Dear Jerry,

Here's the link to the original Washington Post article. It should go first in your compilations, with reactions to it coming later.

Apparently, over a half-dozen social-network analysts were interviewed for the article. One of them, Kathleen Carley, is quoted there on a couple of occasions. Barry Wellman is calling the current situation "the first network war."

Disconnect the Dots
Maybe We Can't Cut Off Terror's Head, but We Can Take Out Its Nodes

By Joel Garreau
Washington Post Staff Writer
Monday, September 17, 2001; Page C01

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A41015-2001Sep16.html

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A rejoinder from Carter Butts:

You know, I think that we should be careful about the ethical implications of this. The ASA (and other professional scientific organizations) has a code of ethics which specifically prohibits its members from deliberately exposing their subjects to harm. Fingering individuals for assassination or imprisonment on the basis of a network analysis is clearly in violation of these policies, and -- in my opinion, at least -- is unbecoming behavior for a social scientist. Not only is the margin of error in any network analytic study frighteningly high, but the direct particiption of social scientists in such efforts violates the "prime directive" of non-interference which allows us to do our work. Is anyone on this list so confident in his or her methods that he or she would use them to decide who should live and who should die? And if we come to make these decisions, can we imagine that this will not adversely affect the willingness of others to volunteer for our studies?

I am as much interested in ending terrorism as anyone else, but I think that we endanger the field when we volunteer to perform studies which will harm our subjects. Social science is the hard-won heritage of all humanity, and I would not place it at risk in the name of political expediency.

-Carter

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Response to Carter Butts from Robert Hauser:

I do not see this as an ethical problem. It's one thing to conduct research and quite another to apply knowledge obtained through research. People are harmed or helped -- more often the

latter, I hope -- all the time in consequence of actions that have been informed, at least in part, by social and behavioral research. Think of any research that affects resource allocations.

Bob

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Phil Bonacich weighs in:I must say that this article raised some issues in my mind that deserve serious thought. The richest country in the world is about to invade the poorest country   By helping the government attack symptoms aren't we contributing to its unwillingness to face the problems created by our possibly biased Middle East policies?   Isn't destroying terrorist networks similar to invading <?xml:namespace prefix = st1 ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:smarttags" />Afghanistan - quick fixes that ignore underlying structural issues? Does this article contribute to the myopia?<?xml:namespace prefix = o ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />

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From: Gavin Hougham <ghougham@MEDICINE.BSD.UCHICAGO.EDU>

Carter,

You are a brave man... strong and sobering words.

I have the feeling, however, that the analyses/interpretations/policy decisions discussed in the article you reference and elsewhere, will not be made by "academics" per se operating under the ethical guidelines of voluntary associations like the ASA or the ASBH (Amer Soc Bioethics and Humanities). Although "academics" once upon a time, many with SNA skills leave for other pastures where their conduct is not regulated or guided by such voluntary "codes of ethics." After all, the rudiments of SNA are not that hard to figure out (I said the rudiments); it doesn't take teams of rocket scientists.... but then again, at places like RAND, their shops are well greased to turn the latest academic toys into policy- or even military-relevant operational tools.

I am reminded of what is happening in bioethics now, where some of the private genomics and stem cell research companies are attempting to "buy" ethics cover for their research (read: r and d) by setting up "ethics advisory boards" and peopling them with known academic ethicists. At least one highly visible academic ethicist has quit his position on such a board once he realized what his role was expected to be (rubber stamp).

In SNA, academics called by the FBI, CIA or whomever to act as consultants or advisors will soon be at the crossroads of needing to balance their obligations to their home disciplines (and more broadly, the academic community) and their desire to put their skills and knowledge to some applied purpose (another never ending debate), and now the next step of having skills that may be used by others to pursue ends not of their own choosing, like assassination or

state-sponsored interference in the affairs of other sovereigns. You think these are new issues? Or that people can not be bought, co opted, or self-motivated into joining "just causes?" Some will think it their duty, and they may have a case to make. Academics are often brought into other domains where the 'pursuit of knowledge' is not the sine qua non of their respective mission statements, imho. It may be new to SNA, but not to other scientists (Manhattan project?), sociologists (Coleman Report on busing?), ethicists (stem cell research?), law school professors (jury selection?), and on and on...

