

Interview with Moghaddam

Sent: Thursday, September 10, 2020 11:58 AM
To: iptaskforce@simplelists.com
Subject: IP--Interview

From: Fathali Moghaddam

Dear Louise,

Some of our colleagues might be interested in this interview, as psychological processes are playing such an important role in the forthcoming US election.

<https://soundcloud.com/user-830442635/time-for-the-democrats-to-get-tough-with-the-mafia-boss-in-the-white-house>

Best,

Ali

--

Fathali M. Moghaddam

Director, Interdisciplinary Program in Cognitive Science

Professor, Department of Psychology

Georgetown University

Editor

PEACE AND CONFLICT:

JOURNAL OF PEACE PSYCHOLOGY

(American Psychological Association Journals)

Web: fathalimoghaddam.com

From: Kirk Schneider

Sent: Thursday, September 10, 2020 1:27 PM

To: Louise Sundarajan

Subject: Re: IP--Interview

Thank you for the interview Professor Moghaddam--it was evocative and illuminating. One question I have however is your advocacy of increased aggressiveness in attacking the present leadership. Can you elucidate what that would look like? My concern there is the risk of inflaming (vs. quelling or working to manage) the cycles of polarization.

Kirk Schneider

--

Kirk Schneider, Ph.D., President of the Existential-Humanistic Institute: ehinstitute.org; Candidate for President of the

APA <https://bit.ly/33szqrQ>; Adjunct Faculty, Saybrook University and Teachers College, Columbia University.

Visit kirkjschneider.com; <https://twitter.com/kschneider56>

Latest books: *The Depolarizing of America: A Guidebook for Social Healing* <https://bit.ly/2NhHiTv>; *The Spirituality of Awe: Challenges to the Robotic Revolution Revised* <https://bit.ly/2U81Csz>; *The Polarized Mind* <https://amzn.to/2L7RQVU>; *Existential-Humanistic Therapy* <http://amzn.to/2BScgxm>

From: Fathali Moghaddam
Sent: Thursday, September 10, 2020 2:31 PM
To: iptaskforce@simplelists.com
Subject: Re: IP--Interview

Dear Kirk (if I may),

I certainly share your concern about polarization and know of your recent book. I have also written on 'Mutual Radicalization' (see below list of recent books). However, in my estimation we are at a historic turning point - we have to get Trump out, because the alternative is a sharp turn toward dictatorship (and where the USA goes, a lot of the world follows). The danger is clear and present. Thank you for your important contributions.

Ali

From: Kirk Schneider
Sent: Thursday, September 10, 2020 2:42 PM
To: Louise Sundarajan
Subject: Re: IP--Interview

Dear Fathali,

Thank you for your thoughtful reply. I much respect your work also. Re your reply: I understand your point and concern--I resonate with much of it (particularly given past precedents of appeasement). But I also think it is very tricky, which you indeed acknowledge. Therefore, what I would appreciate hearing more explicitly is what kind of attack tactics you would advise, and would they be combined with genuine efforts to meet with people, find out more about their grievances and consider possibilities for common ground? This is something that Democrats (as well as Republicans) have not been so adept at in my view. If you'd like we can further the discussion backchannel.

Kirk

From: Maureen O'Hara
Sent: Thursday, September 10, 2020 6:52 PM
To: iptaskforce@simplelists.com
Subject: Re: Re: IP--Interview

Thank you so much for this. A couple of comments.

