

Humiliation, Iran, and the Middle East Crisis

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Introduction

Currently, the world is glued to the television screen, watching what is called the “Middle East Crisis” (except those inside the Middle East, who, in the midst of destruction, might have no television sets left anymore). When we see pictures of people dying and losing their homes, on all sides, our hearts bleed. And when we watch all participants yearn for “victory,” and solemnly confirm that they “must” do as they do, we do not know what to say. We only know that we will be branded as “traitors” whenever we take sides.

Daily, our network, *Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies (HumanDHS)*, receives messages, calling upon us to stand up in these times of crisis. I cannot speak on behalf of the members of our network, who have diverging opinions – but let me give you my thoughts in this paper.

I write this text in the middle of August, during the first days of the United Nations Resolution 1701 that calls for “a full cessation of hostilities,” and just after the London “jet terror plot.”

However, as many warn, the crisis may only really start at the end of August, when Iran will not comply with the United Nations deadline to stop uranium enrichment. The Israel-Lebanon confrontation may represent but a prelude.

I am frequently asked to condemn what is happening in the Middle East. I reply as follows: Of course, I condemn mayhem and suffering. I also condemn earthquakes. There is no question, I think, that we, Homo sapiens (sapiens = wise) ought to be able to solve our problems without killing each other. Who doubts that? The question is not whether I condemn what is happening – indeed it is obscene and I am ashamed of being part of our species. The question is, WHAT NOW?

A very good friend, a Holocaust survivor, has the following to say to the widespread obsession with calling for “condemnation.” He explains this with a joke, told in two pictures. The first picture shows an office in a terrible mess. “We need order!” is the outcry from the employees. Then there is the second picture: the office is now impeccable. But there is a new outcry, “Now that we have order – WHAT DO WE DO NOW?”

In other words, when we have finished putting everybody into their place, here the “enemies,” and there the “friends,” and “we” feel justified to do what we “must” do, because our “enemies” forced us into it – WHAT THEN? Or, in my case, when I have finished condemning all mayhem and violence – WHAT THEN?

When I open my emails, I do find some excellent analytical texts about the “what then.” But most messages I receive everyday are full of hand-wringing and finger-pointing, putting the situation “in order.” Yet, this leads to no change, only to a ubiquitous bath in feelings of shock, depression, despair, indignation, and hatred. Reflection on “what then” is drowned out by a competition as to who can feel more shocked and morally indignant. And this, while reality demands, and trauma research

shows, that crisis entails a chance to be managed constructively only if we face it proactively, not by re-acting and not by allowing it to overwhelm us.

I propose therefore that we leave the finger-pointing behind and embark on proactive bridge building. Condemnations and finger-pointing were perhaps sufficient in former times. They are no longer. On the contrary, today they may aggravate the situation. When a marriage breaks up and the spouses, after a lot of finger-pointing, hate each other's guts, they can move out of each other's neighborhood and never meet again. Humankind does not have this option. We live in new times of global interdependence. We have to stay together even after divorce. And in order to make this viable, we have to turn down the heat and refrain from digging graves of moral indignation and hatred for each other.

What makes me most sad in this situation is, therefore, that so many intelligent people around the world do nothing more than use their passion for justice to wallow in emotions which have polarizing effects, instead of devising action that brings us all together and makes "life after divorce" feasible. I feel personally ashamed and humiliated not only by the crisis itself, but also when I witness people who abuse it for gaining moral high ground by self-serving "indignation-entrepreneurship."

What is this crisis about? Many involved in the Middle East crisis (as well as in the "war on terror") are adamant that the other side chooses to attack them without any reason, out of pure evil, nothing but evil, thus forfeiting all rights to respectful treatment. Everybody re-acts, everybody is an outraged victim, a victim of the other's evil. Whatever one side describes as "necessary and heroic defense" is seen from the other side as "cold-blooded aggression." "Oppression" on one side is "benevolent patronage" on the other.

Every victim also attacks me and the rest of the world for neglecting their plight and allowing their respective enemy to slaughter them. Every death is judged to be caused not just by the "enemy," but also by a "negligent international community" – only very few turn their gaze also to their own camp.

I agree that the so-called international community has to do more, more than shedding tears of "why can we not all love each other," or calling for victory for either side. If this were sufficient, this paper would be redundant. However, calling upon "friends" to stand together against "enemies" does not solve the crisis, not in the short term and surely not in the long term.

I feel sad and humiliated when Middle East politicians declare that nobody cares about their lives. Because I do care. I dedicate my entire life to help finding constructive ways to build a more dignified world. And millions of people around the globe do care. However, helplessness dominates their reactions, helplessness as to what we can do to improve the situation.

This text posits that it is essential to place current crises into a larger historic context, if we wish to guide them constructively, and that there is only one way to start this process, namely by taking a step back. We need to understand how the human condition has evolved over a longer historic time period, how humans have adapted to changing conditions, and which new adaptations we need to develop at the present point in time.

I often compare humankind with the Titanic, just before sinking. Renowned physicist and leading expert in string theory, formulates this beautifully in his book on *Parallel Worlds*. He concludes his book with the following paragraph:

The generation now alive is perhaps the most important generation of humans ever to walk the Earth. Unlike previous generations, we hold in our hands the future destiny of our species, whether we soar into fulfilling our promise as a type I civilization [meaning that humankind manages to build a sustainable planet, both ecologically and socially] or fall into the abyss of chaos, pollution, and war. Decisions made by us will reverberate throughout this century. How we resolve global wars, proliferating nuclear weapons, and sectarian and ethnic strife will either lay or destroy the foundations of a type I civilization. Perhaps the purpose and meaning of the current generation are to make sure that the transition to a type I civilization is a smooth one. The choice is ours. This is the legacy of the generation now alive. This is our destiny (Kaku, 2005, p. 361).

In other words, here we are all together on the “Titanic,” which is about to go down, and what do we do? We fight between the cabins. We leave bloody trails instead of cooperating for building a future for coming generations that is sustainable, both ecologically and socially. We invest our energy into the wrong problems. And humankind’s very survival is the price we might have to pay.

