IN THE MIND OF THE TERRORIST:
DEVIANCE HYPOTHESES

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What's on your mind when you crash a plane into a building? Who wears a belt of explosives and commits suicide in a crowded market? Who smiles after a verdict of conviction for an attack?

If we try to find a logic and a meaning to these absurd or extreme behaviors, we are led to identify or hypothesize it in madness and deviance, in the awareness that our perceptions are often conditioned by the drama of the event, since in this phase we become victims of what in psychology is called *attribution error*. A very common phenomenon, which represents the way in which we sometimes tend to explain the behavior of others by referring to dispositional characteristics (while we attribute situational characteristics to our behaviors), a significant bias, which can affect our understanding of the terrorist in different ways.

"They must be mad", or "They must be sick", this is what we generally say, to a greater or lesser extent, when we are faced with the need or contingency to make sense of those dramatic events that are the attacks, and the violent behaviour of those responsible. And what are these phrases, if not judgments of "abnormality"?

In psychological terms, abnormal behavior is often consistent with the presence of a psychological disorder or discomfort, a debilitating or deviant pathology that negatively affects the well-being of the affected person. Associating the terrorist's behavior with a psychopathology, as is evident, seems plausible, rather reassuring, if not reasonable. Not only for ordinary people, but also for researchers or those who are preparing to study "who is", or rather, "what the terrorist does".

But who is a psychopath?

According to a basic definition, given in diagnostic manuals, it is a person who is prone to deviant behavior and to perform aggressive acts towards others, to hide emotions as well as his or her identity, with a deficit of empathy and remorse.

By comparison, the terrorist carries out violent actions of his own volition, causing the suffering and death of the victims; suffering and death that he himself minimizes or neutralizes. In addition, he often justifies his behavior with necessity, disclaiming any responsibility behind the randomness of the victims. The fault lies with the enemy, with the State, with the Society, which he normally judges, rejects or disowns.

According to a first comparison, therefore, the presence of a pathological disorder in people who engage in terrifying behavior at any level would seem logical and reasonable. And it seemed that way for most scholars in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In fact, in 1981, on the basis of a major review of studies on terrorism, which involved Corrado (1981), Cooper (1976) and Kellen (1982), among many experts on the subject, it was concluded that psychopathy is a relevant trait of the terrorist personality.

In truth, despite some exceptions, this thesis is rather limited because there is little evidence to support it.

First of all, it is rare or difficult to find systematically and with certainty that the personal and social lives of terrorists have been marked by trauma and psychological suffering. From some biographies emerges the description of "[...] a hard and lonely life" (Cooper, 1976, p. 232), a life in which "[...] you have to set the right rules and have an iron discipline" (Orsini, 2009/2001, p. 56) if you want to implement what is required of you. This suggests a certain rationality and methodicality, and not madness or deviance.

It is no coincidence that the data deduced from the biographies of terrorists are reflected in the characteristics sought by recruiters: strong motivation, commitment, discipline, reliability, concentration on the target and stress management, even in the event of possible capture or imprisonment. All qualities in contrast to the pathological self-centeredness common in asocial disorders. Considering the characteristics required by a terrorist movement from its members to carry out certain actions, Cooper (1976, p.229-239), in one of the first psychological descriptions of the figure of the terrorist, had suggested that "the true terrorist is devoid of mercy because he possesses blind faith in his own beliefs or retreats into a comforting individual madness"; and that, moreover, in order to bear the consequences of one's actions, one must have "an isolated conscience or a certain detachment from reality."

Another important point, which contrasts with the hypothesis of the terrorist's abnormality, is the choice of the victim. The nature and

characteristics of the terrorist's victims diverge completely from those of a psychopath: the former, completely random and decidedly symbolic; the latter, defined and supported by elaborate personal fantasies. Moreover, while the actions of a psychopath may depend on a particular victim, the terrorist who uses explosives always keeps a certain distance from the deaths and injuries he causes (Taylor, 1988).

In general, as Cooper (1976) has pointed out, there are very few terrorists who are able to maintain a detachment from actions, or those who find satisfaction in causing pain. In fact, as Kellen (1982) has shown, some of them sometimes have remorse for the acts they have done and the harm they have caused.

This is a significant fact because the idea of the terrorist as an abnormal and detached person can lead to ignoring the process of preparation to which he is subjected in order to become insensitive and inhuman, and therefore capable of performing certain acts and to feel more connected and involved and, therefore, adherent to the cause.

