**CHAPTER TEN: REJECTION**

**Introduction**

Now we turn to the third type of response to humiliation: rejection. If escape shows a clean pair of heels, and acceptance a pair of widespread arms, what bodily posture represents rejection? At least two possibilities come to mind: the thrusting fist and the parrying arm. Which possibility comes into play first in any particular case may depend in part on whether we are talking about revenge or resistance.

**Revenge or resistance?**

Humiliation carries a double punch. It is both *outrageous* and *threatening*.[i] When a person, group or society strikes back against humiliation, what are they doing? Are they trying to signal that the outrage they have experienced is unacceptable? Or are they trying to reduce the practical extent to which their interests and identity are being damaged and/or threatened?

To put it another way:

- is the relevant sequence outrage→anger→attempted revenge? Does the outrage generate anger and a desire to strike back at those who can be held responsible for the humiliation, bringing the perpetrators equivalent or greater anguish? Or

- is the relevant sequence threat→fear→attempted resistance? Does the perceived threat generate fear and a desire to strengthen and

protect the identity and interests that are being threatened by

diminishing the capacity or opportunity of others to damage them? Or

- is it both? (see table 1).

Table One
Modes of Rejection

| HUMILIATION ➔ | ANGER (because of outrage committed) | REJECTION➔ | REVENGE PARADOX |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | FEAR (because of threat posed) | | RESISTANCE PARADOX |

Some acts of revenge may undermine efforts at resistance. This was the message

contained in the words of Nelson Mandela at Soweto in February 1990 soon after his

release from prison. It was a dangerous time, with *apartheid* in grudging retreat and

widespread violence occurring both between Black and White South Africans,

especially the police, and within the townships.

Mandela told his audience that the 'hijacking and setting alight of vehicles, and the

harassment of innocent people are criminal acts that have no place in our struggle. We

condemn that. Our major weapon of struggle against apartheid oppression and

exploitation is our people organised into mass formations of the Democratic

Movement. This is achieved by politically organising our people not through the use

of violence against our people…..I want to add my voice, therefore, to the call made

at the beginning of the year that all students must return to school and learn….'

Mandela's message was that making resistance to *apartheid* effective meant there was no place for revenge. He told his audience in Soweto: 'Go back to your schools, factories, mines and communities. Build on the massive energies that recent events in our country have unleashed by strengthening disciplined mass organisations. We are going forward. The march towards freedom and justice is irreversible. I have spoken about freedom in my lifetime. Your struggles, your commitment and your discipline have released me to stand here before you today. These basic principles will propel us to a free, non-racial, democratic, united South Africa that we have struggled and died for.'[ii]

For an example of how the spirit of revenge may undermine the politics of resistance, consider the case of Saddam Hussein. According to Said K Aburish, a well-connected Palestinian journalist who had dealings with Saddam in the 1970s,[iii] Saddam Hussein's internal politics within Iraq were a synthesis of 'Bedouin guile and Communist method' (Aburish 2000, 8). Saddam Hussein was a master of the bloody 'politics of revenge'[iv] that had been characteristic of Iraq's tribal society for many centuries. He was able to manipulate this form of politics effectively, eliminating rivals by torture and execution. His own family became dominant within the Tikriti clan, the Tikriti interest achieved the central position within the Ba'athist party, and the Ba'athists became supreme within Iraq.

For a while, during the 1970s, Saddam was able to combine this with a strategy of using profits from Iraqi oil to modernise the Iraqi economy and its social infrastructure, as well as build up Iraq's military capacity. In other words, during that decade Saddam was steadily increasing Iraq's ability to resist challenges from other countries in the region that wanted to overthrow him.

Success in conducting the politics of revenge depends upon two things: understanding your rivals or enemies, and having the skills and resources needed to humiliate them repeatedly. Within Iraq, Saddam had both. However, outside Iraq's borders his touch was less sure and his resources less adequate.

Take his relationship to Ayatollah Khomeini. This high-ranking cleric became the dominant personality in Iran after the fundamentalist Shia-led revolution of 1979. He was also Saddam's main opponent during the Iran-Iraq war. Ironically, a few months before the Iranian Revolution Saddam deported Khomeini from Iraq, where he had been living. The previous year Saddam sanctioned the execution of eight Shia clerics, imprisoned two thousand of their co-religionaries and expelled 200,000 others to Iran.[v]

When Saddam deported him, Khomeini moved to Paris and from there, a short while later, he returned to Tehran in triumph. The Iran-Iraq war began in September 1980. Saddam apparently expected it would last no more than a few weeks. In the event, the war lasted nearly eight years. Saddam was trapped by the politics of revenge. It was a very damaging 'grudge fight,' wearing both countries down.

According to Aburish, an important factor was that, in this case, 'Saddam did not know his enemy. For the believer in revenge not to take into consideration Khomeini's determination to punish him for his military arrogance and for humiliating him by ejecting him from Iraq in 1978 was nothing short of foolish. Khomeini refused to consider any efforts at mediation – to him, what was at stake was the irreducible supremacy of the word of Allah' (Aburish 2000, 195).

Another relevant factor was that the United States and other major powers were very content to see the war prolonged. It weakened two major regional powers, increasing their dependence on America, European or Russian support, while decreasing their capacity to resist pressure from outside. Saddam's capacity to assert his independence outside Iraq and resist outside interference in Iraqi affairs was degraded still further by the Gulf War of 1990-1, repeated bombing campaigns, a lengthy oil embargo, and the invasion that took place in 2003. His latest humiliation, or, at least, the latest to occur by the time this book was written, was to be captured hiding in a hole in the ground.

These examples make the same point: the urge for revenge, on the one hand, and strategies of resistance, on the other, have to balanced very carefully indeed and may sometimes work in conflict with each other. Before elaborating and exploring these points further, let us set out some of the possible ways of rejecting humiliation in a little more detail.

**The revenge paradox**

Revenge belongs to the honour code. It has two related objects (see table 1). One object is to express anger and resentment by imposing an appropriate counter-humiliation on a relevant target (eg the perpetrator). The second object is to restore the lost honour, prestige, or 'street credibility' of the revenge-seeker. These two objects, to engage in counter-humiliation and to restore diminished honour, are very closely related. Within the honour code, demonstrating the capacity to humiliate others is a recognised way to increase personal or group honour.