Respectfully,
Gavin Hougham

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From: Edward Swanstrom <swanstrom.e@km.org>
Organization: GKEC
Subject: Anti-Terrorism KM Task Force

An Appeal to the KM and Related Communities

At the KM Standards meeting last week in Washington, D.C., a group of participants came together in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington to ask, "We know what we can do as individuals to help, but what can we do as KM professionals?"

The fight against terrorism is necessary, for any of us and our loved ones can be the next target, but it will be extremely difficult and costly. Monetary value cannot be assigned to the lives of countless soldiers and innocent people all over the world who will be lost. The monetary cost of funding the fight will put all nations' economies at risk.

The US Navy has a motto, "Knowledge at the tip of the spear," for they believe that wars of the future will be won not just with superior weapons but with superior knowledge. The future is now. It is time for knowledge managers worldwide to harness the power of knowledge management, to work together to develop recommendations that we will take to the United States government and other nations involved in the battle.

Knowledge management is critical. As one television analyst put it, the fight against terrorism cannot be fought with hardware and bodies, it must be fought with minds. For those of you who understand how innovation is accelerated by the success of another, this successful attack will be followed by even more daring and innovative attempts and so on. We will have to learn how to anticipate the next innovation horizon for each innovation these terrorists make. We need to learn how to innovate our ability to innovate and develop new technologies that can assist us.

For this type of war, the effectiveness of current high technology solutions is severely limited as well as the use of ground troops. The potential of knowledge management is its ability to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of knowledge while simultaneously reducing the cost of the production, diffusion, and usage of knowledge, which in turn (in this case) reduces the cost in terms of both money and lives lost. KM achieves this by modifying the environment so that the management of know-how, know-what, know-why, and know-who happens more efficiently,

effectively, and at a lower cost. KM leverages the knowledge of a collective of minds, improves the quality of information and knowledge, reduces decision-making mistakes, reduces the cycle-time for transferring knowledge from one person to another, improves pattern recognition and knowledge discovery, increases the certainty and quality of decisions, and more. It also helps find the right balance between people, processes, and technology for this knowledge environment.

Going to Washington Before the events of September 11, I was already scheduled to attend a two-day planning and strategy workshop September 25-26 in Washington, D.C., to network with Congressional and business leaders from across the country. After giving it serious thought, and at the encouragement of my fellow knowledge managers, I have changed my personal agenda for the workshop to center on a discussion of how knowledge management can help fight terrorism. While I am in Washington, I plan to visit as many senior government officials as possible. I will bring a presentation for our proposal and a list of people who have volunteered to develop a KM strategy for the battle against terrorism. GKEC will send an announcement to the Washington Post, New York Times, and other major newspapers, listing the people who have chosen to step up to the task. The invitation to be involved will go out to more than 6,000 knowledge managers worldwide.

Should the September 25 meeting be postponed because of last week's events, I will still plan a trip to Washington. I have colleagues and contacts at the National Security Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Defense, and other pertinent government offices. With the help of my colleagues, we will leverage our social networks to the greatest extent possible. This is one area where I need your help.

Let us work together to support the fight against terrorism and demonstrate the power of KM.

Please email your support for this cause.

We will hold a discussion group at http://www.metainnovation.com .

With deep commitment,

Edward C. Swanstrom, Secretary-General
Global Knowledge Economics Council
http://www.gkec.org
Edward-swanstrom@gkec.org or edward-swanstrom[at]gkec.org

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From: Alan Neustadtl <aneustadtl@socy.umd.edu>

The note by Gavin Hougham reminds me of a valuable lesson learned in graduate school. Regardless that some academics have the lofty ambition of "doing good" in and with research, the development of seemingly innoucous "tools" can be used by others for many varied reasons. The real-life example I was taught concerned a biologist who was also a vocal objector and

critic of the U.S. during the Vietnam conflict. His motivation for producing research on how frogs vision operates was simply an (apparently niave) love of biology and all things biological--this is what led him to research on a seemingly trivial question. Yet, his research was used by others to develop underwater tracking and targeting systems.

For an interesting book that also discussed this concern among "boutique" weapons designers, see Star warriors: a penetrating look into the lives of the young scientists behind our space age weaponry by William J. Broad.

