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Large-Group Identity, Large-Group Regression and Massive Violence

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 1932 Albert Einstein wrote a letter to Sigmund Freud asking if the new science of psychoanalysis could offer insights that might deliver mankind from the menace of war. In his response to Einstein, Freud expressed little hope for an end to war and violence, or the role of psychoanalysis in changing human behavior beyond the individual level (Freud, 1932). However, even Jacob Arlow (1973) found some cautious

optimism in some of Freud's writings, Freud's general pessimism was mirrored by many of his followers, and this fact, I think, has played a key role in limiting the contributions psychoanalysis has made to international relations in general and finding more peaceful solutions for conflicts between enemy groups in particular.

Since Freud, many authors, including those writing about world affairs, politics and diplomacy, *who are not themselves practicing psychoanalysts* have referred to psychoanalysis in their attempt to understand world affairs and large-group psychology in general. They often referred to Freud's writings such as *Totem and Taboo* (1913), *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), and Freud's correspondence with Einstein mentioned above. The main problem with their approach, as Hendrick (1958) noticed long ago, is that because of it, "psychoanalysis is misused by intellectuals, who argue its validity as if it were a philosophy, an ethical system, a set of theories; such discussion...seems alien and unproductive to the analyst himself, whose primary convictions originate in what his patients have told him" (p.4) Their approach usually overlooked two important considerations. First, psychoanalytic theories that systematize new findings in the field have been expanded enormously in the decades since Freud's first pioneering work. To be sure, some authors who are not practicing psychoanalysts now refer to new psychoanalytic theoreticians, such as Jaques Lacan, while writing about large-group psychology. In general, however, these authors also utilize the new psychoanalytic theories as if they were a set of philosophical considerations.

Second, observations afforded by clinical psychoanalytic practice have more to offer the study of world affairs, ethnic identity, political leader-followers interactions and

the eruption of massive violence. Working with children in psychoanalytic therapy, analyzing borderline or narcissistic adults, and conducting clinical small group analysis, in believe, informs us more about world affairs than studying metapsychology or psychoanalytic theories of mind.

Meanwhile, practicing psychoanalysts, with a few exceptions, have basically tended to treat patients, without much interest in or attention to political or diplomatic issues. When they wrote about such issues, they usually applied theories of individual psychology to large-group processes without taking into consideration that once they start, the large-group processes take on their own specific directions and appear as new political, social or ideological movements (Volkan,2005). Recently, especially since September 11, 2001, practicing psychoanalysts have shown more interest in large-group psychology.

Let me first tell you what I mean by the term *large group*. In the psychoanalytic literature the term “large group” often refers to 30 to 150 members who meet in order to deal with a given issue. When the task given to such a “large group” is unstructured and vague by design, the “large group” regresses. At this time, observers notice increased anxiety, chaos, and panic among its members (Rice, 1965; Turquet, 1975; Kernberg, 1998, 2003a, 2003b). 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.

Otto Kernberg (2003a, 2003b) 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 also mentions

disorganization in crowds after natural disasters and then speaks of “mass movements” and “societal and cultural processes.” He primarily illustrates the emergence of aggression in “small groups,” “crowds” and “societies” when regression and disorganization sets in.

In this presentation my focus is on *ethnic, national, or religious large groups*. I use the term “large group” *only* to refer to tens, hundreds of thousands, or millions of individuals, most of whom will never meet during their lifetimes. Paraphrasing Erik Erikson’s (1950) statement about personal identity, I use the term *large-group identity* to refer to a large group that shares a permanent sense of sameness while also sharing certain similar characteristics with other large groups, especially with those who are neighbors.

Ethnic, national, or religious large groups’ psychodynamics in many areas *are different* from the psychodynamics of “small groups,” “large groups” (composed of 30 or 150 individuals), 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, national or religious large groups, like the Mauri, Serbian or Catholic large groups. The membership in such large groups *begins in childhood*. Elsewhere I illustrated (Volkan1988, 1997, 2004 a) how each member’s core *personal identity* is intertwined with their large-group identity.