A paradoxical situation arises. On the one hand, participants in feuds and revenge cycles normally develop a stereotypical view of their opponents, one that depicts them as having very low worth and deserving to be overthrown, degraded and eradicated.

On the other hand, the cultural identity and everyday pattern of activities of many people engaged in the process of humiliation and counter-humiliation are thoroughly bound up with the revenge relationship. They have a strong vested interest in keeping it in existence. If their threats to disable and destroy the hated other were fully realised, they would have to confront a big problem: the loss of an enemy whose existence is central to their own sense of who they are.

Jonathan Lear puts it well: 'The terrorist thinks it is *because* his people have been humiliated that he is justified in his acts. But might the situation be just the reverse? That is, because he takes a certain pleasure in destructive hatred, he has become attached to his sense of humiliation. Thus while it may be true that the terrorist kills out of a sense of revenge, it is *also* true that he holds onto his sense of humiliation in order that he should be able to go on killing' (Lear 2005, 4; italics in original).[vi]

The *revenge paradox* is that those who most want to defeat the enemy may also be those who most want the struggle to continue.

**The resistance paradox**

There is a resistance paradox as well. Edward Luttwak mentions it when discussing regulated capitalism and turbo-capitalism. He would like to see the moral obligations, professional commitments, and social ideals embedded in the old ways of Keynesian social-welfare capitalism protected. However, the professionals needed to do this can only get employment if they are prepared to work in institutions adapted to the turbo-capitalist world that seems to undermine those very things.

Figure One
Protecting interests, identity and a way of life

B
Institutions, Practices and Attitudes
needed to protect and sustain A

A
Specific Interests,
Identity and Way of
Life
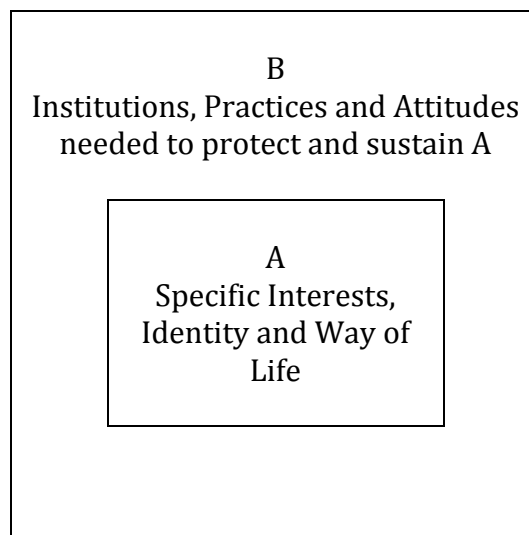
We have to make a distinction between two things: a group's specific interests, especially its identity and way of life (A in figure 1) and the institutions, practices and attitudes needed to protect and sustain those group interests (B in figure 1). For example, landed aristocracies that wanted to protect their rural way of life effectively in the nineteenth century found they had to support governments that would encourage urban-industrial growth to generate the wealth and technological advance needed to make the national army powerful enough to defend that rural way of life against foreign aggressors (se figure 2)..

In the end this strategic move by the aristocracies was self-defeating. They were transformed and diminished by the end of the twentieth century because of the overpowering impact of urban-industrial growth on the whole society, including the aristocracy and its way of life. 'Success' in terms of such a strategy is most realistically measured with reference to how slowly this unwelcome change occurred.

The *resistance paradox* states that in order to protect your identity and way of life you may have to change your identity and way of life. In other words, in terms of figure 1, the requirements of B may conflict with the contents of A. As a result, when your identity and way of life are challenged, you may have to decide which aspects to discard in order to protect the 'core.' Which means you have to decide what the 'core' is.

Figure Two
Aristocracies in urban-industrial societies

| | |
|---|---|
| Aristocracy and its rural way of life are threatened by the military power of rival national states that have industrialized, urbanised and developed an advanced scientific culture <br><br> ↓ | The paradoxical consequence is that having strengthened urban-industrial and scientific interests to defend its rural way of life, the influence of the aristocracy and the strength of the rural way of life are threatened by the new social interests they have encouraged within their own country. |
| <br><br>Aristocracy realise that to prevent defeat and conquest by these rival national states– which will put their way of life under <br> threat - they must encourage  ➔<br> urban-industrial and scientific | ↑ <br><br> If urban-industrial and scientific development are successful this increases the social and political power of the urban working class, the industrial and commercial business class and the scientific professions who |

| | |
|---|---|
| development in their own nation to help make it powerful and capable of resisting attacks | all gain increasing influence in government and society |

There are at least three ways that a group under threat may respond to this situation. One is pragmatic adjustment. For example, suppose the group is well embedded in the society, resistant to self-analysis, and has substantial access to power resources. Such a group may be able to make flexible, pragmatic shifts in style, tactics and attitudes whenever it is advantageous to do so. This would describe quite well the way that the English aristocracy responded to the rise of the modern bureaucratic state and the industrial city.

However, as shown in table 1, two other responses are a last-ditch resistance and a calculated reformation. Let us explore two examples of these responses from Japan and India as they coped with the challenge of Western imperialism.

Table One
Three ways of coping with the resistance paradox

| Last-Ditch Resistance | Pragmatic Adaptation | Calculated Reformation |
|---|---|---|
| Determination to maintain the old ways at all costs and go down fighting if necessary. | Piece-meal shifts under pressure of immediate challenges when survival is at risk. | Deliberate remaking of identity and way of life, maintaining key links with the past but also trying to impose an acceptable structure on the new society coming into existence. |

**The last samurai**

In 2003 *The Last Samurai* starring Tom Cruise was a great popular success in cinemas all over North America. It told the story of a noble Japanese warrior chief who refused to compromise either his traditional way of life or his code of honour when faced with the modern business civilisation and modern technology being brought in from the West. This heroic figure refused to take off his sword as the new modern laws demanded. He would not bow down to the new socio-political order that was intended to replace the old feudal hierarchy.

