A Socio-Psychoanalytic Perspective On Group Dynamics, Cults and Terrorism. Part 2: A Note On Possible Antidotes[1a]

Stuart W. Twemlow, M.D.

Frank C. Sacco, Ph.D.

George Hough Ph.D.

In this second part of a Socio-Psychoanalytic Perspective On Group Dynamics, Cults and Terrorism, two possible antidotes for terrorism are outlined briefly: One, derived from a study and practice of the Martial & Meditative Arts, suggests developing a mindset to the enemy, that instead of hatred & disgust, embodies love defined in a specific non-erotic way. Thus, it is felt that in this mutual mindset the ritual of war can be enacted so that destruction is minimized and differences resolved. The second is a plan for creating safe & connected communities, based on an understanding of mutual interdependence, power dynamics, and community stabilizing systems, defined as essential for community cohesion.

Antidote I : Lessons From Martial Arts

The deeply held convictions of terrorists are frightening. Aside from the unconscious reasons for war, or acts of terror, there are consequences of declaring war that can oversimplify both the enemy and the social context. When training blackbelts in his martial arts school, SWT would pose the following conundrum: 'Who would win a fight between the reigning world heavyweight boxing champion and a homeless person in a street setting?' The intense commitment of someone with nothing to lose is clear for all to see in the war on Afghanistan. In one recent incident, half a dozen Taliban hospitalized prisoners held hundreds of other soldiers including American Special Forces at bay before finally being routed. It is a cliché of martial arts, and common sense, that one would never fight anyone with nothing to lose.

It is our hypothesis that before war, or specifically before a war on terrorism is declared, the following issues should be considered:

a. Contempt Fuels The Enemies' Outrage

For every fanatic destroyed there are a thousand waiting to take their place with the possibility of becoming martyrs. Bodansky (1999) in a detailed analysis of Osama bin Laden and his strategies states, 'Perhaps the most important and lasting legacy of bin Laden is his impact on Muslim youth all over the world, for whom he is a source of inspiration' (pg. 405). Bodansky reports that one Pakistanian newspaper said, 'No matter wherever he is and wherever he decides to live, the number of people who love him will never lessen,' noting also that the giving of the name Osama to babies throughout the Muslim world has dramatically increased. A recent news release noted that Taliban prisoners incarcerated at the American base at Guatanamo Bay in Cuba cover many religions including Christianity with 26 countries represented.[1b] While the last word has not been said about vicious propaganda, one effect of it is by stereotyping and distorting, it adds to the potential for underestimation of the enemy in the guise of trying to mobilize feeling against that enemy. A Japanese colleague of SWT who was a small child during World War II remembers his parents telling him that they had heard that American soldiers killed and ate their own children. We believe that belittling Osama bin Laden as 'the evil one,' and wanting him dead or alive as in Wild West posters, has hurt, not helped efforts to unite other nations against an otherwise highly supportable worldwide mission against terrorism.

b. Declaration Of War Inflates The Status And Grandiosity Of The Enemy, and the Resulting Corporatism Degrades Altruism

Sir Michael Howard[2] noted that America had made a 'natural but terrible and irrevocable error' (in declaring war on Al Quaida). He points out that the British prefer to consider such situations not as war but the mobilization of valuable resources against dangerous antisocial activity. Such "situations" can never be entirely eliminated, but they can be reduced to and kept at a level that does not threaten social stability. These should instead be 'emergencies' fought within civil authority in a peacetime framework, using espionage and without interrupting the normal tenor of civilian life. If not dignified with the status of enemy, Howard declares, 'Enemies instead become criminals whose lesser status makes them easier to fight.' Benito Mussolini once said that fascism should be more properly called corporatism since it is the merger of state and corporate power; profitable wars encourage defensive narcissistic absorption when helping others becomes a secondary concern.

c. Declaration Of War Can Lead To An Oversimplified Mindset To The Enemy

Declaring a war in an atmosphere of contempt can lead to incorrect assumptions about the enemy, that the adversary is identifiable and containable, and that the action will lead to decisive results. While the political impact of showing respect for the enemy may be undesirable, wars must be conducted with such respect. Expecting Osama bin Laden to be holed up in a cave in the hills of Afghanistan waiting for martyrdom is clearly a gross underestimation. War should be concluded as quickly and decisively as possible, setting the scene after it for peace in a culture that has not been devastated physically or psychologically. After all, if genocide does occur, the conquering country has an expensive, time consuming, and very difficult task before it.