Interestingly, Heskin (1984) looks at the issue from another point of view, looking at both the use of the label "psychopath", which is essentially incoherent and derogatory, and that of "terrorist". Just as we are incapable of technically and effectively distinguishing a terrorist from a revolutionary, we similarly judge a person who performs insane and atrocious acts as a psychopath. And, unfortunately, in some cases, this inconsistent and prejudicial use has led, in the context of research on terrorists, to formulate a diagnosis of psychopathy even in the absence of a clinical diagnosis. By the way, Horgan (2015, p.45) cites the case of Kellen who endorsed the thesis of psychopathy in the case of Carlos the Jackal on the basis of this "[...] that the terrorist thinks, says about himself and about the exploits he boasts in his interviews", while Silke (1998) reports the case of Pearce who made a diagnosis of psychopathy because the terrorist had tattoos on his torso.

If one had the opportunity and willingness to interrogate and examine terrorists in clinical settings, as Horgan repeatedly emphasizes and maintains, evidence could be obtained to support the attribution of certain pathological disorders to at least a portion of "abnormal" individuals. This thesis seems plausible if we consider the cases in which subjects of a violent and aggressive nature have been recruited for criminal activities in general. But as mentioned, they are exceptions.

Therefore, despite the attraction of this subject, terrorist organizations should not be regarded either as exclusively psychopathic groups of people, given the atrocity of their actions, or as groups of recruiters of psychopathic people.

But what about the behaviors associated with psychopathy, can we speak of a terrorist personality?

Many researchers have devoted their energy and time to studying the possible similarities between the dominant characteristics of terrorist behavior and the specific traits of certain personality types, in order to identify valid correspondences to formulate a theory of the personality of the terrorist. Proceeding in this direction, several studies support the general thesis according to which the terrorist and criminal subject is certainly psychologically different from the "normal" or "balanced" subject. This does not mean admitting that he has disorders or pathologies, but claiming that he has a specific personality type or sub-type.

This trend of research developed in particular from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, in the wake of the deterministic positivism that characterized criminological and forensic studies in the previous century: a methodological approach that suggests evaluating influences external to free will, analyzing biological, sociological and psychological factors. i.e. genetics, environment and personality of the "abnormal" or "deviant" individual.

In particular, the positivist approach characterized one of the largest studies on terrorists commissioned by the Minister of the Interior of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1981, conducted by a team of experts including Bayer-Katte, Claessens, Feger and Neidhart. (Bayer-Katte et al., 1982); This study was reviewed later by the most authoritative researchers of those years, such as Taylor and Crenshaw.

Analyzing a large sample of 227 German terrorists, the commissioned researchers identified two types of terrorist leader personalities: one, extremely extroverted, "characterized by unstable, uninhibited, reckless, self-centered, and emotionless behavior" (Taylor, 1988, p. 145); one, extremely hostile, "characterized by intolerant, suspicious, aggressive and defensive behavior" (Taylor, 1988, p. 145).

Crenshaw (1986), taking up and reanalyzing the results of the research, highlighted the salient features of the theses elaborated, hinting at the analyses and hypotheses of Bollinger and Jager. While the former had found, among the interviewees, a certain attraction to violence and had identified its motivations in unconscious aggressive tendencies, often

rooted in paternal conflicts had at a young age, or in the identification of violent acts committed by father figures, or even in identification with an aggressor, the latter had not found a common pattern in violent attitudes, neither of attraction, nor of ambivalence. On the contrary, the terrorists interviewed had shown a strong aversion to aggression: they were aware of the need to justify their behavior and had a sense of limit. It is significant to note the lack of consensus among the researchers of the same group and the fact that, despite the variety of results, detailed analyses of each case revealed that the community life of the German terrorists was completely homogeneous.

Although some of the theses that emerged from the German research have their own strength and substance, it was the methodological problems found that reduced them altogether: the researchers actually interviewed suspected terrorists, who sometimes refused to attend the interviews because the study was commissioned by the state. Not only that, researchers struggled to get practical and operational collaboration from local government administrations. Finally, because the interviews were not confidential communications, the scholars risked being sued as a source of evidence (Crenshaw, 1986).