We need to learn to view a wider horizon. In order to achieve this, please take the time, disengage from current crises for a moment, and make a journey together with me, a journey through human history.

The Normative Universe of Honor

I propose that the despair many feel in current times of crises can be mitigated by more knowledge. Even a severely ill cancer patient – instead of frantically rolling on the floor – can exit from panic by studying the features of her new disease and by devising a careful therapy plan. Let us therefore begin exiting from panic by collecting knowledge. The current Middle East crisis, for example, or the “war on terror” are embedded into a large-scale normative transition of humankind. In order to guide these crises constructively, it is important to understand both worlds – the old and the new world.

During the past 10,000 years, *honor* has dominated human communities all over the globe. I define honor as the ranking of human worthiness and value, as the acceptance that there are *higher* beings who preside over *lesser* beings.

William Ury (1999), anthropologist, and director of the Harvard University Project on Preventing War, draws up a simplified depiction of history. He pulls together elements from anthropology, game theory and conflict studies to describe three major types of society: a) simple hunter-gatherers (during the first 90 percent of human history), b) complex agriculturists (lasting for roughly the past 10,000 years), and c) the currently emerging knowledge society.

In Ury’s system, during the first 90 percent of human history, humankind lived as simple hunter-gatherers. They enjoyed a world of coexistence and open networks, within which conflicts were negotiated, rather than addressed by coercion. The abundance of wild food represented an *expandable pie of resources* that did not force opponents into win-lose paradigms.

Around 10,000 years ago, however, this rather benign situation came to an end. It was the point in time when many easily accessible parts of the globe had been populated and the “next valley” was no longer untouched. The next valley was now inhabited by other people (*circumscription* is the anthropological term). *Homo sapiens* had filled up the globe – the first round of globalization had come upon humankind, so to speak. This, together with climate change, brought to the fore a new way of life, for most of humankind, namely agriculture: when I can no longer find uninhabited wild nature, I have to use the land on which I stand more efficiently (*intensification* is the anthropological term).

Agriculture was quite a shrewd human adaptation to new conditions, one could say, however, it had serious side effects. It created what political scientists call the *security dilemma*: As soon as the resource I live on is land (and no longer freely available wild food), I have to defend my land against you, against the greed of my neighbor.

In other words, the normative world of honor, of honorable domination/submission, could be regarded as an adaptation to the fear of attack, which emanated from the fact that land became the resource of most of humankind, a resource that by definition is *not expandable*.

I have based my work on humiliation on Ury’s work – see Lindner (2006b) (see also many full online texts on <http://www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin02.php>). In a world of honorable domination/submission, everybody accepts that it is God’s will or nature’s order that masters hold down underlings. Intricate cultural practices were devised during the past 10,000 years, in different cultures in different ways, to keep this ranking system in place. Underlings learned to kow-tow, they learned to accept being beaten regularly, or even killed. This was meant to “remind” underlings where they “belonged,” namely “below their masters.” Humiliation was routine and seen as legitimate. Even the most atrocious methods of holding underlings down were regarded as “honorable medicine,” good for the victims and good for society. Humiliation was not yet judged to be a violation. Only the masters themselves, when their privileged position was questioned, could define being put down as illegitimate humiliation of their honor and try to repair it, for example, by going to duel. In times of Apartheid, for example, the downtrodden had no right to protest, while the elites cried “foul” whenever their supremacy was questioned.

The word “civilians” did not exist; the common man and woman did not count. They were puppets in their rulers’ hands. For thousands of years, rulers fought their wars, and the suffering of their people went unmentioned. People died, their homelands were devastated, their homesteads destroyed, their men killed and their women raped or taken away. Nobody asked whether they felt traumatized. For the common man and woman the actions of their rulers were like natural disasters. My grandmother said to me once, “Wir kleinen Leute können ja sowieso nichts tun. Die da oben machen ja doch was sie wollen,” meaning that the masses, the “little people” as she called it, had no power. This was how my grandmother felt, this is what dominated her view of life and the world.

The moral world of honor can be illustrated by many examples, from all parts of the world, the so-called “West” as much as in the “non-West.” The normative world of honor cross-cuts our world, it does not follow fault lines of “West” versus “non-West.” Ranked honor is still strong in two realms: in certain segments of societies all around the world, and at macro levels, namely at the level of powerful international elites dealing with each

other. Honor often plays a stronger role in foreign policy matters, in armed services and diplomatic staffs, than among the lower echelons of the average citizen. Thus, a passion to retain a state's "honorable" preeminence, as Donald Kagan (1998) proposes, applies in today's world no less than it did earlier, even when "national honor" is partly concealed by human rights rhetoric and no longer invoked as openly as in the past.

Southern Honor, for example, though no longer explicitly appealed to, is still permeating certain policies in the United States of America. Historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown (1982) describes Southern Honor in his book with the same title. Southern inclination toward the "warrior ethic" embraces the following elements, according to Wyatt-Brown, namely "that the world should recognize a state's high distinction; a dread of humiliation if that claim is not provided sufficient respect; a yearning for renown; and, finally, a compulsion for revenge when, in issues of both personal leadership calculations and in collective or national terms, repute for one or another virtue and self-justified power is repudiated" (Wyatt-Brown, 2005, p. 2). David Hackett Fischer (1989) informs us that Southerners "strongly supported every American war no matter what it was about or who it was against" (Fischer, 1989, p. 843). Social psychologists Richard Nisbett and Dov Cohen – see Nisbett and Cohen (1996) – explain the psychology of violence in the culture of honor in the southern part of the United States. Conceptualizations such as "they' want to break our will, but 'we' won't let it happen," or "'they' are cowards," or "*The enemy*" are embedded in gut feelings imbued with masculine norms of honor that thrive on contests of "strength," on "keeping the upper hand," on "victory," and on avoiding appearing to be a "wimp" or a "sissy," in other words, avoiding to appear "female." In such a context, humiliating "*The enemy*" is felt to be legitimate, especially when this enemy does not act "manly" and thus is felt to forfeit the status as equal in honor. Terrorists are "unlawful" in this frame of mind because they "hide behind civilians" and are "cowards," regardless of how much actual courage might be invested (even if misinvested). "Unlawful combatants" commit "treason" against traditional honor norms, which makes them "free" to be tortured. The introduction of categories such as "unlawful combatants" informs us that *Southern Honor*, though no longer openly invoked, is still permeating certain policies in the United States of America.

