

**PSYCHO-POLITICAL ASPECTS OF
SUICIDE WARRIORS, TERRORISM
AND MARTYRDOM**

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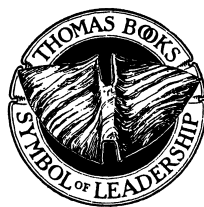
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PSYCHO-POLITICAL ASPECTS OF SUICIDE WARRIORS, TERRORISM AND MARTYRDOM

A Critical View from "Both Sides"
in Regard to Cause and Cure

Edited by

JAMSHID A. MARVASTI, M.D.



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This book is dedicated:

*To the thousands of American children who on 9/11 learned that one or both
of their parents were dead or missing;*

*To those Afghani children, who even during family celebrations were not
safe and were mutilated in an air raid; to the British children who were
bombed on their way to school;*

*To children in Pakistani villages and Iraqi cities who were victims of “col-
lateral damage” and “map changing” policies of superpowers;*

*To those Israeli children who constantly live in dreadful fear and shock and
Palestinians who die while throwing rocks;*

*To the memory of all children of the world who have suffered from war and
violence.*

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dozen publications. She recently has been given the Judith Mishne Commemoration Award by the *Clinical Social Work Journal* for her writings and excellence in clinical practice with children and adolescents.

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FOREWORD

Why the “clash of civilizations”? The main theme of this extraordinary book written and edited by Jamshid A. Marvasti, M.D., is that violence breeds violence. In this book, *Psycho-Political Aspects of Suicide Warriors, Terrorism and Martyrdom*, that theme is explored in all of its dimensions.

An important question is whether jihadist violence is primarily a product of religious ideology or of geopolitical grievance. Many Muslims perceive the United States and Israel as the biggest threat to Islam since the Crusades. Osama bin Laden has articulated the argument that Islam is under attack by the United States and its allies. Bin Laden and his followers believe that they are doing God’s work, and nothing will deter them from their mission, as evidenced by suicide bombers, and their belief that they will be rewarded in the afterlife.

Terrorism is sustained by three elements: (1) grievances, (2) a conspiratorial interpretation of the grievances, and (3) a license to act, which may be given by religious authority. Mohamed Atta, the Egyptian who piloted the plane that struck the North Tower of the World Trade Center, was convinced that the Jews were striving for world domination and considered New York City the center of world Jewry, which was, in his opinion, Enemy No. 1. In the “Letter to the American People” of November 2002, bin Laden warns: “The Jews have taken control of your media, and now control all aspects of your life making you their servants and achieving their aims at your expense.” He goes on: “Your law is the law of rich and wealthy people. . . . Behind them stand the Jews who control your policies, media and economy.”

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran belittles Israel as a “filthy Zionist entity” and seeks to wipe it off the map. Islamist Hamas is ardently dedicated to the destruction of Israel. The perplexing question arises: What is the appropriate response? President George Bush saw Saddam Hussein as threatening and invaded Iraq.

A look back in history. In the 1930s, to no avail, the Soviet Union urged England and France to join together to prevent Hitler from overtaking Czechoslovakia. Hitler exploited popular resentment over Germany’s per-

ceived illegitimate defeat in World War I (“the stab in the back” by communists and Jews) and the unjust “peace” imposed at Versailles. In an article in a popular American magazine (*Harper's*, Sept. 1933), Trotsky warned that the war of 1914—called the “war of democracy”—is leading to “the war for liberation” from the results of World War I.

Bin Laden pointed to revenge as prompting the 9/11 attacks. He declared, “The people of Islam have suffered from aggravation, inequity, and injustice imposed upon them by Zionists, Crusaders alliance.” He also protested the occupation by the United States of the holiest places of Islam, the Arabian Peninsula. He says that the United States has plundered Arabian riches, dictated to its rulers, and humiliated its people. In his words, “What America tastes now is something insignificant compared to what we have tasted for scores of years.”

At the end of World War II, after centuries of domination by Ottoman Turks and European imperialists, Arabs believed that an Arab renaissance was forthcoming, but it was not to be. The victorious Western powers in World War I carved up the Ottoman Empire and installed rulers who would assure the flow of oil. The founding of the State of Israel following World War II was taken as a grievous calamity, and the defeats in the wars against Israel were humiliating. Yet, well before there was a Jewish state there was over a century of Arabs killing Jews through massacres and pogroms.

Assuredly, terrorism is not unique to today’s clash of civilizations. It is as timeless as human conflict. The word “terrorism” derives from the Latin *terrere*, which means to frighten, and the first recorded use of the term as it is currently understood derives from the eighteenth-century “Reign of Terror” associated with the French Revolution. Stalin’s regime was marked by terror. Bin Laden in 1997 condemned the United States government as hypocritical for not calling the bombing of Hiroshima terrorism. The Allied carpet bombing of Dresden killed thousands of civilians to “demoralize the German government,” as Winston Churchill put it. Doctor Marvasti uses the term “suicide warriors” because he wants to be neutral and non-judgmental. A “warrior” is a label for someone who takes part in or is experienced in warfare. Similarly, an Israeli psychiatrist at a recent conference of the American College of Forensic Psychiatry used the term suicide “missionaries” rather than “bombers” because she, too, wished to remain neutral. The desire to be neutral, however, may result in moral relativism.