In 1992, Friedland elaborated a synthesis of the theses on the abnormality and deviance of those who adhere to terrorism, including the hypothesis of Gustav Morf (1970) "on the repudiation of the figure and values of the father" which leads to a hatred of forms of authority; and Berger's about the sense of accomplishment and power that comes from absolute dedication, commitment, sacrifice, and inflicting pain and death (Friedland, 1982). Finally, he came to question the correctness and reliability of the aforementioned theories and, in general, of those of a positivist nature. As Friedland (1982, pp. 81-83) points out, the judgment of validity can be made both a priori and on experience: "some theories, [such as] Berger's, follow circular reasoning. Moreover, most of them are based on one and only main proposition, and their predictive power is reduced. For example, many, at a certain age, reject the values of their fathers but only very few adhere to terrorism. [Whereas], as far as the empirical basis is concerned, so far there is no firm evidence that terrorists are abnormal, diseased, or with a certain type of personality."

At the beginning of the 1990s, in fact, theories about the presence of a psychological abnormality in the person of the terrorist lost popularity, while three qualities or psychological characteristics of the terrorist, taken

as a specific and single individual, which had dominated the academic literature for years, were reconsidered.

Three characteristics that highlight three processes: 1) frustration-aggression; 2) narcissism-aggression; 3) psychodynamic factors.

Frustration-aggression

In an attempt to initiate research on the factors that determine adherence to a movement that aims at political change, and on the "how" and "why" such a movement resorts to violence, some scholars have analyzed minority groups active in contexts of social conflict, taking into consideration the *hypothesis of frustration-aggression* as determining the turn towards political violence.

The Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis (FAH), originally developed by Leonard Berkowitz (1965), provides an aggressive and violent response to the observed impossibility of pursuing and achieving a personal or social goal. This impossibility, experienced as denial, can trigger a "fight or flight" response (physical or psychological), or an aggressive and defensive response, or none of these (ignoring the problem or minimizing its importance by means of the cognitive *dissonance mechanism*).

Several authors have chosen and adapted the FAH process to the motivation for involvement in terrorism. In particular, Tittmar (1992) considered it a plausible explanation for the personal turn towards political violence, especially by those who are less well-off or more disadvantaged by the limited and frustrating conditions of society.

On the other hand, Kampf (1990) has evaluated the close but opposite hypothesis, considering the particular attraction that violence and terrorism exert on young intellectuals and the well-to-do, stimulating the impulse to change a social context that feeds exclusion and frustration. But these could be exceptions that would lead to an evaluation of internal motivations, expanding the boundaries of analysis and interpretation in an uncritical and improper way.

In conclusion, if we want to evaluate and understand the reason that pushes a person to join a terrorist group and, then, to carry out a violent act, the frustration-aggressiveness hypothesis, both for the category of the "have-nots and the disadvantaged", and for that of the "have-nots and intellectuals" turns out to be of little validity and conviction.

Narcissism- Aggression

Among the first to suggest the narcissism-aggression hypothesis as a motive for adherence to violence*, are two of the members of the study financed by the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1980s: Sullwold, who identifies the traits of narcissism* among the subjects of the sample interviewed, and Bollinger who, deepening his colleague's initial results, confirms a certain similarity between the psychological dynamics observed in terrorists and those found in terrorists. borderline subjects with narcissistic personality.

These theories have been taken up and expanded by other authors in the following decade, starting with Crenshaw (1986) who deepens Sullwold's work and identifies in subjects with narcissistic personality and behavior a certain indifference to the negative consequences of their actions, as well as a certain tolerance to high levels of stress; to arrive at Post (1987) who reports Bollinger's results in several publications and, Specifically, the detection in the interviewed terrorists of the phenomenon of *splitting*, "a peculiar characteristic of subjects suffering from borderline personality disorder with narcissistic traits [...]" (Post, 1987, p. 308).

In the 1990s, it was Richard Pearlstein's (1991) turn to narcissism as a motivating factor for the turn to political violence. The author, in reiterating the thesis, specifies what is meant by "narcissism" and how it can relate to states of aggression. He writes: "Narcissism can be considered first and foremost as a set of psychoanalytic behavioral orientations, impulses, or patterns that are entirely and strongly linked to the ego rather than to the object. Narcissism can also be considered as a way of relating to the outside world and to the objective world and strongly dependent on the ability of the external world to provide the subject with sufficient reinforcement of the ego as well as adequate satisfaction [...]. Narcissism, moreover, should be defined as an internal and intrapsychic regulatory tool that enables the individual to defend himself against suffering and evil" (Pearlstein, 1991, p. 7).

