



Da Vinci's Horse: Perspectives on Decision Making in Crisis

Part 4 – Resilient Communities

A story to begin

Stories inform, enlighten and entertain us. Official governmental investigation and reports like the 911 Commission and all scientific research supply data, results of analysis, conclusions and recommendation. What they don't provide is the richness of the people and the events. Dr. Gary Klein (previous PWH featured author on recognition Primed Decision Making) notes that "the limitation of a story, which makes it non scientific, is that no one has controlled the conditions...We have lost precision - the ability to trace each factor - in order to gain richness - the full set of interacting conditions. For most purposes the trade-off is worthwhile." The best stories for me are those which provide unique, unusual or unexpected perspective. Since Project White Horse 084640 intends to offer perspective on decision making in crisis, this segment of DaVinci's Horse begins with a story – one about my home state of Tennessee – where resiliency was a key factor in the evolution of a young United States.

It was certainly serendipitous and probably not even noted that a recent conference focused on state building at Austin Peay University, in the northern part of Middle Tennessee, near the Red River, not far from Fort Campbell, Kentucky - home to many of the soldiers involved in the effort to build a functioning legitimate state in Iraq - occurred in an area with unique and interesting historical parallels to the current efforts to create stabilized states in the face of an uncertain emerging century.

In the late seventeenth hundreds, a significant number of the early American colonists, still found their lives overly constrained and despite British military resistance began to migrate across the Appalachian Mountains into Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee. These mostly Scots-Irish, pay as little allegiance to any government as possible, frontier families, negotiated for land – Indian hunting grounds - in the middle of the future state with Cherokee Indians in eastern Tennessee. But despite the signing of a peace treaty as early as 1777, renegade groups of Creeks and Cherokees resenting past concessions, broken treaties and further encroachment on their hunting grounds formed a coalition known as the "Chickamauga Nation," with intent to reclaim their hunting grounds throughout the Cumberland Valley.

On April 2, 1781 in the “Battle of the Bluffs,” a force of Chickamaugans attacked Fort Nashborough on the bluffs overlooking the Cumberland River - on the site later to be the city of Nashville. Though the settlers barely made it into the fort, the attack eventually was thwarted. For the next decade, Chickamaugans continued a reign of terror of brutal and relentless attacks, raiding settlements along the Red River - north of Nashville. During this time, the Middle Tennesseans defended themselves and preserved their communities without assistance from their parent state-North Carolina.

The westerners' two main demands—protection from the Indians and the right to navigate the Mississippi River—went mainly unheeded. North Carolina’s insensitivity led frustrated East Tennesseans in 1784 to form a breakaway State of Franklin. At the same time, leaders of the Cumberland settlements made overtures for an alliance with Spain, which controlled the lower Mississippi River and was held responsible for inciting the Indian raids. In drawing up the Watauga and Cumberland Compacts, these early Tennesseans exercised some of the rights and responsibilities of self-government and were prepared to take political matters into their own hands.

Such stirrings of independence finally caught the attention of North Carolina, which then quietly began to reassert control over its western counties. When North Carolina finally ratified the Constitution of the United States in 1789, it took the opportunity to lessen the burden presented by the troublesome Tennesseans and ceded its western lands to the Federal government, making Tennessee the Southwest Territory. Beyond the original thirteen, the first two states to enter the Union – Vermont and Kentucky – had been parts of Massachusetts and Virginia. So when Tennessee petitioned to become a state there were no set procedures for considerations of a territory. The Indian fighters of Tennessee put together a constitution declared by Thomas Jefferson the least imperfect and most republican system of government which had been adopted by any of the American states. President George Washington signed the bill admitting Tennessee -the first member erected out of a territory of the United States - on June 1, 1796. The process for an Atlantic to Pacific westward expansion had a model.

