

HUMILIATION AS A PATHWAY TO VIOLENCE

What cannot be contained, mourned, and worked through in one generation is transmitted, for the most part unconsciously, as affect, mission, and task to the next generation.

– Professor Vamik Volkan¹ –

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A month after my return from the Little Karoo, I was wandering around the campus of Stellenbosch University, thinking about my strange reaction to that Oudtshoorn poster, when I ran into Professor Bodley van der Westhuysen, former head of the university's psychology department. The conversation that ensued changed my life.

I told Bodley I'd become obsessed with trying to understand why apparently 'good' Afrikaners like us had invented something as ugly as apartheid. It seemed to me that psychology was worthless unless it could offer diagnoses and healing to nations as well as individuals. I expected him to tell me I was naïve. Instead, he advised me to sign up for the University of Port Elizabeth's doctoral programme in *Psycho-biography*. I did just that, and registered to do a dissertation titled 'The Development of a Social Conscience amongst Afrikaners'. The reaction from fellow Afrikaners was interesting. Their eyebrows would tilt and they'd say something sceptical like 'oh, you're going to get a lot of attention'. I took this as a veiled warning.

I started by rereading the pioneering work of American psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg (1927–1987), whose work on moral reasoning had made a profound impression on me as a young student.

Kohlberg was born in Bronxville, New York. He served in the Merchant Marine towards the end of World War II. For a while, he worked on a ship, the Haganah, smuggling Jewish refugees from Romania through the British blockade into Palestine. He was captured by the British, but managed to escape and returned to the United States. This tangential brush with World War II and the Holocaust forced Kohlberg to start pondering some very deep questions, foremost of which was: what inspires us to commit atrocities against fellow human beings? He spent the rest of his life searching for answers. In 1958, he wrote a landmark dissertation on *Moral Development*.² As he saw it, moral development passed through six stages during an individual's lifetime. This process could, however, be arrested at any stage in its evolution, often by severe trauma, leading to a situation where the moral sense is numbed or blunted. When I read this, it seemed to offer the first clue to why my people had committed deeds that seemed, at first glance, to be irrational and immoral.

Kohlberg believed it was possible to measure a person's 'moral maturity' by assessing their capacity for moral reasoning.³ Moral reasoning, he wrote, is determined largely by an individual's psychological and social circumstances, and the culture in which they grew up. This implied that people who had passed through severe trauma, and lived in constant fear of its recurrence, were likely to be more rigid in their moral thinking than those born and raised in less stressful environments.

Recent studies in neuro-psychology have shown that experiences of trauma cause changes in the human brain. I shall return to this in a later section. The 'danger alert' mechanism in a trauma victim's

brain is in a state of almost permanent activation and can be triggered into full alarm by the slightest stimulus. The victim lives in a state of high anxiety, constantly on guard against real or perceived threats. Such individuals (and groups) have low tolerance thresholds and a high degree of aversion for uncertainty.

Uncertainty – the inability to predict what’s going to happen next – leads to increased anxiety and ultimately to activation of the fight-flight mechanism, sometimes with catastrophic consequences. Managing a high level of anxiety compels trauma victims to seek predictability, *inter alia* by imposing rigid rules on everyone in their environment. This will ring bells for anyone who was raised in an Afrikaans home or school. The culture in which I grew up was mostly conservative, with authority figures (usually male) laying down rules that you disobeyed at your peril. Was this the result of living for generations in circumstances where our survival was, at times, uncertain? I was wrestling with this question when I came upon yet another clue; one that caused me to drop my dissertation and veer off on a new line of inquiry. This clue was psychohistory.

The Dawn of Psychohistory

The past is never dead. It's not even past...

– William Faulkner –

Psychohistory is a relatively new interdisciplinary field of study that seeks to explore and explain the psychological motives of nations. Due to the fact that psychohistory attempts to offer a new way of understanding history, its emergence was initially greeted with scepticism by mainstream historians.

