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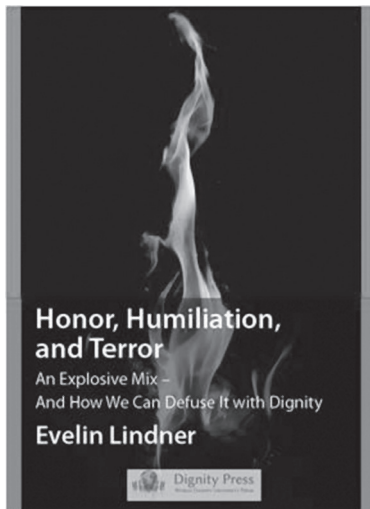
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BOOK SUMMARY

HONOR, HUMILIATION, AND TERROR: AN EXPLOSIVE MIX – AND HOW WE CAN DEFUSE IT WITH DIGNITY: A SUMMARY¹

Evelin Gerda Lindner²



This book has been written for all readers interested in reflecting on humanity's future. It speaks to scholars and students in the field of public policy planning. It also speaks to those who wish to reduce terror around the world, in whatever form it might appear. And it speaks to those who use terror tactics or support them, including those who feel justified in fighting terror with terror.

The book aims at radicalizing its readers. Radicalizing toward dignity rather than terror, radicalizing in the sense of waking up to the *conscientization* that Paulo Freire called for,

which means turning conscience into action for dignity. The book embeds the topic of terrorism into practices of domination in general, domination over people and nature, and how they give rise to terror, both directly and as side-effects. The book argues that the terror that arises from competition for domination needs more attention from us, and that we overlook it at our own peril when we allow here-and-now incidents of terrorism to consume

¹ This summary is republished with permission from the author, Evelin Gerda Lindner. The digital version of the book with full endnotes can be downloaded from www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin/05.php/. The printed version of the book has shortened endnotes.

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all our energy. If we focus on here-and-now terrorist acts too much, the big picture escapes us. The author speaks from the perspective of a concerned global citizen who fears that the beginning of the twenty-first century will once be described as a dark age, dark not because of terrorism, but because of unsustainable social and ecological arrangements that first seed terror and then perilously both under-estimate and over-instrumentalize terrorism.

The book is like a painting, a painting of the world as it stands in the twenty-first century. It is painted by an author who has lived globally, on all continents, for the past forty years. The book therefore uses a very personal brush, in the hope that its readers will be inspired to do the same.

This is the line of reasoning in the book in a nutshell: Violence, hatred, and terror are deeply intertwined with honor, heroism, glory, and love. The past five percent of modern human history on planet Earth, roughly the past ten millennia, were characterized by competition for domination, where “might” became “right.” In this context, a culture of honor spawned, in which destruction merged with love: “It is my duty, if I love my people, to heroically destroy our enemies and secure all resources for us. It is my duty to make sure that we will never be humiliated.” The guiding motto was *If you want peace, prepare for war*.

We, as humankind, have constructed an entire world-system on top of this merger. The consequence, today, is the ubiquitous destruction of our social and ecological relationships. Terror and terrorism are intricate parts of the legacy of the past millennia, and only if we overcome this legacy, together, and in mutual respect, can we address the social and environmental crises of our time and the terror they bring us.

The script of honor and heroism that characterized the past millennia has created a world of victors and vanquished, of dominators triumphing over what they dominate, be it other people or nature. Global interconnectedness, however, is a radical game changer. In the new context, the old script no longer leads to victory. It now leads to the suicidal shredding of our entire sociosphere and ecosphere. Global interconnectedness forces other mottos to the forefront, such as the African adage: *It takes a village to raise a child*. Or Mahatma Gandhi’s *There is no path to peace. Peace is the path*.

Sadly, however, as for now, the global village fails its task. This is the most significant source of terror the world experiences now. It is a dangerous illusion to believe that finite natural resources can be plundered without side effects. And it is an equally dangerous illusion to believe that global social challenges can be responded to with violence and war as if the world were still compartmentalized into unconnected sovereign regions. On a sinking ship, when all hands are needed on deck to change the course, in-fighting is a deadly strategy.

