traumatized large group has his or her own unique core identity and personal reaction to trauma, all members share the mental representations of the tragedies that have befallen the group. Their injured self-images associated with their mental representation of the shared traumatic event are “deposited” into the developing self-representation of children, as if these children will mourn the loss associated with the previous generation’s massive trauma, reverse the humiliation or turn passivity into

activity. If the children cannot deal with what is deposited in them and its associated tasks, these children, as adults, will in turn pass the mental representation of the event and tasks to the next generation. The chosen trauma emerges as a crucial large-group marker, as the shared representations of the event and tasks create an invisible link between its community members, passed down generation to generation.

Because they involve attempted resolutions of unconsciously given tasks, chosen traumas influence the large-group identity more pervasively than chosen glories. Chosen traumas bring with them powerful experiences of loss and feelings of humiliation, vengeance and hatred that trigger within the group's members a variety of shared defense mechanisms that attempt to reverse these experiences and feelings. They therefore differ significantly from chosen glories, in which facts may become embellished or mythologized, but there is no need to reverse the images of experiences and feelings handed down by ancestors.

During times of stress, when the ethnic, national or religious group's identity is threatened, chosen traumas are reactivated and can be used by leaders to inflame the group's shared feelings about themselves and their enemy. A *time collapse* occurs and the chosen trauma is then experienced as if it happened only yesterday: feelings, perceptions and expectations associated with a past event and past enemy heavily contaminate those related to current events and current enemies, leading to maladaptive group behavior, irrational decision-making, and resistances to change. Earlier I (Volkan, 1997) described in detail how Slobodan Milošević and those who assisted him created a propaganda machine in which the Serbian chosen trauma (the 1389 Battle of Kosovo) was exaggerated and reactivated, resulting in a time collapse. Atrocities that took place

against Bosniaks and Kosovar Albanians built an emotional foundation made possible with such a time collapse.

The regressed group, such as Milošević's followers, became involved in a ritual, which I call "*purification*" (Volkan, 2001, 2004). In "purification" the regressed large group becomes like a snake that sheds its skin: unwanted elements within the group or elements that may contaminate the group are discarded to allow the group to deal with shared anxiety stemming from threats against the large-group identity. How a large group "purifies" itself is a specific process unique to that group alone. The process of purification may be benign, as when a group discards an outmoded shared symbol, or malignant, as in ethnic cleansing. It is an activity characteristic of a large group in transition, seeking to crystallize a "new" or modified identity when its existing identity is threatened by regression, and also when it attempts to move out of regression.

An example of benign purification appeared when, after the Greek war of independence in the 1830s, Greeks expelled from their language Turkish words, which had been in use for centuries while they were part of the Ottoman Empire. An example of malignant purification, on the other hand, took place in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s with cultural cleansing (such as the destruction of mosques and centuries-old libraries) and ethnic cleansing of Bosniaks from certain areas.

Narcissistic leaders utilize the demands of their personality organization to manipulate regressed large groups' signs and symptoms, especially specific ones pertaining to their regressed followers, by reactivating the group's chosen glory or chosen trauma, and directing the purification rituals in harmless or most destructive ways. Since narcissistic leaders are prone to respond to feelings of humiliation, shame, inferiority, or

envy with anxiety and often with aggression, their decision-making at times cannot be simply explained by calling it rational actor model decision-making and/or simple initiation of political, diplomatic or even military actions. Narcissistic leaders, especially under conditions stressful for their groups and/or for themselves, utilize large group's chosen glories and chosen traumas as a response to their own internal make-up. For example, the chosen glories are personalized to support a narcissistic leader's grandiosity. Chosen traumas may actually represent images of their humiliated and helpless selves. The leader may attempt to reverse such personal feelings by initiating or supporting the "reversal" of chosen traumas on the historical arena. "Purification" can also be personalized and the leader may modify or destroy people or things in the outside world in order to remove perceived threats against his grandiosity.