Doctor Marvasti maintains that the key motivation of many suicide bombers is the invasion and occupation of their land or holy place. Their rage, humiliation, or feelings of injustice combined with their perception that the only appropriate way to address their grievances is through further violence. Women become martyrs when their social structure is threatened, such as after the loss of a husband or male relative. They are not prompted by the

reward of 72 virgins in Paradise.

To what extent, if any, does belief in an afterlife affect the way one lives in this life? The suicide bomber believes that his enemy will go to hell and he will go to paradise. So many Muslims are eager to turn themselves into bombs—the Koran makes this activity seem like a career activity. In the Koran, God says, “Those who are slain in the cause of God, he will not allow their works to perish. He will vouchsafe them guidance and ennoble their state. He will admit them to the Paradise.”

The public view tends to be that the suicide bomber must be insane, but in fact they are not suffering from psychopathology in the traditional sense. They do not qualify for any *DSM* diagnostic category. Indeed, individuals with significant mental illness are excluded from terrorist groups or acts because they are unable to tolerate the rigors of training, preparation, planning, or teamwork required for terror activity. Bin Laden is not clinically mad—he provides reasons for his actions that, while morally outrageous and religiously irresponsible, could be accepted by otherwise logical people who share his premises.

The psychiatric literature has indicated that terrorists exhibit two ego defense mechanisms: (1) paradoxical narcissism, and (2) projective identification. In paradoxical narcissism the individual appoints himself or herself as judge, jury, and executioner of his cause. The terrorist feels the world must conform to his or her needs, and if it does not, someone must pay the price to make it fit. However, Doctor Marvasti maintains this narcissism does not explain how the same person will then sacrifice his life for the welfare of others, as many suicide activists perceive that they do. The other criticism of this theory is that these qualities are not exclusively seen in terrorists. In projective identification, the individual is splitting off the bad part of themselves, projecting it onto others, and then trying to destroy it.

In this book of 17 chapters, the reader will find the following discussions: (1) controversy in definitions of suicide bombers/warriors, terrorism and martyrdom; (2) proliferation of suicide bombers: why “ordinary people” participate in war and terrorism; (3) what motivates the suicide bomber; (4) trauma of terrorism and political violence on civilians: diagnosis and treatment; (5) homegrown “worrier” and “warrior”: Muslims in Europe and the United States; (6) psychological autopsy of the suicide bomber; (7) suicide and self-destructive behaviors: learning from clinical population; (8) counterterrorism: violence breeds violence and increases terrorism and discontent; (9) the failure of counterterrorism: the need for a psychosocial and nonmilitary solution; (10) Western leaders and terrorism: psycho-political impact and interactions; (11) sowing seeds of war: Israeli and Palestinian child deaths in the context of September 11; (12) Palestine: a nation traumatized; (13) trauma of terrorism: pharmacotherapy in acute trauma and PTSD; (14) female suicide

warriors/bombers; (15) understanding the mothers of suicide bombers and martyrs; (16) neurobiopsychosocial aspects of violence; and (17) history of war crimes, martyrdom, and suicide bombers/warriors. To cover these topics, seven contributors join with Doctor Marvasti.

Doctor Marvasti was born and raised in Iran and thus provides an out-of-the-ordinary perspective of the “clash of civilizations.” He received his M.D. degree from Jondi Shapoor University (Ahwaz, Iran) and completed his psychiatric training at the Rhode Island Medical Center and the Institute of Living (Hartford, Connecticut). For the last 30 years he has practiced adult and child psychiatry at the Manchester Memorial Hospital in Manchester, Connecticut. He was previously an Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Connecticut.

This book is Doctor Marvasti’s third in the American Series in Behavioral Science and Law, the others being *Psychiatric Treatment of Victims and Survivors of Sexual Trauma* and *Psychiatric Treatment of Sexual Offenders*. He also edited the book *Child Suffering in the World: Child Maltreatment by Parents, Cultures and Governments in Different Countries and Cultures*, as well as a number of articles and chapters in books on the subject of psychic trauma and psychotherapy. He has presented scientific papers at international psychiatric meetings in the Middle East, Europe, Canada, and the United States.

Doctor Marvasti here gives us another wise book—thoroughly engaging in its discussion of the most pressing issue of our time.

Ralph Slovenko, Editor
American Series in Behavioral Science and Law

PREFACE

In this book there is no intention to praise or to condemn suicide bombers. Instead, the text endeavors to present from all points of view the history, prejudice, double standards and distortions regarding this important subject in both Western and Eastern news media and governments. The failure of current counterterrorism policies and the issue of “killing breeding more killing” indicate a need for deeper understanding of these bombers/warriors.

Following the proverbial statement “It takes a village to raise a child,” I would like to make an amendment: “It takes two villages to raise a terrorist.” What are the two villages in this metaphor? How do they create and raise suicide bombers? Although one is the village of the “offender/terrorist” and the other is the village of the “victim/target,” what is surprising is that they both may contribute to the development of suicide bombers. One village’s method is military and economic dominance, which to some extent involves invading/occupying, humiliating, and colonizing. The other village, the one that is perceived to be invaded, raises suicide bombers by transforming their “perceived victims” into “victimizers” often by supplying arms, training, religious/spiritual support, and honoring them as “martyrs.” Unfortunately, most of the Western governments and their major media are focusing their counterterrorism efforts on this village, identified as “terrorist.” Meanwhile, the other village continues the policies of occupation/invasion, the practice of double standards, and alienation of civilians through its military domination and corporate exploitation. The Western governments and the major media seem to have ignored that some terrorism may have evolved as a reaction to such events. Terrorism could be a message from those who sense that no one listens to their “perceived injustices” except when they become “suicide bombers.”

