

***Migrazioni. Dal conflitto e  
dall'odio alla cura e alla  
speranza. Prospettive  
psicologiche sul benessere e le  
comunità.***

Naples Conference, 4-5-6 October 2019

***Migrations. From Conflict and  
Hate to Healing and Hope.  
Psychological Perspectives on  
Community and Wellness.***

# **Insecurity, distrust and malaise in the era of Extreme Terrorism**

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# A psychological explosion (1)

- The post-modern era is familiar with the “explosion” of **“Extreme Terrorism”**.
- The focus of the contemporary “terror & terrorism” emphasizes the **psychological perspective**: extreme negative **emotions** (fear raised to the nth power, hate, trauma, etc.) are involved in both attack situations and everyday life.

# A psychological explosion (2)

See a wide range of authors:

*Baudrillard, Bauman, Greenberg,  
Pyszczynski, Solomon, Thackrah,  
Bongar, Brown, Beutler, Breckenridge,  
Zimbardo, Merari, Pedahzur, De Masi,  
Klain, Schmid, Horgan, De Angelis,  
Peirone, Lazzarini, Bollani, Rota, Silke,  
and many others.*

# Aggressività e violenza

Fenomeni e dinamiche  
di un'epoca spaventata

a cura di Guido Lazzarini,  
Luigi Bollani, Francesca Silvia Rota

Prefazione di Maria Giuseppina Lucia

Presentazione di Alberto Riccadonna



**Innovation  
Creativity Setting**



**FrancoAngeli**

In particular, we have the basic definition formulated by Philip George Zimbardo (2004):

**“Terrorism rotates around a thing: psychology.  
It is the psychology of fear”**

*Therefore:*

**Fear, extreme fear, terror.**

*From the etymological root:*

**Terrorism Terror.**

**Terror is an emotion.**

**All is tragically psychological.**

**All is both real and symbolic, as 9/11, “the absolute event, the pure event” (Baudrillard, 2002).**

**The absolute terrorism, the Extreme Terrorism.**

- Zimbardo, Ph. G. (2001a, September). Faceless terrorism as creative Evil or opposing terrorism by understanding the human capacity for Evil. *First publication on Zimbardo's Website.* [www.cyberpsych.org](http://www.cyberpsych.org) 2002.
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## Why is it correct to use the concept “extreme”? There are many reasons. (1)

- The model adopted by this specific Evil is “an asymmetrical war”.
- **Victim is totally exposed**: anyone is attackable, from any aggressor, in any space, at any time, in any way.
- Attack is unpredictable.
- “Zero Risk” does not exist.
- **Aggressor puts himself as Victim**: the key-words are suicide, sacrifice, martyrdom.

## Why is it correct to use the concept “extreme”? There are many reasons. (2)

- With the para/pseudo-religious **fundamentalism** there is the triumph of some psycho-cultural constructions (and related irreducible beliefs):
  - **Myth**
  - **Symbolic Act**
  - **Infinity**
  - **Absolute**
  - **Divine Perfection**
  - **Sacred Violence** (Girard, 1972)

## Why is it correct to use the concept “extreme”? There are many reasons. (3)

- Therefore, we have no limit terror and no limit terrorism, no territorial border and no psychological end.
- The post-modern terrorism is a “gaseous” (and not only “liquid”) phenomenon, in a gaseous (and not only “liquid”) society: it is “hyper”-terrorism.

# A CONCEPTUAL AND SEMANTIC SPECIFICATION

- Zygmunt Bauman speaks about “post-modern society”, “liquid modernity)” (2000) and “liquid fear” (2006).
- It is correct... *it was correct*, but now (after 9/11... and some years before...) we need innovative concepts:
- “hyper-modern society”, “gaseous society”, “gaseous fear”, “gaseous/hyper/extreme terrorism”.

# The 21st Century Terrorism

Recent exasperated developments justify the adoption of the concept “gaseous terrorism”, describing a phenomenon more impalpable than “liquid terrorism”.

- **“elusive” system of information & communication**
  - **powerful “virtual reality”**
  - **individual fragmentation**
    - **self-radicalization**
    - **lone wolves**

There is an authentic hyper/extreme terrorism, in every sense “Mortifero”.

