

World Society on the Couch: Anti-Terror Consultancy as an Object and Test-Bed of Professional Sociology

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This paper is about the re-establishment of a professional, that is, a neutral perspective on terror; most research on terrorism is partisan in terms of biased culturalist studies on the ‘index patients’ of an international conflict. At the same time, there is very little research on the forms and functions of so called anti-terror measures which are commonly treated as acts of self-defence. In contrast to this, from a sociological point of view we find that it takes two to make the terror: an act of violence, and an act of labelling this violence as terror, too. Thus, we argue that Western societies should take full responsibility for their own perceptions, attributions, and actions within an international conflict system, instead of continuing to externalize these. Finally, we state that sociology has a demand for research on the applicability of the concepts of systemic therapy on the field of the intervention into stable inter-cultural conflict systems.

I. Introduction

These days, not a day goes by without alarming news of violence in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Pakistan, in the Middle East, in East Asia, and in Northern and Middle Africa; the same goes with the nightmare scenarios about weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists, or just about rather ‘normal’ terrorist attacks against basic infrastructure systems of the G8 member states and their allies. After a short armistice, the Spanish terrorist organization Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) declared war against Spain, again. The borderland between Afghanistan and Pakistan is still a refuge for

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global terrorist networks. Despite, or because of, the never-ending peace negotiations there is constant escalation in the Gaza Strip. At the same time, when the US-American Supreme Command declares the return to normal in Iraq, Turkish troops chased terrorists in the Northern part of the country. Who knows whether the last attack took place in Algiers, Beirut, Islamabad, Colombo, or Nairobi?

After the Age of the Cold War, *trans-national terrorism has become the elevator music of the ascending 21st century*, but it took some time before we recognized the low scope of the musical scale. Today, every terrorist strike turns to a hit in the fever charts of terror: the assassination of van Gogh in Amsterdam, the assault in Janbu 2004, the 500 victims of Sindschar, an attack on a bus full of children in Sri Lanka, the missiles launched from the Gaza Strip, and the two Palestinians who attacked three pupils in the West Bank – all this is terror.

But there are cases that get us thinking, too: what about the Berlin Sociologist Andrej H. who was treated as a terrorist by the German Federal Bureau of Criminal Investigation? What about the cyber-terrorism against both the institutions and the president of Estonia? What about the globalization critics who were collectively suspected of being terrorists, which legitimized the matchless restrictiveness of the security measures undertaken at the G8-meeting in Heiligendamm 2007? What if you were told that the German Federal Court of Justice *ex post* rehabilitated these critics of globalization, this is, after the show was over?

So, the question is whether or not we tend to suffer from a mass hysteria these days, which is both comprehensible concerning its causes and dangerous concerning its consequences. Is it both justified and reasonable to take any act of violence as an indicator of a massive threat to *homeland security* and the world order? Is it possible that we experience a strange alliance between the mass media and the home secretaries that is the foundation upon which an inappropriate labelling of most different forms of violence is based?

As is generally known, it is not easy to define terror properly. One approach could be to first focus on specific activities then typologize them according to a terrorist/non-terrorist distinction in a second step. But there are two major problems with this strategy: on the one hand, we find that terrorists tend to copy strategies of criminals², so in cases of murder, kidnapping, and hijacking we do not know whether it is either terror or crime we got to deal with. On the other hand, concepts of terror defined from a macro-perspective most often collide with common definitions of war³.

² Townshend, Charles, *Terrorismus. Eine kurze Einführung*, Stuttgart, Reclam, 2005, at p. 13.

³ Crevelde, Martin van, *Die Zukunft des Krieges*, Hamburg, Murmann, 1991; Simon, Fritz B., *Was ist Terrorismus? Versuch einer Definition...*, in: Baecker, Dirk and Fritz B. Simon (ed.), *Terror im System. Der 11. September und die Folgen*, Carl-Auer, Heidelberg, 2002, pp. 12-31.

Thus, it could be more appropriate to focus on the intended political effects of terrorist violence in concrete terms: unsettled structures of expectation⁴, scarred populations, delegitimized political orders, and challenged cultural systems, in general, an atmosphere of omnipresent danger and constant vulnerability on both the individual and the collective level. Well, according to this, we would have to define the set-up of urban *no go areas* as an act of terrorism, as well.

At least these effect-based approaches to the phenomenon are etymologically well embedded: the notion of terror has its roots in the Latin word for shock, which qualified an individual sentiment of fear. Its social connotation was added during the final stage of the French Revolution, when it referred to what we call state terrorism today. That is, terror used to qualify what the powerful did with the powerless. It was not until the Congress of Vienna the term began to indicate the very opposite of its early meaning.

What we can learn from this very brief semantic history of terror that the specific quality of terror is not about the means and effects of the violence, but rather about the terms and conditions of the de-/legitimizing of this very violence. Thus, the problem with “terrorists” is that we have to ask why we do not treat them as homicidal maniacs. Why is it that we cannot treat terrorist attacks as rampage due to individual mental confusion? What is the specific social dimension of the phenomenon? What part of our memory does this violence stimulate? What problems does the violence remind *us* of that *we* feel the need to call it terror? The severity of these questions corresponds to the fact that cases of self-attribution as a terrorist are hard to find.