In this book I have tried to explore and analyze the news/comments/opinions from both sides of the globe. At times I have focused on the “other side’s” interpretation of events to present a different perspective than that normally found in our major news media.

The “other side” is comprised of Middle Eastern people and also of those

Americans/Westerners who believe that certain Western policies may have promoted hostility/resentment against the West. One such American is a former U.S. Air Force lieutenant colonel who flew many bombing missions in Vietnam before becoming a Catholic priest. As he astutely stated, "We are not hated because we practice democracy, value freedom, or uphold human rights. We are hated because our government denies these things to people in Third World countries whose resources are coveted by our multinational corporations."

In this book, I also have reviewed literature from "both sides," and I have attempted to point out that possibly the most common motivational factor for many of these bombers/terrorists is the element of "occupation/invasion" of their land or holy places. On the basis of this explanation, I speculate that after the "occupier/invasion" leaves their land, hostility may cease. This opinion is contrary to what many Western government officials claim in regard to the present war in the Middle East. In fact, what they assert is not too different from what many American officials claimed in the Vietnam war: "If we don't stop them in Saigon, we will have to fight them in Seattle." History has proven otherwise.

I bring up the negative aspect of war and violence as a psychological trauma and discuss the concept of "soft power" or nonmilitary and psycho-social strategies and procedures to decrease hostility and terrorism. Although I believe that war usually is only judiciously analyzed in retrospect, it must be fought in the present. However, an "unjust" war (which feeds terrorism), is just too harmful to wait to be understood, and needs scrutiny from the beginning. I should add that my opinion is that any war (with any label) is harmful to humanity and needs to be avoided.

Throughout the chapters for which I have been a contributor, I have attempted to remain neutral in regard to the interchangeable terms of suicide warriors/terrorists/bombers/activists on both sides of the current conflicts. One such term, "suicide missionaries," I learned from an Israeli psychiatrist during her presentation at an American College of Forensic Psychiatry conference in April, 2006, as she used this word instead of "bomber" to respect neutrality. Unfortunately, I was not successful in including a chapter on the victimization of Israeli children and civilians by Middle East terrorists. A few potential writers from both the United States and Israel were originally interested, but at the last moment were not able to complete the task. However in the fourth chapter, I added a few research summaries on the subject of traumatization of Israeli children and adolescents by Palestinian violence.

Chapter 1

Because I do it with one small ship, I am called a terrorist. You do it with a whole fleet and are called an emperor.

A pirate, from St. Augustine's City of God

Doctor Marvasti and Doctor Dripchak explore the controversy regarding the definitions of "suicide bombers/warriors," "terrorism" and "martyrdom." The two explain that these definitions are frequently in the eyes of the beholders, and that political/religious orientation and loyalties to "one's tribe" color what someone sees or perceives. For example, if a person carries his bomb in his hand, he is called a terrorist, but if someone carries it in an F-16 and still bombs civilians, he may be labeled a war hero or freedom fighter. The chapter further notes that "one man's trash is another's treasure," and that the words "terrorist," "freedom fighter" and "martyr" become interchangeable depending on who is reporting the events and who is publishing the report.

In this chapter, Marvasti and Dripchak also review the "other side" literature and report that the words "Jewish terrorist" and "Christian terrorist" are used in non-Western countries as frequently as Westerners use "Muslim terrorist." Western news media have avoided attaching the label of "Christian" or "Jewish" to terrorists even though such terrorists invoke religion to support their activities, such as a "Christian" terrorist blowing up an abortion clinic or a "Jewish" terrorist assassinating the Prime Minister of Israel because he gave land back to the Palestinians and, from his point of view, this was contrary to The Bible. The authors point out double standards, discrepancies in both Western and Eastern news media, and eventually declare that although history is written by both the victor and the loser, the victor's media has more influence and dominance. A quote from Noam Chomsky suggests that Western regimes also commit terrorist activities, but they refer to these activities as "counterterrorism."

The authors further explore the definition of "terrorism" from the point of view of the U.S. government and United Nations through the concepts of "state-sponsored terrorism" and "state-caused" terrorism. The conclusion in this chapter is that there is no universal consensus about how to define such controversial and emotionally charged words as "terrorism," "war crime," "martyrdom" and "suicide bomber." The Talmud states, "We don't see things as they are; we see things as we are."

Chapter 2

An army of principles can penetrate where an army of soldiers cannot.

Thomas Paine

In this chapter, Doctor Marvasti, a trauma specialist, discusses the question of “why war?” from a psychological/anthropological point of view. He refers to psychoanalytic literature to explain that human beings react to being defeated in war by creating new wars rather than mourning and grieving the trauma of the “lost war.”