This presentation studies some aspects of *large-group psychology in its own right*. I started to study ethnic,national or religious large group psychology without a formal training in clinical group analysis. My only experience with small groups took place in the late 1960s and the early 1970s when I conducted twice a week teaching activities with

small groups of psychiatric residents during each academic year (Volkan1972; Volkan and Hawkins, 1971a, 1971b). In 1977, then Egyptian president Anwar el-Sadat stunned the political world by visiting Israel. When he addressed the Israeli Knesset he spoke about a psychological wall between Arabs and Israelis and stated that psychological barriers constitute 70 percent of the entire problem that existed between the Arabs and the Israelis. With the blessings of the Egyptian, Israeli and American governments, the American Psychiatric Association's (APA's) Committee on Psychiatry and Foreign Affairs followed up on Sadat's statements by bringing together influential Israelis, Egyptians and later Palestinians for a series of unofficial negotiations that took place between 1979 and 1986. I was a member of this committee. I noticed that whenever they met the Israeli and Arab delegates became spokespersons of their large-group sentiments. This is how I began my study of large-group psychology, enemy relationships, and interactions between political leader and their followers, and how I began to consider offering strategies to tame aggression between enemy groups (Volkan, 1988, 1997, 1999, 2004 a and b).

Until the work of the APA's committee, again starting with Freud, psychoanalytic theories concerning large groups mainly focused on individuals' perceptions of what their large groups psychologically mean to them. The six-year study of the Arab-Israeli conflict through a psychological lens provided an opportunity for me to begin to examine the psychology of large groups in its own right. Later I observed other "enemy" representatives—such as Russians and Estonians, Georgians and South Ossetians, Serbs and Croats or Turks and Greeks—in years-long unofficial negotiation series. I also interviewed traumatized people in some refugee camps where "we-ness" becomes

palpable. Furthermore, I spent time with political leaders such as the former US president Jimmy Carter (throughout the 1990s I was a member of the Carter Center's International Negotiation Network {INN}), the former Northern Cyprus president Rauf Denktaş, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, the former Haiti president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the late Yasser Arafat, the present Estonian president Arnold Rüütel and, the present Nigerian president Olesgun Obasanjo and observed aspects of leader-followers psychology in these leaders' verbalized thought processes and actions. Then I was able to define the concept of "large-group identity," a sense of sameness shared by thousands or millions of people, which explains what they mean when they say, "We are Norwegians," "We are Arabs," or "We are Jews,"

Because of their clinical interests, group analysts have focused more on small groups and the psychodynamics involved when seven to fifteen individuals gather for a series of meetings. Wilfred Bion's (1961) work 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 its 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, Bion describes how it begins to function according to three "basic assumptions," which I am sure very familiar to you. I am also sure that you are familiar with my discussant Earl Hopper's (2003) theory of the fourth basic assumption. Unlike myself, Earl Hopper had pursued a systematic study in understanding groups and what he calls "group-like social systems." His intellectual quest shows the influence of psychoanalysis,

group analysis as well as sociology. In a sense I came from one direction and he came from another direction to the topic of this presentation. Today we are meeting and I hope that our discussion in front of you will be rich.

Now let me turn my attention to the classical Freudian theory of large groups. When I do this, I visualize people arranged around a gigantic maypole, which represents the group leader. Individuals in the large group dance around the pole/leader, identifying with each other and idealizing the leader. I have expanded this metaphor by imagining a *canvas* extending from the pole out over the people, forming a huge tent. This canvas represents the *large-group identity*. I have come to the conclusion that essential ethnic, national or religious large-group activities center around maintaining the integrity of the large-group identity, and leader-follower interactions are just one element of this effort.