The bottom line is that the problem of terrorism is not the violence itself, but rather the labelling of it. Thus, yet by using the very label, *sociology of terrorism* is to deal with the fact that it produces the very phenomenon that it observes⁵; just like any other kind of discipline.

In this paper, we will show that scientists and scientific consultants from G8 member states (and their allies) tend to forget about the fact that *terror* is a label that they themselves introduced to a global discourse on violence. Thus, they are not completely aware that terror is a homemade problem of their own societies.

So, we suggest to reframe the stiffen terror discourse. One of the most important steps in this context is to sketch the specific structure of the problem in terms of a global conflict system. Concerning interventions into this very conflict system, we are able to demonstrate that most scientist and advisors do not fulfil the most basic standard requirements of their own profession, which are curiosity, objectivity, and neutrality.

⁴ Simon, Fritz B., *Was ist Terrorismus? Versuch einer Definition...*, in: Baecker, Dirk and Fritz B. Simon (ed.), *Terror im System. Der 11. September und die Folgen*, Heidelberg, Carl-Auer, 2002, at p. 14.

⁵ Baecker, Dirk, *Therapie für Erwachsene: Zur Dramaturgie der Strukturaufstellung*, in: Groth, Torsten and Gerhard Stey (eds.), *Potenziale der Organisationsaufstellung: Innovative Ideen und Anwendungsbereiche*, Carl-Auer, Heidelberg, 2007b, pp. 14-31.

Thus, above all, this paper is about re-establishing this very professional perspective on terror, which means to ask for both for the function of and the responsibilities for this very label. As one consequence of this systemic reframing of the terror-problem we state that the *Jihad* violators shall be held responsible for their violence, but not for the consequences of *terror* which is to be seen as a specific (labelling) re-action⁶ of the “Western” world.

We end by claiming that there is demand for systematic research on the applicability of therapeutic concepts on the field of the intervention into stable inter-cultural conflict systems.

II. Perspectives And Biases In The Anti-Terror-Discourse

As we already indicated, labelling Jihadist violence as terror radically limits the scope of reactions to this form of violence, that is, both the paths and the lock-ins⁷ of the related discussions are very much dependent on this single decision. According to the most common of these paths, it seems like all further steps of escalation have their origin in the specific nature of the terrorist violence against people and symbolic spaces, since terrorists are said to both anticipate and strategically stimulate the “counter”-violence of the target system, e.g. in order to unmask it. By means of this popular argumentation, the terrorists are held responsible for all consequences, which both they and the citizens of the free world have to face.

It seems like both public and political discourse cannot be eluded from this logic of the inevitable escalation. What connects them both is the dimension of inconceivability with which they are confronted: how can these terrifying things happen? How do these people become terrorists or even suicide bombers at all? What are their motives? And included within most of this case study: what are adequate re-action strategies?

Scientifically re-coded most of these questions focus the incubation conditions of terrorism in general, and of the contemporary religion based global terrorism in particular.⁸ Within the field of the respective research, three complexes of causes are

⁶ E.g. the introduction of bio-metric passports for babies, the presence of armies in enemy territories as well as in the homelands, the cave-in of human rights for “terrorists” and of civil rights for citizens, etc.

⁷ Beyer, Jürgen, *Pfadabhängigkeit. Über institutionelle Kontinuität, anfällige Stabilität und fundamentalen Wandel*, Campus, Frankfurt, 2006; Liebowitz, Stanley J. and Stephen E. Margolis, *Path Dependence, Lock-In, and History*, in: *Journal of Law and Economics* (Volume 11), 1995, pp. 205-226; Schreyögg, Georg, Jochen Koch and Jörg Sydow, *Routinen und Pfadabhängigkeit*, in: Schreyögg, Georg and Axel v. Werder (eds.), *Handwörterbuch Unternehmensführung und Organisation*, 2004, pp. 1296-1304.

⁸ Schluchter, Wolfgang, *Einleitung: Fundamentalismus – Terrorismus – Krieg*, in: Schluchter, Wolfgang. (eds.), *Fundamentalismus – Terrorismus – Krieg*, Velbrück, Weilerswist, 2003, pp. 9-24.

discussed: a) individual factors, b) network-action of embedded individuals and c) aspects of globalization and re-regionalization.