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From: Charles Kadushin <kadushin@BRANDEIS.EDU>

In the early seventies, I was approached by a firm that worked for the CIA, asking me whether I could recommend any network experts, including, of course myself. I declined for my self (as one of the founding members of Democratic Socialists of America) and said that all the network experts I know were liberal or radical and that the CIA would not want them anyway, so I "named no names."

Around the same time, Richard Alba and I had developed some main-frame computer methods for handling up to 10,000 nodes. Having had the inquiry about networks from that firm, I supposed that the CIA may have made some progress in network algorithms. I asked a colleague who had extremely good CIA connections whether he could make some inquiries about work on social networks: our methods were financed by NSF and hence in the public domain, but maybe the CIA would consider contributing to science and share at least some algorithms with us.

This colleague got no where. He said that this was the first time he had every been completely stonewalled.

So it is likely that government sources have been in the network field for years, but they are not about to tell us about it.

I have my own reasons for wanting to eliminate terrorism. I just lost a very dear friend who lived in our very small building in New York(three families). She worked on the 105th floor of the WTC for Cantor Fitzgerald. None of them on that floor survived. I am also a strong supporter of Israel, though not of the current government's policies, and have taught at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and have experienced first hand the impact of terrorism. I have seen its terrible impact on Israel long before I experienced it in New York.

Nonetheless, I agree with Carter Butts. We should not actively, as academics and professionals, take part in the application or development of network methods directly to facilitate the hunting down of terrorists or the impairment of their networks. This violates our "contract" with the public as scientists [Note the continuing agony of many members of the "Manhattan Project"]. Further, our work is, and should remain, in the public domain. On the other hand, I would not hesitate to refer vetted counter terrorism experts to publicly available materials, though given modern search techniques, not available in the early 70's, such help should be superfluous. It

would seem in any case that the Washington Post has made a good start in that direction.

As for Phil Bonacich's contribution, I feel it comes close to blaming the victim. Yes, if we don't understand the forces that lead some governments to condone and support terrorism and some people to give up their lives to it, then we can hardly effectively combat terrorism. That does not mean that we ourselves can in any way condone it nor should we justify terrorism in terms of the rationalizations of the down-trodden.

Best,

Charles Kadushin
Distinguished Scholar, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies
Brandeis University

Professor Emeritus, Sociology
Graduate Center, CUNY
212-865-4369

****
From: Barry Wellman <wellman@CHASS.UTORONTO.CA>
Subject: is the washington post the CIA?

Following up on Carter Butts' and Charles Kadushin's eloquent emails, the real question arises in my mind about where to draw the line. Is giving an interview to the Washington Post, undoubtedly read by the CIA, the same thing as helping the CIA? I think it is more akin to Charles' example of publishing something that someone might read and use.

Not a perfect answer, but the one I start with. "'I just send them up. 'Where they come down is somebody else's business' says Werner van Braun" (according to Tom Lehrer's great song in the 1950s).

  Barry

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From: "Jim \"GrimJim\" W Lai" <jwtlai@IO.COM>

Releasing information to the public is a different action than aiding the CIA covertly. It's more a neutral act.

The article may be read by the CIA, but presumably terrorists would also have access to the Washington Post website and attempt to develop countermeasures. For maximal benefit to national security, such research would have been made available to the CIA/NSA et al, but not made public; not giving out the game plan would minimze the chance of countermeasures being

deployed.

To quote William Gibson, "The street finds its own uses for things."

Jim Lai

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From: Steven Sherman <Threehegemons@AOL.COM>
Comments: To: bonacich@soc.ucla.edu

I doubt one should be plagued with guilt about aiding the CIA by offering the sorts of opinions in the Post today. All of the techniques mentioned--assassinating leaders, propping up idiots, building fake networks, disrupting, etc--were employed quite effectively by the US government in the sixties against SDS and the Black Panthers, when Social Network Analysis was in its infancy (they were used even earlier by the 19th century Russian government--some suspect they actually wound up giving impetus to the revolutionary movement in that case). Perhaps if people had included, 'offer support when people you don't necessarilly like beat up on those you really don't like', the list would have been more complete. Of course, that might not seem like such a good idea anymore, since it is in good part how we got into this mess in the first place.

