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**PSYCHO HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTS IN UNDERSTANDING
HISTORY: NATIONS, REPLICATED INJURIES, FEAR OF SUCCESS
AND NEED FOR ENEMIES¹**

**ОСНОВНЫЕ ПСИХОИСТОРИЧЕСКИЕ КОНСТРУКТЫ
В ПОНИМАНИИ ИСТОРИИ: НАЦИИ, ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЕ
МОТИВАЦИИ И ОПЫТ ДЕТСТВА**

В работе рассматривается психологическая сторона природы такого конструкта, как «нация», на который проектируется родительский «имаго» (образ), формирующийся в период стадии индивидуализации. Устанавливается связь психологического смысла детского опыта с концепцией страха перед индивидуализацией. Показываются основания современного состояния наций/групп в арабском мире как реакция на процессы модернизации (с точки зрения вызова родительскому имаго и контролю) и воспроизведение травм детства в групповых фантазиях «очищения» и насилия. Анализируется феномен «страха перед успехом» как следствие дискомфорта в период индивидуализации.

All of us seem to overlook the nature of the construct of nations. Nations serve the purpose of establishing an imposing parental imago to direct us during our individuation phase separating from paternal power. We are afraid of being free, independent, and live within the controlled state environment in order to feel ourselves under control. It's only when the state fails us, shifting us into periods of prolonged dysfunction, that we ready ourselves for the “business of sacrifice” to cleanse ourselves of all feelings of guilt and restore some homeostasis of existence.

We “fuse” with our fantasized “killer Mommy” (a highly sexualized childhood-based fantasy) and perform a “war dance”. We are locked into this “folie a deux” because we fear Mommy and need to perform ritualistic sacrifice of young blood to achieve a modicum of life order within the mechanism of state control. This also helps explain why those of us

comfortable with our individuation (probably because our parents encouraged this in us) become “libertarians” or “individualists” – we speak the realities to deafened masses living in trance altered state who see us as “contrarians” or “enemies” and seek to control/eliminate us.

I urge more of you to become familiar with these ideas about the construct of nations and the psychological meanings of childhood experiences (don't fall into the foolish “trap” of those who deny this psychogenic process without offering any valid alternate theory – they are usually people with unresolved oedipal issues who seek to deconstruct their childhood abuse and trauma). DeMause’s recent study of terrorist childhood relates to this concept of fear of individuation – modernity challenges eons of paternal control and frightens newly liberated Muslims so that they retreat into ageless mechanisms of parental dictatorship, abuse and trauma by entering a trance state alter.

Perhaps this is why the failure of Arab/Muslim intellectuals and moderates to rise up and eliminate the corruption of their world/religion by fundamentalist terrorists has so antagonized the rest of us. We understand the group-fantasies currently in play. We should also be able to

recognize the problems of some unable to follow these ideas and approaches. We should be able to see the “game” being played out here. Watch for the “attacking” of others and the condemnation of alternate theories or rejection of our fundamental paradigms (frequently couched in the name of preventing any orthodoxy of views, usually by those who have no alternate meta-theory and who are filled with their own unresolved issues). This is life and the answers lie within the mind and childhood experiences.

It's precisely the point of psychohistory that replication of past injuries is at the heart of historical motivations. Some have read this in Lloyd deMause's *The Emotional Life of Nations or Foundations of Psychohistory* (freely available at www.psychohistory.com) – humans reenact childhood traumas throughout our lives. War is a fundamental reenactment.

Arthur Conan Doyle had Sherlock Holmes mouth these ideas because they were central to his age (and remain so today):

[In “His Last Bow”, set on the eve of WW1, Sherlock Holmes is talking to Dr. Watson and referring to the imminent war as “an East wind coming”] Holmes says: “There's an East wind coming. It will be cold and bitter, Watson, and a good many of us may wither before its blast. But it is God's own wind none the less, and a cleaner, better, stronger land will lie in the sunshine when the storm has cleared”.

How Conan Doyle could believe that the death and injury of countless men, along with the huge expenditure and destruction involved in war, would make Britain a “cleaner, better, stronger land”, reflects what we psychohistorians understand. War can be perceived as purifying, rejuvenating and a restorer of potency.