Psychohistorian Rudolph Binion, a professor

at Brandeis University outside Boston, wrote in *la Psychohistoire* (1992) that ‘the *why* of history necessarily comes back entirely to a *why* psychologically’. Seen from this angle, he says, ‘[h]istory is what men have done; to know *why* men have done what they have, one must look for the deeper motives, not more not less’.⁴

Psychohistorian Howard Stein⁵ offers a succinct summary of what he considers the cause of historical repetitions of violence to be: “What cannot be contained, mourned, and worked through in one generation is transmitted, for the most part unconsciously, to the next generation.”⁶ This is now referred to as intergenerational or trans-generational transmission of trauma.

Orthodox historians have struggled for centuries to understand why history repeats itself.

Psychohistory attempts to find a possible explanation, or at least to offer an added perspective.

Psychohistorian Lloyd deMause suggests that individuals raised in cultures that tolerate or encourage affection between parent and child differ markedly in temperament from those reared in cultures where this is not the case. Children born in traumatic milieus, or children whose parents survived

wars or concentration camps, are often exposed to harsher childrearing methods – mostly because their parents are constantly struggling to control their anxiety or anger, due to their underlying fear of survival. One result is that the emotional wounds inflicted by traumatic experience are transmitted across generations, creating a cycle that is difficult to break.

Reading these theoreticians raised my interest to the level of obsession. I was particularly taken by the work of deMause, the head of the International Psychohistorical Association. One afternoon, I found his address on the internet and decided to write to him, introducing myself as an Afrikaner trying to come to terms with my own history. I half expected to be ignored or dismissed as a crank, but, the next day, deMause wrote back, welcoming me into the fraternity of psychohistorians. He said the questions I was raising were extremely interesting, and suggested that I attend the next psychohistory conference, scheduled to take place in New York a few months hence.

So I found myself in New York, an Afrikaner amateur in a hall-full building of learned experts. I discovered that psychohistory had attracted the interest of scholars from an extraordinarily broad range of disciplines: psychoanalysts, historians, economists, psychiatrists, psychologists, neuroscientists, sociologists, anthropologists and even journalists

One of the things that became evident to me at this congress was the central role of humiliation as a driver of repetitive violence in history. It stayed in the back of my mind as I tried to connect the dots of my people's history.

A few months later, another gift came my way. A friend working at UNISA⁷ spotted an article she thought I'd like and popped it in the post to me. It was a paper called *Humiliation: Real Pain, A Pathway to Violence*⁸ by psychologist Linda Hartling, originally presented at a workshop on *Humiliation and Violent Conflict* at Columbia University in 2005.⁹ Again, I was dumbstruck. After months of frustration, I'd discovered someone dedicated to the study of the role of humiliation in history. That first article led to contact with the International Association for Dignity and Humiliation Studies,¹⁰ founded by Hartling¹¹ and her Norwegian collaborator, Dr Evelin Lindner.¹²

Lindner, quoting Thomas Friedman,¹³ describes humiliation as 'the single most underappreciated force in international relations'.¹⁴ She notes that conflict between ethnic groups and nations, and especially conquest of one group by the other, invariably results in humiliation for the losing party. Memories of ancient humiliations can be as vivid as if they had happened yesterday.¹⁵ Psychoanalyst and psychohistorian Vamik Volkan¹⁶ refers to this process as 'time collapse', which can play an important role in keeping grievances and conflict alive over many generations, thereby perpetuating cycles of violent revenge.¹⁷

Linda Hartling¹⁸ suggests that the field of social neuroscience may help us understand the way in which humiliation leads humans to engage in violent acts. She describes a neuro-psychological pathway from humiliation to violence: the sequence is humiliation leading to social pain, to decreased self-awareness, to decreased self-regulation, to increased self-defeating behaviour, and, finally, to violence.

