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When Is Terrorism All in the Family?

Editor

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Family and life. In Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, one can read about the constraints and small victories inherent to living within a family, viz., the convicts and officials of a Soviet labor camp. Often enough the families are within us even after we physically leave them as described by psychoanalysts and other psychodynamicists—e.g., Freud's Oedipal triangle, Klein's paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions and the splitting of object relations. Sometimes families are created through self-choice and bound by transgression—illegal, illicit, or otherwise—in the world outside of formal prison as in Hirokazu Koreeda's film *Shoplifters* (2018). And it should come as no surprise, that the family may be one pathway to understanding terrorism.

In seminal work by psychiatrist Jerrold Post (1985), he developed and explicated on a 2 x 2 matrix with combinations of the youthful terrorist being loyal or disloyal to the youth's parents, and the parents being loyal or disloyal to their government. Post elaborates on two of them.

When the youth's loyal to the parents and the parents are disloyal to the government, one likely type of terrorism, if there's to be any, is that of *nationalism-separatism*. Here, the youth engages in violence against the government but supporting the goals of the parents. Examples include the Provisional Irish Republican Army, the Abu Nidal Organization, and the Basque Fatherland and Liberty.

When the youth's disloyal to the parents and the parents are loyal to the government, one likely type of terrorism is that of the *social revolutionary* (leftist). Here the youth engages in violence conflated against the government and goals of the parents. Examples include the Sendero Luminoso, the Red Brigades, and the Japanese Red Army.

Now, what about the other two sections of the matrix? How about the youth's disloyalty to the parents and the government? One likely terrorist possibility might be that of *anarchism-nihilism*. One is against everything and for nothing. (Unless the *nothing* is the *everything* or *something* one is for.) Just one example are those initiating violence within Yellow Vest demonstrations in France. Another and older example would be the People's Will (Narodnaya Volya) at the end of the 19th century in Russia.

That leaves the youth being loyal to the parents and the government. Why would violence occur here? To "out-loyal" the loyal. To be holier than Thou. Psychological motivations may involve overcompensating for feelings of inferiority, attempting to measure up to a very exacting superego, or intrinsic positive reinforcement of excellence getting out of hand.

Leo Tolstoy begins *Anna Karenina* with "happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." Fyodoy Dostoevsky might have better begun *The*

Possessed (Demons, The Devils) and his take on terrorism with “every family is alike in its own way”. Perhaps, terrorism is all in the family.

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Keywords: Family. Political. Psychology. Terrorism. Violence.

Abstract/Description: This article describes putative linkages between family relationships and kinds of terrorism.

Disciplines: Other Psychology, Philosophy, Philosophy of Science. Political Science, Other Political Science, Psychology, Defense and Security Studies, International Relations, Terrorism Studies

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