This samurai leader tried to put his case to the Emperor but could not get a hearing. He felt he had no choice but to stand and fight when the Emperor's advisers sent an army to capture or destroy him. He put up a very good fight combining traditional warrior skills with inventive military tactics but in the end the more advanced armaments in the hands of the Japanese state defeated him. Wounded, he committed suicide on the battlefield.

The central message of the film is that it is noble to choose honour above life but tragic to be forced to make that choice. The hero refuses to adopt a strategy of survival that would undermine the only way of life that would make his survival meaningful. Or, in terms of table two, he chooses B (his traditional way of life) because it is honourable and rejects A (in this case, Western-style modernisation) because it is humiliating. The doomed act of resistance becomes a performance. It celebrates a culture passing away in the face of Westernisation.

This tale is loosely based on the rebellion by the Satsuma clan in 1877, led by Saigô Takamori. Saigô was a leading figure in that clan which held power on the island of Kiushiu in the south-west of Japan, close to Korea and China. The film's narrator is an expatriate English gentleman.[vii] This character bears some resemblance to Augustus H Mounsey, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and 'recently Her Britannic Majesty's Secretary of Legation in Japan,' who in 1879 published a book entitled *The Satsuma Rebellion* (Mounsey 1879).[viii] Certainly, the tone of voice in the film is very similar to the voice in the text where a careful, precise narrative is told with quiet amazement.

Mounsey had evidently visited Kiushiu and was no stranger to Japanese history and society. He tells a story that is more complex than the film. Saigô was a major actor in the national politics of Japan before the Meiji Restoration of 1868 when the Shôgun still ruled. The Shôgunate, held by the Tokugawa clan, had been the real power behind the imperial throne for centuries and other clans, including the Satsuma, resented its power.

Saigô, the 'last samurai,' was no stranger to rebellion. He took a leading part in the military uprising in 1867 that abolished the Shôgunate and gave power back to the Emperor. Many people from the Satsuma clan took positions in national government from that point onward. Others, including Saigô, were not happy with what they offered. In practice, Saigô seems to have wanted a position almost as powerful as the deposed Shôgun. As a result, the Satsuma clan was divided.

The followers of Saigô were not opposed to all forms of change. They were upset because they were not controlling the pace and direction of change. Nor did they simply turn their back on new ideas and practices in favour of the old way of life and the old identity. A manifesto published in the Tokyo newspapers during June 1871 was widely taken to represent Saigô's views.[ix] It argued that government should be 'based upon the polity of Japan in the middle ages, but regard being had to the constitution of western states.' In other words, some modernisation was acceptable.

But modernisation should not be allowed to overwhelm the old Japan. 'We must not attempt to civilise Japan too quickly, and must do first what our resources permit. We must abandon all steam and railroads, &c., and work diligently to perfect our military system. Let us not try to do one hundred things at once, but have patience and go by degrees' (Mounsey 1879, 45). This is not 'No!' but 'Please slow down!' and 'Ask us what we think before you act!' The manifesto said it wanted 'All government measures, small and great, to be well discussed and considered, and then enacted' (42).

Saigô was quite happy to see some changes in the decaying fabric of the old feudal order. For example, abolishing the great feudal lords heading the clans, known as the daimyo, would give samurai like him more freedom.[x] Abolishing samurai status was a different matter. This happened in 1876.[xi] Here is how the most diehard samurai from Kiushiu reacted when Imperial troops from the lower orders dressed in Western-style uniforms were sent to their island`:

'Dressed in the style of the old Japanese warrior, in helmet and chain armour, and armed with swords and halberds, this band of reckless men surprised the garrison of Kumamoto in the dead of night and butchered or wounded 300 of the Imperial troops in their beds. In the eyes of such men this was a chivalrous exploit, and their subsequent conduct was no less chivalrous, according to Japanese ideas; for after performing this cold-blooded massacre, they retired to the hills, and, finding there was no probability of a general rising in the province, eighty-four of them manifested the sincerity of their intentions by committing hara-kiri, whilst only twenty-nine surrendered to the Imperial troops which soon dispersed or killed the rest of the band' (92-3).

Followers of Itagaki Taisuke, a leader of the neighbouring Tosa clan, also based in Kuishi, were less extreme but they also objected to the degradation of their military tradition. Some of the Tosa men had visited the United States and were favourable to Western-style representative institutions in government but they objected to the way the samurai were being dragged down. As they put it, 'A great mistake has been made in endeavouring to lower the samurai to the level of the common people. Encouragement should have been given to the latter to raise themselves to the level of the samurai.' [xii]

When Saigô mustered his own highly-trained troops for rebellion, he surely had in mind two scenarios, one optimistic, one pessimistic. The optimistic scenario was that the Japanese navy, which was staffed with Satsuma officers, would rise up in sympathy to restore and reinforce the hierarchical principle within

Japanese society, implementing the values of the samurai class even though it had been abolished.[xiii]

The pessimistic scenario was the one romantically enacted in *The Last Samurai*. It was that the Emperor and his entourage would feel ashamed when they saw how honourably the samurai from Kiushiu fought for their way of life. In other words, out of a highly-visible collective sacrifice expressing this group's commitment to a certain way of treating human relationships would come a change of heart on the part of those who controlled the nation.[xiv]

**Gandhi**

Gandhi's approach had some resemblance to the second scenario just described. His political technique was, indeed, to bring about examples of highly-visible collective sacrifice. He intended such scenes to express his followers' commitment to a certain way of treating human relationships. He also, like the 'last samurai,' wanted to bring about a change of heart on the part of those who controlled the nation.

Like Saigô and, even more, like Itagaki Taisuke, both discussed in the previous section, Gandhi was looking for a workable mix between indigenous and imported ideas. Like them, he had a hatred of humiliation. However, there are several differences:

- unlike Saigô, who was thoroughly committed to the honour code, Gandhi was much more sympathetic to the idea of universal human rights;

- in Gandhi's eyes, it was much more distasteful to cause or observe humiliation than be the victim of humiliation;

- Gandhi was working to strengthen the spirit of human solidarity, universal equality and mutual help, not refurbish the practices of social exclusivity and hierarchy; and

- he was deliberately importing (rather than reluctantly acquiescing in) ideas taken from Western sources such as Christianity and the ideas of John Ruskin.