"Reparative" or "Destructive" Narcissistic Leaders

"Narcissism," of course, is not a "bad word" and is as normal in human psychology as are sexual or aggressive desires and natural anxiety about internal conflicts. Indeed, healthy narcissism is necessary for anyone to survive, work, and maintain a solid identity. But narcissism is also subject to frustrations, which may lead to unhealthy weakened or inflated self-love (Weigert, 1967). It is when people have *exaggerated* love of self that they exhibit the repeated thought, behavior, and feeling patterns that in combination are called *narcissistic personality*. Such individuals think that they are unique and grand, which causes them to feel omnipotent and to act as though they are better than anyone else. But people with narcissistic personalities live in a paradox: while they love themselves too much and feel grandiose and omnipotent, they

also, in the shadows so to speak, possess an aspect that is devalued and “hungry” for love. Periodically, this hunger asserts itself into awareness and creates anxiety, shame or humiliation in the person. Accordingly, such individuals’ personality organization splits between a *grandiose self* and a *hungry self*. The splitting in the personality organization reflects a lack of cohesive identity. The personality characteristics reflecting the grandiose self are *overt*, while those characteristics reflecting the hungry self are *covert* (Akhtar, 1992; Kernberg, 1975, and Volkan and Ast, 1994).

Volkan and Ast (1994) referred to political leaders with narcissistic personality organization as “successful narcissists”: they are successful in manipulating their external environment and finding a “fit” between their internal demands and external realities. Thus, by manipulating their external world, including their followers and enemies, they attempt to secure the protection and maintenance of their grandiose selves. Some political leaders, under historical circumstances, in fact may remain “successful” for decades or even for their lifetimes after becoming leaders. Others may remain “successful” for shorter periods of time. This manipulation of the external environment results in leaders with exaggerated narcissism becoming either “reparative” or “destructive.”

By the term *reparative*, I refer to narcissistic leaders who dedicate themselves to taking their followers out of their regressed state and changing their internal and external worlds in order to lift up the followers’ individual self-esteem and modify their large-group identity. Reparative narcissistic leaders achieve these tasks, or try to achieve them, without mass killings of any group of people. By the term *destructive*, I refer to narcissistic leaders who resort to mass destruction of an “outside” group, while influencing their followers who go along with supporting such destructive acts, to remain

in a regressed state. These leaders, too, attempt to lift up their followers' self-esteem and modify their large-group identity, but only by comparing themselves with the group which is targeted for destruction.

Both types of leaders choose "chosen glories," "chosen traumas" or both to stimulate large-group identity, depending on their desire to inflame shared mental images of recent traumas. Both make extensive use of "purification" rituals in order to modify the existing large-group identity. Both may destroy some of the group's old symbols or "protosymbols" (Werner and Kaplan, 1963) and change cultural values and customs. But in the long run, what makes one type of narcissistic leader reparative or the other type destructive depends on how they target a selected "outside" group (even one within the same legal boundary) for destruction. At times, it may indeed be difficult to differentiate between the two types of narcissistic leaders. Indeed, a reparative leader may later become a destructive one.

For narcissistic leaders to become "successful"—whether they are reparative, destructive or both does not matter—they have to not only have the necessary intelligence, but also the necessary ego functions to test existing realities in the environment and manipulate them. Some narcissistic individuals become leaders because their grandiose selves push them to excel and be "number one." Others may not have typical narcissistic personality organization initially, but historical circumstances (the external world) change them. Narcissistic characteristics may evolve, become internalized and assimilated, as they learn to "love" power and being "number one." For example, leaders who remain in power for decades, such as Cuba's Fidel Castro or Libya's Muammar Khadafi—whether originally they had *typical* narcissistic personality

organizations or not—ended up behaving to one degree or another as “successful narcissists.” Their cases should be included in any study of narcissistic political leaders.

In the next section I provide the metaphor of a baked apple pie (Volkan, 2004) in order to illustrate the internal map of narcissistic leaders’ personality organization and the psychodynamics of processes that make them reparative, destructive or both.