Research suggests that the social pain of humiliation is experienced as intensely as any physical pain, and that it 'can endure throughout one's life span, and be passed on to future generations'.¹⁹ This disproves the inaccurate (and dangerous) assumption that 'sticks and stones will break my bones, but

words will never harm me'. The more severe the humiliation and trauma, the more likely its victims are to become suspicious of and paranoid about the intentions of others towards them. 'Once humiliated, there is often a powerful feeling that "the self" will never be repaired, healed or be made whole again unless the injustice is appropriately addressed.'²⁰ The anger and rage that follows protects us from inner fragmentation, from 'going mad' or having a 'nervous breakdown'. However, it also tends to foster a desire for vengeance and an attempt to restore dignity. This is why humiliation is often followed by a reversal in which the previously humiliated becomes the next 'humiliator'.

At this point, the core of psychohistory fell into place for me.

Revenge for Humiliation, Even if Centuries Later

History is filled with examples of nations that have been humiliated and violated, where subsequent generations, years and decades later, seek revenge in an effort to reclaim lost honour and restore the wounded self. Psychoanalyst and psychohistorian Howard Stein writes: "What cannot be contained, mourned, and worked through in one generation is transmitted, for the most part unconsciously, as affect, mission, and task to the next generation."²¹ Vamik Volkan refers to it as an amalgam of 'deposited representation'.²² Psychologists and psychohistorians refer to this process as an 'enactment'.²³

Professor Vamik Volkan has spent his later life researching large group traumas. He found that any group that has been through devastating trauma 'carries the image of the event along with associated shared feelings of hurt and shame, and with the defences they initiate, from one generation to the next'.²⁴ There is an international array of scholars who explored the legacies of social shocks like war and genocide, whose findings were compiled and edited by clinical psychologist and traumatologist Dr Yael Danieli²⁵ in her book, *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, published in 1998.²⁶ Of the 38 articles in the book, most deal with the effects of large-scale traumatic events on subsequent generations. The traumatic events include those involving the Aboriginal people of North America and Australia, Russia under Stalin, World War II and the Holocaust, the Armenian and Cambodian genocides, the Vietnam war, the Balkan wars following the break-up of Yugoslavia, and wars and ethnic or religious conflicts in Chile, Argentina, Nigeria and Iran, and the experience of black South Africans under apartheid. Emeritus Professor Judy Atkinson²⁷ (2002) of Southern Cross University looked at transgenerational effects of trauma in the indigenous people of Australia, and sociologists Bonnie Duran and Dr Eduardo Duran (1995) examined post-colonial transmission of trauma in Native Americans.²⁸ In *Native American – Post-Colonial Psychology* (1995), they suggest that: "Historical trauma becomes embedded in the cultural memory of a people and is passed on by the same mechanisms by which culture is generally transmitted, and therefore becomes 'normalised' within that culture."²⁹

Stein warns that groups that have been traumatised may turn the memory 'into a mythology, an entitlement ideology, or a rationale for revenge'.³⁰

A Step Closer to the *Why* of Trauma Enactment

Neuroscience: How Trauma Causes Changes in Our Brains

Thanks to brain imaging, we are now beginning to get a clearer understanding of these cycles of violence, which appear at first glance to be irrational. Pioneering work has been done by Dr Bessel van der Kolk. His findings, from more than 20 years of research on the treatment of psychological trauma, are discussed in his book, *The Body Keeps The Score*³¹ (2014). His subjects included traumatised soldiers who returned from war. Van der Kolk shows how psychological trauma fragments the mind and how victims of trauma lose their ability to act spontaneously in daily life. They tend to be chronically hyper-vigilant, even when safely home. He says, “We now know that their behaviours are not the result of moral failings or bad character – they are caused by actual changes in the brain.”³² Unlike normal experiences, traumatic events tend to be remembered differently. Trauma memories do not get encoded in the brain like normal everyday experiences; they are recalled with extreme vividness, resisting integration, leading to either extremes of forgetting or remembering. Brain imaging studies confirm that these traumatised memories tend to come back as emotional and sensory states, often difficult to express verbally. That’s one reason that trauma victims prefer to ‘talk’ to others who have been through the same experience – because there is so much that cannot be expressed in words. So cycles of violence are created that often last for centuries. In some nations, for example, those engaged in the Bosnian conflict, this cycle has now repeated itself for nearly 600 years. In Afghanistan, certain tribal groups have been at each other’s throats for nearly 1 000 years, as ancient rivals attempt to avenge lost honour. In the next section, we examine a few cases in point.

