

Memories, normative ideals and empathic solidarities in Europe in the aftermath of refugee arrivals in 2015–16

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How does terrorist threat change attitudes towards xenophobic movements? It depends on the salient social norm!

Experimental social psychology has demonstrated that reminders of threat increase people's tendency to think, act, and define themselves in terms of collectives. These unconscious and automatic effects may explain why and how social attitudes change in times of terrorist threat. Of interest, increased collectiveness under conditions of threat does not necessarily mean that people become more xenophobic or right-wing. Instead, they more strongly conform to what they think is the social norm within their relevant ingroup. In line with this reasoning, I present experimental studies showing that terrorist threat increased willingness of university students to engage in protests against a right-wing movement ("LEGIDA"), especially when they perceived a strong anti-right wing norm among students. Other studies on different kinds of threat confirm this pattern. I discuss the implications of these results.