Influencing large-group process while living under a “glass bubble”

Let us create a model of the mind of a person with narcissistic personality organization. Imagine serving a freshly baked apple pie. While placing the pie on the dinner table, a bottle of salty salad dressing spills and soaks a small section of the pie. In order to protect the edible and larger section of the pie, we cut off the spoiled section and push it to the periphery of the serving plate. The large, edible piece symbolizes the portion of the narcissistic leader’s self-image that is invested with exaggerated self-love (grandiose self); the smaller, spoiled piece stands for the individual’s devalued aspects (hungry self). Because narcissistic people are unable to integrate the inflated, grandiose part of themselves with the devalued, humiliated aspects, it becomes essential that the “good” piece not touch the “spoiled” piece (splitting).

The large, good part of the pie must be protected at all times. Individuals with narcissistic personality characteristics often have conscious or unconscious fantasies of living gloriously alone under what I call a “glass bubble” (Volkan, 1979), pushing the spoiled slice even further away, and covering the large piece with a transparent protective dome. One such person literally referred to herself as a beautiful flower under glass, but the “glass bubble” often appears in symbolic ways, such as in the case of an individual

who repeatedly fantasized himself as being Robinson Crusoe *without* his Man Friday. There was no need to have Friday around since the patient believed himself omnipotent; the sea surrounding the Island of Juan Fernandez functioned as a “glass bubble.”

Narcissistic political leaders often need “cronies” or special people who are given unspoken tasks to become a “glass bubble” around the leader. Such “cronies” or special people see that the leader’s grandiose self is safe and impenetrable. With Norman Itzkowitz, Andrew Dod and I wrote a psychobiography of the 37th President of the United States, Richard Nixon (Volkan, Itzkowitz and Dod, 1997) and, I believe, we clearly illustrated that Nixon had a narcissistic personality organization. What became known as the “Nixon Method” of presidency reflected a “glass bubble” syndrome. Some individuals in Nixon’s entourage such as H. Robert Haldeman and John Ehrlichman developed functions above and beyond their actual political duties in response to Nixon’s need for splendid isolation. It is no wonder they were nicknamed the “Berlin Wall” surrounding the leader’s lonely internal kingdom. In *The Making of the President*, Theodore White writes that he saw Nixon stroll down New York City’s Fifth Avenue one day, “smiling as if amused by some inner conversation. His habit of great concentration lent itself to inner colloquy” (White, 1968, p. 53).

But, pushing the spoiled piece of pie to the edge of the plate and covering the good piece of pie with a “glass bubble” is not enough. A person with a narcissistic personality organization is constantly aware of the “hungry self,” which needs to be controlled in order to avoid anxiety, shame, humiliation and/or helplessness. The main defensive task of such a person’s ego is to control the internal relationship between the grandiose and hungry selves. A political leader with a narcissistic personality

organization applies various ego tasks to deal with the spoiled piece of pie, as it reflects in the leader's political decision-making, leader-followers or leader-"enemy" interactions and historical processes. Dealing with the spoiled piece of pie in one way makes the leader with a narcissistic personality organization "reparative." Returning to our apple pie metaphor, the reparative leader tries to wipe the salad dressing from the spoiled piece, or attempts to sweeten it and improve it enough to allow it to remain on the same plate as the unspoiled piece and perhaps even to touch it. Such a leader wishes for his or her followers to achieve an imagined and hoped-for high level of functioning in order to reflect the leader's shining self-image and be extensions of his or her superiority. One of the best examples of reparative narcissistic leaders is Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey.