# **THE NEW TERRORISM**

- **Extreme**
- **Suicidal**
- **“Individualized”**

(Peirone, 2017a, 2017b & 2017c)

# The triumph of Evil

- The hyper-terrorism, the extreme terrorism, this particular human condition, this difficult psychological experience produces highly problematic outcomes: *insecurity, distrust and malaise.*

# **VICTIMS (real and potential) SUFFER FROM:**

- **Insecurity:** feeling of inadequacy, inability to cope, lack of self-confidence, uncertainty, anxiety.
- **Distrust / Mistrust:** lack of confidence in worth, truth, value.
- **Malaise:** slight feeling of illness, discomfort and uneasiness.

# ANXIETY, DISTRESS, BURNOUT...

- The real terroristic assault and the subtle and corrosive situation (the ever present risk: “waiting for always possible attacks...”) are both dangerous. From the Victim’s point of view there are many problematic perceptions (explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious): **a “terror feeling” is always hanging over everybody.**

**NO HOPE, NO FUTURE,  
ONLY A PRESENT  
WITHOUT PSYCHOLOGICAL EQUILIBRIUM**

- The new terrorism (“blind”, suicidal and unpredictable) produces many negative outcomes for all: terrorists and victims (both real and potential).
- Aggressiveness and aggression, high level of stress and trouble, impatience and indifference, grudge and hate, rage and anger, envy and revenge, intolerance and violence (material and/or immaterial), shock and PTSD, fragile personality.

# AND NOW?

- What can we do?
- How to manage fear, distress, anxiety, rage, aggressiveness, hate, anger, violence, pain, shock, mental confusion, low level of self-esteem, identity crisis, personality de-structuring, neurotic and psychotic syndromes, etc.?
- How to recover **security, trust and wellbeing?**

# BIG PROBLEM, WIDE INTERVENTIONS

- “Extreme Terrorism” is a complex problem, but - with a moderate optimism - psychological sciences are able for focusing and implementing “community policies” based on coping, resilience, empowerment.

# THINKING & DOING

- A psycho-socio-cultural approach can work for a practical intervention and a “counternarrative” project, mainly based on the following aims and skills:
- *understanding, awareness, hope, reassurance, trust, courage, mental support and protection, making cure, taking care, “health”.*

# **SOCIETY & COMMUNITY INTERDISCIPLINARITY & MULTIDISCIPLINARITY**

## *Some areas of action-research*

- Health & wellbeing using positive psychology (Seligman e Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Delle Fave, 2006 e 2007; Bertini, 2012)
- Working on/with community by the sense of belonging (Arcidiacono & Di Napoli, 2008a & 2008b)
- Growing up with hope against anxiety and fear (Scioli & Biller, 2009)
- Sociology, political analysis and practical intervention (Silke, 2018)
- Knowledge & trust vs insecurity & malaise (Peirone, 2017a)

# **AN EXAMPLE OF SOCIAL POLICY FOR HELPING PEOPLE AND MAKING COUNTERTERRORISM**

(Peirone, 2017a)

- **Institution:** OPP (Ordine degli Psicologi del Piemonte / Piedmont Association of Psychologists)
- **Project:** a scientific and cultural policy with a strong social impact
- **Method and goal:** the double message “To understand is the first step to act” & “Good against Evil”
- **Actors:** a task force of experts (ten months of working)
- **Product:** one book (16 contributions, 15 authors, 212 printed pages)
- **No profit action**
- **Diffusion and promotion of printed and electronic versions**
- **No limit for the eBook version (free of charge)**
- **File distributed via eMail to thousands addressees**
- **Invitation to readers for a “*fall out effect*” with a large further dissemination**
- **eBook free download:**

**<http://ebook.ordinepsicologi.piemonte.it>**

# LA VITA AI TEMPI DEL TERRORISMO

Psicologia e fiducia per gestire  
la paura e fronteggiare il Male

a cura di Luciano Peirone

Prefazione di Gian Carlo Caselli

Presentazione di Alessandro Lombardo

Introduzione di Andrea Margelletti  
e Luciano Peirone

Postfazione di Igor Graziato

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Many thanks for  
your kind  
attention!