Imagine thousands or millions of persons living under a huge tent. They may get together in subgroups. They may belong to certain clans or professional organizations and they may be poor or rich or women or men. But all of them are under one huge canvas. The pole of the tent is the political leadership. *From an individual psychology point of view*, the pole may represent an idealized father (Freud, 1921) or nurturing mother (Chaseguet-Smirgel, 1984, Kernberg, 1998). *From a large-group psychology point of view*, the pole's task is to keep the tent's canvas erect (to maintain and protect the large-group identity). Everyone under the tent's canvas wears his or her individual garment (personal identity), but everyone under the tent, including the political leader, also shares the tent canvas as a second garment. Elsewhere I identified *seven threads* that, when they are woven together, produce the cloth—the canvas of the large-group tent—ranging from shared identifications to “chosen traumas” (Volkan, 1997, 2004 a). Today I

will not discuss these seven threads, but later in this presentation I will explain what I mean by a “chosen trauma.”

In our routine lives we are not keenly aware of our shared second garment, just as we are not usually aware of our constant breathing. If we develop pneumonia or if we are in a burning building, we quickly notice each breath we take. Likewise, if our huge tent’s canvas shakes or parts of it are torn apart, we become obsessed with our second garment. Our individual identity becomes secondary. We become preoccupied with the large-group identity and will do anything to stabilize it, repair it, maintain it and protect it. During these efforts we begin to tolerate extreme sadism or masochism if we think that what we are doing will help to maintain and protect our large-group identity. (Before going any further I must remind you that here I am speaking of general large-group processes and leaving out certain small groups such as dissenters.) Interestingly, the more our second garment is in danger of being damaged, the more we try to cling to it. We see this phenomenon very clearly while visiting refugee camps or other societies where large-group identity is threatened.

In 1987, after the Arab-Israeli dialogue series came to an end, I opened The Center for the Study of Mind and Human Interaction (CSMHI) under the umbrella of the University of Virginia’s School of Medicine and directed it until 2002. This Center was the first of its kind in any medical school. Its faculty consisted of psychoanalysts, psychiatrists, and psychologists, but also former diplomats, political scientists, historians and scholars from other disciplines. CSMHI was lucky enough to sign a contract with the Soviet Duma. This gave us an opportunity to study the US–USSR interactions from a psychopolitical point of view until the collapse of the Soviet Empire. This study and our

following practices in the field—such as bringing together Russians and Estonians for a series of meetings between 1994 to 2000 in order to help Estonia achieve a peaceful “divorce” from the Soviet Union (now Russian Federation)—allowed us to come up with further theories concerning large-group psychology in its own right and to examine the meaning of some large-group processes.

Large groups are made of individuals; therefore large-group processes reflect individual psychology. But a large group is not a living organism that has one brain, so once a large-group process starts, it establishes a life of its own within the society. The following is one example:

Psychoanalysts, psychiatrists, psychologists and other mental health professionals know a great deal about the individualized process of mourning. Mourning is an obligatory human psychobiological response to a meaningful loss. When a loved one dies, the mourner has to go through predictable and definable phases until his or her mourning process comes to a practical end (Volkan, 1981, Pollock, 1989). Many psychoanalysts going all the way back to Sigmund Freud himself (1917), contributed greatly to our understanding of the individual mourning process during which the mourner internally reviews his or her experiences with the lost person (or thing) and lets this person (or thing) be psychologically “buried” slowly. If everything goes in a routine fashion, the mourner also identifies with aspects and functions the dead person or thing possessed when still living or when it was still around, and keeps the dead person or thing “alive” within his or her psyche. This process may take many years. The individual mourning processes can be “infected” due to various reasons, and we can predict what may happen after such “infections” (Volkan, 1981, Volkan and Zintl, 1993).

Large groups also mourn. Since a large group is not one living organism with one brain, its mourning over the loss of loved ones, lands, and prestige after a war or war-like situation will appear in large-group processes *on a societal level*. For example, after a major shared trauma and loss at the hand of enemies, a political ideology of *irredentism*—a shared sense of entitlement to recover what had been lost—may emerge that reflects a complication in large-group mourning and an attempt both to deny losses and to recover them. What Greeks call the “Megali Idea” (Great Idea) is such a political ideology. Such political ideologies may last for centuries and may disappear and reappear when historical circumstances change (Volkan and Itzkowitz, 1994).