The practice of so-called honor killings is another example. When family honor is perceived to be soiled and humiliated through the rape of a daughter, for example, it is first and foremost the raped daughter who is killed, and rarely also the rapist (Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2000), a criminologist who is deeply knowledgeable of this practice, feels uneasy with the term "honor killings" and prefers to use the term "femicide," personal communication, November 2003, Al Quds University, Jerusalem). According to Stephanie Nebehay (2000), "honor killings" "have been reported in Bangladesh, Britain, Brazil, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Pakistan, Morocco, Sweden, Turkey and Uganda." Afghanistan, where the practice is condoned under the rule of the fundamentalist Taliban movement, can be added to the list, along with Iraq and Iran" (Nebehay, 2000). Let us look at the following case from the UK, so as to get a feeling of the *normalcy and legitimacy* that this moral order had (and still has) among its followers:

Greengrocer Azhar Nazir, 30, and his cousin Imran Mohammed, 17, stabbed Samaira Nazir, a 25-year-old recruitment consultant, 18 times at the family home in Southall in

April 2005. The attack was barbaric, and witnessed by two young nieces. Samaira tried to flee but her brother dragged her back into the house where the assault continued. Samaira was killed after she asked to marry an Afghan man – instead of marrying someone in the Pakistani family circle. She fell in love with Salman Mohammed, who befriended the family after arriving in the UK in 2000. The relationship was kept secret at first, but when Samaira asked for permission to marry him, her family reacted angrily. Her fiancé was warned by Nazir: “We can get you anywhere if you get married, even if you are not in this country.” Samaira had tried to talk to her mother about the problem at a relative’s house, but her mother refused. A neighbor heard Samaira shout, “You are not my mother any more.” Samaira’s father was arrested and bailed during the investigation but fled to Pakistan. The judge said to Samaira’s brother: “You claimed to have loved your sister but were guilty of orchestrating her murder.” (I summarized this story from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/london/5179162.stm).

The judge’s words illustrate how an honor system is different from a system of equal dignity: In an honor system, the brother ought to love his sister by killing her – killing her is his duty, even if he finds it difficult and would rather spare his sister. In a world of equal dignity, he ought to love his sister by *not* killing her – in that case not killing her is his duty, even if he hates her. As it becomes clear, both systems are diametrically opposed to each other. They cannot coexist. It is either, or. It is like driving on the right side of the road or the left side – one cannot have both.

Let us now have a look at the new world of dignity.

The Normative Universe of Equal Dignity for All

Ury posits that a knowledge society resembles the hunter-gatherer model because the pie of resources – knowledge – appears to be *infinitely expandable* (there are always new ideas to be developed), lending itself to win-win solutions. This type of society moves away from rigid hierarchical structures toward the open network of our earliest hunter-gatherer ancestors. Negotiation and contract replace command lines, and coexistence is the primary strategy.

In other words, the vision of a future global knowledge society entails a surprisingly benign promise. As soon as land is no longer the main resource, all are freed from the security dilemma and from having to fight against neighbors. All can cooperate, together increase the pie of resources, and everybody gains. No longer do masters have to keep armies of underlings to fight enemies. A global knowledge society entails the potential to liberate both, masters and underlings, from having to force everybody into a ranked system. All are called upon to throw their creativity into the task of forging better ways to protect our shared home, planet Earth, and build a world where all can live dignified lives.

And indeed, human rights are the new moral adaptation to the new conditions of an increasingly interdependent globalizing world. Many accuse the West of wanting to force human rights down the throat of the rest, but it may rather be that norms of ranked honor lose their utility under the new conditions.

The first sentence in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” This means that nobody ought to be humiliated – humiliation is now a violation of dignity that is illegitimate. For the past 10,000 years, honor has ranked people in higher and lesser beings; human rights un-rank them again, masters are called upon to descend and underlings to rise, all meet in the middle, in equal dignity, connected in shared humility, back to what seems to have been the rule prior to 10,000 years ago.

Formerly, when underlings staged revolutions, they merely replaced their masters and kept the hierarchical system in place – former inferiors soon acted as new tyrants. The human rights revolution is different, and recognizing this fact is essential for efficient crisis management today. The human rights revolution entails two parts, first the dismantling of humiliators, and second the dismantling of the very humiliating system, including our own humiliating behavior. What was “benevolent patronage” before, transmutes into “oppression,” and now this oppression has to be dismantling by non-dominating means – see the work by Morton Deutsch (2006), and Philip Pettit (1996), or by Howard Zehr (2002), and John Braithwaite (2002).

Honor codes had their place in a world that did not yet experience the coming-together of humankind into *one single global community*; they have their place in a world of *many fragmented units pitched against each other*. Human rights represent a normative framework that is better adapted to an emerging global knowledge society.

Human rights defenders no longer can humiliate others, not even humiliators. Looking down on others and treating them as lesser beings is no longer legitimate. This entails that also those people, who still endorse honor codes, wherever in the world, may not be looked down upon. The brother who kills his sister has his place in the old world of honor, and from the point of view of human rights, he deserves everybody’s respect as a human being, even though his deeds are rejected. Mandela walked out of 27 years of humiliation in prison and many of his guards had become his friends.

Brave heroism and sacrifice in the old world of honor meant standing up *against* our enemies, it meant accepting to be part of a hierarchically organized ingroup, united in patriotic love for our ingroup, pitted against threatening outgroups. Brave heroism and sacrifice in the new world of dignity means standing up united in humanizing love *for* a vision of one united family of humankind, where everybody deserves to be respected as equal in dignity, a world without enemies and outgroups, a world of neighbors, who together find a way to live together even if they do not love each other, even after “divorce.”