Norman Itzkowitz and I wrote an extensive psychobiography of this Turkish leader (Volkan and Itzkowitz, 1984). A brief summary of Atatürk's life as it appears in conventional history is as follows: Mustafa was born in 1881 in Selanik (now Thessaloniki, Greece), a port city of the Ottoman Empire. His father, a customs clerk and small businessman, died when the boy was seven years old. Mustafa left home as a young teenager to enter military school where a teacher gave him a second name, Kemal (meaning "perfection"). He graduated near the top of his class. Although he became an officer in the Ottoman military, he was critical of the Sultan and became active in anti-government organizations. After distinguished service in World War I, highlighted by his heroic leadership against Allied forces at Gallipoli, he was promoted to the rank of general at the age of 35. As Allied forces threatened to overrun what remained of the Ottoman Empire after World War I and the Sultan proved powerless to fend off Italian,

French, British, and Greek incursions, Kemal sought to salvage Turkish independence. He left Istanbul for Anatolia, the “heartland” of the Turkish people, and organized an army to resist invading Greek forces. Fearing Kemal’s growing power, the Sultan, under pressure from the Allies, ordered his dismissal, prompting Kemal to establish a provisional nationalist government in Ankara, to which he was elected leader. While in Ankara, then only a provincial town, Kemal planned campaigns against the Greeks, who had invaded Anatolia, and ultimately defeated them in 1922, leading to a peace agreement with the Allies. The Sultan went into exile, and modern Turkey was established in 1923 with Kemal as its leader. After coming to power, Kemal adopted the surname “Atatürk,” meaning “Father Turk.” As the first president of the Turkish Republic, he instituted drastic political and cultural changes in order to modernize and secularize Turkey: abolishing the Caliphate, dismantling Islamic law and curtailing religious influences over the state, instituting a legal system based on European models, emancipating women, replacing Arabic script with the Latin alphabet, and instituting modern economic procedures. According to a generally held Turkish belief, Atatürk almost single-handedly inspired his war-weary country to re-establish its independence and create a new Turkish identity through cultural revolution. Though he died in 1938, he is venerated in an extraordinary way in Turkey as though he still lives. Even now, most people simply refer to him as Ata (father) or Atam (my father), and he is immortalized as “The Eternal Leader.”

Without providing any further history here, I wish to highlight how Atatürk in his own words described how he developed a narcissistic personality organization during his childhood and how he sensed his wish to be “reparative.” He was born into a house of

death (i.e., his three siblings before him had died), and he had a grieving mother. After he was born, his mother gave birth to two more siblings and one of them also died in early childhood, this in addition to the death of his father. The following statement, made when he was an adult, reflects his premature maturation, or the defensive inflation of his grandiose self:

Since my childhood, in my home, I have not liked being together with either my mother or sister, or a friend. I have always preferred to be alone and independent, and have lived this way always Because when one is given advice one has either to accept and obey it—or disregard it altogether. Neither response seems right to me. Wouldn't it be a regressive retreat to the past to heed a warning given to me by my mother who is more than 20 or 25 years older than I? Yet were I to rebel against it I would break the heart of my mother, in whose virtue and lofty womanhood I have the firmest belief. (quoted in Aydemir, 1969, Vol. 3, p. 482)

Atatürk saw himself as above others—and was perceived as such by his followers. He did not, however, seek fantasized enemies or subgroups to devalue or destroy in order to remain superior. His narcissism expressed itself quite differently:

Why, after my years of education, after studying civilizations and the socializing processes, should I descend to the level of common people? I will make them rise to my level. *Let me not resemble them; they should resemble me!* (Quoted in Aydemir, 1969, Vol. 3, p. 482; italics added)

Modern Turkey was born in 1923 upon the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, which, during its last century, continually lost ground to its enemies, mostly Westerners. When Atatürk came to power he, unlike Slobodan Milošević of more recent times, did not focus on reactivating a chosen trauma, initiating time collapse as an entitlement for revenge. The “chosen trauma” that he focused on was the regression of his own society under the Ottoman Empire. Thus, instead of preaching revenge, he pushed the enemies’ (the Westerners’) ideals as a solution for his own people’s progression. It is beyond the point here to discuss how well Atatürk succeeded in modernizing Turkey. My focus is on his attempt to raise the self-esteem of his followers, whom he perceived as “hungry” for a better life. He sweetened the spoiled piece of pie.