a) *Individual factors*: The focus of the first level of the analysis of terror is on more or less individual biography research in the lives of unstable, fanaticized, fatuous, ideologized, and morbid characters. Nonetheless, they are said to have (had) rational motives, which has been widely discussed in the context of the 9/11 incident or the attacks in Madrid.⁹ Concerning this, most different motives have been identified, so far: suicidal attackers compensate their biased perception of powerlessness by combining both the greatest possible crime with the greatest sacrifice in order to turn the table on both the world they leave and in paradise.¹⁰ By this argument, terrorist violence is connoted with specific forms of deprivation experiences, which are said to have fatal consequences on young male middle-class Muslims and their conflict with the antinomies of Western Modernity.¹¹ Hence, Islamism is said to be an outlet for sexually, mentally or socially deprived men.¹²

b) *Network-action of embedded actors*: Further analysis of the structure of attacks soon showed that lone operators were in the minority, and thus raised the question for the existence of terror-specific socialization regimes and shifted the focus to training camps in Afghanistan. Concerning these, we are informed about rigorous initialization rites, de-personalization, and religion based elitist brainwashing. At the same, the network structure of the trans-national terrorism and its impact on its indestructibility caught the interest of researchers¹³, as with the recruitment practices¹⁴ and the internationality of

⁹ Witte, Daniel, *Zur Rational-Choice-Analyse des transnationalen Terrorismus: Potenziale und Grenzen ökonomischer Erklärungsansätze*, in: Kron, Thomas and Melanie Reddig (eds.), *Analysen des transnationalen Terrors. Soziologische Perspektiven*, VS, Wiesbaden, 2007, pp. 17-44, at p. 21.

¹⁰ Elwert, Georg, *Charismatische Mobilisierung und Gewaltmärkte. Die Basis der Attentäter des 11. September*, in: Wolfgang Schluchter (ed.), *Fundamentalismus – Terrorismus – Krieg*, Velbrück, Weilerswist, 2003, pp. 111-134, at p. 121.

¹¹ Eisenstadt, Shmuel N., *Antinomien der Moderne*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1998; Rubenstein, Richard E., *The Psycho-Political Sources of Terrorism*, in: Kegley, Charles W. (ed.): *The New Global Terrorism. Characteristics, Causes, Controls*, Prentice Hall, New York, 2003, pp. 139-149.

¹² Hess, Henner, *Terrorismus: Quo vadis? Kurzfristige Prognosen und mittelfristige Orientierungen*, in: Kemmesies, Uwe (ed.): *Terrorismus und Extremismus – Der Zukunft auf der Spur. Polizei und Forschung*, München, 2006, at p. 129; Kepel, Gilles, *Die Rache Gottes. Radikale Moslems, Christen und Juden auf dem Vormarsch*, Piper, München, 1994; Riesenbrodt, Martin, *Die fundamentalistische Erneuerungen der Religionen*, in: Kindeberger, Kilian (ed.), *Fundamentalismus. Politisierte Religion*, Brandenburgische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2004, pp. 10-27.

¹³ Schneckener, Ulrich, *Netzwerke des Terrors. Charakter und Strukturen des transnationalen Terrorismus*, SWP-Studie Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, Berlin, 2002, at p. 6; Aderhold, Jens and Steffen Roth, *Trittbrettfahrer der Globalisierung: Antiglobale Netzwerke und das Problem ihrer Unzerstörbarkeit*, in: Aderhold, Jens and René John (ed.), *Innovation – Sozialwissenschaftliche Perspektiven*, UVK, Konstanz, 2005, pp. 149-172.

¹⁴ Sageman, Marc, *Understanding Terror Networks*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2004.

both the network and its strategic orientation¹⁵, while data concerning the concrete member structure of al-Qaida were deduced from the little information that had been provided by the mass media and governmental authorities¹⁶, treated in terms of social network analysis¹⁷, and visualized¹⁸. At the same time Mayntz¹⁹, Priddat²⁰, and Raab/Milward²¹ introduced networks of the type al-Qaida in terms of hybrid or paradoxical organizations that integrate both fluid network structures and elements of formal organization; if airplanes shall be turned into missiles, then there is to be both a hierarchical communicative structure and a rigid division of roles and 'labor'²².

c) *Aspects of globalization and regionalization*: most dominant in the context of globalization-focused approaches are the concepts of the international prosperity or power gap²³, that is, an asymmetry that is often perceived as a (post-) colonial regime. As it is the both ideologically and geopolitically most exposed representative of this world order, the USA is said to be the most endangered target unit worldwide.²⁴ According to most contingent parameters, the world of nations is not only ranked with regard to their risk of being attacked by terrorists, but is also divided into either target units or incubators of the terror. The latter, i.e. states with a governmental system that is

¹⁵ Steinberg, Guido, *Der nahe und der ferne Feind. Die Netzwerke des islamischen Terrorismus*, Beck, München, 2005, at p. 25.

¹⁶ Hirschmann, Kai, *Terrorismus in neuen Dimensionen. Hintergründe und Schlussfolgerungen*, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (Volume 51), 2001, pp. 7-15; Halem, Irm, *Micro Target, Macr Impact: The Resolution of the Kashmir Conflict as a Key to Shrinking Al-Qaeda's International Terrorist Network*, in: *Terrorism and Political Violence* (Volume 16, Number 1), 2004, pp. 18-47; Schneckener, Ulrich, *Netzwerke des Terrors Charakter und Strukturen des transnationalen Terrorismus*, SWP-Studie Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, Berlin, 2002, pp. 28-29.