The Transition

Probably the most touching depiction of the transition from a moral universe of ranked honor to a moral universe of equal dignity is given to us by Ernest Gordon (1962) in his book *Through the Valley of the Kwai*. Ernest Gordon spent three years in a Japanese prisoner of war camp during World War II, and his experiences as a prisoner informed both the film *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, starring Alec Guinness, and the new film *To End All Wars* directed by David Cunningham.

On the surface, Gordon's message is that of forgiveness, however, if we analyze his predicament deeper, it is the transition from ranked collectivist honor to equal dignity for each human being. He later served as a visiting lecturer at universities around the world, among them at International Christian University in Tokyo, Japan, the country of his torturers, whom he had forgiven.

The film *To End All Wars* does an excellent job in dramatically contrasting the universe of honor with the moral framework of equal dignity for everybody. One of the most elaborated codes of honor is *bushido*, a Japanese code of conduct meaning the "way of the warrior," the "way of the Samurai." Under the bushido ideal, if a samurai fails to uphold his honor he can regain it by performing seppuku (ritual suicide). Bushido ethics informed Japanese fighting spirit during World War II, to reinforce readiness for self-sacrifice and loyalty among the soldiers and the population at large. It reached its peak with the self-sacrifice of the kamikaze pilots.

In the film *To End All Wars*, the code of honor is represented by the Japanese camp guards, but also by some of the prisoners, with Campbell as their leader (played by Robert Carlyle). Campbell puts everybody's life in danger through his insistence on not bowing to Japanese domination – in line with bushido, which stipulates that accepting to be captured alive is the deepest shame for a soldier.

The new moral universe of equal dignity is represented by Ernest Gordon himself, who succeeds, not unlike Mandela, to forge links of humanity with some of the Japanese torturers. Gordon and the guard/translator Takashi Nagase, for example, became friends and met after the war. Devout Buddhist Takashi Nagase devoted his life after the end of World War II to making up for the Japanese army's treatment of prisoners of war.

Thus, the significant cleavage in this film is not between the Japanese and their prisoners, but between two moral codes. Both moral universes come to a dramatic stand-off when the war is ending and wounded Japanese soldiers seek help. For Gordon, they are human beings who deserve help. For Campbell they are "the enemy," undeserving of pity. Campbell's refusal to help is in line with the honor code of the Japanese guards, who try to drive away their wounded comrades. Only Gordon, to the astonishment of the Japanese guards, steps forward and gives them water. Campbell tries to stop him: "Come back to *your* men!" Campbell, however, loses the battle for the hearts and minds of his comrades, and the prisoners take Gordon's side. They follow Gordon to help the wounded Japanese.

Campbell, on his part, disappears into a corner of the camp, where he mistreats Ito, the now powerless head of the Japanese camp guards, in revenge for all the cruelty Ito had perpetrated on the prisoners. Gordon approaches and tries to stop Campbell. Ito uses the moment of confusion, snatches the sword and commits seppuku. At that moment, Campbell experiences a moment of deep revelation. He takes the head of dead Ito to his chest, realizing that he and this "enemy" had their honor orientation in common, in contrast to Ernest's insistence that all human beings deserve to be treated as equal in dignity.

The film beautifully depicts the deep earnest, with which both Campbell and Gordon hold on to their respective ethical orientations. Both are brave, both are noble. Nobody is mad or insane. But Campbell stands for an ethical orientation that is no longer viable in a world of mutual interdependence, while Gordon makes a case for the ethics that can make our world livable in the future.

The binding nature of the interdependence that increasingly characterizes our globe is expressed in the film through the fact that nobody can flee. The camp is surrounded by impenetrable jungle and all are caught together. The urgency of WHAT THEN is brilliantly depicted when Campbell, continuously making plans to escape, is being asked (I paraphrase): “Ok, let us assume that we have killed and captured our Japanese prison guards. WHAT THEN? The jungle is impenetrable! Admit that your plan is a suicide mission for us all!”

Today’s World Is Defined by Three Clashes of Humiliation

Today’s world is defined by three clashes of humiliation: First, clashes of humiliation between opponents who both adhere to the normative universe of honor, second, clashes of humiliation where one side adheres to the honor code, and the other to human rights, and, third, we have clashes of humiliation between opponents who both adhere to human rights ethics.

By keeping these three scenarios apart, I suggest, we can find a way to realize the second part of the human rights revolution, the most difficult part, namely respecting every human being, even those with whom we profoundly disagree.

1. Clashes of humiliation in a world of honor

One of my young Israeli friends told me (2003, in Jerusalem): “Always in history, some people have pushed out other people of their land. Ours is a power struggle that is not new. The strongest will win, and it will be us this time. We will prevail.” He added that God had promised Palestine to his people. “Pity for the Holocaust is no argument,” he explained, “this is *our* Promised Land, and I am ashamed of all the Jews who abandoned it cowardly during the past two thousand years. I am no coward; this time, I want to stand up bravely!”

On August 7, 2006 (in BBC World *HARDtalk* with Noel Thompson), Israel’s former Prime Minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, made the point that if London were to be the target of hundreds of rockets, it would react in the same way as Israel, perhaps even stronger. After all, Churchill bombed Dresden. If there had been television cameras at that time, to document the devastation of Dresden, the Allied Forces might have lost the war, to the detriment of the world’s own good. Today, Netanyahu explained, in the case of Lebanon, Israel is showing extreme restraint, relative to the damage it could inflict. However, still Israel is wronged and criticized. And due to its restraint, it does not attain its objective, namely the elimination of Hezbollah. Perhaps it would be better for Israel, Netanyahu suggested, using more military force, in order to actually reach the goals, since criticism was forthcoming anyhow.

And, so Netanyahu continued, many moderate leaders around the Arab world wish Israel to win against Hezbollah, because they know that they will be next. Furthermore, not to forget, the West should be careful to criticize Israel, because if Israel were to fail, the West will be next. Iran will attack the West. And facing a hostile Iran will not be as benign as facing the Soviet Union in the Cold War, since the Soviet Union always backed down when its survival was threatened. In contrast, Iran, with its fundamentalist

ideology, will not balk from behaving in suicidal ways. According to him, so Netanyahu stated, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair's views are correct, that there is a dangerous arc of extremism that stretches across the Middle East, which can be defeated only by an alliance of moderation encompassing Muslims, Jews and Christians.