   The role of the social scientist should be to ask some tough questions about what agendas are being set, by whom, for what purposes.... I disagree with the notion that those of us who want to understand the larger context, and may point to structural relations that need to be changed between the US and the MidEast as a region, are somehow blaming the victims. If you want to see the results of 'fighting terrorism' by only building a sophisticated security apparatus, while resisting seriously rethinking one's more profound relations, take a look at contemporary Israel.

Social Network Analysis has much to offer about the present situation. It is something of a truism that when plenty of people are detatched from the stronger networks in society, trouble ensues. This point, made over and over about US cities, also applies to global society. Of course, if one tried to offer insights of this sorts, the calls from Washington Post news reporters will soon stop coming.

respectfully
Steven Sherman
Guilford College

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    Reply-To: Steven Corman <steve.corman@ASU.EDU>
    From: Steven Corman <steve.corman@ASU.EDU>

    We should not actively, as academics and professionals, take part in the application or development of network   methods directly to facilitate the hunting down of   terrorists or the impairment of their networks. This   violates our "contract" with the public as scientists.

    With all due respect to Professor Kadushin and others on this   list who share his views, I

cannot let this argument go   unchallenged. It is at best dangerously myopic to place parochial ideals like our supposed "'contract with the public   as scientists" above the nation's need for assistance in this   matter. How much time will there be for scholarship once we're dying from smallpox epidemics and/or extinguishing our   burning cities and/or cleaning up rubble from car   bombs...and/or whatever else these people have in store for   us? Science does not flourish in conditions of chaos and   anarchy.

     Thanks to Kathleen Carley, Frank Fukuyama, David Ronfeldt,   Karen Stephenson, and all the other network researchers who   are thinking about this problem. We should, as academics and   professionals, follow their example rather than leaving it to   others to take care of our collective problem. If anyone   needs my help, my e-mail is above.

     BTW, I forwarded the Post link to a colleague of mine who was   raised a Quaker, and is still a dedicated pacifist. She told   me how relieved she was that this approach is being considered. She thought a sophisticated attempt to disrupt   their networks is our best hope of effectively fighting   terrorists without killing lots of innocent people. That   might be a good way to interpret our contract with the   public, too.

     SC

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     Steven R. (Steve) Corman
     Associate Professor
     Hugh Downs School of Human Communicaiton
     Arizona State University
     http://www.public.asu.edu/~corman

A couple of thoughts. First, I want to add an observation to one of Carter's points, which I quote:

     Not only is the margin of error in any network analytic study frighteningly   high, but the direct participation of social scientists in such efforts   violates the "prime directive" of non-interference which allows us to do   our work. Is anyone on this list so confident in his or her methods   that he or she would use them to decide who should live and who should die?

Given that a number of people on this list use SNA to help companies make personnel decisions, I'm curious how many people squirmed when they read Carter's challenge. Are we prepared to apply the code of ethics to professors who moonlight as corporate consultants? Still, I wonder if extensive enough contextual background work -- which I hope and pray the consultants among us use before they tamper with organizations -- can make SNA a more reliable tool for

anti-terrorism efforts, given Carter's valid concerns.

Before I continute, I want to make clear that in the comments that follow I am not inviting a debate on the merits of force versus peace seminars as a means of ridding the world of terrorism. If readers oppose cooperation with government agencies due to some personal ethical or ideological position, then so be it. My argument is only with those who want to make an argument that the goals of social science are such that it is wrong for social scientists (as opposed to humans in general) to be involved in issues like national security and anti-terrorism.

With that said, I've thought a while about something else Carter wrote:
Social science is the hard-won heritage of all humanity, and I would not place it at risk in the name of political expediency.

I wonder if this hyperbole doesn't transgress the boundaries of reasoned argument, insofar as I question the premise that the social sciences have much credibility to lose. It seems to me that beyond communities of social scientists themselves, the social sciences aren't held in especially high regard. When we list the great advances of Western civilization, there aren't many 20th century professors of anthropology, sociology, political science, or economics on the list of contributors.