Some may object to my characterization of Atatürk’s actions as reparative: some may see Atatürk as a micromanager of his followers’ behavior, perhaps even a westernizer for westernization’s sake. He also initiated “purification”: getting rid of many existing societal, cultural, and religious traditions or customs. Atatürk’s secularization program could be said to have interrupted existing family and child-rearing practices, causing another type of societal regression. The Islamic law used in matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance during the Ottoman period, however, had been very unfavorable to women, and Atatürk believed that “[a] bad family life inevitably leads to social, economic, and political enfeeblement. The male and female elements constituting the family must be in full possession of their natural rights and must be in a position to discharge their family obligations” (Atatürk, 1952, Vol. 2, p. 183). Atatürk sought to remove existing burdens from his followers’ minds so they could function more creatively and productively. Though his innovations sometimes required legal

enforcement, their intent and effects were always to enhance his followers' personal autonomy, to turn the existing societal regression into progression. Although Atatürk was indeed a lonely man internally, he did not have paranoid characteristics; he willingly exposed himself and his "glass bubble" to the public.

The opposite of a reparative narcissistic leader is one who is determined to destroy the spoiled piece of pie. For this leader, a destructive one, it is not enough to push the spoiled piece of pie further away from the good piece on the same plate or even "externalize" it onto another plate. The spoiled piece of pie has to be destroyed. Such a leader has "malignant narcissism" (Kernberg, 1975; Volkan and Ast, 1994). Here the observable characteristics of the grandiose self are accompanied by paranoid expectations and psychopathic elements.

There have been many attempts to understand the mind of the man who presided over the Holocaust, and scholars have reviewed the various possible psychological influences on the formation of Hitler's personality. Since so much is known about Hitler and the Third Reich, I will not attempt to present a psychobiography of Hitler. I will simply refer to the personality patterns that are reflected in his writings, such as *Mein Kampf* [*My Struggle*] (Hitler, 1925 and 1927). What we do know is that his ideology, propaganda, and activities aimed to create two collectives: the first, the Nazis, who were supposed to be tough, grandiose, superior, and powerful; the second, Jews, "Gypsies," homosexuals, and others deemed sub- or even nonhuman. The idea that the latter group—the small piece of the pie—"had" to be destroyed, alone leads to the conclusion that Hitler's personality fits well with our understanding of the internal organization of malignant narcissism. Whichever "diagnosis" of Hitler's personality is the correct one

does not matter for the purpose of this chapter. What I want to illustrate here is the reflection of a malignant narcissistic personality organization on a historical arena.

Hitler had an especially talented confederate in Joseph Goebbels, whom he appointed head of Nazi propaganda in 1928 and who is credited with creating the “Führer myth” while he was Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment (*Propaganda und Volkssaufklärung*) under the Third Reich (Bramsted, 1965). Austrian historian Victor Reimann—who was arrested by the Nazis in 1940 and spent the next five years in Nazi prisons—observes, “The Hitler/Goebbels combination is perhaps unique in world history” (Reimann, 1976, p. 2). Goebbels was the architect of the “glass bubble” in which Hitler could maintain and hide his grandiose self where it could remain uncontaminated and unconnected with Nazi cruelties, so that any atrocities that came to light could be blamed on others; “If only the Führer knew became a byword in the Third Reich” (Reimann, 1976, p. 6). Goebbels forbade jokes about the Führer and sought to conceal Hitler’s personal weaknesses: a god does not have weaknesses. Hitler’s drawings and watercolors from his days as a struggling artist were collected so that no one could critique Hitler as an artist. Goebbels banned even the use of quotations from Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* without the permission of his Propaganda Ministry.