Doctor Marvasti presents and examines psychoanalytic writings of Vamik Volkan, Abigail Golomb and David Lotto. Discussed also is the concept of the “Vietnam Syndrome” which deems “grieving the loss” of the Vietnam War to be a more painful process than that of creating a new war (with the hope of reversing the previous defeat). Marvasti also analyzes the process of “dehumanization” of the enemy as a procedure to decrease the natural human inclination toward empathy and to bypass the inhibition against killing.

The chapter explores whether or not “ordinary people” can become suicide bombers. Also considered are the dichotomies of “us” versus “them” and “myth” versus “historical” fact. Abigail Golomb’s examples of the “cowboy and Indian” in the U.S. are mentioned: Western culture considers the cowboy as “hero” and the Indian as “wicked” as if it were the Indian who had come from another place and stolen the land from the cowboys. This perspective parallels the example of the Israelis and Palestinians in their conflict.

Chapter 2 concludes that war/violence has been a major part of human experience and that aggression is not solely the character of soldiers, since ordinary people under certain circumstances also may exhibit these behaviors. People are not born warriors or terrorists but can develop into them.

Chapter 3

You will never end terrorism by terrorizing others.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

In this section, Doctor Marvasti utilizes psychological/sociological tools to consider the factors that motivate suicide bombers. In the review of literature from “both sides,” the author concludes that the element of occupation/invasion of homeland/holy places of suicide warriors is the most frequent/consistent variable reported.

This chapter discusses the motivational elements of (1) nationalism, (2) rage and revenge, (3) psychic trauma and dissociation, (4) religion, (5) group process, (6) poverty, (7) perceived injustice, humiliation, shame and despair, (8) cultural support, and (9) remuneration. The author concludes that these motivational factors are varied and complex yet can be divided into “internal” and “external” experiences (e.g., psychic trauma and humiliation are internal experiences which may be triggered/caused by what is occurring in

the external environment such as occupation and invasion). Suicide bombers/warriors probably will continue to exist as long as there are life situations in which people feel that this type of violence is the only way to change their world and to improve their nation/tribe's status quo.

Chapter 4

A whole life can be shaped by an old trauma, remembered or not.

Lenore Terr

In this chapter Doctors Marvasti and Dripchak consider terrorism as a trauma and examine the psychological responses following catastrophic events among adults and children. The impact of terror is partially connected to society's response to the "terrorist" act. The authors note that more dysfunctional behaviors probably are created by the response than by the actual event. Significant information on the impact on children on both sides of recent military conflicts is presented. The authors discuss the psychological impact of terrorism and atrocities on victimized Israeli children and adolescents. The authors further explore the intergenerational transmission of trauma. Finally this chapter discusses crisis intervention and psychotherapy. Models appropriate for the treatment of trauma such as Eye Movement Desensitization, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Play Therapy are applied to victims of "terrorist trauma."

Chapter 5

When slavery was a custom, every right-minded person supported it. Nothing is as powerful a legitimizer as social custom, even more powerful than law.

Thomas Szasz

Doctor Marvasti introduces the concept of homegrown "worrier" and "warrior" by referring to Muslims residing in Europe and the United States. He focuses on possible similarities and differences between U.S. Muslims and European ones. Marvasti finds that more radicalization appears evident in European Muslims than among those in the U.S. Also explored are the situational elements in Europe which possibly foster an environment of armed violence by these homegrown "warriors." In considering the 7/7 attacks in Great Britain the author reviews specific profiles of terrorists: Mohammad Sidique Khan, Shehzad Tanweer, Abdullah Jamal and Hasib Hussain.

Marvasti discusses racial discrimination and stereotyping of the Muslim population by certain Western groups and the elements of resentment, alienation and distortion by some of the Western news media. "Other side" literature reveals that the Western attitude toward Israel has become a source of

resentment and rage in some young Muslims in the West. However, in this chapter, the author indicates historical evidence of collaboration and co-existence between Jews and Muslims.

Research by the Pakistani-American Public Affairs Committee on Muslims living in the U.S. is used to explore the issue of integration of Muslims into Western culture, their attitude toward U.S. government policies, and their feeling of discrimination and commitment to their own religion/culture.

Also discussed is a similar but smaller investigation conducted on Iranian-American Muslims. In summary, it seems that most respondents are fond of Americans but resentful of the Western news media and wanted to “correct” the misconception that the nineteen terrorists of 9/11 do not represent the 1.3 billion Muslims in the world.

Chapter 6

Our children are not born to hate, they are raised to hate.

Thomas della Peruta

Doctors Marvasti and Dripchak provide a psychological autopsy of the suicide bomber. In an extensive review of literature, they dissect this type of fighter by examining the bomber’s family structure, socioeconomic status, education, religion, ideology and other demographic details. The authors conclude that there is no single profile that can be created to identify these suicide attackers as they are a heterogeneous group. The purported psychopathology of terrorists and two specific ego defense mechanisms, paradoxical narcissism and projective identification, are examined. As the issues of justification and rationalization are explored, it becomes evident that the one major commonality among these bombers is the perceived injustice of the occupation/invasion of their homelands. From that point of view, the authors speculate that anyone, given a particular set of internal and external circumstances, could become a bomber/warrior.

Chapter 7

Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.

