Book Review of ‘Waves of Global Terrorism: From 1879 to the Present’ by David C. Rapoport, New York, Columbia University Press, 2022, 448 pp., £28 (UK) (Paperback), ISBN: 9780231133036.

In *The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism* (2004), David C. Rapoport theorised that modern terrorism can be historically seen and understood through the Anarchist (1st/1879-1920s), Anticolonial (2nd/1919-1960s), New Left (3rd/1960s-1990s) and Religious (4th/1979-2020s?) Waves. Ideologically similar, the organisations within each Wave also share characteristics, such as a signature tactic, weaponry and targets. The energy driving them spreads globally and tends to last one generation. Since the Rapoportian Wave Theory was launched, its explanatory power has been widely debated, sometimes challenged, but usually tested, corroborated and applied to uncover then overlooked Waves (da Silva 2020). Unsurprisingly, the 2011 Oslo and Utøya Attacks (Norway), the 2019 Christchurch Mosque Shooting (New Zealand), and the 2019 El Paso Shooting (U.S.) made Terrorism Studies scholars wonder whether these attacks are shaping a Far-Right (5th) Wave. In the 448-page *Waves of Global Terrorism: From 1879 to the Present*, David C. Rapoport reexplores his longstanding scholarship to shed light on this heated debate.

Definitionally, Rapoport understands terrorism as “[…] violence employed for a religious or political objective and is not limited by the accepted moral norms that limit violence” (3). In Chapter 1, a lengthy discussion on pre-1879 and non-Wave Abrahamic (i.e., Jewish Sicarii and Zealots, Islamic Assassins and Christian Crusaders) and secular (i.e., the Ku Klux Klan and Sons of Liberty) terrorism makes it seem like the book’s title does not truly translate its content. Yet, it serves to remind us that not only Islam but also Judaism and Christianity have been used to encourage terrorism, but that the West only attributes positive connotation to the latter.

Rapoport proceeds by brilliantly combining a chronological and thematic structure. The theorist expands on the Anarchist (Chapter 2) and Anticolonial (Chapter 3) Waves and updates the historical developments of the New Left (Chapter 4) Wave by discussing the peace agreement between Colombia’s Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia. Furthermore, he extensively elaborates on how the 2011 Arab Spring contributed to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant’s emergence and growth, thus, boosting the Religious Wave (Chapter 5), a chapter that takes the spotlight until the novel discussion on a Far-Right Wave (Chapter 6).

Previously, Rapoport (2004, 61) had argued that “[…] three events in the Islamic world […]” sparked the Religious Wave: “In 1979, the Iranian Revolution occurred, a new Islamic century began, and the Soviets made an unprovoked invasion of Afghanistan.” Now, the theorist adds the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty (1979) as “[…] the second crucial event […]” (218). Nevertheless, he does not explain the reason why it was not originally appraised. Confusingly, Rapoport argues that “[…] it was not until the third decade of the wave that Islamic groups began targeting Western states like *the United States*, France, the United Kingdom, and Spain” [emphasis added] (209). Perhaps, he meant the second decade because “[s]trikes on American soil began in 1993 with a partially successful effort on the World Trade Center” (366). In addition, Rapoport argues that “[i]n 2006, Hamas released an Israeli soldier in exchange for 1,027 Palestinian terrorists and terrorist suspects” (201), then, he argues that “in 2011, when Hamas exchanged an Israeli soldier for 1,027 Palestinian terrorists and terrorist suspects” (202). The Israeli soldier – Gilad Shalit – was kidnapped on June 25, 2006, and released on October 18, 2011. The phrases above are not the only ones that read almost identically and are next to each other, suggesting that this chapter could have been better edited:

While the Taliban was eager to negotiate the withdrawal of the American forces, it did not want the “illegitimate” Afghan government present (256).

The Taliban was eager to negotiate an American withdrawal but did not want the “illegitimate” Afghan government present (258).