Gandhi was born in India in 1869. As is well known, he trained as a lawyer in England then spent over twenty years in South Africa. In Natal he became involved in the cause of Indian indentured labourers, founded the Natal Indian Congress, and developed his approach of non-violent resistance or *satyagraha*. He went back to India in 1914.

Like Saigô, Gandhi was a man of action although a very different kind. Bhikhu Parekh gets to the heart of Gandhi's approach in the following passage: 'Thought came to have no meaning for him for him unless it was lived out, and life was shallow unless it reflected a carefully thought-out vision. Every time Gandhi came across a new idea, he asked if it was worth living up to. If not, he took no further interest in it. But if the answer was in the affirmative, he integrated it into his way of life, 'experimented' with its 'truth', and explored its moral logic…He read little, and only what was practically relevant' (Parekh 2001, 6-7).

Saigô was trying to defend a coherent traditional way of life against a threatened invasion by 'Western civilisation.' By contrast, Gandhi was trying to create a coherent new way of life in the face of the British Raj well installed in India and reluctant to go.[xv]

Gandhi wanted individuals to be on patrol duty over themselves, to take personal responsibility for making themselves strong enough to resist attacks upon their integrity. Such individuals would be powerful tools for reconstructing Indian society and, eventually, Gandhi hoped, the world. With supreme self-confidence, great organisational powers and a considerable flair for publicity, Gandhi told his followers what kind of reconstruction he thought was necessary.

At the end of *Sarvodaya,* a pamphlet written while in South Africa and inspired by Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, Gandhi sets out his view of the kind of *swaraj* (or self-rule), that India and Indians should aim to achieve. He begins by stating that '*Swara*j cannot be attained by the sin of killing Englishmen' or by 'the erection of huge factories. Gold and silver may be accumulated but they will not lead to the establishment of *Swaraj*. Ruskin has proved this to the hilt.'

In fact, he adds, 'Western civilization …has reduced Europe to a sorry plight. Let us pray that India is saved from the fate that has overtaken Europe…Some day there will be an explosion, and then Europe will be a veritable hell on earth. Non-white races are looked upon as legitimate prey by every European state. What else can we expect where covetousness is the ruling passion in the breasts of men ? Europeans pounce upon new territories like crows upon a piece of meat. I am inclined to think that this is due to their mass-production factories…India must indeed have *Swaraj* but she must

have it by righteous methods. Our *Swaraj* must be real *Swaraj*, which cannot be attained by either violence or industrialization. India was once a golden land, because Indians then had hearts of gold. The land is still the same but it is a desert because we are corrupt. It can become a land of gold again only if the base metal of our present national character is transmuted into gold. The philosopher's stone which can effect this transformation is a little word of two syllables—*Satya* (Truth). If every Indian sticks to truth, *Swaraj* will come to us of its own accord.'[xvi]

In Japan, the men of Satsuma and Tosa tried to bargain with the Japanese government about the proper trade-off between ends and means, between a valued identity and way of life on the one hand, and, on the other hand, effective means to make it secure. By contrast, Gandhi refused to consider a trade-off of any kind. In his view, ends and means had to be cut from the same cloth. In terms of figure 1, A (the valued way of life) had to be not only compatible with B (the means to achieve and defend it) but also closely interwoven with it.[xvii]

The form of opposition to British rule Gandhi recommended and practised was *Satyagraha* or non-violent resistance. He organised mass campaigns of collective disobedience to colonial laws such as the imposition of the salt tax in 1930. Demonstrators from his movement were not permitted to be violent. Gandhi's followers were required to receive any blows upon their persons by police or military without striking back or breaking the bond of human fellowship linking all people. This proud passivity was, of course, intended to very exasperating for the authorities and undermine their self-confidence. The enormous publicity these campaigns received gave courage to the Indians who took part in them.

Gandhi's philosophical approach drew upon values very familiar to Europeans. This made it easier for him to encourage shame feelings among them. At the same time, by teaching his followers to acquiesce in humiliating punishments without striking back or deviating from their intentions, Ghandi weakened the effectiveness of violence as a means of colonial control.[xviii]

Gandhi reckoned he had a strategy for national liberation whose 'cost will be insignificant compared to the fabulous sums devoted by nations to armaments. ' In 1938 he was confident enough to write that 'even a few true *Satyagrahas* would suffice to bring us freedom.' Gandhi's view of families and clans was very different from Saigô's. For the samurai, the clan was a castle to be held against the attacks of other clans. By contrast, Gandhi believed that when people understood the suffering caused by violence it would melt their hearts. He argued this 'from the analogy of what we do in families or even clans. The humankind is one big family. And if the love expressed is intense enough it must apply to all mankind' (Gandhi 1951, 262-3).[xix]

However, Gandhi had no way of handling or even comprehending violence as an expression of inter-communal hatred. Again, Parekh sums up the matter well: 'His theory of human nature could only explain savagery as a temporary loss of humanity capable of being set right by an appropriate surgery of the soul. When he was confronted with the depth and extent of intercommunal brutality, he felt morally disoriented and could not make sense of it' (Parekh 2001, 120).

Nearly a million people died during the savage violence between Hindus and Moslems that occurred when the British Raj achieved its independence in 1947 and divided into India and Pakistan. Gandhi's highly imaginative politics of resistance helped to loosen the British government's grip upon India. Ironically, as this grip loosened it released another, more deadly, politics, the politics of revenge.

**Revenge chains**

Revenge may be stimulated by acts of conquest, relegation or expulsion (and by offensively persistent reminders of them).  Unlike resistance, the primary object of revenge is not to preserve one's resources and capacity to pursue one's own goals but instead to attack the one who is blamed for the humiliation in a way that will hurt and outrage them. It is an act of retaliation, not defence.

The desire for revenge springs from the feeling of outrage. The outrage stems from the perception that one's rightful position and standing have been overthrown or seriously threatened through an act of humiliation.  Revenge may be displaced from the actual agent of humiliation – who may be unidentifiable, unreachable or too dangerous to attack – onto a more convenient target that is already, so to speak, 'set up' for humiliation on account of its supposed 'unworthiness' for the place it occupies, according to those seeking to discharge their outrage. In extreme cases, this process of displaced revenge may be repeated several times moving downward in a hierarchy or 'pecking order,' creating what might be called a revenge chain.