1. I agree that Trump gets away with much because the media does not know how to discuss what Trump is actually doing but the Democrats in Congress have tried to use the law to stop him--impeachment, the Muller report--and it made not a bit of difference to his supporters--in fact they admire him for "coming up Trumps".
2. I think there is also a psychological dimension to the springboard to dictatorship. There are obviously structural vulnerabilities such as the Electoral College, 2 Senators per state regardless of population, life time appointments to the judiciary and Senate rules that permit McConnell to refuse to bring a vote to the floor for a vote. But we need to recognize that part of the "springboard" is psychological and understandable. The fact

that people are living in times of extreme anxiety--on a cultural scale--where the old anchors of coherence and identity are in tatters, climate change looms, mass migration overwhelms social systems, and traditional avenues for social cohesion such as religion, community rituals like HS football games, cultural events birthday parties and basic economic security of job are unravelling. And on top of that comes the fear, grief and impotence in the face of the pandemic. People will be drawn to sources that offer a sense of potency escape from precarity, and somehow Trump rings that bell for many working class voters. The super wealthy don't care about or for democracy .(In between wars Britain, where I was raised, many supported Hitler. The Tories long held the belief that democratic enfranchisement of the "rabble" was a mistake and Boris and his cohort still believe that.

3. So I don't think the Dems are as far off as you fear. I think they are right to offer both a substantive alternative to Trumpism with social policy that speaks to the American working class and aspirant poor AND at the same time offer an affective and symbolic alternative, presenting Biden and Harris as reasonable, sane, kind, compassionate and competent. I hope I am right. I do agree that they need to hammer the abominable handling of COVID19 which has created an existential fear in many. So lets hope the Bob Woodward tapes will put high focus on Trumps inhumanity and incompetence.

Maureen O'Hara Ph. D.
Professor of Psychology
Lead, BS in Organizational Behavior
National University
11255 N. Torrey Pines Road
La Jolla, CA 92037
760 889 9493 (mobile)
858 642 8464

From: Fathali Moghaddam
Sent: Thursday, September 10, 2020 9:36 PM
To: iptaskforce@simplelists.com
Subject: Re: IP--Interview

Dear Kirk,
Like you, I have invested in conflict resolution (I directed the CR Program at my university for six years). However, I see the HOUSE ON FIRE!
Only two months left to an election that could bring the beginning of the end for much of what we see as American democracy.
In the longer term, of course CR and negotiations will have to play a larger role.
Forgive me if the pandemic situation does not allow for longer replies....like many others, I am in Zoom classes and meetings too many hours each day.
Ali

From: Fathali Moghaddam
Sent: Thursday, September 10, 2020 9:52 PM

To: iptaskforce@simplelists.com
Subject: Re: Re: IP--Interview

Dear Maureen (if I may),

I completely agree with you on just about all the points you make.

My concern is that many on the Dem side are not seeing the urgency of the present situation and are engaged in 'business as usual.'

I believe we are facing a historic and extremely grave danger. If Trump wins, this will be a turning point away from what we understand as American democracy (limited as it is), and where the USA goes much of the world will follow.

We are in a desperate fight - and Trump does not care about the law or any of the 'normal rules.'

This is not normal politics.

Ali

From: Ron Boyer
Sent: Friday, September 11, 2020 12:01 AM
To: iptaskforce@simplelists.com
Subject: Re: Re: IP--Interview

Thanks for sharing this insightful interview Dr. Moghaddam. I agree with your entire analysis of the current situation and just authored a Guest Editorial in a journal (in press) entitled "It *Can* Happen Here," inspired by the prophetic 1950s novel by Upton Sinclair, "It Can't Happen Here." That novel describes the current political crises to a tee in the character of the Trumplike figure of "Senator Buzz Windrip," an authoritarian US President who wraps himself in religion and the flag.

I appreciate your focus on the conditions being established for Trump, or someone like him, to arise. My chief concern is that Trump is a symptom in this regard, not the disease itself, which appears to be a collective psychological malignancy that has infected say 30% of the body politic and will remain long after Trump has been removed from office--hopefully without much more bloodshed. The standoffs between rival militias in Louisville, for example, are extremely volatile and I'm concerned mass politically inspired State violence like Kent State may erupt at any moment. It wouldn't take much in Louisville right now.