Phil Donahue

In this section Doctor Dripchak, a clinician who has evaluated and treated many suicidal patients, presents up-to-date, “state-of-the-art” information in regard to suicide in the clinical patient population. Her goal is to explore whether what we learn from this population can help augment our understanding of the suicide bombers and their motivation.

In this chapter, the author explores the historical, legal, and religious

aspects of suicide. She compares suicide notes of the clinical population with those of suicide bombers/warriors. She also explores the similarities and differences between suicide bombers and suicidal patients.

Chapter 8

We can bomb the world to pieces, but we can't bomb it into peace.

An anti-war slogan

This chapter focuses on counterterrorism. Dr. Marvasti discusses that “violence breeds violence” and increases terrorism and discontent. He attempts to demonstrate “what doesn’t work” in counterterrorism by reviewing literature from “both sides” and by concluding that “killing leads to more killing.” Included is a quote by Sir Peter Ustinov who stated that “terrorism is the war of the poor and war is the terrorism of the rich.” Identified are elements within counterterrorism which may have contributed to terrorism. Considered also are the “wounds” of the Middle East population in regard to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict as documented in “other side” literature.

Doctor Marvasti presents a hypothetical question: If Palestinians could use the techniques of Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela or Martin L. King, Jr. in responding to Israel, would it be possible to “disarm” the Israeli extremists (without using any arms) and attract the sympathy of Jewish citizens to see them as “victims” rather than “offenders”? The author notes that as history indicates, violence breeds violence and extremism leads to the development of “other side” extremists.

State-sponsored terrorism, “state-caused terrorism,” and the limiting of civil liberties (as a side effect of counterterrorism) are explored. The failure of the Western counterterrorism techniques which rely solely on “killing” the suspected terrorist (while disregarding the many innocent civilians also killed in the process) increases the resentment/discontent in “both sides” of the conflict. This result is probably what terrorists wish for. Military invasions may kill some terrorists, but such actions fertilize the ground for more.

Chapter 9

Madness answered with madness simply deepens, it never dispels.

Mahatma Gandhi

Doctor Marvasti discusses the failure of counterterrorism and points out the need for a psychosocial and nonmilitary solution. He reviews the “other side” news media/opinion and tries to find an explanation for the negative view in various countries toward the U.S. and British governments. This chapter attempts to explore “what may work” in countering terrorism. The

suggestion is that if some U.S. policies have had a negative impact, they can be corrected by America itself. As one of the previous Presidents mentioned, “There is nothing wrong with America that can not be cured with what is right in America.”

The subjects discussed in psychiatric literature in regard to “what may work” are alleviating psychic trauma, listening to the “oppressed” group and their perceived injustice, decreasing humiliation, acknowledging stereotyping/prejudicial thinking/writing toward an “oppressed” population and decreasing the level of hatred. Supporting the “moderate” population and instituting moderate government policies are also beneficial. Doctor Marvasti discusses the “concept of nonviolence” and the psychology of “soft power” which utilizes nonmilitary strategies to shape international relations/behavior. He refers to the writings of Joseph Nye and also of Ben Franklin who wrote, “There never was a good war or bad peace.”

In this chapter, Doctor Marvasti briefly refers to the great Persian poet and clergyman, Mevlana Rumi (of 13th century); although he lived in an era of terrorism and genocide, no words or stories of revenge or retribution occur in his thousands of verses. Instead this Islamic clergyman chose to focus on commonality of humanity and love, even for one’s enemy: “From love, thorns become flowers.”

Historical evidence presented in this chapter confirms that whenever Western governments have supported a dictator/tyrant in Third World countries, the populations of those countries have developed resentment/hostility toward the West, and conversely, whenever these governments have opposed a dictator and brutal regime, people of those countries have developed a positive attitude toward the West. Doctor Marvasti refers to the CIA-sponsored coup d’état of Iran in 1953, which overthrew the democratic government of Doctor Mosaddeq. Although at that time it may have been considered a victory for the U.S., the hostility and resentment created toward the West eventually culminated in the Islamic revolution of 1979.

Chapter 10

The shepherd has always tried to persuade the sheep that their interests and his own are the same.

Marie Beyle

This chapter discusses the impact of terrorism as a trauma on Western political leaders, and the ways in which these two entities may interact with each other (e.g., some Western leaders may exploit terrorism/ nationalism/religion to accomplish their own agenda). The author notes Sinclair Lewis’ words from 80 years ago, “When fascism comes to America, it will be wrapped in the flag, carrying a cross.”

This section also discusses leaders as human beings who are subject to developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), acute stress disorder, excessive anger, narcissistic insult and urges for retaliation after experiencing the trauma of terrorism. Dr. Marvasti questions whether or not leaders also demonstrate an “identification with the aggressor” or a “compulsion to repeat the trauma” when they are exposed to the trauma of terrorists. These topics, as well as leaders’ public reactions, internal struggles, transformations of defeat into victory, and references to the terrorists as “cowards,” are subsections of this chapter. In addition, the subject of leaders’ communication with God is explored. Doctor Marvasti speculates that this phenomenon may reflect genuine and honest feelings of leaders which others may misunderstand.

The author also focuses on the opportunistic type of leader: such a person may exploit terrorism to create fear in his nation, thus uniting citizens to back his/her policies. The statement of Martin Luther King, Jr., “We have guided missiles and misguided men” reinforces this.