As Elias Canetti puts it, 'No one ever forgets a sudden depreciation of himself, for it is too painful. Unless he can thrust it on to someone else, he carries it with him for the rest of his life.' Depreciation is a pushing down, a lowering or diminution that refuses to accord the victim proper recognition of who they are and where they fit into the scheme of things. To put it another way, humiliation is a displacement of the self or group. One response is to displace the humiliation itself, passing it on to others. This helps to 're-place' (or re-establish) the group or self as an assertive and autonomous agent able to exercise power and do things it wants.

Cannetti provides a telling example. Imagine, he says, the feelings of Germans during the period of gross monetary inflation between the two world wars. Inflation has depreciated the worth of individuals and put almost everybody in the same boat, feeling diminished. Money has become worthless. This makes people feel worthless. They are desperate to transmit this feeling onto something or someone else: 'What is needed is a dynamic process of humiliation. Something must be treated in such a way that it becomes worth less and less as the unit of money did during the inflation. And this process must be continued until its object is reduced to a state of utter worthlessness. Then one can throw it away like paper, or repulp it. The object Hitler found for this process during the German inflation was the Jews. They seemed made for it.' (Canetti 1973, 219).

**Revenge cycles**

For a revenge cycle to occur, both parties must be strong enough to survive the process. At least one of the parties involved (and probably, but not necessarily,

both) must regard the other individual, group or society as irredeemably

unworthy. In other words, it must deny that the others have any legitimate right

to the position and standing that they 'outrageously' assert. Outrage is caused by

the continued existence of the other in the 'inappropriate' place they persist in

occupying. The continued and highly visible presence of the hated other is a

running sore, a cause of constant pain.

Another factor fuelling a revenge cycle is the vested interest that certain

participants on both sides – full-time killers, for example – have in continuing the

conflict. Ironically, the wounds produced by humiliation eventually get

incorporated into the identities of at least some of the people concerned.  They

begin to 'need' the hatred and love the revenge. This is part of the revenge

paradox.

To express it more formally, revenge cycles have the following elements:

(i)     group X experience a humiliating attack, which they survive, and they

        place the blame upon group Y;

(ii)    X feel outrage at Y for supposedly having carried out the attack;

(iii)   X carries out an attack intended to humiliate Y in order to express

        their outrage at Y and even up the score;

(iv)    since Y regard the original attack upon X as being justified, Y does not

        share X's view that the original attack made by Y was outrageous. Y is

        therefore, in turn, outraged at the humiliating attack (the reprisal)

subsequently made by X. As a result, (i) to (iii) are repeated with the positions of X and Y reversed, leading back to (i).

Table Two

The Revenge Cycle

| | |
|---|---|
| (i) X blames Y for a humiliating attack upon X, which X *survives.*<br>↓ | (iii) the sequence from<br>from (i) to (iii)<br>← is repeated with X and Y reversed |
| (ii) X feels outrage against Y → | ↑<br>(iv) X carries out a humiliating retaliatory attack upon Y |

In order to try and understand revenge cycles better, let us focus briefly on Europe since 1870.

**France and Germany**

Two important studies of revenge are Thomas Scheff's *Bloody Revenge* (Scheff 1994) and Wolfgang Schivelbusch's *The Culture of Defeat* (Schivelbusch 2001).

Scheff makes an interesting comparison between international systems and families. He draws on theories developed to understand conflict situation within families to help explain instances of protracted conflict between national states, especially the two world wars in Europe. He argues that instead of blaming particular states or statesmen for specific wars, it is better to look at the system of communications between states in Europe at the time. There was a low level

of trust within that system, and widespread use of devious and deceptive techniques such as conspiring with third parties rather than talking in a direct and open way with potential enemies in order to achieve mutual understanding and prevent confrontation.

A pervasive problem, between states as within family relationships, is alienation. This takes two forms: isolation, when the distance from others is too great, and engulfment, when blind loyalty and commitment to a relationship means a submergence of individuality, so that important parts of the self are denied and put out of reach. Intense nationalism carries the danger of individuals being engulfed within the nation while nations are isolated from each other, a situation that comes under the heading of 'bimodial alienation' in Scheff's terminology (Scheff 1994, 2).

If alienation is present within relationships, it increases the chances that when shame occurs it will be unacknowledged. This is unfortunate because shame not only serves as a useful moral arbiter for our behaviour but also provides a good guide as to how well we are balancing closeness and distance, or solidarity and independence, in our relationships.

When shame is unacknowledged it may combine with other emotions, such as guilt or fear, to produce 'feeling traps.' Scheff is especially interested in the feeling trap that develops when unacknowledged shame leads to, or results from, anger. When this occurs shame leads to anger, anger to more shame, shame to more anger and so on. This sequence is difficult to stop if the part played by

shame is hidden and those involved do not understand what is happening.[xx] This factor helps to explain the periods of protracted conflict between states such as France and Germany, carried out in a spirit of vengeance or 'humiliated fury'[xxi].

France after 1871 experienced humiliation because of the loss of Alsace and Lorraine. However, Scheff notes, the motive of revenge against Germany 'was seldom publicly avowed, as suggested by Gambetta's advice to the French about the defeat of 1871: "Speak of it never; think of it always," a counsel of obsession, denial and bypassing of shame' (Scheff 1894, 87). After Germany's defeat in 1918, Hitler, who was no stranger to shame-anger in his own life, showed the German people a way to 'interrupt the chain reaction of overt shame and rage' (118). His solution was to project the shame and anger onto the Jews, making them the object of German vengeance.

Schivelbusch throws light on the socio-cultural character of revenge-seeking after national defeats. By the early nineteenth century history had given a clear answer to the questions: whose interests does the French state represent and defend? and who stands for France? The parts played by the French aristocracy and monarchy were crucial. The absolutist Bourbon monarchs had humiliated the proud French nobility in the seventeenth century, forcing aristocrats to accept a subordinate place and bend the knee at the royal court. Their uprising, the Fronde, was an early modern version of the Satsuma rebellion. The Fronde was crushed.[xxii] However, after France's military defeat at the hands of England in 1763, leading members of the aristocracy took the chance to identify

themselves with the need to rescue French honour. Men like Lafayette became patriots.