If we look at Netanyahu's stance, he is "right" within the logic of the past, when the world was still caught in the security dilemma, not yet as interdependent as today, and human rights were still marginal. He acknowledges this, albeit regarding it as disadvantageous, when he grants that a bombing campaign similar to the bombing of Dresden in World War II might not be as popular today.

Netanyahu clearly is a man of resolve. Every inch of his demeanor and body language, the way he moves his head, his eyes wide open and confrontational, portray a man who projects honor, bravery and heroism, a man, who is intent on not bowing to pressure. Similar to Campbell in the film *To End All Wars*, as long as we judge him from within his moral boundaries, he is a man of moral nobility.

I am writing this paper in Japan, a few days after visiting the controversial Yasukuni Shrine. This Shrine is filled with praise for patriotic bravery. Descriptions abound of how military leaders died heroically while leading their men despite their own wounds. Bushido is everywhere, it permeates Yasukuni Shrine, and its fabric is made of noble heroism.

In the world of honor, not only Netanyahu is "right" and "brave," all the Rumsfelds of this world are "right" in trying to secure their interest *against* others, with as much overpowering might as possible. Seymour Hersh (2006) explains in an article in *The New Yorker*, that the Israeli military action of August 2006 was planned long before the kidnapping of the Israeli soldiers. He explains how many in the U.S. regard this campaign to be in the American interest, because "it would be a demo for Iran." He reports a U.S. government consultant with close ties to Israel saying, "The Israelis told us it would be a cheap war with many benefits... Why oppose it? We'll be able to hunt down and bomb missiles, tunnels, and bunkers from the air. It would be a demo for Iran" (Hersh, 2006).

I myself am born as a "refugee child" into a family of displaced people from Silesia – see Lindner (2006a). Even today, sixty years later, my parents have not recovered. My parents' trauma of having lost their homeland informed my life. I grew up with the typical "minus-identity" of refugees, an identity of not belonging and of feeling alienated from humanity.

Within the world of honor, it would be "right" for me to instigate war against Poland and attempt to re-conquer Silesia. I would be "justified" in defining the loss of my father's farm and the humiliation of my parents as unacceptable humiliation of their honor. I could call for the humiliation of "our enemy-humiliators." Any suffering of civilians would not concern me. I could reject as weak and cowardly any pity with the "enemy" and could refuse any definition of humiliation in terms of human rights. And, if fellow Silesians were to criticize my "patriotic love for my Silesian homeland," I could brand them as being sickly obsessed with self-hatred.

Also the bin Ladens of this world have their place in the moral universe of collectivistic honor, wherever we might find them, in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Hezbollah, Hamas, the U.K. or the U.S.: "You have occupied our land, defiled our honor, violated our dignity, shed our blood, ransacked our money, demolished our houses, rendered us homeless and tampered with our security. We will treat you in the same way" (Osama

Bin-Laden, tape of January 19, 2006, translated by the British Broadcasting Corporation, January 21, 2006).

Bertram Wyatt-Brown adds (in a personal message, August 18, 2006): “I think that you might include in your telling analysis the role of family and tribe within the honor code. And, of course, what you say about the Middle East and Japan are also true about the present day big city street gangs and the determination of their leaders and members not to be ‘disrespected’ or ‘dissed,’ as they say. That’s the root cause of so much violence and murder here in Baltimore and elsewhere. The gang becomes – in the absence of parental interest or protection – a teenager’s ‘family,’ and he or even she must uphold the dignity of that group no matter what the cost or lose face and be disgraced or killed.”

“An eye for an eye,” “might is right,” and “humiliation for humiliation,” all this is part and parcel of the world of honor that characterized most of humankind’s existence for the past 10,000 years. And if Iran were to be attacked by the West in September 2006 “in order to render it less dangerous,” this would also be part and parcel of the world of honor.

2. Clashes of humiliation between the world of honor and the world of equal dignity for all

Clashes of honor-humiliation are clashes within the old world. Now, let us look at four kinds of clashes between the old and new world. We find two scenarios in which opponents feel humiliated by the other side’s moral orientation and two scenarios where the other side’s moral setup is exploited.

Let us begin with the case of human rights being exploited for honor. We find those in today’s world, who adhere to the honor code, but use human rights arguments to vilify their “enemy” and bolster their own “honorable” strategies. In such cases, usually, the “enemy” is branded as violating human rights. When the “enemy” kills “civilians,” for example, the “enemy” is accused of violating human rights and this is taken as proof of the “enemy’s” moral inferiority. As soon as “my camp of honor” kills civilians, however, this is “collateral damage,” and therefore not diminishing “my side’s” moral high ground. In other words, in a world where human rights are “on offer,” they can easily be abused by adherents of the old honor code. The argument of dignity humiliation is exploited to promote honor-humiliation and its scripts.

Let us now look at the case where human rights are felt to humiliate honor. While some believe that human rights are universal, others brand them as an imperialistic attempt on the part of the West to humiliate the rest. Particularly in Asia, this opinion can be heard, however, usually all elites, around the world, tend to hold that view – even though this view is often disguised, for example, in a specific usage of the term “freedom,” as to be observed, for example, in the framework of so-called *Southern Honor* – see Bertram Wyatt-Brown (1982). Human rights aim at dismantling privileges of elites, and one way for dominators to resist being humbled is to discredit the moral justifications of this call. (As I explained earlier, I believe that human rights offer the only ethical framework for One World to construct a viable future.)

The third case is the inverse of the second. Human rights defenders feel humiliated by every detail in the honor script. The very idea that some people may arrogate superiority over others in an Apartheid style is humiliating for the humanity of all human rights

advocates, not only on their own behalf but also on behalf of all the downtrodden around the world. However, as mentioned earlier, precisely since human rights do not condone arrogating superiority, human rights defenders have the difficult task of refraining from taking a stance of superiority over people of honor.