Extensively reviewed and quoted in this regard are the writings of Doctor John Mueller (professor of political science at Ohio State University). The psychological subject of “fear of death,” its impact on “war-oriented” leaders, and increased support by their traumatized nations also are discussed.

In the final section of the chapter, the author provides examples of peaceful reactions of some leaders in response to terrorism, aggression, and other combative gestures by their enemies. Doctor Marvasti concludes that a leader is a human being with frailties common to all, and therefore should not be idolized as a superhuman figure. Leaders are also “working through” their own childhood issues and possible traumas, and their reaction to terrorism may reflect how successful they have been in this endeavor.

Chapter 11

*Is it any comfort to know that the tanks murdering in my name are digging
a grave for my people as well?*

Aharon Shabtai

This chapter is authored by Justine McCabe, Ph.D., a psychologist and cultural anthropologist who has worked in Lebanon and Iran, and traveled frequently to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories where she has volunteered and done respite training with relief workers. Doctor McCabe considers the losses felt by Palestinians and Israelis by comparing the deaths of their children in the first and second Intifada to the deaths experienced by Americans in the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Doctor McCabe’s comparative statistics reveal that between 2000 and 2007, 118 Israeli children died. This rate of Israeli child deaths would be the

equivalent of 129 children's deaths in the Palestinian population. However, there were actually 930 Palestinian child deaths during this time. She uses these figures to comprehend the gravity of these deaths in terms of the American population: 118 Israeli child deaths over 6.5 years would be the equivalent of 4,355 American child deaths, while 930 Palestinian child deaths would be the equivalent of 31,638 American child deaths. Doctor McCabe then translates these child deaths in terms of the 2,973 Americans who died in the September 11 attacks, finding that 118 Israeli child deaths are equivalent to two September 11 attacks for Israelis, while 930 Palestinian child deaths are the equivalent of twenty-five September 11 attacks for Palestinians. She explains that the killing of children in particular creates a distinctive emotional context that evokes the most intense, primitive feelings (hatred, hostility and revenge) among Palestinians and Israelis. These in turn, lead to more child deaths, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of the conflict. Her data also highlight the gross asymmetry and inequality that have defined the relationship between Palestinians and Israelis since 1948, highly relevant in understanding the perpetuation or resolution of the conflict.

Doctor McCabe indicates that the effect of the deaths of these innocent children, Israeli and Palestinian, can be likened to the "loss of innocence" that Americans felt after the September 11 attacks. Noting the decisive role that their government plays in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, she suggests that perhaps by empathizing with the loss of Israeli and Palestinian children, Americans would be moved to pressure their government to restore the equality between these two peoples that is essential for an enduring peace. Concomitantly, world leaders must firmly enforce international laws prohibiting the killing of civilians—especially children—whether by states or individuals.

Chapter 12

Violence, even well intentioned, always rebounds upon oneself.

Lao Tzu

In this chapter, Doctor Jess Ghannam focuses on the subject of "Palestine-A Nation Traumatized." This chapter is particularly revealing as it presents the feelings and perceptions of a conflict from the "other side." This vantage point allows the reader to compare it with reports/news media from the West and discover the significant differences/discrepancies in reporting.

Doctor Ghannam initially explains that according to the Geneva Convention, the "occupier army is responsible for the health/wellness of the inhabitants under occupation." He reviews documentation from neutral sources (such as the UN and human rights groups) that indicate that the phy-

sical/mental health conditions of Palestinians in the occupied territories are devastating. Doctor Ghannam refers to the international laws of health care to point out the ways in which the implements of occupation: segregation, closure, curfew, blockades, military checkpoints and frequent invasions by the Israeli Army were detrimental to the health and hygiene of civilians.

Doctor Ghannam presents research on 229 adolescents in the Gaza Strip who were exposed regularly to the trauma of Israeli's army attacks. The results of these studies reveal the widespread presence of PTSD and depression; yet, Doctor Ghannam also acknowledges the resilience of Palestinian children despite their continued exposure to devastating traumas.

Chapter 13

. . . stress can set off a ripple of hormonal changes that permanently wire a child's brain to cope with a malevolent world. Through this chain of events, violence and abuse pass from generation to generation as well as from one society to the next.

Martin Teicher

In this section, Doctor Marvasti and Kenneth M. Cunningham discuss current aspects of pharmacotherapy in treatment for trauma of terrorism. The definitions of trauma, its short and long-term negative impacts, and psychic trauma are explained in biochemical and anatomical terms. The authors note that emotional trauma/stress may cause biochemical and anatomical changes in the brain. In the past, it was assumed that "something emotional," no matter how devastating it could be, would have impact only on the "software" of the brain's "computer." But as the writers explain, scientific literature now points toward damage and changes in the anatomy of the brain (hardware) as well as alteration of biochemical/hormonal pathways. Also discussed is medication for treatment of PTSD and for the possible prevention of the negative impact of psychic trauma.

Chapter 14

I have to tell the world that if they do not defend us, then we have to defend ourselves with the only thing we have, our bodies. Our bodies are the only fighting means at our disposal.

Hiba, female suicide bomber trainee

In this chapter Doctor Marvasti and Susan Phillips Plese review the literature on female warriors from an historical point of view. They focus their attention on the recent phenomenon of female suicide warriors/bombers.