What are your thoughts on healing the divisiveness with fellow Americans who are on the other side of "reality"? Because I think it is more than sharing perspectives; when it comes to possession of nuclear codes and armed militias, I'm not sure any kind of mass psychological intervention is practical, and if so, what form might that take. After Trump is gone - hoping he can be gotten rid of at least from the White House - that still leaves the conditions for tyranny unaddressed: the 30% who believe his lies no matter what (the Trumpist Branch Dravidians) and their corrupt and spineless Republican leaders. How to provide some mass therapy and healing there?

Speaking personally, I am thinking globally here, but acting locally by having difficult conversations with my lifetime friends and family members who are far across the aisle from us

crazy Californian socialists. At least at this most personal level, we are finding creative ways for this messy conversation to proceed. The Trumpists are not completely or all "insane," though an argument can be made that America experienced a mass psychotic break during 9/11 - the very "epidemic of mass hysteria" Carl Jung warned us about after WWII as being the greatest threat to the survival of the species.

I am also interested, as Kirk is, in your further thoughts on the forms these political "attacks" by the Democrats in the spirit of the Lincoln Project might take.

Kirk I'd love to hear your views on this as well. As well as Marc Pilusik and others engaged with this rich and urgent topic.

From: Fathali Moghaddam
Sent: Friday, September 11, 2020 7:30 AM
To: iptaskforce@simplelists.com
Subject: Re: Re: IP--Interview

Dear Ron (if I may),

I would slightly re-phrase - "It IS happening here!"

Trump and his backers are tearing up the subpoenas and going outside what is normal and legal in US politics.

As I mentioned in my previous email to Kirk, of course I am supportive of dialogue and 'peace building,' but the crisis of the next few months needs much more than that.

I agree with you that Trump is a symptom - this is a global turn toward strongman authoritarian leadership. I returned to Iran with the revolution in 1979 and was there for five years, as Khomeini re-established dictatorship.

Since that time, populist movements around the world have been subverted and more 'springboards to dictatorship' have been created.

I see this as related to the well-documented increasing concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer hands. As documented by Oxfam and others, about a dozen individuals own as much wealth as the poorer half of the world - almost 4 billion people. This kind of wealth concentration can only happen with certain supportive political systems.

Ali

From: Ron Boyer
Sent: Friday, September 11, 2020 1:59 PM
To: iptaskforce@simplelists.com
Subject: Re: Re: IP--Interview

Ali (I'll take the liberty!), I completely agree. It IS happening here. It IS a pivotal historical moment in the history of our democratic republic. What happens in the next few months will have a profoundly transformative effect on the trajectory of the world's fate. And that so much of this rests in the hands of the Democratic Party is concerning. You know that saying about the Dems uncanny ability to "snatch defeat from the jaws of victory."

What do you envision as the best-case scenario for the nation in the short term (from the next few months and years) and in the long term (the next few decades)? And what forms, to repeat myself, do you see a true (not superficial) positive healing and transformation of the collective (including the 30% on the other side of "reality") taking place. What is the nature of a pragmatic mass psychological intervention in this circumstance? What does that look like?

I think Kirk's notion of appointing a Surgeon General for National Mental Health (Kirk, hope I got this right) is interesting and original. Having spent decades working in our government, I am no longer hopeful in restoring our sanity and am tending towards radical out of the box solutions to avoid civil war. There is serious discussion going on among political leaders in the Democratic Party--and here on the West Coast--gaming out scenarios in the event Trump refuses (as Michael Cohen suggests) to leave office peacefully. These scenarios include the secession of the West Coast states from the union. This idea is beginning to appeal to me on several levels and I believe is fully worthy of consideration.

Any thoughts? All views welcome.

From: Maureen O'Hara
Sent: Friday, September 11, 2020 2:24 PM
To: iptaskforce@simplelists.com
Subject: Re: Re: Re: IP--Interview

Got it. I agree with your sense of alarm and the point that this cannot be approached as business as usual. I find myself wondering though, what BAU actually is and isn't. Is social protest BAU that simply moves the deck chairs as the ship sinks or is it a transformative move demanding that humanity play a bigger game? What would you actually do if you were leading the Dems right now? I am funneling money to the Lincoln project but it seems puny against the tsunami of lies and manipulation .