Since we have now elevated Osama bin Laden and his network of Al Quaida to the status of enemy, how then would it be possible to convert this war into one that could be won? Our point is that it is necessary to adopt a code of respectful conduct for a constructive outcome. One young Vietnam Veteran told of how he had the job of digging up Vietnamese graveyards to bury American trash. The contempt implied in such actions is undoubtedly not consciously intended. It can be seen as part of a 'war psychosis;' the outcome of the fantasy that the enemy can only be defeated only if every last one is destroyed and humiliated.

Victoriano Crillio, a famous Secoya Chief who SWT met while exploring in the upper Amazon Valley of Ecuador, was known for his gentleness, legendary strength, and agility. His son represented six tribes of the upper Amazon Valley in the Ecuadorian Parliament. A quiet and gentle voice boomed from this 85-year-old man of immense power and strength. He responded to my question, 'What are the qualities needed to be a chief and to win a war?' He felt there were three: First is knowledge. Knowledge must be culturally relevant, based on experience, capable of being translated into common sense terms understandable to all, and useable with effective and predictable results, since in war he said that the culture of both sides must be preserved at all costs. Second is diplomacy, which he dismissed with a twinkle in his eye as the ability to get along with people you don't like. And third and finally, is the capacity to wield a big stick with a soft voice, pointing out that the softness of the voice tempers the destructiveness and perceived justness (to all sides), of the stick. The stick, he said, should only be used out of love (respect in our terms). Can the compassionate gentle philosophy of this powerful Amazon Chief, whom Nietszche would likely have called a Roman Caesar with Christ's soul, teach us something? We believe, only if the enemy is not dehumanized.

In a project to reduce violence in a Jamaican city (Twemlow & Sacco, 1996), after receiving two lessons in the principles and philosophy of the martial arts, one police officer while on patrol, was attacked by a man wielding a machete. His usual practice would have been to shoot the individual. He remembered, however, what he had been taught; instead, he disarmed him and brought him under control utilizing talk down and joint locks. The officer determined that the man had found his wife in bed with someone else and had begun to drink rum and run

amok. The policeman was proud that he had not killed this man whom he did not consider a bad person, and instead, he had been able to be helpful to him in understanding his rage and jealousy. The policeman later became a natural helper in the community in which he lived, his work being very much facilitated both by his strength, his gentleness, and by then, this legendary act of benevolent compassion.

In our dojo 'there is no enemy' is a conundrum to be understood by all black belts. The enemy from this perspective is potentially understandable rather than a monstrous subhuman species created by propaganda and oversimplification. Once the possibility of human contact with the enemy is resurrected, negotiation can begin. Since the real object of war is no fighting embodied in the Kanji—Bushido, meaning both fighting (Bushi) and not fighting (do: the way). Paradoxically, the Bushido code of conduct for war was an integral part of the training of the Samurai during the several hundred years of war in Japan. The Bushido code's overt goals of teaching ethical behavior and values to soldiers, may have also involved covert strategies to handle the enemy and win the war. This code includes 'values' like: respect, courtesy, honor, rectitude, benevolence, veracity, self-control, courage, and loyalty. Table 1 is a summary of how these principles can be translated into fighting strategies.

Table 1 The Bushido Approach to Winning A War

Principle	Lesson of the Martial Way(Do)	Value as a Battle Strategy
Respect	Consider all types of attackers as skilled masters	Better assessment and judgement of the enemy
Courtesy	"Even when you are quietly seated, not the roughest ruffian can dare make onset on your person" Ogasawara	Keeping a reserve of energy, maintaining strength, controlling fear and anger
Honor	Allowing the enemy to save face	Not provoking to the enemy
Rectitude (justice)	"To die when it is right to die, to strike when to strike is right" Courageously using good judgement	Conveying a sense of irresistible, intent and strength
Benevolence	"Bushi no Nasaki" the tenderness of a warrior	Paradoxical surprise of the enemy, avoiding a "nothing to lose" mentality.
Veracity and loyalty	"Bushi-no-Ichi-gon" the word of the Samurai is guarntee of truthfulness	Allow preservation of strength and energy, courage, intense commitment of the fighter to the goal, avoidance of cognitive dissonance.
Self-control	Absorbing the strike without complaint and with intelligence (giving way)	Stoicism, relentlessness
Courage	Endurance in the course of righteousness	Intense commitment to the battle, willing to die for the cause

In summary, from the point of view of martial arts, the role of victim and victimizer are psychological postures that necessitate a code or set of rules that involves deep knowing of your enemy and respect for the cause of the enemy. Thus, there is a mutually implied agreement with the enemy that the war is winnable and with minimal 'collateral damage'. Modern warfare, mainly fought at great distances with machines, has unfortunately enabled the human element and compassion to be largely dissociated from combat.