It is doubtful that these first Tennesseans worried much about frightening their children when instructing them on how to react when a Chickamauga coalition



raid threatened. They were unsupported by their parent state – no cavalry riding to the rescue, none expected. They were not specialists; indeed, they were in part farmers, blacksmiths, hunters, teachers, preachers, mothers, fathers, children, soldiers, medics, negotiators, and eventually politicians.

These mostly Scots-Irish frontiersmen had proven indeed, that they were a resilient community, and they were now the sixteenth state of these United States.

Introduction to the Project White Horse 084640 Resilient Community Initiative for 2008

The entry page for Project White Horse Fall Edition depicted the technology, events and people of the 20th century, contrasted with people and crisis events of the emerging 21st century, all overlaid with the comment “how you think about the future determines what you do in the future.” The current entry page expands the thought to inquiring about the result if experience or education is unmatched or unsuited to the problem at hand. The first implication for this century is that we might be better off (no matter your political leaning) reflecting on John Kennedy’s “*And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your*



country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.”

The second implication is that the problems will be ever changing, sometimes beyond our immediate comprehension. The solution will be a process, an attitude, and a will to be resilient. For 2008, Project White Horse 084640 will explore thinking about that future in context of the idea of a **resilient community**, whether that “community” be a university, a city, a state, or a nation.

The decision (and investigation since Fall '07) to focus for some period on the idea of resilience derives directly from the PWH focus on time critical decision making in crisis – particularly worst case scenarios. By using analysis concepts more focused on process than event (as addressed in Christophe Roux-Dufort’s featured article), when looking at a Katrina-like or Virginia Tech type events, it stands out clearly that no matter how well local first responders act or how quickly national assistance arrives, worst cases create situations that simply can’t be mitigated completely by “those officially responsible - leaders and

troops alike.” Citizens must be prepared and heavily involved in their own survival and recovery. The more prepared the citizen, the less required by responders for individual support with more focus and effectiveness on dealing with the larger community needs. The more ready the citizen, the more likely the survival and recovery when a major disaster severely diminishes or isolates the ranks of the professional first responder.

What featured authors have said

Resiliency has been a major point of emphasis and discussed repeatedly by the authors featured and referenced on PWH.

From Americans at Risk by Dr. Irwin Redlener:

Concern about the potential for future disasters, does not seem to translate into enhanced preparedness planning, Americans hover somewhere in the middle, between contemplation and preparation...surprised at every new challenge, even those we've been warned of repeatedly... We expect government to take care of business by strengthening what is fragile or not secure and by responding when called. But mostly we hope against hope

that calamity isn't around the corner. (As a result) America is failing one of the most important tests of national capability and resolve we have ever faced.

RAND terrorism expert, Brian Michael Jenkins in Unconquerable Nation, notes that despite some significant investigation on impending threats, alarms did not lead to the threat being taken seriously enough before 9/11. The 9/11 Commission subsequently blamed intelligence for a “failure of imagination.” Not to be allowed again, our thinking vaulted to the edges – the line began to blur between hypotheticals and pure fiction. He states:

there is nothing wrong with being afraid, but we have spent the past five (now almost seven) scaring hell out of our selves... We need to spend the next several years doing things differently. We need to increase preparedness by educating and mobilizing all Americans to participate in homeland security. (Indeed) the best way to increase our ability as a nation to respond to disasters, natural and man-made, is to enlist all citizens through education and engagement, which also happens to be a very good way to reduce the persistent anxieties that afflict us. We have not done this.

*(But) such a strategy would attack the terror, not just the terrorists.
(emphasis added)...*

We must avoid lurching from one nightmare scenario to another and instead formulate broad security strategies that estimate comparative risks and set priorities...The concept of security must be broadened from deterrence and prevention to include effective response procedures to mitigate casualties and ensure rapid recovery...Finally, the American people themselves need to become more sophisticated about security... We cannot expect a risk free society.