One need not know psychohistory to be doing it or using it – but it certainly helps when you do. Groups seem to have a tendency to cleanse, to remove perceived “impurities”. The cleansing has been fully described by deMause as a payment for a sense of guilt (success or achievement beyond what one's parents achieved). Nations simply are larger group units doing this. Thus, we should see that this is systemic to populations – perhaps we could better see it as collective replication of shared trauma, probably originating in childhood?

The current US and global economic collapse reflects a desire to purge ourselves (to punish ourselves) for prolonged achievement. Coupled with the 11 September attacks, the US group shifted into trauma and remains in trance. “Lust for war” and revenge reflects a desire for sacrifice so that the group may be cleansed. Group-think requires all to buy into the group lie (group illusion) or risk condemnation as traitors. The leader is catapulted into a place of omniscience and omnipotence to satisfy the group's “magical thinking” (another sign of trance state behavior) that all can be made well again. For the group, achievement of group goals must be accomplished, sooner better than later. From a psychohistorical perspective, failure to achieve them could bring a backlash against the leader (the leader-as-sacrifice).

When a group cannot satisfy this “blood lust” with sufficient deaths, other enemies must be found for increased sacrifice. Therefore, in the current “war on terrorism”, an insufficient casualty count in Afghanistan as well as the “disappearance” of Usama bin Laden turned US attention to attacking an “old” enemy, Saddam Hussein. Even the defeat of Iraq and capture of Saddam could not assuage US “blood lust” and we are witnessing a new search for enemies, this time in Syria, Iran and North Korea. Traditionally, enemies are found among less developed nations, usually having lower childrearing methods behind their group motivations and behaviors.

At this moment in the US group, when collective desires for punishment (of self and others) reign supreme – even destroying valued rights and traditions of dissent – psychohistory ought to be used more to assess and analyze things. Europeans currently seem amazed at the US’ “collective craziness” (they often seem to forget their own experiences with this) because Europeans currently see things more clearly. Then again, Europeans fail to understand that

Americans are living in a state of mental illness right now after the terrorist attacks. In fact, recent global discussions about circumcision reflect this castration anxiety preceding sacrifice (equivalent to war) – some day, one may hope that calm minds will recognize circumcision as a vestige of another time disguised as ritual. Similar mentions of religion, god, hatreds abound in recent global discussions, indicating a need to vent feelings by disguising them as psychohistorical assessments.

Psychohistorians search for evidence of a fear of success (not the traditionally understood “fear of failure”) because this represents a group’s discomfit with itself, discomfort generally caused by a lifetime of being told that one will be a failure. Psychohistory emphasizes our frequent comfort with failure and consequent discomfort with any achieved success (happiness, economic success, lifestyle, power, etc). This means that we believe that we may be punished because we will have achieved more than we were expected to and it also our fear of what our parents will do to us because we achieved beyond them. Therefore, success creates a fear which can only be satisfied by achieving expected failure. In this sense, success creates a need for failure (destroying happiness or the economy, sacrificing a leader or someone close to the leader, sacrificing the nation, increasing taxes or over-spending, searching for external/ internal “enemies”, sacrificing external/internal enemies through “purification crusades” or war, etc).

Need to Sacrifice

Psychohistory understands the fundamental unconscious concept of an individual’s/ group’s desire/need to sacrifice as an attempt to deal with the anticipated displeasure of one’s parents/elders – a displeasure caused by parents’/elders’ discomfort at their children surpassing their own accomplishments. In this sense, sacrifice becomes another mechanism to reduce the fear of success. Since sacrifice means the cleansing of one’s/group’s belief that one is impure/unclean. The best sacrifice used in history has been that of young men in war. This is because there has been a frequent perception that the blood of the young is more potent, more energetic, more capable of cleansing the collective group guilt.

Psychohistorical research has long shown that there must be an agreement to war between nations (consciously or unconsciously) before they go to war. In other words, as seen in the press/political cartoons/political speeches, leaders/nations state their preference for and agreement to engage in war with each other. Unconsciously, war seems to gratify and excite individuals/nations – perhaps as a test of concepts of masculinity or territorial definition. Thus, the language of leaders motivating their followers to war became a worthy subject for psychohistorical research and an excellent predictor for the probability of war.

1. First presented as part of the 2002 University of Klagenfurt Guest Professorship seminars.
2. *Matt Everett*, personal correspondence 2003.