It was Goebbels who was ultimately responsible for crafting Hitler’s image and many of his signature gestures, Goebbels who made compulsory the use of the title “Führer” and introduced the greeting “Heil Hitler.” Goebbels saw to it that Hitler was presented as a “god” to the post-1919 Treaty of Versailles Germans, who had been humiliated, both materially and emotionally. Hitler’s image in his “glass bubble” was that

of a beneficent god, a friend of children and animals, a lover of nature, and a spotlessly clean person.

There were yet more explicit efforts to associate Hitler with God's image in German minds. Water C. Langer reports German press notices "to the effect that, 'As [Hitler] spoke, one heard God's mantle rustle through the room'"; one German church group even passed a resolution stating that "Hitler's word is God's law, the decrees and laws which represent it possess divine authority" (Langer, 1972, p. 64). The party adopted a creed that clearly echoed Christian professions of faith: "We all believe, on this earth, in Adolf Hitler, our Fuhrer, and we acknowledge that National Socialism is the only faith that brings salvation to our country" (Langer, 1972, p. 64). At the Nuremberg rally of September 1937, the inscription below a giant photograph of Hitler read, "In the beginning was the Word..." the opening line of the Gospel of John. On another occasion, a photographic portrait of Hitler surrounded by a halo appeared in the front window of each of the large art shops on the *Unter den Linden* in Berlin (Langer, 1972, p. 64).

It is clear, then, that even malignant narcissistic leaders need special persons who become the "glass bubble" around the leader and maintain their own self-esteem by becoming extensions of the powerful leader. In turn, they help the leader protect the illusion that his or her grandiose self is safe and impenetrable. Followers carry out the demands of malignant destructive narcissism, as in Hitler's case, which "spares" the leader from feeling responsible for those acts of destruction. The malignant leader combines exaggerated narcissism with pathological paranoid and psychopathic characteristics. He is afraid that the bubble will become penetrable, allowing devalued or "dangerous" others to enter the leader's lonely kingdom. But this statement itself needs

further scrutiny. Even Hitler showed “reparative” qualities. Nazis themselves, in Judith Stern’s terms, were made into “small gods” by their imitation of Hitler (Stern, 2001). In a sense, Hitler attempted to enhance the self-esteem of his followers. But, as a malignant narcissist, this reparative activity could only take place at the expense of other groups that were dehumanized and destroyed. Those followers that were made “little gods” were not actually given their personal “freedoms,” but were used to enforce the leader’s glass bubble.

Shame, humiliation and the narcissistic leader

Volkan, et al (1998) suggested that a political leader’s established personality organization tells us a great deal about how this person will respond to an external event that, in the leader’s mind, becomes contaminated with an anxiety producing internal danger signal. Freud’s (1926) series of situations dangerous to the ego of a growing child is well known. The first is fear of an actual loss of “mother.” The second involves the loss of mother’s love. The third, during the oedipal phase of life, is the loss of penis (castration anxiety). The fourth danger Freud proposes involves fear of not living up to the internalized expectations of the superego, thus loss of self-esteem. We can add a fifth fear for people with unintegrated self-representation: losing the “good” or idealized part of the self-representation by mixing it with the “bad” or devalued part—or, in the case of a narcissistic personality organization, losing the omnipotence of the grandiose self by synthesizing it with the devalued self and object images that compose the “hungry self.”

When political leaders “personalize” an external event and experience it as a *derivative* of one of these danger signals or various combinations of them, they may add a

factor to political decision-making or action that emanates from their personality organizations. For example, for leaders with exaggerated obsessional personalities, the threat of a loss of control, such as over emotions or over balancing opposite elements, induces anxiety. They direct their energy toward achieving orderliness and predictability. When faced with a decision, especially under stressful conditions, obsessional people typically will try to find a solution by searching for some rule, principle, “morality,” or external requirement to supply the “right answer” and reestablish “control” over frustrating external factors.