Bent Out of Shape by History

1. GERMANY – The bitter fruit of the Treaty of Versailles

The year 1914 saw the outbreak of the most devastating war that Europe had ever seen. The conflagration consumed an estimated 37 million lives; 17 million deaths and 20 million wounded. At the end of the war, and after years’ of stalemate in the trenches, the Germans were defeated. Coming to the peace talks at Versailles, the victorious powers were ready to extract their pound of flesh and humiliate the Germans.

Many wiser heads warned against such humiliation, warning that there will be unforeseen consequences, but the victors didn’t listen: by God and the people, they were right. The consequences for Germany were unspeakably awful; hyperinflation, extreme hunger and physical deprivation, and political violence and instability, all compounded by the burden of the war debt and then the Great Depression in the 1930s. Volkan writes: “The experience of civilian deprivation and trauma during the war conditioned a generation of central European youth to make Adolf Hitler a charismatic figure and his programme politically attractive to them.”³³ Psychohistorian Peter Loewenberg, discussing the origins of World War II, emphasises that the ‘relationship between moral, physical, and psychic trauma of the First World War on the civilian populations, particularly the

children, of central Europe, and the Nazi appeal to them during the crises of the Great Depression after 1929 was causal'.³⁴

Into the vacuum stepped Corporal Adolf Hitler, with his ideology of redemption through blood, discipline and sacrifice. American psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton (2003), known for his studies of the psychological causes and effects of war, wrote as follows about the importance of Hitler championing vengeance on the French and the British: "We know from history that collective humiliation can be a goad to various kinds of aggressive behavior. Nazi doctors told me of indelible scenes, which they either witnessed as young children or were told about by their fathers, of German soldiers returning home defeated after World War I. These beaten men, many wounded, engendered feelings of pathos, loss and embarrassment, all amid national misery and threatened revolution..."³⁵

The Germans were arguably the most sophisticated and tolerant people in Europe at the time. Some of the most famous writers and eminent scientists were German; they had the highest rate of intermarriage between Germans and Jews. Yet many got pulled into Hitler's nightmarish search for enemies and scapegoats, foremost among them communists and Jews. American sociologist Thomas Scheff (2003), along with many others, suggests that the humiliation that befell Germany after World War I led Hitler and the German public to become trapped in an ongoing cycle of humiliation, rage and vengeful aggression, which ultimately resulted in *blitzkrieg* against their European neighbours and in the atrocities of the Holocaust. Scheff writes that: "There is a powerful subtext in the early writings and speeches of Hitler about the humiliations that the Germans had suffered, which he thought would restore community and pride to the German nation."³⁶ In 1940, when France fell to the German onslaught, Hitler forced the French to sign their surrender in the very same railroad car in which the French and the victorious allies had forced the Germans to acknowledge their capitulation in 1918.

2. RWANDA genocide – 1994

Rwanda is a place of breath-taking beauty. Rwandans lived for centuries in a traditional class system of the Twa at the bottom; next, the majority, the Hutu, who were the peasant farmers, and then a minority, the Tutsi, who were considered aristocratic, upper class and elite herdsman.

The first European to visit Rwanda was Count von Götzen in 1894. When the Rwandan King died in 1897, the Germans moved in. Their presence and influence was never dominant, however. When Germany invaded Belgium during WW1, the Belgians retaliated and invaded Ruanda-Urundi in 1916. After the war, in 1924, Belgium was granted the area as a mandate to administer as a colony. It was only then that the Catholic Church presence became a dominant influence, particularly amongst the Hutus. The church influence led to the old hierarchal traditions being challenged. The Hutus were put into positions of power, replacing Tutsis. Racial identity cards, defining who was Hutu (85%) and who Tutsi (14%), were introduced; this despite centuries of intermarriage and the established custom of allowing both Hutu and Tutsi to become honorary members of the other group.