During the French Revolution, the nobility, like the monarchy, was discredited and 'the Parisian masses became the sole heir and bearer of this aristocratic inheritance, which was recast as the concept of national honour' (Schivelbusch 2003, 133). The French urban working class and peasantry were gradually integrated into the modern French nation during the nineteenth century. Unlike their German counterparts, they acquired a confident sense of nationhood.

It is true that there were deep internal divisions in France. These were exacerbated by military defeats at the hands of the Germans in 1870-1. The French officers regained their sense of pride by bloodily suppressing the revolutionary Paris Commune. They were also lifted by colonial adventures in North Africa. What held the French nation together despite these divisions was a shared sense of itself as a noble but unjustly wounded nation, needing and deserving revenge.

Germany's social divisions after 1918 were much deeper than those in France after 1871. Following World War I, Germany was 'in a free fall' lacking 'France's safety net,' its strong sense of national pride that could look back on two centuries of leadership on continental Europe. In Germany , 'The memories of centuries of national inferiority, supposedly relegated to the past by the victory of 1870-71, by the founding of the empire, and by forty years of power politics, now reappeared like an unwelcome guest on Germany's doorstep' (196-7).

The German people only joined the nation fully in August 1914. They were then pitched into a battle supposedly for German '*Kultur*' against French, British and American 'civilisation.' Four years later, the nation that they had just joined, the nation for which they had been asked to give everything, fell apart around them. Inflation made things even worse, deepening the social disintegration..

Hitler's achievement was to put this society together again for a while at least, with devastating effects for some, and eventually all, of its members. Schivelbusch shows how much the reconstruction and reintegration of German society in the 1930s depended on techniques of mass production and mass consumerism and mass propaganda borrowed from the United States. The Nazis learned from Henry Ford and the New Deal. Coca-Cola became very popular. Hitler drew the comparison quite explicitly: 'We resemble the Americans in that we have wants and desires.' Hitler knew how to create and manage these wants and desires. Furthermore, as Schivelbusch comments, 'The extermination of the Indian population influenced Hitler as profoundly as the Monroe Doctrine, which codified America's hegemonic aspirations.'[xxiii]

**World on fire**

Hitler used the fledgling parliamentary democracy of the Weimar Republic to exploit resentments generated by the capitalistic market and its arbitrary cruelties during the 1920s. He played upon the fact that people felt they had been unfairly treated, degraded, belittled, ignored and treated with contempt. Hitler gave them a target for

their revenge: the Jews. Unfortunately, this story did not end in 1945. It is now being replayed throughout the world, although Jews are certainly not the only victims

Amy Chua tells about the death in 1994 of her aunt, who was, like her, an ethnic Chinese from a well-off family in the Phillipines. Her aunt's chauffeur, a Filipino, murdered her. In the police report, the 'motive given was not robbery, despite the jewels and money the chauffer was said to have taken. Instead, for motive, there was just one world – "Revenge"' (Chua 2003, 4-5). This anecdote illustrates the main message of *World of Fire.* This message is as follows. Do not promote free-market capitalism and votes for all without

- redistribution measures,
- the rule of law, and
- effective guarantees for the protection of minorities.

Like Edward Luttwak, Amy Chua draws attention to the perils of importing only half the American way, of buying the blue-print without getting the benefits of the historical learning process and the broader socio-cultural context that produced the blueprint and makes it a reasonably decent way of living.

Chua's central point is that 'for the last twenty years the United States has been promoting throughout the non-Western world raw, laissez-faire capitalism – a form of markets that the West abandoned long ago...It is striking to note that at no point in history did any Western nation ever implement laissez-faire capitalism and overnight universal suffrage at the same time – the precise

formula of free market democracy currently being pressed on developing
countries around the world' (14).

The problem with this blueprint is that when it is applied two things tend to
happen simultaneously. Firstly, minorities become successful, highly visible and
the object of great resentment. Many of these minorities are not just highly
talented but also highly exposed and highly vulnerable to popular discontent.
That includes the overseas Chinese in the Philippines, Burma, Malaya, and
Indonesia, the Bengalis in Assam, the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Lebanese in West
Africa, the Ibo in Nigeria, the Croats in (now ex-) Yugoslavia, the Indians in East
Africa, White Europeans in Zimbabwe and, not least, Americans world-wide.

Secondly, democratic politics allows the resentful majority to take its revenge
upon these ethnic minorities who can easily be labelled as arrogant, exploitative
and oppressive. Politicians like Robert Mugabe are able to direct blame onto the
targeted minority (in his case, white settlers) and impose high penalties upon
them. Sometimes, the political atmosphere created encourages aggrieved
individuals or groups to take violent reprisals against members of the minority
concerned. [xxiv]

Cycles of revenge are set up. In some cases, these take the form of protests
against the workings of the market. For example, reforms imposed upon
Tanzania by the World Bank and IMF during the 1980s allowed Indians to re-
establish themselves as a major economic force. This led to 'bitter anti-Indian
brutality' (114). In other cases, such as Sierra Leone and Kenya, the beneficiaries

of 'crony capitalism' (147) try to protect them themselves and reduce their vulnerability by closing down democratic institutions. [xxv] Sometimes the cycles of revenge lead to genocidal action against hated groups, most notoriously in Rwanda and in former Yugoslavia.

Amy Chua sets out clearly the formula for generating revenge cycles: 'Take the rawest form of capitalism, slap it together with the rawest form of democracy, and export the two as a package deal to the poorest, most frustrated, most unstable, and most desperate countries in the world. Add market-dominant minorities to the picture, and the instability inherent in this bareknuckle version of free market democracy is compounded a thousandfold by the manipulable forces of ethnic hatred' (195).

**Clash of civilisations**

In the *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Huntington 1997), Samuel Huntington is equally impressed by the potential for hatred and revenge in the post-Cold War world. However, his particular lenses focus at a higher level in the system. As far as he is concerned, 'Civilizations are the ultimate human tribes' (Huntington 1997, 207). A civilization is 'the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species' Civilizations – and that includes the Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Orthodox Christian, Western, and Latin American cases [xxvi] - are 'the biggest "we" within which we feel culturally at home as distinguished from all the other "thems" out there' (43).