Fourth, some people employ honor strategies to defend human rights and this has humiliating effects. People, who advocate human rights and rave at human rights violators in humiliating ways, betray their own moral stance. They need to learn from Mandela and Gandhi how to walk the talk. As I said in the introduction, I feel personally humiliated by people who use the methodology of honor-humiliation in order to supposedly remedy dignity-humiliation and defend human rights. In the same vein, the instrument of war and violence to uphold human rights (even in self-defense) is humiliating and counterproductive to its own goals, first because honor strategies discredit human rights, but also because fear of attack reverses the transition toward human rights backward, back to a fragmented world pitched against each other in the honor code.

3. Clashes of humiliation in a world of equal dignity for all

The honor code was the dominating moral framework for the past 10,000 years, but it is no longer. Binyamin Netanyahu recognizes that bombing Dresden was a viable strategy only because there were no television screens available through which the entire world could pour their feelings into a local conflict. What was feasible once, “eradicating our enemy,” is therefore no longer so. Not only survivors, but people in the entire world may feel humiliated by ways of identifying with a local conflict, and some might retaliate with violence. Hezbollah, for example, has never been as popular in the entire Arab world as at the current point in time when I write this text, August 2006.

As we see, in times of global interdependence, a local conflict, if subjected to “solutions” of violence, will merely turn into a global conflict and set on fire the whole world. Monty Marshall (1999) writes remarkably on protracted conflict and how *insecurity gets diffused*. The increasing interdependence of our world, today, puts human kind into a larger frame and turns former “might is right” into “might is suicide.”

In the film *To End All Wars*, Campbell cannot reply to the question as to whether he is devising a suicide mission. Indeed, he endangers everybody by not seeing the larger picture. Every adherent of the old honor code – be it among the Netanyahus or the Hezbollah-followers of this world – treads in these suicidal footsteps, even though this is not their intention. They have just not yet internalized that the world is in the process of changing profoundly, something that causes the old honor code to become not only morally obsolete but also counterproductive to self-defense, self-preservation, survival – in short, suicidal.

I am writing these lines while listening to the BBC World’s coverage of the speech given by Syria’s President Bashar al-Assad on August 15, 2006. He uses the word humiliation in about every second sentence. He explains that United Nations Security Council decisions are not “divine” and that national interest and national sovereignty are to be regarded as more important, *even if this leads to war*. Clearly, we see collective suicide looming. Evidently, the Security Councils will truly promote peace only after the

international community has developed it into an impartial and inclusive institution; only then will it be able to save humankind from collective suicide.

In the world of human rights, the very thought that it might be possible to achieve peace by humiliating “enemies” into submission, is obscene and humiliates the dignity of all humankind. The new world is a world of coexistence, even in the face of antagonism, of negotiation and open networks, of democratic structures, globally and locally, structures, which make “might-is-right” strategies redundant at all levels.

In a world of equal dignity for all, no longer is it possible to march into other people’s territory and say, “I deem this to be my land, and since I am mightier than you, you better succumb.” To take my case as an example again, I cannot just march into Poland and take my father’s farm back like a feudal lord. My sadness over my father’s losses does not give me the right to act like a bully. What I have to do, is acknowledge that we all are in one boat, all humankind, and that Polish citizens are as worthy of being respected as equal in dignity as everybody else. Poland was victimized by Germany in World War II and deserves all the apologies that Willy Brand extended to it. And it deserves all the time it needs to ponder this apology. Aaron Lazare (2004) wrote most insightfully on apology and explains that forgiveness needs time. After an apology, I cannot just stride about and demand that I ought to be forgiven. It is not sufficient that I praise my own moral high ground and overlook that the other side needs more time to ponder my apologies. I cannot stay in monologic unilateral bubbles where I define what the other side ought to feel. My impatience and monologic isolation would be disrespectful and have humiliating effects. I need to engage in dialogue and considerate politeness, in self-reflective humble patience (not submissiveness). I might politely ask, for example, if I may visit my father’s farm, and indeed, since Poland is part of the European Union, borders have lost their political significance, starting to do what they should do, namely giving dignity to cultural diversity. And I am well advised to recognize that knowledge is the new resource in today’s world and no longer land. Indeed, in my case, I have followed Judith Viorst (1987) suggestion that there are *necessary losses*. I am part of the global knowledge society and have no desire to be a farmer. I have no desire to attach myself to a little piece of land. I am a global citizen. The entire planet Earth is my home. It is such a tiny planet, cutting it up and fighting over every inch is absurd. I do not want my father’s land back.

In the new world, grievances need to be addressed in an all inclusive way. *The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland*, for example, is an independent body dealing with complaints against the police, set up to create a climate of policing acceptable to all of Northern Ireland’s deeply scarred communities. Or, on UN Indigenous People’s Day (August 9) in 2006, the UN Human Rights Council’s, in a historic vote, supported the declaration on indigenous people’s rights.

This is the way into the future: away from land toward knowledge, and away from old deadly *Blood Borders* – see Ralph Peters (2006) – to a united world where borders are benignly administrative and cultural. The European Union can serve as an example – it takes age-old deadly enmity out the European borders and leaves them with the much more benign task of protecting and celebrating cultural diversity. The crisis in the Middle East, and the looming Iran crisis, all crises need to be contained within a larger global framework and it is everybody’s responsibility to build and strengthen the necessary global mechanisms for such crisis containment. If the United Nations were not there, we

would have to invent them, and whenever they fail, it is not their fault, but the fault of those who do not strengthen and support them sufficiently, the fault of us all, who fail to make them fit for the job. Joseph Preston Baratta (2004) explains, how a world federation could work constructively.