The last time we witnessed the reappearance of a political ideology of entitlement was after the collapse of Yugoslavia (Sells, 2002). When the huge Yugoslav tent was gone the Serbs, the Croats, the Bosniaks and others became preoccupied with establishing themselves under their specific smaller tents. When a large group asks, “Who are we now?” they become preoccupied with repairing, protecting and maintaining the canvas of their tent. In order to hold on to their large-group identity, they try to illuminate specific symbols woven into or painted on the fabric of their tent’s canvas. When ethnic, nationalistic, or religious identity markers are illuminated, doing so reassures the society that their large-group identity still exists. I named one of these significant markers a *chosen trauma*.

A chosen trauma is the shared mental representation of an event in a large group’s history in which the group suffered a catastrophic loss, humiliation, and helplessness at the hands of enemies. When members of a victim group are unable to mourn such losses and reverse their humiliation and helplessness, they pass on to their offspring the images

of their injured selves and the psychological tasks that need to be completed. This process is known as *the transgenerational transmission of trauma*. (For a review and an examination of this concept see: Volkan, Ast and Greer, 2002.) All such images and tasks contain references to the same historical event. As decades pass, the mental representation of such an event links all the individuals in the large group. Thus such a mental representation of a historical event emerges as a significant large-group identity marker. A chosen trauma reflects the “infection” of a large-group’s mourning process. A reactivation of a chosen trauma serves to link the members of a large group. Such reactivation can be used by the political leadership to promote new massive societal movements, some of them deadly and malignant.

Political leaders may initiate the reactivation of chosen traumas in order to fuel entitlement ideologies. The story of Slobodan Milošević allowing and supporting the re-appearance of *the Serbian chosen trauma*—the mental representation of the June 28, 1389 Battle of Kosovo—is well documented (Volkan, 1997). According to the myth that developed among the Serbs some 70 years after the Battle of Kosovo, the event and the Serbian characters of this battle, especially the Serbian leader Prince Lazar who was killed during the battle, mingled with elements and characters of Christianity. As decades passed, Prince Lazar became associated with Jesus Christ. For example, icons showing Lazar’s representation decorated many Serbian churches throughout the six centuries following the battle. Even during the communist period when the government discouraged hero worship, each day the Serbs were able to drink (introject) a bottle of red wine called “Prince Lazar.”

As the six-hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo approached in 1989, with the permission and encouragement of Milošević, Lazar's 600-year-old remains, which had been kept north of Belgrade, were placed in a coffin and taken over the course of the year to almost every Serb village and town, where they were received by huge crowds of mourners dressed in black. Again and again during this long journey, Lazar's remains were symbolically buried and reincarnated, until they were buried for good at the original battleground in Kosovo on June 28, 1989. On this day, the six-hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, a helicopter brought Milošević to the burial ground where earlier a huge monument made of red stone symbolizing blood had been built (Kaplan, 1993). In the mythology, Prince Lazar had chosen the Kingdom of Heaven over the Kingdom of earth. By design, Milošević, descended from a helicopter, representing Prince Lazar coming to earth to find a new Kingdom, a Greater Serbia.

Thus Milošević and his associates, by activating the mental representations of Lazar and the Battle of Kosovo, along with the peak emotions they generated, were able to create a year-long "time collapse" (Volkan, 2004 a). The perceptions, feelings, and expectations concerning a past hero and event were collapsed into the perceptions, feelings, and expectations about a current "enemy," magnifying its threat. Milošević and his associates first encouraged a shared sense of victimization followed by a shared sense of entitlement for revenge. This led to genocidal acts in Europe at the end of the 20th century. In early June 2005, new tapes showing violent murders in the name of large-group identity shook the Serbian citizens—as well as rest of us.