¹⁷ Fellman, Philip V. and Roxana Wright, *Modeling Terrorist Networks – Complex Systems at the Mid-Range*, paper presented at the Joint Complexity Conference, London School of Economics, 16-18 September 2003; Fellman, Philip V., *The complexity of terrorist networks*, International Conference on Complex Systems – NECSI Summer School, 12-23 June 2006, Boston; Krebs, Valdis, *Uncloaking Terrorist Networks*, 2001. Available online at: <http://www.orgnet.com/hijackers.html>; Krebs, Valdis, *Mapping Networks of Terrorist Cells*, in: *Connections* (Volume 24, Number 3), 2002, pp. 43-52.

¹⁸ Sageman, Marc, *Understanding Terror Networks*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2004.

¹⁹ Mayntz, Renate, *Hierarchie oder Netzwerk? Zu den Organisationsformen des Terrorismus*, in: *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* (Volume 14), 2004, pp. 251-262.

²⁰ Priddat, Birger P., *Djihad als Netzwerkunternehmens eines Global Tribe: Al-Qauida*, in: Baecker, Dirk, Peter Krieg and Fritz B. Simon (eds.), *Terror im System. Der 11. September und die Folgen*, Carl-Auer, Heidelberg, 2002, pp. 110-129.

²¹ Raab, Jörg and H. Brinton Milward, *Dark Networks as Problems*, in: *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* (Volume 13, Number 4), 2003, pp. 413-439.

²² Mayntz, Renate, *Hierarchie oder Netzwerk? Zu den Organisationsformen des Terrorismus*, in: *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* (Volume 14), 2004, pp. 251-262.

²³ LaFeber, Walter, *The Post September 11 Debate Over Empire, Globalization, and Fragmentation*, in: *Political Science Quarterly* (Volume 117), 2002, pp 1-17.

²⁴ Galtung, Johan, *Der Preis der Modernisierung. Struktur und Kultur im Weltsystem*, Graf, Wilfried and Dieter Kinkelbur (eds.), Promedia, Wien, 1997, at p. 104.

said to be underdeveloped according to the parameters of Western modernization have the best chances of acquiring that label.²⁵

Against this background, it is most interesting to find that it is not the absolute, but rather the relative, poverty at both the regional and the global level which is said to have the greater impact on the escalation of violence;²⁶ concerning the latter, religious and cultural differences are said to have a more catalytic than an activating effect.²⁷ Basically, the most serious conflicts come from problems concerning the acquisition and the distribution of the most different resources in countries with the weakest state power.²⁸

That is, within an overall analysis, we can state that individual factors, structural conditions, results from network analyses, and a global perspective are taken into account. Consequently, we are well provided with information on the motive structure of the assassins, their background, the corresponding recruitment practices, fundamentalist milieu structures, the impact of regional hot spots on terrorism, financial infrastructures, and the global dimension of terror, etc.²⁹ What we find here are one-directional causal patterns of explanation and attribution: the impact on Islamist propaganda on terrorism³⁰, the collaboration between terrorists and criminals³¹, and sometimes the dimension of global inequalities.³²

Overall, these articles paradoxically produce a both one-dimensional and contradictory picture of terrorism. It seems that science is mostly content with reproducing the most different yet existing interpretations, instead of keeping its professional distance to the global event "terror". So, at the moment almost everybody seems to agree with the idea that rigorous interventions by the police, by the intelligence agencies, and by military units are the only appropriate anti-terror measures. Thus, the discussion just varies

²⁵ Elwert, Georg, *Charismatische Mobilisierung und Gewaltmärkte. Die Basis der Attentäter des 11. September*, in: Schluchter, Wolfgang (ed.), *Fundamentalismus – Terrorismus – Krieg*, Velbrück, Weilerswist, 2003, pp. 111-134, at p. 127.

²⁶ Münkler, Herfried, *Die neuen Kriege*, Rowohlt Taschenbuch, Hamburg, 2004, at p. 17.

²⁷ Link, Werner, *Die Neuordnung der Weltpolitik. Grundprobleme globaler Politik an der Schwelle zum 21. Jahrhundert*, Beck, München, 1998.

²⁸ Münkler, Herfried, *Die neuen Kriege*, Rowohlt Taschenbuch, Hamburg, 2004, at p. 18 and p. 44.

²⁹ Burke, Jason, *Al Qaeda. The True Story of Radical Islam*, Penguin, London, 2004; Elwert, Georg, *Charismatische Mobilisierung und Gewaltmärkte. Die Basis der Attentäter des 11. September*, in: Schluchter, Wolfgang (ed.), *Fundamentalismus – Terrorismus – Krieg*, Velbrück, Weilerswist, 2003, pp. 111-134; Laqueur, Walter, *Krieg dem Westen. Terrorismus im 21. Jahrhundert*, Ullstein, Berlin, 2004; Napoleoni, Loretta, *Modern Jihad. Tracing the Dollars behind the Terror Networks*, Pluto Press, London, 2003.

³⁰ Eisenstadt, Shmuel N., *Vielfalt der Moderne*, Velbrück, Weilerswist, 2000; Omand, David, *Countering International Terrorism: The Use of Strategy*, in: *Survival* (Volume 47, Number 4), 2005, pp. 107-116.