Antidotes to Terrorism II : A Framework for Creating Safe Connected Communities

It is our working hypothesis that for communities to become safe havens instead of breeding grounds for fanaticism and terrorism, several conditions must be met[3]:

- The presence of satisfying connections between people which in turn depend upon:
  - The quality of the leadership.
  - Shared interests, experiences and values.
  - A relatively low level of unacknowledged conflict.
  - Stable, non-threatening external conditions.
- Work connections between people depend on all of the above and a shared task considered as worthwhile.
- A safe connected community recognizes the authority and responsibility of all as members of the community and draws upon the various strengths of community members.
- Within this space members can connect spontaneously according to their interests, but to accomplish a work task, this space must be structured into a forum for wide ranging discussion.
- Respectful, non-blaming discussion that has a number of good outcomes:
  - People develop the capacity to see the other's point of view.
  - People develop their individual voices and learn about personal responsibility.
  - People learn about inter-dependence: that is, each member or sub-group can best achieve its goals by collaboration and helping to solve the problems of other individuals/sub-groups. Altruism and compassion develop hand in hand with enlightened self-interest.
- Dysfunctional communities tend to develop pathologic power dynamics among individuals and sub-groups:
  - The phenomenon of 'pseudo-speciation,' (Erikson, E.1985; Erikson, K. 1996), the tendency to view others as alien, inferior, and not-fully-human, licenses cruelty to others.

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- A community fragmented by pathologic power dynamics does not develop a collective knowledge or spirit through which to address its problems.

- Unhealthy forms of escapism (drugs, perverse sexuality, etc.) occur.

- A working hypothesis about pathologic power dynamics that can be applied to communities includes the following:

  - Pathologic power dynamics are reflected in communities through the living out of complex, dysfunctional Bully-Victim-Bystander roles.

  - These three roles can be seen as representing a dissociating process. The Victim is dissociated from the community (as 'not-us') by the Bully on behalf of the By-standing community.

  - The Bully-Victim relationship represents a dyadic structure and the Bystanders are an abdicating 'third'.

  - The focus of work is with the Bystanders and the desired transformation is from Bystander to involved and committed community member/witness.

  - The intervention aims at the recognition within the large group of the dissociated element (represented by the Victim) as a part of themselves about which they are anxious, and the recognition of the dissociating process (represented by the Bully), as a defensive action for which they are responsible.

- Connected people make safe communities. These connections are restored when the fragmenting effects of dissociation processes are interrupted by grasping the meaning of this action as an effort to deal with anxiety felt by all.

- Dissociation is a violent process and often produces violence. The goal is the transformation of brute power into passionate statement and respectful communication; this requires the survival of the container and of the task.

- In a larger sense, the cohesiveness of a community depends upon its 'stabilizing systems.' Each of these systems takes up a basic aspect of the community's developmental task (for example, health, learning, order, spirituality).

- Each stabilizing system represents a primary authorized role in the community.

- This opens the field to an examination of the community's relationship to authority and vice versa.

- The power dynamics within a subsystem (for example, the student body of a school) are greatly affected by the power dynamics of the larger system, which contains it (for example, the power dynamics among teachers and between teachers and students).

• Symptomatic behavior within any sub-group system can be seen as a consultation-in-action to the authority structure of that stabilizing system. Symptomatic behavior is not simply a problem to be solved, but rather a dysfunctional solution, which keeps a larger, potentially more painful and more meaningful problem unseen.

Is it possible for strangers in a community to become connected in these ways? Indeed the first step is easy in a crisis situation as when Americans pulled together dramatically in response to September 11th. There was a 30% drop in crime rate in the Bronx, although within two to three months that had returned to 'normal.' People in New York City were and still are, more than usually helpful to each other and tolerant of other's mood swings and demands. Stories abound about the bravery of individuals and strangers who would help each other in self-sacrificing altruistic ways: *United We Stand, God Bless America* is still seen decorating many buildings, billboards and homes. The connected attitude of Americans is typified in an airline pilot's September 15, 2001, preflight announcement for flight 564 bound from Denver, Colorado, to Washington, DC. He said:[4]