The authors review literature which analyzes the motivation of female suicide activists and criticize the bias in the findings/conclusions. According to

Marvasti and Plese, these analysts have focused on the “personal motivators” of the female fighters such as losses, sexual affairs, divorce, gender conflict, and infertility. They have ignored the more political factors of nationalism, ideology and the urge to fight against the perceived invader/occupier, as if a female could not have idealistic/activist views. The authors explain that nationalism and the desire to resist the enemy of their state touches the hearts of both women and men as does cultural humiliation, desperation, injustice and rage.

President Arafat addressed 1000 Palestinian women in 2002 and referred to his female fighters with this famous statement, “You are my army of roses which will crush Israeli tanks.” However, historical facts reveal that Sri-Lankan and Chechen fighters have utilized proportionately many more female suicide bombers/warriors than Palestinians.

Chapter 15

We will not learn how to live together in peace by killing each other's children.

Jimmy Carter

In this chapter the hardship of being a mother of a suicide bomber is explored. Doctor Marvasti and Claire Olivier have reviewed the literature on Palestinian mothers and challenge the allegation that these mothers encourage or pressure their children to become “martyrs.” The authors explain that what encourages/proliferates terrorism/suicide bombers in a culture are not the mothers, but the perceived sense of injustice, humiliation and the devastating impact of occupation/invasion of their homeland. These are the core motivating factors.

The authors frequently refer to the writings of Doctor Eyad Sarraj, a prominent psychiatrist in Gaza, who has had many professional contacts with mothers of past and probable future “martyrs” while practicing psychiatry in a culture which is known to have suicide “missionaries.”

The authors, through their literature review, have speculated that there are two different reactions of these mothers: the one expressed in public and the other experienced in private, which reflect their cultural context and rituals. In public these mothers may contain their tears (if they can) and express strength, nationalism and support for the “resistance movement,” but in their hearts, they are bleeding, grieving and suffering. One should not be deceived by the public expressions of pride, honor and stoicism nor take them to be indicators of a lack of pain and loss.

A New York University graduate student from Jerusalem interviewed sixteen “mothers of martyrs” from the West Bank and reported that these mothers cared deeply for their “martyred” sons and were not able to prevent them

from entering into the military conflict. The authors conclude that mothers living in war zones or occupied territories face unique challenges not experienced by many other mothers, even those whose children become soldiers.

Chapter 16

Though this be madness, yet there is method in't.

William Shakespeare

In this section, Gagan Dhaliwal, M.D., a child psychiatrist, reviews the “Neuro-bio-psycho-social aspects of violence.” He explains that violence and war have always been a part of human civilization and are a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. Although some individuals may suffer from mental illness that increases their potential for violence, mental illness does not necessarily create a violent attitude. Factors that may increase the risk of violence include growing up in poverty, exposure to family/neighborhood violence, and certain medical disorders. Scientific literature indicates that violence is a heterogeneous phenomenon in nature, and possibly no single factor or gene can explain it.

Chapter 17

It is only a generation after a war that the ordinary people begin to admit that it was a futile, foolish, and unnecessary one- which is something the prophets, poets, and philosophers were nearly stoned for saying as it began.

Sydney Harris

In this chapter Doctors Marvasti and Dripchak review the history of war crimes, martyrdom, and suicide bombers/warriors. The two explore the historical definition of war crimes and refer to cases possibly unknown to many Westerners.

In the history section on martyrdom in Islam, Marvasti and Dripchak introduce the Shia concept of martyrdom by referring to the epic of Imam Hussein and his seventy-two soldiers in Karbala, Iraq who were massacred by a much larger army. Imam Hussein and his small force knew that they would be killed and yet did not submit; so, in this way they might be considered suicide missionaries. Also, the Iranian suicide battalion (Intehari) in the Iran-Iraq war was motivated by Imam Hussein’s martyrdom.

The authors explain that the history of political violence and suicide attacks against powerful enemies dates back to ancient times, even in The Bible when the story of Samson could be considered a suicide mission. What is different in contemporary times is the extent of the lethality of the weapons and the speed in conveying the events to the world in “high definition color”

through TV and the Internet. Also, the extent of disinformation, justification, double standards, and war propaganda has increased.

These authors point out that since most of the time history is written primarily by the victor of a conflict, no longer may history be considered totally factual and free of personal judgment. Therefore, the quest to achieve objectivity may be only an elusive goal, even if information from both sides is revealed. As Gary Wills stated: *"Only the winners decide what were war crimes."*

J.A.M.

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**PSYCHO-POLITICAL ASPECTS OF
SUICIDE WARRIORS, TERRORISM
AND MARTYRDOM**

Chapter 1

CONTROVERSY IN DEFINITIONS OF SUICIDE BOMBERS/WARRIORS, TERRORISM AND MARTYRDOM

Jamshid A. Marvasti and Valerie L. Dripchak

If the existing government of Afghanistan had declared war on the United States at 8 A.M. EST, September 11, the attacks on New York and Washington would have been air raids.

Anonymous, European Union representative¹

We do not see things as they are. We see them as we are.