In Huntington's view, civilisations are the building blocks of global society. Unfortunately, their values are for the most part incompatible or inconsistent with each other. It is difficult for them to understand or agree with each other. Truce or, at best, pragmatic cooperation is the best to be hoped for. Mutual enmity is quite likely.

Huntington argues that the way civilizations relate to each other is the basic framework of world order or disorder. Four factors are especially important: the West is declining, for example, economically, demographically, and linguistically (despite the popularity of English); people are turning towards religion all over the world; Islam is resurgent; and, finally, China and, more generally, Asia are becoming more powerful.

Huntington sees four categories of civilization. One is the West, which, he strongly implies, is the only truly 'civilised' civilization.[xxvii] Then there are the 'challenger' civilisations: China (Sinic) and Islam. Thirdly, there are the 'swing' civilizations, those of Japan, Russia (Orthodox) and India (Hindu),  whose behaviour or political allegiances could affect the balance of advantage between the West its challengers. Finally, there are the rest of 'the Rest' (ie the non-West)' (Huntington 1997, 183): these civilizations include the Latin American, the Buddhist and the African.

Huntington sees two main kinds of clashes between these civilizations. One is 'fault line conflicts' (207) on the boundaries between civilizations. These include the wars in southeastern European, especially ex-Yugoslavia where the Western,

Orthodox and Islamic civilizations intersect. In such wars, the core states of the

civilizations – in cases where they actually have core states – are drawn in,

initially to provide support to their civilizational friends but ultimately to impose

constraints and broker peace. The absence of a clear core state in Islam is an

important factor prolonging conflict.[xxviii]

Figure Three
Huntington's model: The 'clash of civilizations'

| The West<br><br>The 'civilized' civilization | Challenger Civilizations<br><br>Sinic<br>Islamic |
|---|---|
| Swing Civilizations<br><br>Japanese<br>Orthodox<br>Hindu | 'The Rest'<br><br>Latin America<br>Buddhist<br>African |

In these conflicts, 'As violence increases, the initial issues at stake tend to get

redefined more exclusively as "us" against "them" and group cohesion and

commitment are enhanced. Political leaders expand and deepen their appeals to

ethnic and religious loyalties, and civilization consciousness strengthens in

relation to other loyalties. A "hate dynamic" emerges, comparable to the

"security dilemma" in international relations, in which mutual fears, distrust, and

hatred feed on each other. Each side dramatizes and magnifies the distinction

between the forces of virtue and the forces of evil and eventually attempt to

transform this distinction into the ultimate distinction between the quick and the

dead' (266). Using other words, Huntington is describing important aspects of revenge cycles.

The other possible kind of conflict is direct clashes between core states or between whole civilizations. He speculates about the possibility of a war breaking out in the future should, for example, the 'Chinese, eager to revenge their 1979 humiliation, invade Vietnam' (313).[xxix] He invents a scenario in which the Americans, Indians, Pakistanis and Indonesians are all involved, dragging Europe in behind them. More generally, he suggests, such wars are most likely to occur if one core state intervenes in the business of another core state in another civilization, making the latter feel that an attempt 'to humiliate and browbeat' (316) them is under way. Huntington's advice to core states faced with this kind of temptation to intervene is: keep out, steer clear, and mind your own business.

Huntington's analysis diminishes the perceived threat posed by the rise of Asia by arguing that it contains five or six civilizations and, as a result, will be unable to organise cooperation between its constituent countries such as China, Japan, India and Russia.[xxx] The likely result, he implies, will be outbreaks of vengeful violence amongst them. At the same time, Huntington warns against an influx of minorities into the West, especially the United States, from other civilizations, in which category he includes Latin Americans from Mexico and all points south.[xxxi]

By depicting global society as a collection of adjacent, competing and closed civilizations, Huntington revives the nineteenth century picture of bounded national states, each presenting stereotypical versions of its rivals and enemies to its own

people. For example, Huntington gives us 'bloody' Islam, and revenge-seeking China, and suggests that it would be unwise to allow too many 'un-American' Mexicans into the United States.

The tone of voice in *The Clash of Civilizations* is a mixture of reasonableness, anxiety and half-concealed contempt for supposedly less 'civilized' people inclined to violence. You can find a similar tone in an essay published about a century and a half earlier: *On Liberty* (Mill 1964), originally published by John Stuart Mill in 1859. Mill belonged to a highly cultured class of property owners in Britain that for generations had been able to rely on the deference of those 'below' them and, as a result, had been quite assertive about telling their inferiors how to live their lives.

By the late 1850s it was clear that uncultured tradespeople, artisans and even unskilled workers were going to get the vote before many years had passed. The danger was that as a result they might start telling their old masters what to do. The late 1850s was a good time for gentlemen like Mill to rediscover the importance of being able to put a fence around your own culture and way of life and say 'keep out.'[xxxii]

The late 1990s was a good time for at least part of the American establishment to rediscover the importance of the general principle that you should not interfere with someone else's civilisation, especially if your own civilisation seemed to be the one most at risk. Fear of revenge may be triggering a pre-emptive strategy of cultural resistance.

**Summary**

In this chapter we have: compared revenge and resistance as responses that reject humiliation; considered the contrasting cases of Mandela and Saddam Hussein; looked at adaptation, last-ditch resistance and calculated reformation as ways of rejecting humiliation, with reference to the British aristocracy, the Japanese samurai and the movement led by Gandhi; examined revenge chains and revenge cycles; reflected on relations between France and Germany; explored revenge cycles between ethnic groups; and investigated the supposed clash of civilizations.

**Conclusion**

During the past three chapters we have surveyed the escape, acceptance and rejection responses to the experience of humiliation. It is impossible not to notice the hefty profile of the honour code making several appearances. These include the 'virtuous' character of strength and violence in the American ideology and in Fanon's creed, the pride in self-sufficiency and capacity to suffer shown by the workers studied by Cobb and Sennett, Friedman's evocation of the globalization's jungle law and the examples of revenge cycles, all foreign to the spirit of the human rights code.