In 1962, Rwanda became independent. By now, strong feelings of resentment existed between the groups and, among the Hutu, the description 'cockroaches' became a common epithet for Tutsis. Intermittent conflict between the two groups became the norm. By 1990, a new wave of Tutsi

persecution was in full swing. In December of that year, the Hutu 'Ten Commandments' – a 'litany of hatred, attributing dishonesty and treachery not only to all Tutsis but also to any Hutu who befriends them' – was published in a local newspaper. The eighth commandment demanded that 'Hutus must stop having mercy on Tutsis'.

By 1994, following the death of the Hutu president when his airplane was shot down, an orgy of Hutu extremism was whipped up over a period of several weeks. On 29 April, the national radio announced that, on 5 May, the capital, Kigali, should be cleansed of all Tutsis. Even unborn Tutsi children should be ripped from dead Tutsi women. The Hutus took revenge for the humiliation they felt they had been subjected to for centuries³⁷ and a tragedy, eclipsed by few in recent history, followed.

3. CHINA

Loewenberg writes about the humiliating effects that 'foreign incursion and exploitation' by Western imperialism in the 19th and early 20th centuries had on China. He lists the Opium War of 1839 (which ended in the ceding of Hong Kong to Britain in 1841), the Boxer Rebellion of 1899–1900, and, finally, China's 'national humiliation of foreign control of maritime and native customs and the salt monopoly'.³⁸

Let us briefly look at what transpired.

In the 19th century, opium was big business for British traders in Asia. The drug was mass-produced in the British colony of India and then transported by sea for resale in China, where opium was considered a menace; its importation was forbidden and its use banned by Emperor Yung Ching's edict of 1838. Within a year, British traders had stockpiled 20 000 chests of unsold opium in Hong Kong and were attempting to find ways around the imperial ban. When the emperor heard about this, he sent soldiers to destroy the opium. The British were furious and the first Anglo-Chinese Opium War of 1838–1842 followed.

The British Navy destroyed Canton and other Chinese port cities and then sailed up the Yangtze, the Chinese's main trading artery, destroying any forces that offered resistance. The Chinese eventually sued for peace, and were forced to cede Hong Kong to the British and pay six million dollars compensation for the opium they had destroyed.

Fifteen years later, in 1856, there was a second and even more vicious Anglo-Chinese opium war, intended to force the Chinese to abandon further attempts to outlaw the opium trade. An English writer who saw the bombardment of Canton wrote: "Field pieces loaded with grape were planted at the end of long, narrow streets crowded with innocent men, woman and children, to mow them down like grass till the gutters flowed with their blood." This massacre, deemed a 'horrible and revolting crime' by *The Sydney Morning Herald*, was followed by a second massacre of Chinese soldiery at Canton. After this, Chinese resistance collapsed and the vast nation was flooded with British opium. Towards the end of the Qing dynasty (1899–1901), there arose in China an anti-imperialist uprising, the Yihetuan movement, known in the West as the *Boxer Rebellion*.³⁹ The uprising happened during a period of severe drought and flooding, with the inhabitants struggling to survive, particularly in the Shandong province where, in the 1890s, China had given foreigners commercial concessions, amongst other things for the building of a railway line. They considered the building of

the railway as an attempt to Westernise them; something many resented and opposed.⁴⁰ The Boxers killed hundreds of Chinese Christians and foreign missionaries as well as railway line entrepreneurs, businessmen and engineers. An army with soldiers from eight countries, including Japan, eventually overwhelmed the Boxers, bringing disastrous devastation to Beijing and the countryside. There are pictures of captured Boxer rebels, decapitated and with their heads put on poles.⁴¹ The Boxer protocol was signed on 7 September 1901. Government officials who supported the Boxers were executed. For the next 39 years, China had to pay indemnity for foreign troops stationed in Beijing,⁴² 450 million *taels* of silver, which was more than the government's annual tax revenue.⁴³ In 1931, the Japanese invaded China. From then until Japan's defeat in World War II, China endured a devastating war that destroyed the economy and cost millions of Chinese lives. Japanese atrocities included the 'rape of Nanking' – a six-week period of rape and killing taking the lives of about 40 000 people⁴⁴ – as well as the activities of Unit 731, who used the Chinese as subjects to test germ warfare agents.⁴⁵