We know that the democratic forms of governance are relatively new in our species. And is fragile. If it's to survive and be peaceful it requires a level of social intelligence and cultural/institutional support to buffer it from malignant exploitation by those with power. It evolved before a time of media platforms designed to addict .Can the 1st amendment survive in these times?

I am wondering, if I can put you on the spot, what can you , after so many years of thinking about paths to peace, imagine people can do to head off the catastrophe that looms?
In solidarity, Maureen

From: Fathali Moghaddam
Sent: Friday, September 11, 2020 5:25 PM
To: iptaskforce@simplelists.com
Subject: Re: Re: IP--Interview

Yes, I strongly support the idea of 'national healing' and giving far more importance to mental health.

However, the forces shaping the springboard to dictatorship are global and will continue to be a challenge for supporters of democracy, at least over the next decade. We might get rid of Trump in the Nov election, but the national and international forces behind Trump are going to be with us. They are not about reconciliation and we might end up holding that piece of paper saying 'Peace in our time.'

From: Fathali Moghaddam
Sent: Friday, September 11, 2020 9:40 PM
To: iptaskforce@simplelists.com
Subject: Re: Re: Re: IP--Interview

I am a firm believer in democratic peace theory. True democracy will bring peace. But in order to get to democracy, we have to overcome those who oppose democracy and will do anything it takes to establish (or re-establish) dictatorship. In the context of the USA at present, what we can do is to recognize the imminent danger we are facing and see this as a must-win fight. Yes of course, we should cooperate with principled Republicans and other allies (Lincoln Project).

From: Kirk Schneider
Sent: Saturday, September 12, 2020 3:06 AM
To: Louise Sundarajan
Subject: Re: Re: Re: IP--Interview

Thank you for this rich discussion Ali, Ron, Maureen et al. Unfortunately I don't have time to go in depth on the topics now except to say that I resonate with key points you all have made, and do see the urgency of working on a number of fronts to address this critical juncture in our country and world. I also see three major potential debacles to avoid: the lapse into verbal flamethrowing (so prevalent already and equivalent to throwing gasoline on the flame); violence and war (of course! but are continual worst-case scenarios); and helplessness and despair (which is how many increasingly feel). Ultimately, and I sense you resonate with this, Ali, we're going to need to "sit down at the table" and talk to one another person-to-person for a substantive and sustainable coexistence. We're certainly not going to reach everyone this way, but we could potentially reach a critical mass of people that can help turn the tide. Our biggest challenge right now is crossing that threshold of the "point of no return" where tensions run so high that dialogue is just not a viable option anymore. Hence whatever we do, we must try to do everything we can to minimize that very real risk.

And yes, Ron, I do see a Psychologist General as being a vital hedge against each of the dire scenarios going forward.

Kirk

--

Kirk Schneider, Ph.D., President of the Existential-Humanistic Institute: ehinstitute.org; Candidate for President of the APA <https://bit.ly/33szqrQ>; Adjunct Faculty, Saybrook University and Teachers College, Columbia University. Visit kirkjschneider.com; <https://twitter.com/kschneider56>

Latest books: *The Depolarizing of America: A Guidebook for Social Healing* <https://bit.ly/2NhHiTv>; *The Spirituality of Awe: Challenges to the Robotic Revolution Revised* <https://bit.ly/2U81Csz>; *The Polarized Mind* <https://amzn.to/2L7RQVU>; *Existential-Humanistic Therapy* <http://amzn.to/2BScqxm>;

From: Ron Boyer
Sent: Saturday, September 12, 2020 3:10 PM
To: iptaskforce@simplelists.com
Subject: Re: Re: Re: IP--Interview

Thank you, Kirk, - and Maureen and Ali. It has been a rich discussion, and the kind that is so necessary today. I agree completely with your assessment of the three debacles to be avoided if possible.