Why do we need to pay attention to specific large group processes in their own right in international relations? To answer this question imagine a serial killer such as

Jack the Ripper or Ted Bundy who is murdering his victims by strangling them with a red scarf. Also imagine that this serial killer is caught, tried and put away. What happens to his murder weapon, the red scarf? It stays in a dusty box in the basement of a court or police building as evidence used during the trial. In short, in the future no one else will use this scarf as a "tool" for murdering people.

Let us go back to Milošević. At the present time he is being tried because the United Nations considers him responsible for mass murder, among other things. What was Milošević's "red scarf" and what will happen to it? As I described above, one of Milošević's prominent "tools" for inciting extreme violence was his reactivation (with the help of some Serbian academicians and people from the Serbian Church) of shared symbols of the Serbian large-group identity: mental representations of the Battle of Kosovo and the Serbian leader Prince Lazar who was killed during this battle.

Now let us imagine that Milošević is found guilty and is put away, but his "red scarf" is not put away in a basement. Since this "red scarf" *belongs to the large group* and not to a lone individual, it is possible to use it again in a future large-group process. We know this because Milošević is not the first person to inflame the mental representations of the Battle of Kosovo and Prince Lazar. On June 28, 1914, for example, during an anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, a Serb named Gavrilo Princip assassinated Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary and his pregnant wife in Sarajevo, thereby beginning World War I. We can imagine that Gavrilo Princip, above and beyond being under his own individual psychology, was wearing the canvas of his large-group identity as his main garment when he killed the Archduke and his wife. I

think that the present day suicide bombers too become spokesperson of their large group identity (Volkan, 2004a).

The political, legal and military systems have no effective methods to deal with a "tool" that can be used for massive destruction when it belongs to a large group rather than just the man or woman who makes use of it. It can be better understood by the application of psychological insights that illuminate large-group processes in their own right than by logical realpolitik conceptualizations. Who is going to examine "red scarves" that are the property of large groups? I hold that psychoanalysts, especially group analysts, are best equipped to do so if they are willing to venture beyond their couches or clinical small group therapy offices, conduct field work, and collaborate with scholars and practitioners from other disciplines (especially history), in an effort to understand collective human issues such as politics, diplomacy, wars, and terrorism.

Psychoanalysts have theorized about the aggressive drive as being the root cause of war; the state, the nation, and its leaders as mental representations of a mother, father, or ideal self; the identification of large-group members with one another; and so on. Many of these considerations, although they may be theoretically valid as far as individual psychology is considered and meaningful for clinicians, have had a very limited impact on political theory, and diplomats have found them inapplicable to their practical analysis of international events and relationships. The primary reason for this is that most psychoanalytic theories of large-groups focus on an individual's perception and experiences of his or her own large group and its leader, and do not deal in depth with *specific issues* in international affairs such as the reactivation of a specific chosen trauma.

When a large-group identity is threatened by various things, such as the group's enemies, the ethnic, national, or religious large group regresses. I found 20 signs and symptoms of this kind of regression (Volkan, 2004 a). I borrow the term "regression" from individual psychology because I do not have a word that stands only for large-group regression. (Perhaps Hopper's (2003) term "incohesion" is better). When an ethnic, national, religious large group regresses it primarily becomes involved in certain large-group processes that serve to maintain, protect and repair the large-group identity. Since large groups as I described them here have their own specific characteristics that are built upon a centuries-old continuum and shared mental representation of history and myth, the examination of signs and symptoms of their regression should also include psychological processes that are *specific* to such large groups. In order to communicate with diplomats and others who must deal with international conflicts, clinicians need to go beyond a general description of the emergence of aggression in large groups, when they regress, and their shared paranoid or narcissistic sentiments, and refer to actual manifestations of regression within each specific large group.