For leaders with narcissistic personality organizations, the danger signal is the threat against or the loss of the grandiose self, which includes derivatives of loss of mother, mother’s love, body parts, and self-esteem. Such a danger signal for narcissistic leaders is accompanied by feelings of shame, humiliation, envy, and helplessness. These feelings cause the greatest threat to these leaders’ mental equilibrium, so they avoid these feelings at all costs or, once they feel them, they may strike back at people or elements that directly or symbolically threaten their superiority. They defensively retreat into their glass bubbles even further to insure that no threatening people or images penetrate the protective dome.

A political scientist as well as a psychoanalyst, Blema Steinberg, has provided one of the best examples of how a narcissistic political leader’s decision-making and actions relate to feelings of shame and humiliation. Steinberg (1996) meticulously documented various external events (not summarized in this chapter) that induced humiliation in President Richard Nixon, leading to his decision to bomb North Vietnamese sanctuaries in Cambodia in mid-March, 1969, and the subsequent invasion of

Cambodia in 1970. There is strong evidence that Nixon reached the decision to bomb Cambodia while he was in his “lonely kingdom” under a “glass bubble.” We learn, for example, from Henri Kissinger (1979) that Nixon decided to bomb the Cambodian sanctuaries while in an airplane flying from Washington, D.C. to Brussels, and that his decision was made without consulting the relevant advisors, “in the absence of a detailed plan” (Kissinger, 1979, p. 242).

The plane ride was the beginning of Nixon’s ten-day ceremonial visit to Europe, which of course had been planned much earlier. The day before this flight, on February 22, 1969, the North Vietnamese had renewed their offensive actions. One can easily image, from a *Realpolitik* point of view, that Nixon’s decision to bomb was a response to the renewed North Vietnamese offensive. At the time, Cambodia, a monarchy with seven million subjects, was trying to stay neutral, but the North Vietnamese had established sanctuaries in the border area between the two countries. Earlier, Nixon had examined research and intelligence which indicated that bombing these sanctuaries would drive the North Vietnamese further west, and deeper into Cambodia, perhaps eventually causing Cambodia to fall to the communist regime, and so he had decided not to attack the bases (Hersh, 1983). So why did he change his mind suddenly without any consultations? There were factors emanating from his narcissistic personality organization (Volkan, Itzkowitz and Dod, 1977). To him, the North Vietnamese move “was a deliberate test, clearly designed to take the measure of me and my administration at the outset. My immediate instinct was to retaliate” (Nixon, 1978, p. 380). Upon Kissinger’s request, Nixon agreed to postpone his decision for 48 hours, and then later cancelled the original bombing plan. He ordered another strike on March 9, only to rescind it a second time.

The first B-52 raid on North Vietnamese bases in Cambodia finally commenced on the morning of March 18. He kept the bombing secret from the American public and told Kissinger: “[The Department of] State is to be notified only after the point of no return” (Ambrose, 1989, p. 258). Only after ordering the retaliation on North Vietnamese bases in Cambodia did Nixon meet with some of his advisors, giving them the impression that their input would be considered, even though the attack was a *fait accompli*.

For the focus of this chapter what should interest us are the code names of the Cambodia bombings. The first one was code-named “Breakfast.” The second attack in mid-April was code-named “Lunch.” “Lunch,” according to Kissinger, is based in part on another humiliating situation. This time, the desire was to retaliate against North Korea, which had recently shot down a U.S. spy plane: “But as always when suppressing his instinct for a jugular response, Nixon looked for some other place to demonstrate his mettle. There was nothing he feared more than to be thought weak” (Kissinger, 1979, p. 247). I have no idea who came up with the code names pertaining to food. What comes to mind is that “Breakfast” and “Lunch” might be for Nixon’s “hungry self.” If his “hungry self” is fed, then his “grandiose self” will not be threatened. We also know that “Lunch” was succeeded by the code name “Dinner,” and eventually expanded into an entire “Menu.” It is beyond the purpose of this chapter to examine in detail the history after the attacks that were treated symbolically as “food,” but Steinberg reminds us that Nixon’s actions would have a powerful ripple effect: the U.S. invasion of Cambodia on May 1, 1970, marked the beginning of a full-fledged civil war that devastated Cambodia and killed more than a million people (Steinberg, 1996, p. 206).