I think the only question--an it's a vital question--is your conclusion. Have we, or have we not-- as a nation--passed the "point of no return"? As a cup half full type of person, I want to say "No!" We must not lose hope and fall into utter collective despair--not yet in any case. Nor should we even if this Kafkaesque nightmare in the making comes true in the months and years ahead. In that scenario -- we will need each other, and a firm resolve to resist by whatever means at our disposal.

My personal model is the existential philosopher and novelist, Albert Camus Camus, while appearing in his public persona as France's most celebrated novelist and author of "The Plague" (an apt metaphor we are experiencing on multiple levels today in America), in the privacy of his home secretly resisted the Nazis as the anonymous editor of "Combat" and the voice of the French underground resistance.

Let us hope it never comes to that, as Upton Sinclair prophesied it might in "It Can't Happen Here." But the very nature of this discussion suggests that, at best, we as a democracy are now teetering on the brink of this abyss.

From: Marc Pilisuk
Sent: Saturday, September 12, 2020 5:09 PM
To: iptaskforce@simplelists.com
Subject: Re: [E] Re: Re: Re: IP--Interview

Thanks to all for the creative exchange. When Michael Nagler and I co edited a three volume contribution on Peace Movements World-wide, we could a magic theme of what works in averting mass violence. We did find a remarkable sample of people from many cultures displaying diverse forms of peace making and peace building activities. That spirit is visible in this discussion. I have a comment on the danger that we may be approaching approaching is dire *and a mass mobilization of hate, sanctionning violence by vigilantes and by a militarized*

police force. We are at a time when restrictions on nuclear weapon use have been removed and military interventions are easily used to upset elections and raise patriotic fervor. We are also at a time when environmental conditions that lead to desertification, floods, massive fires, massive displacement of refugees and conditions conducive to the Pandemic spread of viral and bacterial diseases.

Given the prospects, the suggestions of establishing true conversation with Lincoln Republicans, top military officials, career intelligence people, investment bankers, legislators, and military organizations, are important I love the opportunities to communicate with caring colleagues and to support the movement for justice. But the more difficult task of the moment is to move elite power brokers toward a dialogue that values the well being of humans.

Peace,

Marc

Marc Pilisuk, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus, The University of California
Faculty, Saybrook University
494 Cragmont Ave
Berkeley, CA 94708
Ph 510-526-1788

From: Ron Boyer
Sent: Saturday, September 12, 2020 9:17 PM
To: iptaskforce@simplelists.com
Cc: Ron Boyer
Subject: Re: [E] Re: Re: Re: IP--Interview

Thanks for adding your expertise to the conversation Marc. Loved your analysis and most importantly your conclusion at the end.
Ron

From: Maureen O'Hara
Sent: Saturday, September 12, 2020 9:45 PM
To: iptaskforce@simplelists.com
Cc: Ron Boyer
Subject: Re: [E] Re: Re: Re: IP--Interview

- I agree that it will be vital to bring power brokers into dialog. What gives me hope, however naive this may be, is that these power brokers are also human and they are also over their heads. Imagine Gavin Newsom's situation--he has a pandemic, raging firestorm, computer hacks, racial strife, a collapsing economy and foreign interference in the election all on his desk at the same time. The governor of Oregon has street

protests, white militias, the pandemic, and the worst fires in history and a collapsing economy. Such impossible situations are repeated across statehouses across the US and beyond. (Johnson has COVID and Brexit). And yet we expect them to handle their roles without a hitch. What I long to see is a perceptive journalist--someone who sees the bigger picture and can take the side of humanity-- take a stab at starting with empathy for these folks instead of critique and offering some compassion for them and the rest of us for the terrifying existential crisis humanity faces. And then propose a confidential gathering using what we know about dialog to create a coalition of the willing It is long past time for the media to get off its "lets you and them fight" mantra and instead build a plausible narrative that can support well being of all life.

Maureen O'Hara Ph. D.
Professor of Psychology
Lead, BS in Organizational Behavior
National University
11255 N. Torrey Pines Road
La Jolla, CA 92037
760 889 9493 (mobile)
858 642 8464