Certainly there are people with social science training who have contributed much to society (and equally many who have wrought horrible destruction, e.g., Mao Tse-Tung, Ho Chi Minh, etc.), but I would argue that they do so as a result of applying the tools -- begun as ideas in the minds of theorists -- to the very real, very messy, sometimes very bloody problems of humanity -- precisely the domain that some academicians eschew as beneath their purity. If social science is to have any meaningful heritage, it will be because it lends itself to the solution of real-world problems, not because it remains above the fray for fear of misuse, or of losing some sacred purity of purpose which is in reality not a public purpose at all, but merely a private pursuit of knowledge, publications, and provincial prestige.

I don't intend any of this to question Carter's concern about the misuse of SNA in a manner that harms the innocent (or more likely, the not directly guilty), which I believe is valid, given what I know of the strengths (and limitations) of SNA. But I think there is more to be gained from applying SNA in ways the Post article mentioned than mere "political expediency." These people will kill again, and some people on this list may have the skills to help stop them. Shame on us if we refrain from helping for fear of losing our academic virginity, or because we are timid, in the seeming safety of our ivory towers, about using force against murderous thugs.

Finally, I want to respond to an assertion by Charles Kadushin:

We should not actively, as academics and professionals, take part in the application or development of network methods directly to facilitate the hunting down of terrorists or the impairment of their networks. This violates our "contract" with the public as scientists [Note the continuing agony of many members of the "Manhattan Project"].

I'm curious about the content of this contract. When we justify five-figure per student subsidies

from taxpayers, we usually do so in the language of our contributions to societal well-being. I'm quite certain that most members of the U.S. public would quickly defund social scientists who refuse to lend their knowledge to the defense of their fellow citizens.

It is indeed a terrible thing to contribute to another person's death -- this I don't dispute. But let's not pretend that through our inaction we can remain innocent of bloodshed. We are guilty, in my opinion, if we withhold knowledge that can stop terrorists.

Respectfully,

Tony Woodlief
Charles Koch Charitable Foundation

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From: Richard Rothenberg <rrothen@EMORY.EDU>

Folks:

A quote from the NY Times, January 1, 1995, when the city of New York was wondering why the crime rate had dropped. The quote refers to the then Police Commissioner Bratten's strategies:
"...But at the core of his strategies is the view that a relatively small number of people commit most crimes, and that they are often loosely affiliated or come in contact with one another buying guns or drugs or selling stolen goods. With aggressive detective work, the theory goes, one arrest should lead to others..."

I agree with the thoughts expressed here that law enforcement and other agencies know a good bit about all of the things that go on in SNA, and would add that they have important things to teach us about what goes on on the ground. Could I dare to say that human relationships are multiplex, and an 'academic researcher' might bear different relationships to different people.
A really minor aside to Dr. Wellman. The exact quote (and the way Lehrer sings it) is :

"Vonce the rrrockets go up, who cares vere they come down.
That's not my department, says Werner von Braun."

But perhaps the more important line is the one the song opens with:

"Gather round while I tell you of Werner von Braun,
A man who's allegiance is ruled by expedience."

That isn't what we're talking about here.

Rich Rothenberg

Richard Rothenberg, MD

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From: Meindert Fennema <fennema@PSCW.UVA.NL>
Organization: Universiteit van Amsterdam

Dear all,

I was, some 25 years ago, appraoched by the New Jersey State Police to give my opinion about a network program they had developed to fight organized crime. I did not respond, for the same reasons that Charles Kadushin gave. By now I may have changed my mind because fighting international terrorism by studying their network seems more effective and less harmful for innocent Arabs that bombing the country that hosts the main suspect. Yet Kadushin's arguments are also valid.

Meindert Fennema
University of Amsterdam

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From: Phil Bonacich <bonacich@SOC.UCLA.EDU>
Comments: To: Charles Kadushin <kadushin@BRANDEIS.EDU>

Dear Charles - Forgive me if I am incorrect, but you appear to believe that the only reason for trying to understand the conditions that give rise to terrorism is to better eradicate it. I would like to suggest another reason - perhaps we can come to understand the important role that we, as the world's only super power, played in generating the mess, and change. For example, we initially supported the very Afghanistan government we are now going to attack.