Concluding Remarks

The intensity of the thought, feeling, and behavior patterns in people with narcissistic personality organization changes according to the degree of their grandiosity. Some have chronic difficulty relating to others and at times have a blurred vision of reality. Those who also possess areas of integrated identity and have clearer perceptions of external realities—those who, alongside their belief in their superiority, know where to stop and what to pursue and how to separate where the realistic dangers end and fantasized dangers begin—are better adjusted to life and may become quite successful in the world's eyes. Indeed, for some narcissists who actually are very smart, handsome, powerful, and effectively manipulative, their inner craving for achievement and applause often will direct them to leadership positions in education, business, social organizations, or politics. Such a person, as stated earlier, is a “successful narcissist.” He or she values becoming “number one” in a group. For example, Richard Nixon's “need” to be “number one” remained constant throughout his adult life. He was elected president of the Whittier Alumni Association, the Duke University Alumni Association of California, the Orange County Association of Cities, and the 20-30 Club, all while still in his twenties. At the age of 33, he was elected to Congress; at 37 he became a U.S. Senator, and in 1952, at the age of 39, he became the second-youngest man to be elected Vice President of the United States. He also collected “firsts,” whether significant or *trivial*, from becoming the first U.S. president to visit the People's Republic of China to being the first candidate to visit a particular small rural town on the campaign trail. According to his aide, John Ehrlichman, “There was a running gag on a Nixon campaign; everything that happened

was a ‘historic first’ (Volkan, Itzkowitz and Dod, 1997, p. 94). Accumulating such “firsts” was a sign of his need to collect emotional nutrition for his grandiose self, so that no one, not even himself, would know that his anxiety concerned the spoiled, unwanted part of the apple pie in his mind.

By “successful” political leader, I am *not* referring to the moral worth of their individual deeds, but to the fact that they each were able to find an echo of their personalities in the external world by which they achieved primacy in the eyes of others. For successful narcissistic leaders, a “fit” occurs between their internal demands and their followers’ responses to them, especially when the followers are in a regressed state. Some such leaders are able to maintain that “fit” over an extended period of time, and some are not. Furthermore, it is difficult to judge if a narcissistic political leader’s decision, made while the leader is under a “glass bubble,” is going to be reparative or destructive. For example, Egypt’s Anwar Sadat—another leader with a narcissistic personality organization—utilized the “Nixon method” for making decisions: He would not depend on his advisors; he thought he knew better than anyone else and hence, he was a lonely decision-maker. Sadat would go to his village about 40 miles from Cairo and create his own “glass bubble”: He would wear a *galibia*, smoke a pipe and make major decisions all by himself, such as the one that initiated the visit to Israel when he spoke at the Knesset in 1979. Thus, making decisions while in a “glass bubble” does not mean that such a decision will be destructive. It can also be a decision that may lead to a kind of healing between enemies.

Sufficient narcissism, even exaggerated narcissism, I think, is necessary for a political leader to be an efficient leader. Narcissism makes a leader comfortable as

“number one.” Thus, I repeat: narcissism is not a bad word. But, it can also be used for the initiation of horrible events, especially if the large group to which the leader belongs is experiencing regression and perceives an entitlement for revenge for recent traumas and/or chosen traumas. If a narcissistic leader reactivates and inflames a chosen trauma and helps to create an atmosphere of time collapse and victimization, the possibility that a destructive event could evolve should be anticipated. When a generalized feeling of victimization settles in a large group, a sense of entitlement for striking out can follow. It is obviously doubtful that any future political leader will go through psychoanalysis before assuming power. On the other hand, psychoanalysts who seriously observe and study political processes and leader-followers interactions should speak out about danger signals coming from destructive narcissistic leaders.

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