³¹ Münkler, Herfried, *Die neuen Kriege*, Rowohlt Taschenbuch, Hamburg, 2004.

³² Halem, Irm, *Micro Target, Macro Impact: The Resolution of the Kashmir Conflict as a Key to Shrinking Al-Qaeda's International Terrorist Network*, in: *Terrorism and Political Violence* (Volume 16, Number 1), 2004, pp. 18-47.

concerning the tactics, while strategy is rather seldom questioned: identification and extinction of hundreds and thousands terrorist actors, groups, networks and states in order to make the network loose its' organizing and acting skills.³³

But sooner or later, even science will have to face the fact that nobody seems to really know either how these selective interventions are to be performed or whether these ever will be successful. Basically, there are two problems with the extinction strategy: first, the relevant knots of the terror-networks are to be identified, but this is looking for a needle in an international haystack, which has so far meant more collateral *damage* than lucky strikes. Certainly, the most regrettable of these collateral damages is self-cannibalization of the Free World, which indicates that it lacks learning aptitude: the 9/11-incident was not the first terrorist attack in history. Nonetheless, Western societies always seem to revert to the early childhood of democracy when confronted with terror. Regardless of what kind of terrorist violence has ever occurred during the last 200 years, the Occident and its Allies just know but one way to deal with terror: sacrificing the very values that they claim to defend. Thus, we argue that terror is not about historically varying forms of violent attitudes or actions, but rather a certain form of self-destructive collective neurosis, that is, communication that is neither appropriate to the needs of the regarded system nor to the demands of its environment.

III. The Terror System As A Communicative Conflict System

The attack on the World Trade Center induced a wave of explanatory models. Most of the questions focused on the causes and motives of terrorist violence, on their structures of action and organization, on certain social structures that could embed terror, and finally on ways of containing as well as destroying both terrorist organizations and their promoting structures.

What is remarkable in this context is that the notion of terror quickly caused research and communication that focused almost exclusively on both the rationales of and containment of the actions of just one of the parties involved; the terrorists who are accused of unjustified acts of violence. Analyses of both the specific nature of the reaction patterns of the *Alliance of the Willing* and of its enabling structures were far less in demand.

Meanwhile, first voices can be heard that are no longer interested in whatsoever detailed interior views from just one side of the medal. Rather, they plead for a more systemic view on the international conflict system called terror. One example for that is Navid

³³ Castells, M., *Bausteine einer Theorie der Netzwerkgesellschaft*, in: Berliner Journal für Soziologie (Volume 11, Numer 4), 2001, pp. 423-439.

Kermani³⁴, who published a plethora of articles on the Middle East and the Middle East policy of the Occident: during the lecture of his own articles he found that these followed a peculiar pattern based on an “*automatism of action, reaction and counter-reaction*” and which “*world policy as well as our own perception complied with, these days*”.

Thus, instead of continuing with following these automatisms of the days of the immediate 9/11 shock, we should now start to reflect on the functions and enabling structures of this automatism itself. That is, in concrete terms: we shall take our distance in order to be able to have a close look at the form and function of the conflict system called terror, at what is covered by the very label, at what is overemphasized, and at what is left aside. By this means, we re-enhance the pre-terror scope of freedom of communication.

As they are even more invisible than motives of conflicting actors, conflicts themselves are usually not treated as a discrete third party, and thus, are most often ignored as a discrete level of analysis.

Simply said, the function of conflicts is to re-establish a stable relationship to the system’s own instability.³⁵ If a system is alienated, e.g. due to a shock, then the system can overcome its own alienation by externalizing it — a procedure which is well known as physical, psychological, and social defence mechanisms which legitmate violence, projection of own deviances, and the exclusion of scapegoats. By these means, conflicts replace insecurity with problems. Once established, problem-focused social conflicts are very stable and prevent all involved persons – including scientists - from unpleasant dissonances, then the conflict partner first turns into an opponent and finally into an enemy; this is a former subject turned into an object.

As demonstrated by the history of the Middle East, conflicts tend to establish social systems with highly compulsive constraints.³⁶ In this context, the integrating elements are most simple binary schemes like friend and foe, in which even neutrality can be interpreted as an act of aggression³⁷.

That is to say the escalation of violence is not only due to the chaining of acts of counter-violence, but also due to the fact that even distance to the conflict seems to be impeded; in a friend-foe scheme there is no place for the neutral reflections of a third party. So, both the opponents and the scientists who subtly assign to one of the latter

³⁴ Kermani, Navid, *Strategie der Eskalation. Der Nahe Osten und die Politik des Westens*, Wallstein, Göttingen, 2005

³⁵ Luhmann, Niklas, *Ausdifferenzierung des Rechts*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/Main, 1981, at p. 97.

³⁶ Luhmann, Niklas, *Ausdifferenzierung des Rechts*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/Main, 1981, at p. 101.