All this left the Chinese with deep feelings of shame and desire for vengeance, says Dr Shaohua Hu, research fellow at the Institute of World Economy and Politics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. He writes that: "[C]urrent tension between China and Japan may be attributed to several factors. Many Chinese still hate the Japanese because of their historical animosity and for this to dissipate sixty years may not be long enough."⁴⁶

China's first attempt at reclaiming respect and honour was Doctor Sun Yat-Sen's (1866–1925) 1927 programme, the San Min Chu I – *The Three Principles of the People*.⁴⁷ The goal was to raise China through the principles of 'nationalism, democracy and livelihood'; this was, says Loewenberg, 'the inspiration for both the Kuomintang and the Communists'.⁴⁸ Loewenberg says he had seen and heard students at conferences in China 'filled with virulent hatred for Japan and Japanese' and 'their eyes filled with tears, as they expressed their outrage'⁴⁹ at Japanese pillaging during the Second World War. Loewenberg says that, although this was three decades ago and all this was their grandparents' trauma, it is totally comprehensible in terms of the Chinese national historical legacy.

Loewenberg concludes that all the "contempt, brutality, and indignity that came with foreign interventions – international expeditions, treaty ports, foreign 'concessions' on the Chinese coast and up the rivers, 'gunboat diplomacy', control of tariffs ... all contributed to the psychological issues of 'face' and shame before the world".⁵⁰

In September 1949, 48 years after their humiliating defeat at the hands of the allied coalition, the Chinese Communist Party completed its long and bitter campaign to wrest control of the Chinese mainland from the nationalist Kuomintang (National People's Party). Addressing a vast crowd on Beijing's Tian An Men Square on 1 October 1949, Chairman Mao proclaimed: "The Chinese people have stood up!" Out of this came the new Chinese national anthem:

"Stand up! Stand up! Not willing to be a slave people."⁵¹

The message was clear, says Loewenberg: Mao was repairing centuries of hurt and pain. "Now China had arisen and stood as an equal before the peoples and nations of the world." It was imperative that no foreign incursions ever impinge on China again: "Stay away from our borders, out of our territory, our air space, and our rights. We insist on our rights. We insist on our parity, and will proudly defend the sovereignty of our territory and China's dignity as a great power in the world."⁵²

However, the repercussions from more than 100 years of humiliation at the hands of foreign powers did not end with Mao's victory in 1949. Traumatized nations don't necessarily strike back at those who traumatized them. They are equally likely to take it out on others, or even their own people, if the programme designed to rise above humiliation and restore dignity is not met with absolute loyalty. China never directed its vengeance at the British; it turned on its own people. Millions perished during the *Great Leap Forward*, which started in 1958, and the *Cultural Revolution* beginning in 1966.

4. HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

By 1948, many of those who survived Hitler's concentration camps had immigrated to Israel.

Various studies have been done, and are currently underway, considering the Israel/Palestine deadlock as part of a re-enactment related to the Holocaust.⁵³ The contention is that, as a consequence of the Holocaust, the Jewish people (actual Holocaust survivors as well as others) were left with a deep fear of survival as a group. The people and Government of Israel, in their determination to ensure that 'never again' will there be a repetition of the Holocaust, see opposition to or criticism of Israel's actions as an existential threat. Therefore, they seek to acquire and maintain military superiority relative to the Palestinians and surrounding Arab nations, (the latter who launched war against Israel the day after Israel was named a country by the United Nations), and tend to see compromise and 'territorial concessions' as a form of weakness that they must vigorously resist.