Some major signs of large-group regression, such as *rallying around the leader*—as occurred in the USA immediately following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks—have been known since Freud. When Freud (1921) wrote about this phenomenon he did not say that he was referring to regressed groups. Robert Waelder (1930) brought to our attention the fact that Freud was describing regressed groups. Sometimes the members of a large group continue to rally around a leader for decades and remain "regressed" in order to modify the existing characteristics of their large-group identity. In this situation what we observe is similar to an individual's "regressing in the service of progression and

creativity.” After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish people (in general) continued to rally around Kemal Atatürk, the leader of modern Turkey which was established in 1923, until his death in 1938 (Volkan and Itzkowitz, 1984). This was the main factor that supported modern Turkey’s cultural revolution and the modification of characteristics of the Turks’ large-group identity. On the other hand, in certain totalitarian regimes, people rally around the leader in order to feel personal security rather than to be punished. Without being aware of it, they internalize what Michael Šebek (1996) called “totalitarian objects,” and blindly follow their leader by giving up many aspects of their individuality.

When a large group is in a regressed state, the personality and the internal world of the political leader assumes great importance concerning the manipulation (the “good” or the “bad”) of what already exists within the large-group psychology. Therefore, the personality organization of Milošević (which I described elsewhere {Volkan, 1997}) was a crucial factor in what happened in the former Yugoslavia. Sometimes political leaders, such as Milošević, will bring the “red scarves” that belong to the large group out in the open and use them as tools of mass aggression.

Two types of splitting are also signs of large-group regression. First, a splitting between “us” and “them” (the enemy outside the regressed large group) becomes very strong and the “other” becomes a target for *dehumanization* (Bernard, Ottenberg and Redl, 1973). Second, in regressed large groups, following the initial rallying around the leader, a severe split occurs within the society itself, especially when the leader cannot maintain hope and cannot tame shared aggression. Just a few years after September 11, 2001 we notice such a split in the USA. There are various reasons for this, but I believe

that this also reflects the regressed state of America after the massive tragedy and after the American leadership's failure to separate "realistic" dangers from "fantasized" dangers and its inability to help tame the shared anxiety of the population.

A regression within the large group stimulates the population's sharing of primitive mental mechanisms in dealing with the external world. I am referring to *massive introjections* (for example, the population's "eating up" political propaganda without making much of an effort to analyze whether what is coming into their inner world is poisonous or not) and *projections*, such as happened under the totalitarian regime of Enver Hoxha, when Albanians built 7,500 bunkers throughout Albania in anticipation of an enemy attack that never occurred. Building these bunkers which would not stand against modern weapons was also a reflection of *magical thinking*. Within regressed societies we see various types of magical thinking. I believe that in the USA the expansion of religious fundamentalist thinking and the increased belief in millennialism reflects this phenomenon which, at the present time, is strongly influencing the political/societal movements in this country.

In a regressed society political, legal or traditional *borders* begin to symbolize the canvas of the large group tent. In other words, borders become highly psychologized and people, leaders, and official organizations become preoccupied with their protection. Since there is a realistic danger "out there," obviously borders need to be protected and because of this, it is difficult to study the psychological aspects of this preoccupation. When I was an inaugural Rabin Fellow at the Yitzhak Rabin Center for Israeli Studies in Tel Aviv during the spring of 2000, I had a chance to study the border psychology in Israel at a close range and to describe it (Volkan, 2004 a). Now, in the USA we are

subjected to the influence of a border psychology almost daily, but because of the real (and fantasized) danger in the political propaganda, we may not be aware of this influence. At airports, for example, we deny the assault on our individual autonomy at the security check points because of the possibility of real danger, and subject ourselves to large-group psychology, and our individual psychology that propels us to rebel against the intrusion from outside is put in the background. When a large group's tent's canvas is attacked and torn apart, *minor differences* between the enemy groups become very major issues since minor differences are experienced as unchangeable "borders" separating one large group's identity from their enemy's identity.