> First I want to thank you for being brave enough to fly today. The doors are now closed and we have no help from the outside for any problems that might occur inside this plane. As you could tell when you checked in, the government has made some changes to increase security in the airports. They have not, however, made any rules about what happens after those doors close. Until they do that, we have made our own rules and I want to share them with you . . .. Here is our plan and our rules. If someone or several people stand up and say they are hijacking this place, I want you all to stand up together. Then take whatever you have available to you and throw it at them. Throw it at their faces and heads so they will have to raise their hands to protect themselves. The very best protection you have against knives are the pillows and blankets. Whoever is close to these people should then try to get a blanket over their heads. Then they won't be able to see. Once that is done, get them down and keep them there. Do not let them up. I will then land the plane at the closest place and we *will* take care of them. After all, there are usually only a few of them and we are two-hundred-plus strong. We will not allow them to take over this plane. I find it interesting that the U.S. Constitution begins with the words "We the people." That's who we are, the people, and we will not be defeated. (New Yorker, October 15, 2001)

The passengers were then asked to turn and introduce themselves to any strangers around them. The pilot said 'For today we will consider you family. We will treat you as such and ask that you do the same with us.' The second step, that of recognizing the cause of the enemy and 'loving' them, in the sense of the Amazon chief, still eludes us. Antidote II outlines what we believe are attributes of a resilient reflective community. Antidote I assumes that the enemy is respected for fighting skill and is not dehumanized and degraded. Safe communities require connected and tolerant people, who unlike terrorists do not hate and degrade the 'enemy'.

Conclusions

If one accepts that the etiology of terrorism is primarily social and on a continuum with normality, we believe a deeper psychological and psychoanalytic understanding of fanaticism and terrorism, the fear it produces, and the difficulties in controlling it, becomes possible. Perhaps with the exception of killing that results from primarily an internal motivation, violence is always dialectically determined: The terrorist-terrorised relationships are co-created roles always embedded in a participating bystanding social context, i.e. terrorism as we have hypothesized it is a state of consciousness, the flames of which are fanned by the bystanding audience, i.e. the culture and context in which the battle rages. A deeper understanding of the preconscious and unconscious roots of the desire for war other than as a biological given of predatory animals is to see it resulting from group pressures and social customs. Thus, the terrorist and the terrorised are mirror images of each other, each seeing the other as a victimizer and each feeling the victim of that victimization. These co-created roles create behaviors that are grossly irrational, both in developed as well as developing countries, and leaders in both worlds can unwittingly get caught up in the process. Leaders with a deeper understanding and respect for the enemy and of the implications of conflict are more likely to fight a war that can be ended and that will be minimally destructive. If it is as Barber (1995) suggests, in Jihad vs. McWorld, then the Bystander is the abdicating social democracy, the necessary and basic antidote, urgently needed.

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Endnotes

1a Modified from a chapter entitled "Reflections on the Making of a Terrorist", in Terrorism and War : Unconscious Dynamics of Political Violence. (2002), Eds. C. Covington, P. Williams , J. Arundale, J. Knox. London, Karnac/Other Press Permission granted by Dr Paul Williams.

1b Berkshire Eagle 2-13-02

2 Harper's Magazine Jan. 2002, p. 13-18.

3 Gerard Fromm, Ph.D, of the Erik Erikson Institute for Education and Research, Austen Riggs Center, Stockbridge, MA, assisted in these conceptualizations.

4 New Yorker, October 15, 2001, P.53

Biographical Note

Stuart W. Twemlow, M.D.

Director, Peaceful Schools & Communities Project, and Professor, Psychiatry, Faculty Dept. Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston Texas. Medical Director, HOPE Unit, The Menninger Clinic Houston Texas. Consultant to the FBI Critical Incident Response Group on School Shootings. 7th Dan black belt in Okinawa Kobudo, 6th Dan in Okinawa Kenpo Karate. Renshi (master teacher) in the Okinawan arts of Kenpo Karate and traditional weapons.

Frank C. Sacco, Ph.D.

President, Community Services Institute, Springfield and Boston MA, Consultant to the FBI Critical Incident Response Group on School shootings. 3rd degree black belt and senior instructor in the Korean art of Han-Pul. Adjunct Professor, Psychology, Western New England College, MA.

George Hough Ph.D.

Consultant to U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration; Consultant to State of Kansas Death Penalty Defense Unit; Faculty, Greater Kansas City Psychoanalytic Institute.

Correspondence to: Stuart W. Twemlow, M.D.
The Menninger Clinic
PO Box 809045
2801 Gessner Drive
Houston, Texas 77280-9045.
STWEMLOW@aol.com