That said, the scholar lists fifteen references to narcissism to explain the choice of terrorism by some individuals with certain traits, while admitting that these are data containing "summary suggestions to this interrelationship" (Pearlstein, 1991, p.28). Finally, he concludes that "in 90% of cases of political terrorists, narcissistic wound or narcissistic delusion plays a crucial psychographic role" (Pearlstein, 1991, p. 7). This,

however, basing his analysis on studies that report the presence of narcissistic traits in terrorist subjects, and not making references to as many researches that, on the other hand, show the absence of them.

Psychodynamic hypothesis

Psychodynamic psychology originates from Freud's studies, and considers human behavior to be influenced by a series of hidden, unconscious desires, rooted in unresolved real or imagined conflicts in childhood.

The hypothesis of the applicability of psychodynamic theory in the analysis of the psychology of the terrorist individual dates back to Kellen's (1982) study of the case of Hans-Joachim Klein, a repentant terrorist from the Federal Republic of Germany. In analyzing his choice and his actions aimed at struggle and violence, as well as the environment and relationships that nourished his history and his individuality, the researcher states that the man: "unbeknownst to him, was participating in a struggle against authority, since he was unconsciously fighting against his father. [That is], anger at the established order and those who defended it could be an extension of his hatred of his father" (Kellen, 1982, p.18). In support of his thesis, Kellen also delves into Klein's subsequent disillusionment; hence, the dissociation from the atrocities committed by the group and the consequent exit from the organization, as if to identify the evolution of violent behavior, in the light of the unveiling of the unconscious motives that determined it.

Other authors have applied this model, in other ways and for other cases or in a more or less evident and explicit way, outlining a very popular research direction that has crossed the literature on terrorism for many years. See the analyses of Bartalotta (1981) and Brunet (1989), the aforementioned Post (1984) and Pearlstein (1991), or Johnson and Feldmann (1992). Few, however, have criticized such an approach. Among these, Maxwell Taylor in his 1988 publication *The Terrorist*, in which, analyzing the psychology of members of terrorist groups, starting with the leaders, he considers unfounded many of the possible psychodynamically oriented evaluations, which essentially refer to the Electra and Oedipus complexes. In general, Horgan (2015) intervenes, the most concrete criticisms of psychodynamic theories concern their almost tautological circular nature, and their reductive and vague results in their application to the study of terrorist psychology.

Remaining in the field of psychodynamics, some scholars have focused attention on the process of "identification", in the light of the developmental theory developed by Erickson (1968), according to which child development is characterized by successive crises, each of which must be overcome in order for the child's personality to become fully integrated. As a result, the failure to overcome such conflicts in childhood manifests itself later in adult life with various psychological problems.

Crenshaw (1986) developing Erickson's theory and applying it to the study of terrorist motivations, describes the process of affiliation in the following terms: "at the time of identity formation, individuals seek meaning and a sense of completeness, as well as what Erickson defines [...] " faithfulness," that is, the need to believe in something or someone outside of oneself and to be faithful to it. [In this sense] ideologies are the guardians of identity. [...] Clandestine political groups exploit young people's need for loyalty and, according to Erickson, represent the "reservoir of anger" felt by those who have been deprived of something they believed in and were loyal to. An identity crisis [...] makes some adolescents vulnerable [...] to totalitarian collective identities that promise certainty. In these groups, the troubled young person finds not only an identity, but also an explanation of his difficulties and a promise for his future" (Crenshaw, 1986, pp. 391-392).

Kaplan (1981), again taking up Erickson's study, argues that the motivation for affiliation is connected to the need to belong to the group which, therefore, plays a fundamental role in the formation of identity and the importance of the terrorist. This aspect then evolves in the development of interpersonal relationships, in the acceptance of the ideology of the movement and in the adoption of the strategies of the terrorist organization.

Although other awoperical researchers, such as Post and Taylor, have taken up and deepened the process of identification at the basis of the motives of the terrorist, and there are some cases falling within the identity model in which family influence is identified, it remains an approach that is however limited in applicability, and therefore somewhat reductive for the understanding of the logic of affiliation.

The effectiveness of such a model can only be achieved by expanding it and integrating it with multiple levels of analysis, in the awareness that the identity of the terrorist is formed and developed in response not only to "his own world", but also to external changes (Horgan, 2015). This requires having a current and far-sighted look at the

phenomenon, the subjects that define it and the factors that influence it: a challenge that is still open for today's researchers.