Whatever we do, we have to heed that dismantling honor structures needs to be done in dignified ways, which, again, takes time. Haste can have humiliating effects. In old times, changes could be implemented in the blink of the eye, just by applying force. This is no longer possible in times of human rights. Inclusiveness, consensus, negotiation, and contract are the new buzzwords. Many Indians believe that India has an edge over China, not in the short-term, but in the long-term, precisely because of the inclusiveness, though relative slowness, of their democratic procedures. Patience is necessary, and patience has to be given its space and not denigrated as “failing to act.” Slow and careful action is also action. Cautious and well-planned action, embedded in dialogue and respect, is the very blueprint of what action means within the human rights framework. Israel, for example, accused the Lebanese government of “failing to act and dismantle Hezbollah.” Indeed, what the Lebanese government might have tried was to avoid civil war by carefully including and moderating Hezbollah. Such action needs time. In a statement by Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, in the *Daily Star* (Lebanon), on July 17, 2006, said, “As we were preparing for a new phase of reform and development, here we are again facing Israeli attacks that have killed civilians, destroyed the country’s roads and airport, hit its main ports and violated Lebanon’s sovereignty and its citizens’ rights and dignity.”

Seymour Hersh (2006) writes in his article in *The New Yorker*, that even those who continue to support Israel’s war against Hezbollah agree that it is failing to achieve one of its main goals – to rally the Lebanese against Hezbollah. Hersh quotes John Arquilla, a defense analyst at the Naval Postgraduate School, as saying, “Strategic bombing has been a failed military concept for ninety years, and yet air forces all over the world keep on doing it... The warfare of today is not mass on mass ... You have to hunt like a network to defeat a network. Israel focused on bombing against Hezbollah, and, when that did not work, it became more aggressive on the ground. The definition of insanity is continuing to do the same thing and expecting a different result” (Hersh, 2006).

What hurts human rights most is being stuck in “double standards.” Empty human rights rhetoric discredits the very human rights message. Promises that are not kept hurt deeper than no promises. Whoever wishes to promote human rights is well advised to check their conduct for consistency. Dominating behavior is not compatible with the message of equal dignity for all. Human rights are not achieved by fooling opponents with pretty words, while abusing their hope for equal dignity to get the upper hand in old-fashioned honor ways. Many human rights advocates do not understand this dynamic and apply honor strategies to promote human rights, some in blissful ignorance, and others in a Machiavellian spirit. Whatever the source, such behavior is humiliating and destructive.

Often, the media are accused of making matters worse. However, there is a host of films that try to bring the message that we ought to stand up for the larger common good. We have classics like *High Noon* that promoted this principle for a city, or, more recently, on a much larger scale, *Spaceship/starship Enterprise*. I am writing this paper in Japan, where the old television series *FBI* (1965-1974) with Efrem Zimbalist Jr. as Inspector Lewis Erskine is being shown. *The Butcher* (1968) depicts a gang of thugs, who make a living from kidnapping. A boy is kidnapped. The father is a butcher, a man of

honor. He pays the ransom for his son and gets him back alive. Soon, another boy is kidnapped. Inspector Erskine approaches the butcher for help – his son could provide the FBI with valuable information. The butcher declines. He does not trust that the FBI will be able to protect his family in case the kidnappers find out that he cooperated with the FBI. However, to his surprise, the butcher's own family fails to obey him. He yells at his family, telling them that he is “doing the thinking” for the family and that he is not prepared to accept mutiny. When Inspector Lewis Erskine has left the house, the butcher's wife turns against her husband and reproaches him. She says (I paraphrase): “You are wrong! These kidnappers have to be stopped and we can help!” At the end, the father is persuaded, reluctantly. Later, Inspector Erskine turns to him and praises his son, “what a great son you have.” The butcher admits, yes, perhaps his son is of a higher moral fabric than he is - he himself did not wish to help wider society to get rid of dangerous kidnappers, while his son, his wife and daughter, were ready to put themselves into harm's way in order to serve the safety of the larger community. At the end, the viewer feels lifted up, morally.

The lesson is always that we have to work together to help build a strong superordinate structure, like the sheriff, or the FBI, that safeguards the security for all, so that it is no longer necessary that everybody looks only at their immediate self-interest. Serving common interest serves self-interest best. At the current point in time, it is no longer the local level, the FBI, but the highest global level that needs to be strengthened. The United Nations need to be made capable of doing the job.

The Way Out

It is absurd, when Titanic goes down, to squabble in the cabins or between them. Times of global crises demand that we build strong global institutions and mechanisms that can contain local crises, so that the global ones can be affronted. If we fail, humankind's very survival will be the price we have to pay.

It is equally absurd to descend into psychiatric language. Nobody is insane or mad when espousing a moral framework. A human rights defender is not a coward and an appeaser, and the bravery of an adherent of the old honor code is not madness or evilness either. We compound an already difficult transition unnecessarily when we descend into mutual insults – we merely create feelings of humiliation on all sides at our peril.

Particularly the human rights avant-garde has the responsibility to guide this transition in dignified ways, in a Mandela-like spirit, without losing heart in depression, and surely without spewing insults in psychiatric terminology. Mandela could have instigated insult, mayhem and genocide against the white elite in South Africa. He did not. It is natural that those at the forefront of a transition and those who are slow, have opposing positions. The task for human rights defenders is precisely to take this transition on in dignified ways and not compound its inherent difficulties with their personal immaturity.

What do we have to learn then? We have to learn the dignified firmness of a Mandela. To do that, we first have to calm down, in a next step we need to build common ground between all of us so that the transition towards a better world can proceed more constructively, we furthermore have to explain the advantages of a “better world” to those who hesitate and cling to old times, and, last but not least, descending in hopeless

depression and pessimism is obsolete because this can turn into self-fulfilling prophecy and remove the very drop of energy that might otherwise enable us to save the situation.

1. Calm down: there is no need to despair

We need to calm down and recognize that there is no need to despair at human nature. Some think that “man is aggressive by nature” and will always fight. This is a misconception. There is no archeological evidence for systematic war prior to 10,000 years ago. There is no proof of organized fighting during ninety percent of human history – among early hunters and gatherers – see Ury (1999).

Human nature is rather the ability to learn and unlearn. During the past 10,000 years, everybody learned to be part in a system of domination and submission. This we have to unlearn. Still, our cultures today have not adapted to new times. Building new cultures and learning new skills that give life to human rights are the task of the currently living generations.