When a large group regresses, societal processes that will remind everyone of the continuing existence of the canvas begin to appear. *Cultural amplifiers* (Mack1984), for example, are like designs on the canvas illustrating the specificity of that particular large-group identity. The group wants to "repaint" such designs on the canvas to show that the large-group identity still survives and to ease shared anxiety. But the group is helpless, angry, humiliated and is suffering from complicated mourning. Thus, when such designs are "repainted," they do not exactly look like the original designs; they are now sloppy and some aspects of them are exaggerated. In South Ossetia there was a playful cultural norm of kidnapping of brides. A girl would be symbolically kidnapped and married. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the Republic of Georgia, bloody fights took place between ethnic Georgians and ethnic South Ossetians living within the same legal/political boundary of the Republic of Georgia. In fact, South Ossetians declared their own "independent state." Today aspects of large-group regression linger in South Ossetia as well as in Georgia. The cultural kidnapping customs

in South Ossetia have turned into horrible societal problems in the form of actual kidnappings and rapes of young women.

I have already described the reactivating as well as changing of function of chosen traumas. Also past glories (*chosen glories*) can be reactivated with good or malignant consequences. During the Gulf War, for instance, Saddam Hussein depended heavily on chosen glories to galvanize the Iraqi people support, even associating himself with Sultan Saladin who defeated the Christian Crusaders in the twelfth century. By reviewing a past event or a past hero, Saddam aimed to create the illusion a similar triumphal destiny was awaiting his people and that, like Saladin, he was a hero. Saddam, like Saladin, was born in Tikrit, but it did not matter to Saddam that Saladin was not an Arab but a Kurd, or that he had ruled from Egypt rather than Iraq or that Saddam had killed many Iraqi Kurds. The emphasis was principally on the ancient's hero's religious large-group identity. Often chosen glories and chosen traumas are condensed when the shared mental representation of a past large-group event is reactivated.

As clinicians we need to collaborate with scholar and practitioners from other fields to study the situation of each large group from many angles in order to find specific elements in large-group processes, to understand their underlying meanings and then begin to plan psychoanalytically informed political strategies for inducing progression within the large group or two or more groups in conflict.

My colleagues from the Center for the Study of Mind and Human Interaction (CSMHI) and I evolved a process to deal with the unfolding of large-group regression and conflicts between large groups. Nicknamed the "Tree Model" (Volkan, 1999) to

reflect the slow growth and branching of a tree, this methodology has three basic components or phases: (1) psychopolitical diagnosis of the situation, (2) psychopolitical dialogues between influential delegates of opposing groups, and (3) collaborative actions and institutions that grow out of the dialogue process.

The first phase includes in-depth psychoanalytically informed interviews with a wide range of members of the large groups involved and an understanding begins to emerge concerning the main conscious and unconscious aspects that surround the situation that needs to be addressed. During the psychopolitical dialogues between influential representatives of opposing large groups that takes place in a series of multi-day meetings over several years, resistances against changing large group's "pathological" ways of protecting large-group identity are brought to the surface, articulated, and fantasized threats to large-group identity are interpreted so that realistic communication can take place. In order for the newly gained insights to have an impact on social and political policy, as well as on the populace at large, the final phase requires the collaborative development of concrete actions, programs, and institutions.

Our methodology allows several disciplines, including psychoanalysis, history and diplomacy, to work together to articulate and work through underlying psychological and historical aspects of the tensions. Then what is learned is operationalized so that more peaceful coexistence between large groups can be achieved and threats (especially the fantasized ones) to large-group identity coming from the "other" can be tamed. This leads to a progression within the large group.

The signs of a *large-group progression* include forming stable family, clan and professional subgroups, preserving individuality and having a society where individuals

and professional organizations establish a capacity for compromise without damaging integrity (Rangell, 1980) and an ability to question what is “moral” and “beautiful.” When a large group is not regressed, there is an increased emphasis on freedom of speech, having just and functioning civil institutions, especially a fair legal system and mental hospitals with human care (Stern, 2001), and halting devaluation of women and children.