In the light of what has been said so far, it can be said that involvement in extreme or violent behavior is an issue that does not necessarily have to be addressed with positivist or psychodynamic theories, or with the hypothesis of the psychological uniqueness or specific personality of the terrorist. There are two reasons for this. The first, because the data and theses regarding the "clinical" and pathological abnormality of the terrorist are neither numerous nor always verifiable; the second, because the studies that demonstrate, on the other hand, the normality of the behavior of those who adhere to terrorism are different and moreover truthful. But let's proceed in order.

Already Morf (1970), in one of the first researches on the psychology of the terrorist, had not found dominant personality traits among the adherents of the National Liberation Front of Québec. Rasch (1979), in his study of some of the components of Baader-Meinhof, also found no symptoms of psychopathy or paranoia, or other psychiatric or neurological disorders.

A few years later, two of the most important and interesting studies on terrorists strongly supported the thesis on normality: the one signed by Jamieson (1989), and the one conducted by Lyons and Harbinson (1986), one of the best examples of rigorous and sample-controlled research.

Jamienson (1989) observed the Red Brigades for several years, having several interactions with its members. From the observations and data collected live, he elaborated a description of the Italian terrorist: a rather "normal" description of "a person who elaborates his ideas meticulously, "with careful analysis and thoughtful reflection", who "considers every event in political terms and who is 'well prepared'", who "has a marked intelligence, a great openness and generosity and, sometimes delusions of exhibitionism" (Jamieson, 1989, p. 48). All in all, a person who has neither the attitude nor the behavior of a murderer, a criminal, thirsty for violence and eager for revenge. The same results have been achieved and confirmed, after a few decades, by Orsini (2009).

Lyons and Harbinson (1986), on the other hand, compared 47 "political" murderers with 59 "non-political" murderers in Northern Ireland, finding that the latter, compared to the former: "[...] They tend to have normal intelligence and mental stability, they don't have psychiatric problems or specific mental illnesses [...]. They show no sense of remorse, as they are able to rationalize it well and are convinced that they are

fighting for a just cause. Political terrorists, in general, do not want to be seen by a psychiatrist, and although they believe there is nothing wrong with them, they are willing to cooperate" (pp.193-198).

Can we therefore *maintain a normality of the terrorist's behaviour?*

According to Silke (1998), yes, since from his study on the recurring theme of pathological abnormality, he himself deduces that "most researchers in this field agree with the theory that terrorists are essentially normal individuals" (Silke, 1998, p. 53)

Despite the results found in this regard, such a thesis is not so widespread in the literature of individual psychology, nor so supported by scholars in current research. On the contrary, explanations based on psychological deviance persist in them, as demonstrated by the studies on suicide bombers by Beck (2002) or Lankford (2013).

It is a question of incoherence of concept and result that drags on from initial research to subsequent revisions, that is, from the studies undertaken by Ferracuti, Kellen and Cooper to those taken up by Crenshaw or Post or Pearlstein, to name a few.

The incoherence stems from the difficulty or reluctance of early scholars to affirm the abnormality altogether, or to affirm the normality of the terrorist altogether. As Horgan (2015), Ferracuti, Kellen and Cooper point out, "[...] They claim that the terrorist is completely insane, or insane in part (or for a time), or almost insane. Similarly, the terrorist has a distinct or "almost" distinct personality', is considered different or "almost" different. In other words, the fathers of the theses on the psychology of the terrorist do not put him in a clear category, nor do they describe him in effective language. What exactly is meant by "insane" or "different"?

This internal incoherence and conceptual confusion damaged most of the initial research on the individual psychology of terrorists and, as Silke (1998, p.67) points out, "[...] have compromised, in their wake, contemporary research."

Although the conclusion of the historical research required the need for methical revisions in order to analyze the data and results on abnormality and normality, they proved to be of little value because, in some cases, they used the arguments of the same studies to support both perspectives. This general tendency to reinterpret and disseminate the results of previous analyses on the basis of new data, on the one hand, has demonstrated a lack of consideration of the original context and, therefore, hindered a maturation of research over time; on the other hand, it has

attributed to the terrorist "a pathological aura" that has been extended to the present day (Silke, 1998).

But the persistence of the thesis on the diversity of the terrorist is due not only to the inconsistencies inherited and not overcome over time, but also to the strong influence it exerts on researchers, since it allows the simple categorization of a complex situation to be developed, illusorily. And, in the pessimistic predictions of an expert like Horgan, as long as there are no rigorous and controlled psychological studies of terrorist activities, this perspective and this illusion will be difficult to counteract in a clear way.