Globalization, as it developing at present, has the effect of strengthening the honour code. The point is that enforcement of the human rights code depends upon everybody being prepared to follow rules that protect the interests of others. How are those rules enforced? There are three possible ways: by the community where it can exercise strong informal pressure on its members; by the state where the means of surveillance and control are sufficiently developed; and by the self-discipline of

individuals who are motivated to behave according in the correct spirit (exercising what Martin Albrow has called 'performative citizenship'[xxxiii]).

Western influence during the past century has disseminated the principles of the human rights code throughout the world. This increased awareness among the global population of these principles has been a major factor raising levels of resentment at 'humiliating' conditions and treatment that do not meet the standards of that code. However, the capacity and willingness of national governments to fund and enforce human rights has not increased to the same extent. Meanwhile, the pressures of globalization often undermine the coherence of local communities, and, in any case, habits of citizenship may not be deeply ingrained at that level compared to the loyalties associated with family and religion.

In these circumstances, feelings of humiliation and resentment generated, in part at least, by an increased awareness of one's own human rights frequently lead to action framed by the honour code which says: 'fight for yourself and your group.' When fighting is prolonged and widespread, consideration for human rights decreases substantially. If warfare and civil violence become endemic, the honour code is likely to triumph at the expense of human rights.

**Looking forward**

In the last chapter we will: consider globalization's hidden agenda once more; identifying the conditions favouring emancipation cycles and distrust cycles; study the dynamics of European integration since 1945; see the workings of a transatlantic revenge cycle; consider the implications of future global multi-

polarity and growing urbanization throughout the world; face up to the possibility of an increase in state-sponsored terrorism; and ask how the human rights code and honour code are likely to be accommodated within twenty-first century politics.

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[i] Threatening both in prospect ('will it happen?') and if or when it happens ('can we survive it?').

[ii] Nelson Mandela, 'Address to rally in Soweto, 13 February 1990, http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mandela/1990/sp900213.html (consulted 26 April 2005)

[iii] Said K Aburish relates that he was managing director of Growth International, a consulting firm, and chairman of its successor, Aburish, James and Associates. In this capacity he helped the Iraqi leader make contact with foreign suppliers who could help develop Iraq as a modern urban-industrial society with a strong arms programme. Aburish 2000, 107.

[iv] Aburish's book is entitled *Saddam Hussein. The politics of revenge* (Aburish 20000).

[v] Aburish 2000, 122, citing Makiya 1989, 316.

[vi] Lear's comment, made in the preface of his book on Freud, continues thus: 'But how are we to understand someone who is *motivated* to keep feeling humiliated? On the surface, the terrorist sincerely believes that he hates his humiliation, and would do anything to get rid of it. He would be deeply offended – furious, *humiliated* – at any suggestion that, really, he has a hidden longing to stay connected to his sense of humiliation. Humiliation is nothing he really *wants* – and thus doing anything to promote it is against his own sense of his best interests. Thus it is irrational for him to pursue it. And this goes to the heart of Freud's insight: that humans tend towards certain forms of motivated irrationality of which they have little or no awareness' (Lear 2005, 4; italics in original).

[vii] He is played by Timothy Spall.

[viii] Details of Mounsey's biography are taken from the title page. Apparently, a 'Mrs Augustus H Mounsey' was occupying one of Essex's 'principal seats' (that is 'a country mansion, esp. with large grounds') in 1889. See http://essexpub.net/Directories/Seats.htm (25 April 2005).

[ix] Saigô had arrived in Tokyo the previous month. The manifesto 'though never proved to come from his pen, was generally believed to contain a statement of his views' (Mounsey 1879, 41).

[x] See Mounzsey 1879, 101-3.

[xi] Mounzsey 1879, 88

[xii] Memorial to the government quoted by Mounsey 1879, 260-1.

[xiii] On Satsuma clan members in the Japanese navy, see Mounsey 1879, 119.

[xiv] On the death of Saigô, see Mounsey 1879, 214-5. It is as heroic as in the film. Mounsey notes that the Japanese government pardoned over 39,000 of the rebels, imprisoned about 3,000, and executed only twenty. Mounsey 1879, 226-7.

[xv] He wanted to transform the situation of the 'untouchables' or Dalits. On the topic of Dalits in India, see Goringe 2005; Mendelsohn 1998.

[xvi] See The Official Mahatma Gandhi eArchive at

http://www.mahatma.org.in/books/showbook.jsp?id=48&link=bg&book=bg0029&lang=en&cat=books

(26 April 2005)

[xvii] 'The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree' ( Gandhi 1951, 10.

[xviii] Ironically, in this latter respect Gandhi was treading a path which, when taken to extremes, would lead to the suicide bomber who is difficult to resist because he or she does not fear death.

[xix] The quotations are taken from a reprint of an article written by Gandhi in the newspaper *Harijan*, 22 October 1938.

[xx] For deeper background, consult Scheff's web-site at www.soc.ucsb.edu/faculty/scheff/ (4th April 2005).

[xxi] Scheff 1994, 61. See also 61-3

[xxii] On the Fronde, see Ranum 1994.

[xxiii] Gassert 1997, 92, 95, 100. 264, 296ff cited in Schivelbusch 2003, 284. The quotation from Hitler comes from Schäfer 1991, 214. See also Prinz and Zitelman 1991.

[xxiv] For a case study meant to carry the opposite message, one of hope and reconciliation, see Blumenfeld 2002.

[xxv] See Chua 2003, 147-51, 157-8.

[xxvi] To which Huntington adds, 'African (possibly)' (Huntington 1997, 47).

[xxvii] See, for example, Huntington 1999, 40-41; 321.

[xxviii] Huntington 1999, 176-9.

[xxix] In 1979 China invaded Vietnam and withdrew after about three weeks.

xxx For example, ' Multicivilizational international organizations like ASEAN could face increasing difficulty in maintaining their coherence' (Huntington 1997, 128).

xxxi See also Huntington 2004, especially 221-56.

xxxii For a broader view of the social and political context see, among others, Harvie 1976; Collini 1991.

xxxiii Albrow 1996, 175.