In Brave New War, John Robb discusses rethinking security noting

that security within the twenty-first century will require a new balance between wealth creation and safety. Traditionally, that meant balancing the protection afforded by the state with personal freedoms. It's different today. The balance is increasingly between preserving the benefits of global interconnectivity and insulating against the myriad threats that can strike at us through those same connections...(The) threats are made worse

because of the power afforded by rampant global interconnectivity... (and) to build a solution, we need to start with the assumption that we don't know what the next threat will be.

Robb states that Hurricane Katrina was a perfect opportunity to demonstrate that we had learned from 9/11 about how to quickly implement efforts that could mitigate the impact of unexpected events, but we failed in a management and coordination fiasco. To make matters worse the after-action reports focused almost exclusively on the sort of hindsight biases seen in post-9/11 reports. They were full of blame and condemnation, not focused on ways to build a more responsive system. He concludes the Rethinking Security Chapter with

Because we are unable to decapitate, outsmart, or defend ourselves against global guerillas, naturally occurring events, and residual nationalism from causing cascades of failure throughout the global system, we need to learn to live with the threat they represent... (meaning) the adoption of a philosophy of resilience that ensures that when these events do occur (and they will), we can more easily survive their impact. By building resilience into the fabric of our daily life, our response to these threats will

organically emerge in what seems like an effortless way. Without them, we will suffer the effects of dynamic shocks on a brittle system.

Discussion

We have to accept that the world has changed and as Sun Tzu wrote in the 5th Century B.C., we must know the enemy and ourselves. Evidence indicates we have done little of either. We must display that same resilience of our frontier fathers. While they faced a rugged wilderness and Native Americans fighting to preserve a way of life centuries old, we must deal with the both the positive and negative aspects of:

- 1) Information Technology (vs. hackers)
- 2) Globalization (vs. dependence on a world outside our control)
- 3) Mother Nature –building and living where we choose – climate, features, jobs (vs. earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, wild fires)
- 4) Military/defense strengths (vs. Asymmetric/Non-State warfare intended to marginalize technology and proven state-on-state doctrine and organization)

In addition to the problems presented by these individual elements, the impact of their combined effect creates in addition, a problem set unto itself. This would seem to call for need for enlightened research and approach, re-orientation, indeed new learning at all levels - public to responder to leadership.

Research, to be meaningful must be bounded and results must be mirrored against metrics. The PWH investigation of decision making is specifically bounded by first, concern for worst case disasters in which actions acceptable in emergency events of less magnitude probably are only the entry level in providing solutions; second, recognition of time as a major aspect – not necessarily speed but actions in sync with impending requirements; and third, recognition of the multi-jurisdictional, diverse levels and types of knowledge and experience required, all embedded in the need for “teams of leaders” able to command control – to lead – seamlessly (no small task, but none the less imperative).

So how to define the boundary conditions for research into the concept of a “resilient community?” We certainly should acknowledge the accepted definition of the active adjective –resilient. From the dictionary:

1. Springing back; rebounding
2. Returning to the original form or position after being bent, compressed, or stretched
3. Recovering readily from illness, depression, adversity, or loss; buoyant

Beyond that, I am reluctant to stretch the definition into absolute terms or qualities applied to the desired end state for a community, other than one that reflects planning, ability to thrive through ups and downs, and is prepared to and manifests the capabilities of survival and recovery if situation calls. Rather, the initiative throughout 2008 will be intended to develop, evolve, and offer the characteristics that would make a community resilient.

This edition, as a beginning, provides six very different contexts, all related to security and safety, with only one with stated focus on resiliency- and that not on disaster recovery, but on creating bounce-back environments for children from troubled environments. As always, Project White Horse endeavors to offer perspective from seemingly non-connected elements. This approach, mentioned

in previous writings, is a spin from Frans Johansson's *The Medici Effect; What Elephants and Epidemics Can Teach Us About Innovation*.

Here it is probably worthwhile to provide some aspects of Johansson's thinking.