Many human rights defenders are angry people, frustrated at the uncoordinated slowness of the human rights revolution. Some get all heated up and waste their energy on depression, indignation, or righteous anger. Some lash out. They try to achieve the first part of the human rights revolution (dismantling the tyrant) by forgetting the second (dismantling tyranny, including our own tyrannical habits and traditions). They forget that tyrants, supremacists, adherents of the old honor order, must be humbled with respect and dignity, and that we have to unlearn humiliating people. We have to learn to walk our talk and understand that human rights bestow dignity on every human being, including those who are slow to grasp the new times. Recognizing this will help us all calm down and guide the transition toward new times more constructively.

2. Build common ground with the other side

During the past thirty years, I lived as a global citizen, in the West and in the Non-West (I lived for seven years in Egypt, for example) and in my medical doctorate on quality of life, I compared Egypt and Germany – see Lindner (1994). What I found was that there is ample common ground among all of humankind. We are much more similar than we think. We all yearn for recognition and feel humiliated if disrespected. We all wish for a sustainable future for our children. The only difference is the width of our *moral boundaries* – see Susan Opatow (1995). As long as we lived in a fragmented world, caught in the security dilemma, our moral boundaries included “us” and excluded “them;” we thought that we had to secure our children’s future by keeping outgroups out. But the world has changed. Today, our moral boundaries must include all humanity (and even reach beyond humanity). Today, we secure our children’s future not by keeping humanity fragmented, but by uniting it, even in the face of disagreement and ill feelings.

3. Explain that everybody is better off in a world of equal dignity for all

Some days ago, the BBC World radio phoned me, and I was disappointed at myself. I was unable to explain my stance to my satisfaction, namely my views that a new

normative world of human rights requires more from all of us than mere finger-pointing, and that the solution lies in teaching all the world the Mandela way out of humiliation.

May failing underlines that, indeed, the task is not easy. However, there is no reason to give up something just because it is difficult.

What we need to explain to everybody is that globalization, if harnessed by human rights, entails a great potential. It can lead to a benign future. Human rights are more than a fancy moral ideal. They can bring about a better life for all. They free valuable human abilities that were suppressed under the conditions of the security dilemma. During the past 10,000 years, elites dominated inferiors, and this handicapped all participants. The talents for leadership of subordinates were wasted, as were the talents of elites for caring. Fathers, for example, had no access to domestic life. They never tasted the pleasure of playing with their children and see them mature. In the same vein, their wives never had the chance to show their talent for leadership in public life but had to accept their husbands' definitions of the world. Both were at a loss. Also society at large was at a loss. Talent and innovative creativity were wasted at all fronts. And all this changes with human rights. Human rights are deeply humanizing. It is not least therefore that human rights are universal and not just a Western scheme.

4. Do not lose hope, be patient, keep working

Human rights are the adequate moral system for a world that is coming together. Human rights can dignify globalization. But the human rights revolution is not self-executing. It requires everybody's help. Every inhabitant of the globe needs to abandon "we/them" differentiations and define themselves as "we," as "we humanity," who, rather than pointing fingers, jointly searches for the best ways to provide our children with a livable world. So far, the global village is a ramshackle village, a "Titanic" about to sink, full of humiliation – millions of poor watching a few rich wallow in wealth, all suffering from environmental degradation that could have been avoided, and local cycles of humiliation endangering us all.

Moral emotions are strong. The urge to protect them is fierce. We feel that the core of our very being is being soiled when our moral code is violated. A man, who is intent on defending his honor by going to war and killing his "enemies" to attain "victory," feels an almost obsessive certainty that he "must" go down this path. Denying him war is like denying the bottle to an alcoholic. At the same time, the disgust felt by human rights defenders at such "honorable violence," is as passionate. The strength of moral emotions makes them difficult to be managed. However, a difficult task is a challenge and no reason to give up; the fact that the glass is only half full does not mean that it cannot be filled; and when progress is too slow this is no reason to stop. Hand-wringing is the worst we can do. We need to get to work.

I received two kinds of counter reactions to an earlier draft of this text from the "honor camp," both describing world affairs as a stand-off between "evil terrorists" and "evil America" respectively. One message warns, for example, that my "philosophical musings on the psychology of aggression/forgiveness" need to be "contrasted to the realities of 'real-politick' as practiced now by the USA and its lackeys." The mirror type of messages warns that human rights are too weak to stop terrorists.

Both types of messages are steeped in the old honor code, in the old definition of Realpolitik that conceptualizes life as a confrontation that requires instant counter-confrontation. For many, it is difficult to grasp that Mandela's way was not a personal fancy, but entails a blueprint for a path that goes beyond both confrontation and forgiveness. Mandela stepped out of the master-slave dyad and designed action rather than re-action. 27 years in prison is not an ad-hoc solution. Martial arts provide related approaches, namely the stepping out of the way and letting opponents fall by their own efforts. Medicine and psychotherapy often use similar strategies, namely solving a problem by strengthening the entire immune system and building up alternative ways of living that "crowd out" the problem. It took the Church 300 years to vindicate Galileo: the inquisition was "crowded out" by new movements and their weight. Similarly, today, old world views need to be "crowded out" instead of given limelight through re-action. We need to work *for a new world*, using a long-term time horizon, rather than get bogged down in ad-hoc reactionism *against old enemies*.

Iran, the Middle East, global warming, poverty, all these problems can only be solved within a global framework of dialogue and negotiations, embedded into institutions that are based on human rights. We need to build a *decent* global community, in the spirit of Avishai Margalit (1996) and his call for a *Decent Society*.

A *decent global village* is a place where coercion is used in novel ways. Pacifism no longer means the rejection of force. Gandhi disliked the words and ideas of "passive resistance." The term *satyagraha* (non-violent action), is a combination of *satya* (truth-love) and *agraha* (firmness/force). United Nations peace keeping missions need a stronger mandate than hitherto in order to be able to prevent and police regional and local conflicts – and a strong mandate means precisely the interlink of coercion with respect. Respectful firmness is indeed the only way to stop sectarian extremists who are in the business of turning spirals of humiliation into an abyss that can swallow us all.

Human rights defenders, Mandelas, Gandhis, moderates, take the lead!

Contain local conflicts with respectful firmness so that we all can take on the global challenges that we face and that endanger us all.

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