Do we admit, then, the problematic nature of analyses on the terrorist personality and, therefore, the *stagnation* of research?

A too pessimistic view, perhaps, but one that remains so, if one thinks that the issue concerns almost exclusively the use of psychological traits to motivate individual adherence to terrorism. In truth, the question is more openly about the possible usefulness of behavioral traits: whether they exist, whether they are recorded, and whether they are systematically verified.

In fact, current research, if it is to emphasize the importance of personality traits and support the study and understanding of the process of involvement in terrorist activities, (by some and not by others) should take into account the predictive utility of psychometric assessments and behavioral classes. In doing so, in particular, it should also consider the concerns expressed by Blackburn (1989) about the adaptability of the approach; and the recent theses of Merari and Friedland (1985), on predictive utility.

According to Blackburn (1989), personality traits cannot be inferred from individual behavioral responses recorded in specific contexts. On the contrary, there is a certain long-term stability and in different situations of a wide range of social and emotional traits. Nevertheless, such reasoning cannot be translated as it is to analyses of the individual psychology of the terrorist. In fact, as Merari and Friedland (1985, p.187) point out, "[...] Even if it were possible to identify some common characteristics of the terrorist's personality, the transformation of such information into a general theory would be hampered by its predictive irreversibility. [...] The fact that terrorists share certain qualities does not imply that any person with such traits is destined to become one.'

To the extent that personality traits can influence the operational choices   associated   with   terrorist   involvement   and   activity,   it   is

understandable that various attempts have been made to elaborate and develop types or profiles of terrorists.

The first dates back to the study conducted by Russell and Miller in 1977, from which they deduced the following sociodemographic profile of a typical terrorist: male, single, aged between 22 and 24, of upper-middle-class origin, recruited in universities where he acquired good knowledge of Marxist and revolutionary ideas.

This is followed by other interesting attempts to profile specific right-wing or left-wing terrorist groups, national or international, such as those of Handler (1990) or Strentz (1987), up to the most recent ones by Gill and Horgan (2012), who profiled 1200 terrorists belonging to the IRA (Irish Republican Army), identifying a functional relationship between the type of subject recruited and the type of role played within the organization, or Dyer and Simcox (2013), which profiled 171 terrorists affiliated with Al-Qaeda and convicted in the United States, observing the following characteristics at the time of the crime:

1. 95% of the criminals were men;
2. 57% were under 30 years of age;
3. 52% had attended university;
4. 23% had training at undergraduate or postgraduate level;
5. 28% were unemployed;
6. Fifty-four percent of Al Qaeda-related crimes were committed by U.S. citizens residing in 26 different states;
7. Thirty-six percent of Al-Qaeda-related crimes were committed by people born in the United States;
8. Twenty-four percent of the crimes linked to Al-Qaeda were committed by Christians who had converted to Islam.

The profiling of the terrorist opens up the question of the filter of classification, i.e. whether it should be proposed in terms of demographic characteristics or in terms of psychological types; a question that deserves further study and not here. In general, if psychology intends to study the terrorist in order to integrate knowledge into an intervention strategy, then it must understand *what they do* rather than *how* people who open themselves up to participation and adherence to terrorist groups are. For this reason, profiling based on integrated behavioral analysis of the fundamental factors of time and the context of recruitment and action are more useful.

At this point in the discourse, the problem of how to highlight the role of personality in contemporary analyses arises again. These are so complex and problematic that they are insufficient, incoherent and unable to provide concrete and verifiable results. A situation denounced and criticized several times by Taylor, yet almost ignored and set aside by current researchers.

The failure of attempts to formulate a sensible and well-founded psychological theory can also be explained by the limited consideration of the remarkable heterogeneity of terrorism because of which researchers have focused attention almost exclusively on the individual and not on his aspiration, or on his strategy, factors that in turn motivate adherence to and participation in terrorism. This underlines the need to carry out more specific analyses on individual terrorists and organisations, i.e. their organisation by roles and their recruitment process, and the need to take into account the social, cultural and contextual factors that variously influence involvement as a choice and as a process.

The most encouraging conclusion at this time is that research needs to make an effort to collect new and more numerous *case studies* on terrorists and to critically and less superficially review the academic literature. And this, even before trying to identify a role for personality in the analysis.

The question, however, remains: why do so few of the people exposed to the alleged conditions that breed terrorist behavior actually become terrorists?

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