³⁷ Schluchter, Wolfgang, *Einleitung: Fundamentalismus – Terrorismus – Krieg*, in: Schluchter, Wolfgang (ed.), *Fundamentalismus – Terrorismus – Krieg*, Velbrück, Weilerswist, 2003, pp. 9-24, at p. 13.

base on truncated and simplifying semantics, which shows that most scientists are also part of the conflict structure themselves, too.

Due to the unpredictable and, thus, omnipresent nature of the international terrorism, the perceived threat is universalizing.³⁸ Soon, a global conflict system is established.³⁹ Now almost every form of violence in almost every corner of the world is very likely to be labelled as terror. So, perhaps we would not need much more than to combine the ideas of an increased interest in violence, of global mass media, and of the law of large numbers to explain the perceived increase or omnipresence of terrorist violence.

If we now continue to focus on the global conflict system called terror we find that escalation is not only a problem *between* the two conflicting sub-systems, but also *within* them. On the one hand, the nature of terror functions as the legitimation of counteractive measures against terrorism, which ironically bear its' signature. But what is more interesting, on the other hand, is that the Free World acts as a servant of the terrorists as they react on violence that is explicitly interpreted as an attack on their liberal foundations by both nationally and internationally extinguishing the achievements of Modernity themselves.

That is, we can follow Dirk Baecker⁴⁰ in saying that every act of terrorism is an attempt to gain control. But, as stated in the next chapter, from a systemic point of view, this attempt can be observed on both sides of the clash of civilizations.

IV. The Neutrality Ban As An Impact Of Culturalist Analysis Of The Terror

As already demonstrated, the discourse on the causes and consequences of terror is very much biased. Particularly peculiar, however, is the more or less manifest partisanship of scientists, a group that usually aims at maximal neutrality as well as at the objectivity of its findings. Perhaps this lack of neutrality is due to that fact that the terror is said to be violence that targets not only materials and bodies, but also the intangible foundations of the cultural spheres; and these spheres are the preferred objects of the research and development in the social sciences and humanities.

³⁸ Beck, Ulrich, *Weltrisikogesellschaft revisited: Die terroristische Bedrohung*, in: Hitzler, Ronald and Jo Reicherts (eds.), *Irritierte Ordnung. Die gesellschaftliche Verarbeitung von Terror*, UVK, Konstanz, 2002, pp. 275-298, at p. 54.

³⁹ Japp, Klaus P., *Terrorismus als Konfliktsystem*, in: Kron, Thomas and Melanie Reddig (eds.): *Analysen des Transnationalen Terrors. Soziologische Perspektiven*, VS, Wiesbaden, 2007, pp. 166-193, at p.168.

⁴⁰ Baecker, Dirk, *Die Gewalt des Terrorismus*, in: Aderhold, Jens and Olaf Kranz (eds.), *Intention und Funktion. Probleme der Vermittlung psychischer und sozialer Systeme*, VS, Wiesbaden, 2007, pp 219-229, at p. 223.

Basically, two types of attitudes towards terrorism can be distinguished. For one group, the threat is most existential, concrete, and immediate. Thus, there is no use in reasoning about potential causes of violence; nothing on earth could ever justify attacks that aim at ones own (way of) life. As surviving is the order of the day, even the smartest cause study would not reduce the finality of countermeasures. So, the bottom line is problem-solving strategies between police state and anti-crime measures in the Wild West⁴¹.

Of course, scientists usually tend to join the other party that focuses first on the causes and conditions of terror in order to learn how to destroy terrorist structures even more efficiently. Even the most empathic study on the social structure of the *failed states* acting as *incubators of terrorism*⁴² comes to the conclusion that supporting structures of terrorism have to be forcefully destroyed.

Both groups have their function; on the one hand, the perception of an immediate, constant, and omnipresent life-threatening situation justifies the most rigid measures against groups and individuals even within the homelands of the Free World. And on the other hand, the second approach justifies measures against the rest of the world:

- First, external state failure is defined according to internal rules.
- Second, state failure is defined as one of the most basic causes of terrorism.
- Third, terrorism is defined as an existential threat.
- Fourth, you feel legitimated to attack declaredly weak states that never have attacked you.

In this very sense, both approaches to terror harmoniously complement each other within the semantic amalgam “war against terror”, not least because both of them strictly externalize the causes of terrorism.

But as already indicated before, *it takes more than one to cause terror*; it takes an act of violence, and it takes the label to turn this violence into terror, too.⁴³ Unlike its semantic alternative, war, the concept of terror does not primarily commit to external hostility but rather to patriotism in the war against oneself. War is about the extinction of external forces, while in the context of terror we have to face the problem that contemporary

⁴¹ Ignacio Ramonet, in: *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 12 March 2004

⁴² Rotberg, Robert I., *Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators*, in: Robert I. Rotberg (ed.), *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC, 2003, pp. 1-25; Rotberg, Robert I., *The Failure and Collapse of Nation-States*, in: Robert I. Rotberg (ed.), *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2004, pp. 1-45.