The book warns that the risks flowing from terrorism are both dangerously played down, and dangerously played up. If reasonable balance were the outcome, it would be acceptable. However, it is not. The result is that what is being done, is easily misguided, and what should be done, fails to be done. Terrorism is being overemphasized for ulterior motives where it should be seen as a social problem, and on the other side, where it would require more attention and efforts to prevent it, it is neglected. Examples include infrastructure, including vulnerable installations such as nuclear power plants that are insufficiently protected against terrorist attacks. Where terrorism does receive attention, it may be for the wrong reasons and with counterproductive consequences. What should be done is the weaving of global social cohesion, yet, this is neglected. What we call terrorism may altogether be a harbinger of much greater terror, terror that looms if we, as humankind, continue to stay at the surface with our attention.

Having escaped nuclear annihilation during the Cold War, similarly deadly threats, including nuclear threats, now also flow from terrorism. In a situation where opportunities for catastrophic terrorist acts increase, even from single individuals, it is hazardous and foolish to concurrently increase the breeding ground for terrorism. It is hazardous to feel terrorized by here-and-now isolated emergency threats to the status quo, while failing to feel terrorized by the fact that this status quo is unsustainable, at least in the longer term, and that it breeds terror rather than diminishing it. In short, terrorism needs to be taken less seriously on one side and more seriously on the other side.

Terrorism is the proverbial canary in the coal mine. It is a warning sign for Terror with a capital "T." It warns that when the world is as interconnected as it is at the present point in history, organizing social life on Earth as in the past is no longer feasible. While terrorists are few, their activities hold the

entire world hostage, not only through the immediate destruction they bring about, but also through the responses of affected societies. Examples are an excessive militarization, the undermining of civil liberties, and an overall drift toward authoritarian regimes.

Global cycles of humiliation have the potential to trigger terror on a scale that can set back all human rights milestones achieved so far. They can throw us back into a world of extremist empires on a path to annihilate each other. Cycles of humiliation can be triggered advertently and inadvertently, for instance, through double standards, through failing the promise of equal dignity for all. Therefore, only large-scale change both globally and locally can help us build a more dignified future. Small-scale efforts, as well-intentioned and partially successful as they may be, are like wanting to keep the walls of the proverbial coal mine from collapsing by simply patching the cracks.

The study of terrorism and of humiliation has to be designed as a multi- and transdisciplinary approach. Also, *chronocentrism* has to be avoided. If it is true that during the past five percent of modern human history a culture of honor has spawned, in which destruction and bravery merged and violence and terror became intertwined with heroism and glory, then present-day's social and ecological degradation is a by-product of the successful functioning of what we erected as world-system. None of these challenges can be adequately understood and addressed from one discipline alone, nor with myopic ahistoricity.

This perspective is supported by the author's particular personal life path, which is neither Western nor non-Western. More than "traveling the world," she has lived globally, with all continents as her home, and she has done so for the past forty years. This global experience forces her eyes wide open to the fact that we, as humankind, have dug ourselves into a multitude of perilous crises, both despite and because of what we call progress. Yet, the author also sees an immense window of opportunity waiting to be used. Unfortunately, so far, instead of recognizing the depth of the crises at hand and grasping the historic opportunity to exit, most of us choose to stay myopic. We tend to exaggerate negligible dangers, overlook gigantic dangers, and scorn the exit opportunity that history offers us entirely undeservedly. Meanwhile, terror contributes to, and is instrumentalized for masking or even closing this window of opportunity.

Domination and humiliation are intimately interlinked, and we live at a point in history where dynamics of humiliation are being fueled ever more forcefully, not least through the breaking of the promise of equal dignity as it is enshrined in human rights ideals, and this in a shrinking world. This engenders an atmosphere of terror, and inspires acts of terror that foreclose our most important task: global cooperation to save our ship from sinking, cooperation for a large-scale *dignity transition* toward a decent global village for all people and our planet.