He describes a place where different cultures, domains, and disciplines stream together toward a single point. They connect, allowing for established concepts to clash and combine, ultimately forming a multitude of new, groundbreaking ideas. This place where fields meet, is what I call the Intersection. And the explosion of remarkable innovations that you find there is what I call the Medici Effect...from a remarkable burst of creativity in fifteenth-century Italy.

To achieve the Medici Effect, Johansson reflects that is mandatory to break down the barriers presented by the *associative* process – efficient process that the brain uses to allow us to move quickly from analysis to action – but with a cost – inhibition of our ability to think broadly and therefore inhibiting creativity. To exploit Intersections – be creative – we must make unusual

associations through divergent thinking. He states that those who break associative barriers do one or more of the following:

1. Exposed themselves to a range of cultures
2. Learned differently (innovators are often self-taught)
3. Reversed their assumptions (what would it take to make the opposite true or occur)
4. Took on multiple perspectives (Leonardo da Vinci's "three perspective philosophy")

And so, as we progress, varied perspectives from uncommon fields will be investigated, discussed and offered, all with intent not only to bound the idea of resilient communities but also to find, learn, and evolve "intersections." I surmise that for resilience to exist, those intersections must be actively populated simultaneously by leaders, first responders, and engaged and enlightened citizens, all with a common mission of individual and community survival, prosperity and well being.

Final Thoughts

As “homework,” I highly recommend following the link in the PWH Forum post RC#9. Some aspect or articles about John Boyd, the OODA Loop, and Boyd’s larger body of work have populated every edition of this website, since this monumental work is at the very core of what this site is about. The link will take you to a Power Point presentation given by Dr. Chet Richards at his recent Adaptive Leadership Conference. If you’re familiar with the OODA Loop, skip to slide #36 – *What type of organizations operate at rapid OODA Loop tempos?* Dr. Richards closes with emphasis – a common outlook made up of *doctrine, values, teamwork focused on mission*. As you read the excellent work of the current featured authors, I suggest that in their own way, each is sending a similar message. In particular, are not the elements of Nan Henderson’s “resiliency wheel” the other side of the same coin?

In addition, I highly recommend on the broadest basis [The Medici Effect](#) by Frans Johansson, and if you have not read the referenced books, I highly recommend at least a focused reading as follows:

1. **Americans at Risk: Why We Are Not Prepared for Megadisasters and What We Can Do Now** by Irwin Redlener – Chapter 13; *Rational preparedness for an Uncertain Future: A Nine Point Plan*
2. **Unconquerable Nation: Knowing Our Enemy, Strengthening Ourselves** by Brian Michael Jenkins – Chapter five; *A Durable Shield: Strategies for Strengthening Ourselves*
3. **Brave New War: The Next Stage of Terrorism and the End of Globalization** by John Robb – Chapter 8; *Rethinking Security*

This fourth part of DaVinci's Horse began with a story and so will end in a similar fashion. **East of Eden** (1952) by John Steinbeck tells the stories of three generations of two families, focusing on the theme of good against evil and making prominent use of the biblical story of Cain and Abel, in which Cain murders his brother out of jealousy after God rejects his gift but then accepts Abel's. In the novel, Steinbeck ascribes great significance to the translation of the Hebrew word *timshel* ("thou mayest" or "thou will") over come sin or evil. He believes it demonstrates that humans have free will and can triumph over sin if they choose to do so, but victory is not guaranteed.



In light of recent election year comments on the foundation of the United States, consider the George W. Cecil quote:

On the Plains of Hesitation, bleach the bones of countless millions who, at the Dawn of Victory, sat down to wait, and waiting died.

I submit to you that those frontiersmen who defied Great Britain at risk of everything dear in fathering this nation, recognized full well that they were not guaranteeing anything, knew that what they had crafted was inherently flawed, and realized that what they had accomplished was to place a new nation at the *dawn of victory* – not for a year or a decade or a century but for as long as the people of the nation could reproduce the resiliency - spirit, blood, and treasure - of 1776. Thou mayest.

The story continues

qEB

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