⁴³ Baecker, Dirk, *Die Gewalt des Terrorismus*, in: Aderhold, Jens and Olaf Kranz (ed.): *Intention und Funktion. Probleme der Vermittlung psychischer und sozialer Systeme*, VS Verlag, Wiesbaden, 2007, pp. 219-229.

terrorist networks are probably indestructible⁴⁴; most tactics within the war against terror are about adapting the own system to a surrounding that the system maybe cannot change, at any time. Thus, we are confronted almost daily with our own technical, psychological, and social security shortcomings. The bottom line is that war aims at victory, that is, an end with terror; while terror is about terror without an end. Within the context of the war against terror, both dimensions of violence are condensed to a never-ending story of attack and revenge; maybe the *war against terror* is the most compact and paradoxical tale of violence, which makes neutrality twice as hard as in any other case.

But, neutrality is a basic scientific virtue. In particular when science wants to give advice, neutrality is both basis and quality feature of consultancy, never mind whether the demands for advice are in health care, in economy, or in politics. Nonetheless, most analysts of terror stand out due to their striking partisanship. *They act like a couple's therapist who constantly supports the female*, that is: unprofessional. Therapy research showed that partisanship only works either as a temporal tactic within a neutral overall-strategy, or against the background of an aspired exit-option. As it will be hard to find an exit-option at the global level, and as Western societies still lack of an overall-strategy of the war against terror, the bottom line is what is well-known in couple's and family therapy for ages: partisanship is a problem of consultancy, and not a solution.⁴⁵

This excursion to therapy is coherent not only in terms of an analogy, but also in terms of a glance on the roots of the trans-individual, systemic tradition of consultancy.⁴⁶ What is true for couple or family therapy applies at the global level all the more; advisory interventions into conflict systems are definitely the matter of a specifically sociological form of consultancy. At both levels of the analysis, an inter-systemic sociological focus can be distinguished selectively from the intra-systemic perspectives of its cognate disciplines. While both the reconstruction of the inner life and the coping with an individual biography are the core-competencies of classical psychological approaches, inter-systemic coaches and consultants would rather focus on the history of the communication between these very actors as well as on further *trans-individual structures*, which can be both physically reconstructed and psychologically experienced, e.g. by techniques of the *structural constellations school*.

⁴⁴ Aderhold, Jens and Steffen Roth, *Trittbrettfahrer der Globalisierung: Antiglobale Netzwerke und das Problem ihrer Unzerstörbarkeit*, in: Aderhold, Jens and René John (ed.), *Innovation – Sozialwissenschaftliche Perspektiven*, UVK, Konstanz, 2005, pp. 149-172.

⁴⁵ Stabb, Deborah L. Cox and Jerry L. Harber, *Gender-related Therapist Attributions in Couples Therapy*, in: *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* (Volume 23, Number 3), 1997, pp. 335-346; Quinn, William; Damond Dotson and Karin Jordan, *Dimensions of Therapeutic Alliances and the Association with Outcome in Family Therapy*, in: *Psychotherapy Research* (Number 74), 1997, pp. 429-438.

⁴⁶ Nestmann, Frank, Frank Engel and Ursel Sickendiek (ed.), *Das Handbuch der Beratung*, Dgvt, Tübingen, 2007; Kriz, Jürgen, *Grundkonzepte der Psychotherapie*, Beltz, Weinheim, 2001; Schlippe, Arist von and Jochen Schweitzer, *Lehrbuch der systemischen Therapie und Beratung*, Göttingen, 2000; Schiepek, Günter, *Die Grundlagen der Systemischen Therapie*, Göttingen, 1999.

Thus, it is never the focus on the internal structure of a given state or cultural system which provides us with sociological findings at the level of world society. In the context of terror, an intra-systemic perspective neglects the inter-active form of the conflict system called terror, that is, the violence of alter which ego labels as terror. And this is exactly the point: the most interesting sociological finding concerning terror is that terror is a problem that is created by the Western World itself, e.g. by calling Jihad 'terror', and not just Jihad. Accordingly, we are not only to ask for the functions which Jihad has with regard to its incubator cultures but also for the function which the notion of terror has on the systems of the Western World.

Additionally, not until we contrast the two battle calls of Jihad and terror we find that they do not differ much in one most basic dimension, as *both enact a neutrality ban*. That is, that these two most different codes have the same impact on two most different cultures: a drive towards ideological mobilization, loss of rights, escalation, exclusion, totalitarianism, and fundamentalism.

The most peculiar difference is that, on the one side of the clash of civilizations, *a majority of the one system fears a minority of the other* (terror scenario), while on the other side, a minority of the one system feels challenged by the majority of another (Jihad scenario). Culturalist approaches will not help much to cope with this amalgam of inferiority complex, megalomania, humiliation, and arrogance; possibly they even take counterproductive effects. Is it right to attach the terrorists to a certain culture, as was done just a few lines above? Do we not rather tend to exclude terrorists from (our own) societies in order to being able to give them a special treatment? Hence, it blends well into these questions that it is not the intention of this paper to discuss cultural specifics in the context of terrorism.