The author predicts that hostility will increase if we fail this task, not least since one of its drivers, humiliation, becomes much more salient in an interconnected world than it was in previous historical times. It is therefore that she advises to take humiliation into account in radically new ways. When dignity is promised, but violated, it is not just any expectation gap that opens, it is a dignity gap, and this is extremely dangerous. The reason is that what the author calls *dignity humiliation* is more intense than the *honor humiliation* that has reigned while the world was not yet as interconnected as now. Having one's dignity humiliated excludes one from humanity and is therefore more hurtful than having one's honor humiliated. If dignity humiliation were to stay internally coherent, it would lead to the conscientization of a Paulo Freire and to responses in the spirit of a Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. Most often, however, it rather leads to what the author calls *cross over*: to acts of revenge that are informed by the script of honor humiliation. If this cross over becomes our future, the resulting hostility will constitute a far greater danger than climate change or the exhaustion of raw materials, or any other disaster scenario.

Whoever believes that peace education would be good enough as a remedy, will be disappointed. Peace education is useful and important, yet, not enough. Research in social psychology shows that particularly youths of thirteen to fifteen years of age, those in need to listen most, are the most difficult to reach. Especially adolescent males are the most vulnerable to be recruited by terror entrepreneurs. Most people do not reach their full brain capacity until the age of twenty-five. Many youths may therefore not be able to contain themselves, and their environment must shoulder this responsibility. Their communities have to hold and contain those young people in their vulnerability. "It takes a village to raise a child," is one African saying, "All

kids are our kids” is another. For a world free of terrorism, it is the global village who is responsible for all of the world’s children and youth.

Not only young people need to be held. Mutual connection is a life-giving necessity for all. To realize this, the global community has to re-design the foundational constitutive rules of our currently existing world-system, away from competition for domination toward the partnership model of society. All other interventions, as well-intentioned as they may be, will vainly attempt to cure the symptoms. If it takes a village to raise a child, then the global village fails this task up until now. And this is the most significant terror the world experiences.

Terror and terrorism will decrease when we, as humankind at large, stop overlooking the long-term and global challenges of our journey on planet Earth, the moment we cease waging artificial conflicts and dare to attend to our necessary conflicts. Necessary conflicts need to be addressed rather than neglected, and this has to be done in dignified and dignifying ways, without humiliating the humiliators. Both terrorism and out-of-proportion counterterrorism hinder this overdue transition. We need to use the presently available historic window of opportunity to become the global family we are, the integral part of nature we are, and solve our family problems in ways good families do.

The author has coined the term *egalization* to signify the true realization of human rights ideals of equal dignity for all. She calls for globalization to be humanized by egalization – for *globegalization* – instead of accepting that globalization dehumanizes humanity through global domination and terror. She calls for dignity-ism, or *dignism* to inform new global institutions that benefit from the promise that is entailed in interconnectedness. These institutions will need to manifest the principle of unity in diversity, meaning that we unite in respect for the dignity of our diversity, while at the same time guarding against global uniformity and global division. Such global institutions will enable the global community to overcome bygone cultural scripts and learn to practice the Freire-Mandela-Gandhi way of healing humiliation, overcoming terror, and creating a dignified future for our children.

With this book, the author hopes to alert readers to what the psycho-geo-historical lens that she uses lets her see. When incidents of terrorism happen, the author’s hope is always that the shock will awaken people’s attention to

the deeper layers of terror-in-waiting. She hopes that people will be propelled into more thorough reflection on long-term preventive action. However, usually her hopes are dashed. Like with climate change, inaction is fed both by denying the threat, as much as by its opposite, exaggeration to the point of defeatism – “there is nothing we can do; we’re already doomed.”

The image of the Blue Planet from the astronaut’s perspective summarizes, publicizes, and symbolizes an immense window of opportunity for us to create a dignified world, including a terror-free world, at least free of systemic terror. What befits humankind now is a sense of emergency so as to truly see and use this historically unmatched window of opportunity that may not remain open for long.

The Blue Planet image provides a powerful frame for collaboration. None of our forefathers was able to see anything comparable. None of our predecessors was able to fathom in the same way as present-day *Homo sapiens* that we are *one single* family living on *one tiny* and *finite* planet. None of our founders of religions, philosophies, or empires had access to the vast amount of knowledge that we possess today about the universe and our place in it. History does not repeat itself anymore, it does not go in circles, all is new now.