THE PRESENT

In March 2015, *The Financial Times* published an article by journalist Gideon Rachman⁵⁴ in which he suggests that 'solving international conflicts may involve thinking as much about emotions as interests'.⁵⁵ He quotes newly elected Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, speaking just before he assumed office: "On Monday national humiliation will be over. We will finish with orders from abroad." One of Tsipras' first acts as prime minister was to visit the memorial for the Greek resistance fighters executed by the Nazis in WW2. This was an attempt to revive national pride while at the same time inflicting 'a little return humiliation on the Germans'; leaders of the Eurozone creditors who were insisting that Greece cut government spending and repay its debts.

Rachman says he has some advice for anyone who thinks they can portray national humiliation, as in this case, as a Greek eccentricity. [He says](#) that such people should look around the world and they'll see similar situations playing itself out elsewhere. He continued putting recent international conflicts on the table, all involving the use of humiliation rhetoric to stimulate resistance to presumed enemies. One such person is Russia's President Vladimir Putin. Putin is from a generation that 'once served a larger and more powerful nation – the Soviet Union'. The loss of its empire and its cavalier treatment at the hands of the West has left Russia seething with 'national humiliation'. Putin is also bent on reclaiming past honour by reminding the Russians of their nation's finest hour – the great patriotic war against Germany. Other Russian officials boast about Russia's nuclear arsenal as 'a totem of their great-power status and a reason for others to fear them'.

Similarly, China's previous humiliation by Western powers and Japan has generated a powerful wish to end and reverse the situation that led to the national humiliation. The national history museum in Beijing, for instance, dwells on China's 'century of humiliation'. Young Chinese are assured modern China will not be pushed around by anyone. Likewise Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, said in a speech in 2003 that the 'single most under-appreciated force in international relations is humiliation'.⁵⁶

The Verdict is in: Trauma Leaves Real Scars, Not Metaphorical Ones

Humankind has now reached a point where it is able to address large group trauma. However, first, we need to understand it and take it seriously. The pain unprocessed trauma causes to individuals is unspeakable; the socio-economic devastation is incalculable. Our planet teems with conflict zones turned to wasteland by war or conquest. Millions of children grow up with destitute and fearful parents having to rebuild their lives in a wasteland – leading to highly dysfunctional childrearing (deMause), which breeds its own violence and abuse, along with substance abuse and mental health problems. However, there is hope for the cycle to be broken, says Loewenberg, 'if one generation can get hold of the legacy it has received, translate the transmission into narrative, grieve its effects, and open a reparative future'.⁵⁷

NOTHING ENRAGES ANYONE MORE THAN BEING HUMILIATED.

Born an Afrikaner, it took me half my life to realise the extent to which our collective psyche had been shredded by similar processes of humiliation and trauma at the hands of the British Empire since 1795. The humiliation and fragmentation of Afrikaner families after the Anglo-Boer War (1898–1902) was no different from that experienced by the groups just discussed. Neither is the anger that peaked in 1939 when the surviving children and the first generation born after the Anglo-Boer War reached adulthood. For Afrikaners, the war did not end in 1902.

I would argue that the same symptoms of humiliation, along with the need to restore self-worth and dignity, can be observed in my people. At first glance, this is likely to offend a lot of people, but bear with me while I explain.

¹ Howard Stein, *A Mosaic of Transmissions after Trauma, Lost in Transmission*: (Fromm, M. Gerard (Ed.), Chapter 10, (Kindle, Version 5.2.8) Loc. 3152/4012.

² Kohlberg, Lawrence & Colby, Anne, *The Measurement of Moral Judgement*, Volumes I and II.

³ Humiliation and trauma of a group, physically or otherwise, activates the need for group survival. Meaning – 'feelings of safety' influences people's level of 'moral reasoning' in resolving any crises that threatens the group's safety (survival). Fear of survival can be either 'conscious' or 'unconscious'. Unconscious fear can, for example, present as bravado, and unconscious fears again influence unconscious motives (reasons or explanations for choice of action).