Nonetheless, from an inter-cultural point of view we find that in the Western World, much more effort is made on the analysis of both the causes of Jihad than on *the analysis of the reasons for the Western atmosphere of terror*, but regarding this sociologists can have a clear conscience when they refer this kind of questions to their colleagues from the cultural sciences, that is, the psychologists of cultures, in a matter of speaking.

In the following final section of this paper we will sketch a basic structure of a decidedly neutral program for the research and consultancy in the context of the trans-national conflict system called terror.

V. Before Getting Up From The Couch: Perspectives And Advice

Consequent inter-systemic analysis generates new perspectives and, by this means, surprising gains of knowledge which are either convincing or serve to clear the way for

new questions, at least. As a matter of fact, we do not need many words to elaborate the fact that contemporary research and advice on terror has problems with properly defining its field of research or its client system.⁴⁷ Usually it is the *own* governments, states, societies or cultures which are identified as the clients, that is, as victims of terrorist violence with a demand for coping strategies. Of course, there is demand for advice on those delinquent and failure systems that act as index patients with either Terrorism or Incubator of Terrorism syndromes also. The history of the interaction between the two combatants is told in a highly selective way, if at all. Consequently, the fundamental law of taking the responsibility for ones own perceptions, attributions, and actions is hurt, too, as it is exclusively applied to the index patients, and not to the own clients.

By this means, most of the researchers and consultants are gambling away the chance for a multi-perceptive problem approach, and are reducing both their own mental scope and their skills. In peculiar contrast to the state of arts that has been achieved on all advisory levels between person and organization, yet, the cultural and societal advisors act like a surgeon with a butcher's knife:

- Instead of challenging the two clients with multi-perspective feedback (e.g. by means of crossover mirroring) the respective rationales follow biased and most trivial actor-victim-schemes.
- The given structure of the conflict is never questioned or reframed.
- The focus is primarily on attributes of (one of) the actors, and not on the characteristics of their inter-action.
- Instead of establishing a neutral sphere of trust, we find an atmosphere of partisanship and accusation.
- All responsibility for the consequences of the conflict is handed over to the index patients.
- There is no advice for the index patients; merely, there is advice on them.

In view of the state of the art section of this paper, we claim that most of all researchers and consultants practice both partisanship and cultural self-importance instead of cultivating a professional attitude of "*neutrality and curiosity*"⁴⁸. Why does this group prefer the distance to its own ethical standards to the distance to its own cultural sphere? We guess that this question justified a separate paper.

But it is most important for us to state that the stunning compliance to the neutrality ban is not a result of a culturally formed perception which even scientists cannot escape, as they are part of one of the party of the conflict system, as well. Contemporary

⁴⁷ Königswieser, Roswita and Alexander Exner, *Systemische Intervention*, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, 1999, pp. 22-23.

⁴⁸ Ellebracht, Heiner, et al., *Systemische Organisations- und Unternehmensberatung*, Gabler, Wiesbaden, 2003, at p. 47.

psychotherapy and organizational consultancy provide us with quite a scope of tools for which applies what Dirk Baecker said with regard to management constellations: “*The therapeutic success of this method consists in the fact that observers as well as participants can look at a situation which they are in, at the same time*”.⁴⁹

We claim that the application of just this single method would produce surprising insights in the nature of the transnational conflict system, and thus would enable sociologist consultants to act as professional *reflecting teams*.⁵⁰ Thus, we are convinced that there is an immediate need for systematic research on the terms and conditions of the application of concepts of therapeutic consultancy in the field of stable inter-cultural conflict systems. This transfer will not only help to reframe these conflicts but also will contribute to the professionalization of a specifically sociological consultancy, which is said to have a lack of both internal and external legitimation, so far.⁵¹ Hence, our final statement in this paper is advice, of course, and this advice takes two directions.

The first is directed to the researchers and advisors of all cultural backgrounds. The only case in which we cannot afford a neutral position is when neutrality itself is banned. *Thus, re-establishing spaces of neutrality means playing the terror game our way.*

The second is addressed to the Western Societies. Instead of behaving as if in the childhood of democracy, take full responsibility for your perceptions, attributions, and actions. This includes the label terrorism because ‘Terrorists’ do not perform terror. They engage in Jihad, Civil War, Rampage, or Homicide, etc. That is, terror is nothing but a word for your reaction to this very violence. So, *if terror is the problem, then YOU are (part of?) the problem.*

⁴⁹ Baecker, Dirk, *Therapie fuer Erwachsene: Zur Dramaturgie der Strukturaufstellung*, in: Torsten Groth and Gerhard Stey (ed.), *Potenziale der Organisationsaufstellung: Innovative Ideen und Anwendungsbereiche*, Carl-Auer, Heidelberg, 2007, pp. 14-31, at p. 14 (translated).

⁵⁰ Ellebracht, Heiner, et al., *Systemische Organisations- und Unternehmensberatung*, Gabler, Wiesbaden, 2003, at p. 64.

⁵¹ Dewe, Bernd, *Soziologie und Beratung*, in: Nestmann, Frank et al. (eds.), *Das Handbuch der Beratung* (Volume 2), Dgvt, Tübingen, 2007, pp. 125-140.