Besides being the geographical lynchpin to the Religious Wave, the Middle East had already been a hotspot throughout the Anticolonial and New Left Waves. Europeanists should find this book useful as a teaching resource, considering that Rapoport discusses Europe-based organisations within all Waves. Although dedicating substantial attention to Africa during the Anticolonial Wave, Rapoport neglects it by not thoroughly discussing Nigeria’s Boko Haram during the Religious Wave. Latin America has a more dubious treatment. Rapoport does argue that “Europe and Latin America [were] the major geographical sites for First and Third Wave attacks […]” (199) and adds that it began to dissipate around the 1910s: “After 1914, only ten states experienced terror; all were in Europe or the Americas: Italy, Spain, France, Russia, Portugal, Bulgaria, the United States, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil” (102). Still, he does not dedicate a single line to discussing the Argentinian, Brazilian and Uruguayan cases. In his discussion of the New Left Wave, to some extent, Rapoport compensates Latin Americanists, even though not many will agree that Uruguay’s *Tupamaros* succeeded, as he argues, and many will miss a detailed discussion on Peru’s *Sendero Luminoso*. Non-Portuguese speakers may not realise that he misspells Brazil’s *Ação Nacional Libertadora* and not everyone will wonder about Haiti when reading that “[a]ll Latin Americans speak Spanish except Brazilians, who speak Portuguese” (159).

Apropos, regarding other elements that had been originally theorised (see Rapoport 2004), Rapoport describes how the U.S. and the U.S.S.R./Russia supported or countered organisations within each Wave. Two other elements seem more relevant than they originally seemed and permeate all Waves: Infiltration as a counter-terrorism tactic and the role played by women.

Rapoport’s discussion of Far-Right Terrorism conveys the novelty that most readers will expect by reading this book. It begins well but ends lacking a bold conclusion. As an early-career Terrorism Studies scholar, it was good to see a ‘big name’ displaying excellent academic conduct by acknowledging not only established but also other early-career colleagues who had applied the Rapoportian Wave Theory to understand Far-Right Terrorism. Rapoport largely uses data that had been gathered to test the New Left and Religious Waves and could also have used Jonathan Collins’ (2021) large-N analysis of Far-Right Terrorism across France, the U.K. and the U.S., given that it suits well the geographical scope that concentrates on Europe and the U.S. across the last chapter.

Islamophobia and xenophobia appear as big themes under Far-Right Terrorism. While mapping out Far-Right movements across Europe, Rapoport argues that “[o]nly Portugal still welcomes immigrants,” apparently, because “Portugal has few Muslims; most immigrants come from former colonial territories like Brazil and speak Portuguese” (279). In 2017, the Portuguese Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination registered 179 occurrences concerning racism and xenophobia. From them, Brazilians amounted to 18 (10.1%) and was the third most victimised group (CICDR 2017). In 2021, the Commission registered 408 occurrences. Brazilians amounted 109 (26.70%), thus, becoming the most targeted group (CICDR 2021). In this case, then, such a linguistic skill only seems to guarantee that Brazilians can understand the slurs. Islamophobia, xenophobia as well as racism and anti-Semitism are reasonably evenly discussed. However, other cases that present complexity to the Rapoportian Wave Theory are not discussed. Previously, Rapoport (2016) had acknowledged that:

[T]he Wave Theory needs more work […]. The Nazi-Fascist issue should be worked out. Finally, since the original Wave Theory excluded the study of single-issue groups, there is good reason to examine their relationship (Rapoport 2016, 223).

Now, Rapoport, although highlighting that “[…] the Nazi form became the most devastating the world had ever experienced,” neglects it by arguing that “[s]ince our concern here is with underground groups, Nazi and Fascist activities will not be discussed” (116). Regarding the so-called Eco-Terrorism, Rapoport chooses to “[…] avoid terrorist groups concerned with a single issue, like animal liberation, environmental movements, etc” (03). Why? Do these cases break or prolong Waves? Questions about Far-Right Terrorism shaping a Far-Right Wave also remain open as the theorist unassertively concludes that:

If it is linked only to the immigration problem and significant Islamic attacks, it may end soon […]. On the other hand, it is clear that in the United States immigration and Islamic attacks are only part of the problem. White supremacy, the belief that whites could soon become a minority, dominates the scene. If that anxiety persists after the immigration and Islamic issues fade, we may be seeing a Fifth Wave (305).

Ultimately, *Waves of Global Terrorism: From 1879 to the Present* summarises a 60-year career that has been characterised by a war against “historical amnesia” among policymakers and Terrorism Studies scholars (1). Offering a remedy to this challenge, Rapoport not only goes back to, updates and expands on *The Waves of Modern Terrorism* (2004) but also *Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions* (1984), *Before the Bombs There Were the Mobs: American Experiences with Terror* (2008) and *The Capitol Attack and the 5th Terrorism Wave* (2021), thus, making a unique contribution to Terrorism Studies. Remedies, however, require precaution and continuous development. The Rapoportian Wave Theory should be recalibrated to broaden its geographical coverage and handle the complexity that some organisations pose to it. Future research will need to look retrospectively to analyse whether Far-Right dynamics created enough energy to shape a Wave, and this book will certainly be a key guide.

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