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From: Geoffrey Williams <geoffreyfw@YAHOO.COM>

Please explain to me how this isn't blaming the victim: It is wrong to try to disrupt and destroy

criminal networks that have killed thousands in cold blood, without warning, without condition, without remorse. At the same time, the RIGHT approach is for the U.S. to change its policies (or at least, look guiltily through them to understand how, by supporting the mujaheddin, we OBVIOUSLY were asking them to kill thousands of our citizens).
Geoffrey Williams

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From: Barry Wellman <wellman@CHASS.UTORONTO.CA>

Folks,

I think it is time to cool the rhetoric down, or else we will wind up calling each other bad names and not thinking straight. There are a lot of good people wrestling with important issues, and we need to talk calmly and without heat.

In our grief and fear, I see four tendencies in some of the discourse on this (and other) lists:

Presentism: The belief that what happened last Tuesday was an even in itself, as compared to a belief that what has happened should be set in historical context.

Parochialism: The belief that what happened was a unique tragedy, as compared to a pointing to other mass murders of civilians in Rwanda, Baghad, Serbia, etc.

Patriotism: The belief that "we" all agree, as compared to the understanding that this is an International Organization in which there may be people with thought and integrity who have differences of opinions.

Actionism: The belief that this is a crisis in which we all must be instantly mobilized for all things, as compared to the feeling that there may be ethical limits about what to do, and who to do it with.

I personally stand on the second "as compared" side of Presentism, Parochialism and Patriotism, and am quite undecided about Actionism.

In case any one cares (are we approaching Loyalty Oath times?), I am a citizen of the US and Canada, and my wife was in NYC and observed the attacks last week. She finally was able to drive home on Thursday (thanks be to Hertz).

  Barry

****
From: Richard M Southwick <rmsouthw@MAILBOX.SYR.EDU>

All,

Barry's point is well taken on the rhetoric. I (and perhaps some of you) witnessed a list devoted to information system issues spiral out of control last week. The administrators were led to close down the list for a time for fear of litigation. It was at once most unfortunate and distressing, and at the same time terribly interesting to behold from a network perspective. Very quickly even the voices of reason became destructive inputs.

As a relative newbie to social network concepts, I was led to wonder about the notion of a listserv as a social network, and perhaps about the network metaphor for social phenomena. The "state" of the (listserv) network had obviously changed, but it seems to me that so had the underlying relation(s) on which it was based. I'm sure that others have dealt with the dynamic nature of social networks and the problems this poses for research?

-- Richard Southwick

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****
From: Gavin Hougham <ghougham@MEDICINE.BSD.UCHICAGO.EDU>
Comments: To: Geoffrey Williams <geoffreyfw@YAHOO.COM>

Geoffrey,

Last night on PBS, Bill Moyers interviewed Robert Jay Lifton, the psychiatrist/social critic. Lifton cautioned us to avoid the simpleminded polarization of the world into black and white. Your facetious commentary below simply falls into the trap that Phil and others are warning against. Phil doesn't "blame" the US in the way you suggest, by the way _I_ read his comment.

The world ain't so black and white.... our outrage, frustration, sadness, and sense of betrayal and violation notwithstanding. Analysis won't be as simple as you make it out to be; any solutions based on anything other than very long term strategic thinking will possibly reproduce the very environments (conditions, if you will) that have spawned the awful tragedy of last Tuesday. We all grieve together over the loss of life, and perhaps even more so, over the loss of our adolescent ontologies.

Gavin Hougham
Univ of Chicago

****
From: Alessandro Usai <alessandro.usai@UNI-BOCCONI.IT>

I know that in moments like this emotional feelings count more than rational analysis. In Italy we are all close to our relatives, friends, colleagues, and to all the innocent people involved in this immense tragedy, like maybe never happened before.

However, let me try to bring the debate back to the search for explanations, which constitute our main ojective as social scientists.

In order to have more information about the social, structural and political context in which the tragic events are embedded let me suggest you a "special" reference, a book from one of the more prominent ABC reporters, J.K. Cooley, published in 1999 and titled "Unholy wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism" (Pluto Press Ltd., London).

It's also an instructive "network story", supported by extensive and documented "data", which is not blaming anyone but it may help us better understand what's going on today and maybe learn something for tomorrow.