⁴ Binion, Rudolph, *Introduction à la Psychohistoire*, p. 7.

⁵ Stein, Howard, PhD, psychoanalytic, medical and organisational anthropologist. Professor and special assistant in the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine, University of Oklahoma Health Science Center in Oklahoma City.

⁶ Stein, Howard, Fromm, M. Gerard (ed.), *Lost in Transmission: Studies of Trauma Across Generations*. (Kindle, Version 5.2.8) Loc 3151–61.

⁷ University of South Africa in Pretoria.

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- ⁸ Hartling, Linda, *Humiliation: Real Pain, A Pathway to Violence*,⁸ *The Journal of Psychohistory*, Vol. 19.
- ⁹ 2005 *Workshop on Humiliation and Violent Conflict*, co-sponsored by Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies and Center for International Conflict Resolution, New York.
- ¹⁰ Humiliation and Dignity Studies: www.humiliationstudies.org.
- ¹¹ Director and founding member HDS Dr Linda Hartling, PhD.
- ¹² Founding President HDS, Dr Evelin Lindner, MD, PhD (Dr med. and Dr psychology).
- ¹³ *NY Times* columnist and Pulitzer prize-winning author.
- ¹⁴ Friedman, Thomas L, *The Humiliation Factor*, *New York Times*, 9 November, 2003.
- ¹⁵ Hartling, L, *Humiliation: Real Pain, A Pathway to Violence*, *The Journal of Psychohistory*, Vol. 19.
- ¹⁶ Vamik D Volkan, MD, DLFAPA, FACPSSA, is a Turkish-born American professor in psychiatry, psychoanalyst and prominent psychohistorian who has written extensively about large group conflict and its consequences. He has also introduced several important concepts that are helpful in understanding the causes and effects of large group behaviour. One of them is the concept of 'chosen trauma', which refers to a shared image or mental representation of an event and the associated feelings of shame, humiliation, victimisation and rage, usually resulting from the actions of another large group. This chosen trauma can become an important part of the identity of the traumatised group.
- ¹⁷ Volkan, Vamik D, *Chosen Trauma, The Political Ideology of Entitlement and Violence*, Berlin, Germany, 10 June 2004.
- ¹⁸ Hartling & Luchetta, *Humiliation: Assessing the Impact of Derision, Degradation, and Debasement*, *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 1999, pp. 3–4.
- ¹⁹ Hartling, L, *Humiliation: Real Pain, A Pathway to Violence*, *The Journal of Psychohistory*, Vol. 19.
- ²⁰ Muenster, Bettina, Lotto, David, *The Social Psychology of Humiliation and Revenge, The Origins of the Fundamentalist Mindset*, p. 122. Howard Stein, *A Mosaic of transmissions after trauma*, (Fromm, M. Gerard (Ed.), *Lost in Transmission*: Chapter Ten, [Kindle, Version: 5.2.8] Loc., 3152/4012
- ²¹ Fromm, M. Gerard (ed.), Chapter 10, Howard Stein, *A Mosaic of Transmissions after Trauma*, *Lost in Transmission: Studies of Trauma Across Generations* (Kindle, Version 5.2.8) Loc., 3152/4012.
- ²² www.vamikvolkan.com/Transgenerational-Transmission-and-Deposited – representation.
- ²³ Enactment: the compulsion to repeat trauma.
- ²⁴ Volkan, V, Bosnia-Herzegovina: Chosen Trauma and its Transgenerational Transmission, Introduction, www.vamikvolkan.com.
- ²⁵ *It Was Always There* – Yael Danieli – SlideShare; www.slideshare.net/worldwidewhosewho/yael-danieli-chapter.
- ²⁶ Danieli, Y (ed) *Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, *Lost in Transmission Studies of Trauma Across Generations* (2012).
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