Talmud

INTRODUCTION

The definition of terrorism is in the eye of the beholder (viewer). This makes for a conundrum that is much like the story of the four blind men who were touching an elephant and explaining what the elephant was like. All four were right (as they explained what they sensed), and all four were wrong (because each explained only a part of the elephant and not the elephant itself). In regard to terrorism, the elements of desires, subjectivity, prejudice, and political or religious affiliation also interfere with what "blind men" perceive. As a result, two mistakes occur: first, only one part of the terrorism is identified or explained; and second, this single part is distorted because the subjectivity of the examiner creates the double-blind effect.

DEFINITION OF THE TERM TERRORISM

The term terrorism has its origins in the Latin verb *terrere* which means to frighten (*Wikipedia Encyclopedia: Terrorism*). *The Merriam Webster Dictionary* (2000) defines terrorism as a systematic use of a state of intense fear as a means to induce coercion. Because acts of terrorism have become more prevalent throughout the world in the post-September 11 era, the definition has expanded to “a strategy of using political violence, social threats or coordinated attacks closely associated with unconventional warfare in manner of conduct and operation” (*Wikipedia Encyclopedia: Terrorism*). The National Research Council has used the term to refer to an illegal use of violence by groups with political or ideological motives whose primary goal is to force governments into some action by inducing fear in their people (Smelser & Mitchell, 2002).

One of the problems with defining terrorism is that the label of a terrorist is not static. Salman Akhtar, a psychoanalyst, has defined it as being, “time-bound. As political loyalties shift, today’s terrorist becomes tomorrow’s hero” (Hough, 2004, p. 814). A freedom fighter can become a terrorist, or a terrorist can become a peacemaker. It is a gray area to define exactly when that role changes. Bin Laden was originally recognized as a freedom fighter when he and the Taliban militants were committing atrocities towards the (pro-Soviet Union) Afghanistan government. Later, he became a terrorist when he and the Taliban changed the directions of their guns to point toward western interests.

Yasser Arafat, on the other hand, was originally labeled a terrorist and a “child murderer.” However, after he agreed to sit at the peace table his image in the western news media became more “civilized,” and he became a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Saddam Hussein was not always considered to be the enemy. The Reagan administration supported Saddam Hussein throughout the 1980s and looked the other way as he used chemical weapons against his Kurdish population (Herman, 2002). The United State supplied him with weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and financial loans. This was until he disobeyed the U.S. by marching into Kuwait in 1990 and then lost its friendly support (Herman, 2002).

Similarly, up until 1942, the Jewish underground fighters in Palestine were terrorists. Western sympathy began to spread in 1942 as more people heard of the Holocaust, and “by 1944, the terrorists of Palestine, who were Zionists, suddenly began being described as freedom fighters” (Ahmad, 2001, p. 11).

Some of the definitions regarding terrorism are further influenced by political or ideological perspectives, or both. For example, Marjorie Cohn (2002), an associate professor of law, divided terrorism into several political cate-

gories and explained that one needs to distinguish among the following terms: individual terrorism, such as the September 11, 2001, attacks; state/government terrorism, such as Israel's occupation and aggression against the Palestinian population; international state terrorism, such as the bombings in Afghanistan by the government of the United States and the United Kingdom; and state-sponsored and supported terrorism, such as the United States government's financial and military support for Israel, and a national liberation struggle, such as Palestinian movement.

Joseph Sobran questioned whether terrorism should be defined in an ideological way. He raised such questions as: Can the end justify the means? Is it possible to be a terrorist and a freedom fighter at the same time? Is it possible to use bad methods for good purposes? (Kemp, 1986, p. 135).

At times the methods that one uses to fight determine whether one is defined as a terrorist or not. The label of terrorism has been used based on who is the attacker and who is killed. If you kill someone that we like, it may be called terrorism by our news media. If you kill someone that we do not like, we may rationalize the action by suggesting that it just helps to keep the peace or is a kind of self-defense, or is collateral damage. From another point of view, as Marvasti stated, "If you carry your bomb in your hand, you're a terrorist. If you carry your bomb in an F-16, you are a freedom fighter—a war hero" (Bates, 2003).

Western news media and governments consider terrorists to be those who do not belong to any organized or official armed forces. They represent no recognized government and therefore their people or movements have no "seat" in the United Nations. For example, the massacre of the American Marines in Beirut in 1983 by a suicide bomber was considered terrorism, but if that same act were performed by an Egyptian or a Jordanian soldier, it would be labeled an act of war rather than terrorism.

Heskin (1980, p. 74) stated that terrorism is an emotionally charged topic. He referred to the bombings in Birmingham public houses in November of 1974 by the Provisional Irish Republic Army (IRA), in which a dozen people were killed or injured. These actions were universally condemned as terrorism. However, he asserted that such atrocious behavior is not a sufficient definition of terrorism. For example, the British bombing of Dresden, the American bombing of Hiroshima, or the German bombing of London are not considered acts of terrorism, although they too resulted in deliberate massacre of innocent civilians. Heskin added that, "the behavior of the perpetrators (governments) was, numerically at least, more atrocious than the Birmingham pub bombings, and its effects more calculated and cold-blooded." The citizens of the countries that were bombed were inhabitants of a land that was at war with the perpetrators. Yet the Provisional IRA also claimed it was at war with Britain. Is there a difference? Does war then justi-