When a large group is *not* in a regressed state, its members (in general) can wonder about the enemy’s “psychic reality.” To understand why the “other” behaved in malignant ways does not mean to forgive and forget what has happened. It means performing the difficult task of “humanizing” even the most destructive perpetrators. Horrible massive acts are not performed by “devils,” but by humans under specific influence of large-group psychology such as the one I call *purification*. After a massive trauma at the hand of enemies, after the reactivation of chosen traumas and glories, after a large group finding itself in a situation where the question, “Who are we now?” arises, a large group shakes its canvas to get rid of unwanted elements just like a snake sheds its skin. As far as I am concerned this is an obligatory process. The process of purification occurs on a spectrum, from getting rid of “foreign” words during which no one is killed to massive murders of “unwanted” subgroups within a society and to wars with “others.”

I hope it is clear that here I am not focusing on individuals who, due to their own individual psychological reasons, create chaos and tragedy such as the one that occurred when Timothy McVeigh blew up the Alfred Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April, 1995. I am instead focusing on large-group psychology and hurting and killing people in the name of large-group identity. By studying the “psychic reality” of the

enemy as a large group, new ways of dealing with the enemy and its threat may emerge instead of the attacked group's responding to the enemy and the threat through developing signs of its own regression (Volkan, in press).

Al Qaeda divided the world into two categories. After September 11 America (again I am not speaking of individuals here, but referring to a general large-group process) did the same and ideas such as the "clash of civilizations or religions" directly or indirectly was supported within the society. A division of the world into a clear cut "us" and "them" is a sign of large-group regression. Responding to an enemy in a non-regressed fashion, psychologically speaking, is a very difficult task. Realistic and logical actions easily are contaminated with emotions supporting the wish to do to the enemy what it did to us. I do not think that humans (as large groups) have ever developed the idea or ability to refrain from being like their enemies once they feel threatened or hurt.

I need to be careful *not* to be misunderstood here. I am not referring, for example, to what Nazis did and what the Allies did during World War II and I am not saying that the Allies were like the Nazis. Many factors such as historical circumstances, reactivation of past victimizations, the leader's personality organization, existing military power and, most importantly, the degree of large-group regression can make a large-group dehumanize the "other" and be terribly cruel. In dealing with such an extremely regressed large group, the opposing group need not be identically as regressed as the perpetrating group. When I speak of *a similarity between enemies* I am referring to certain large-group processes without considering the degree of their outcome. First, I am simply saying that when a large group's identity is threatened, the threatened large group automatically begins to hurt the aggressors' large-group identity, thus the attacked group begins to take

on similarities to the perpetrator. Second, both groups utilize shared mental mechanisms such as introjection, projection, denial, dissociation, isolation, rationalization and intellectualization in their consciously or unconsciously motivated political propaganda. This comes from their leadership and/or is wished for and supported by the society. Third, humiliating, hurting and killing people in the name of large-group identity become acceptable by both sides (Volkan, in press). If the leadership does not provide a kind of reality testing that includes an understanding of the enemy's (as large group) "psychic reality" and shows some attempts to respond to it in humane ways, dangers become magnified and further regression sets in or is maintained. Therefore, the idea of a large group becoming like its enemy is an area that needs to be studied openly again and again until new possibilities for different responses (above and beyond the necessity to use the military) can be conceptualized. In fact new strategies in international relations without succumbing into large-group regression can be considered, and the so-called "diplomatic channels" need not be closed until a psychopolitical evaluation of the situation is completed.

There is a beauty in human diversity, and most people can enjoy human diversity when they are not preoccupied with the pressures and anxieties associated with the repair and maintenance of their large-group tent's canvas (large-group identity). Recognizing the beauty of diversity, however, often requires a great deal of work. I believe that clinicians, when they are willing to take part in interdisciplinary efforts, have much to offer those who wish to encourage diversity while resolving conflict. They also will benefit a great deal from studying large-group psychology in its own right if they are involved in such efforts.

Thank you for listening to me.

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