Why do we, as humankind, overlook the historic opportunity that is open to us to engage in deeper global cooperation, an opportunity greater than ever imaginable before? Why is our global government/corporate nexus stuck in out-of-date games of competition for domination, games that also fuel terrorism? One reason may be the negative aspects of the recent rounds of globalization that we have witnessed, aspects that systematically hide its promises. Its promises lie in what anthropologists call the *ingathering* of the human tribes. This ingathering entails a unique opportunity, the opportunity to unite the global human family, invite it into one-world consciousness and cooperation, not just as lofty rhetoric, but as hands-on lived global solidarity.

Many wonder, including the author, why even thinkers and activists who work for a better future for humanity seem rather disinterested in global governance. Perhaps the promise entailed in the ingathering of humankind goes unseen and unused because it is such a novel phenomenon. And perhaps the toxic aspects of globalization are too complicated, causing people to recoil from focusing on the global level. In the author’s view, even though

this oversight is understandable, it is not excusable. Mechanisms of global plunder admittedly are so complex that only a minority of people is in a position to understand them, let alone do something about them. For most people, globalization simply dissolves the floor under their feet without any clear explanation, particularly in communities that were sheltered before. The world becomes confusing, fear-inducing, and frightfully “liquid,” as Zygmunt Bauman formulated it. The sense of insecurity that in former times was experienced only by displaced people, refugees, diasporas, exiles, or indigenous peoples, is now brought to the rest through globalization.

The result of this oversight is that the global space that waits to be humanized is left to forces of dehumanization. Even those among my friends stay timid who would have all the necessary resources to give a significant push to planetary solidarity. They leave it to social media, for instance, where the potential for planetary solidarity is being instrumentalized for profit, and this is still one of the more harmless abuses. Or, they leave it to a global nexus of finance, criminality, and terrorism, including the instrumentalization of the fear of terrorism. Others are more courageous, yet, also they make globalization only more toxic when they enact the “frequent traveler” version of global citizenship, viewing the world as a leisure park for the rich, at best, or targeting the commons of our globe as market opportunities yet to be exploited. Then there are those who are both daring and caring, those who wish to help, those who feel called to work for development, humanitarian aid, conflict transformation, and environmental protection. Yet, sadly, also they, only too often slide into the charitable-industrial complex that is part of the dark side of globalization. Not enough, even the most well-intended global human rights advocates create conflict rather than prevent it when they hold the illusion that “bringing people together” and “raising human rights awareness” alone will translate into peaceful global cooperation. What human rights advocacy may do instead is throw inequality and disrespect into starker contrast than before, and this, in turn, can create expectation gaps that lead to feelings of humiliation that were not felt before. If these feelings of humiliation, together with the means for violent backlashes, are then magnified by globalization, they can heat up and boil over. Terrorism is an intricate part of this mix.

The book ends with a call for action. We, as humankind, have to, and can dramatically change the underlying structures of our world-system. We can

co-create a decent global village for all people and our planet. The author's personal path of global living represents a radical hands-on experiment in global "family building." She suggests that many readers of the book will find it worth investigating how also they can contribute more to creating a world of unity in diversity, rather than enduring a world of division without unity. Global solidarity and trust is tantamount to solving our global problems, which, if successful, will also diminish terror and fear.

In our times of global crises, it is not only crucially important, it is also hugely enriching to invest in nurturing global solidarity in mutual respect. If we do, the nature of what we call terrorism will change and space will open for dignity to flourish.

Respectful global family building is more than feasible, it is also hugely inspirational and even fun. In the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies community, as part of our global family building efforts, we encourage all our members to open their homes as Human Dignity Dialogue Homes or *Dignihomes*. The author meets many young people, all around the world, also outside of our dignity community, who confirm that connecting with other people, connecting with "strangers," if done respectfully, can be exhilaratingly exciting, enjoyable, meaningful, and deeply satisfying.

"Only connect..." wrote novelist Edward Morgan Forster (1879 – 1970) in the epigraph of his famous 1910 novel *Howards End*. If his advice had been heeded in 1914, already the two world wars of the twentieth century could have been avoided. Respectful connection, respectful solidarity, considering the others' perspectives in addition to one's own, could have saved millions of lives. This book is another attempt at connecting, globally and locally.

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