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Responses

It Is Waves, Not Strains

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"The Four Horsemen of Terrorism: It's Not Waves, It's Strains" asks some useful questions, but its critique of the Wave Theory is wholly inadequate and the "Strain Theory" alternative has little utility. I will discuss the critique and "alternative" before addressing the queries.

The article begins by noting there is no evidence that activities associated with any one of the Four Waves is ever terminated, and the conclusion is "there are no waves of terrorism." Academics therefore would find it much more useful to devote their energies to studying the four organizational types created in the late 19th century that have remained a critical feature of our lives since. Oddly, while the article describes the Wave Theory as "one of the most influential articles" ever written in terrorist studies, it really does not discuss that theory and simply denies the contention that we have experienced profound expansion and contraction phases but provides no evidence.

This denial induces me to describe how I became convinced that the distinctiveness of modern terror could not be understood without emphasizing the importance of time and the changing character of the international political context which gives terrorism a cyclical character. In the late 1960s, I began studying terrorism and was initially concerned with learning how social scientists and policy makers had viewed the phenomenon. In the first *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (1931), J. B. S. Hardman published a useful, detailed "Terrorism" article, focusing on its history in our world and concluded it had reached a high point in the 20th century's first decade and had an enormous impact on the public. But by 1931, "technology" had made society so complex that "classes" and "masses" now determined future events; individuals and small groups were no longer relevant! The second edition (1968) consequently did not commission articles on terrorism, violence, or assassination subjects in the first edition. Other subjects associated with violence were discussed without relating them to violence.[1] Ironically, when the second edition was published, a new outbreak of terrorism absorbed the West and the Third World, leading American historian Richard Hofstadter to blame academics for not preparing their country.

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Shirked by our historians, the subject has been repressed in the national consciousness. We have been victims of what members of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence have called an "historical amnesia." Yet it is not simply that historians have found a way of shrugging off the unhappy memories of our past; our amnesia is also a response to the experience of a whole generation. For the long span from about 1938 to the mid-1960s, the internal life of the country was unusually free of violent episodes. Americans who came of age during and after the 1930s found it easy to forget how violent their forbearers were.[2]

Subsequently, various U.S. government decisions showed it did not understand terrorism's cyclical nature either. When the Soviet Union collapsed so many terrorist groups disappeared, the U.S. decided to stop funding terrorist research! The rationale was that since the global terrorism since the 1960s was largely connected to the Cold War, terrorism was no longer significant. Scott Stewart, a Diplomatic Security Service Special Agent who participated in hundreds of terrorism investigations including the 1993 World Trade Center, said the State Department "abolished my office . . . since terrorism was over."[3] Friends at the Rand Corporation told me money for terrorism research disappeared even though religion produced a number of terrorist groups in the 1980s. The 1999 Crowe Commission Report, *Confronting Terrorist Threats*, examined attacks on embassies and blamed the government for greatly reducing intelligence resources, and in 2004 *The 9/11 Commission Report* found that same "indifference" made the 9/11 strike easier.

The academic belief from the 1930s to the 1960s and the government's view after the Cold War ended that terrorism had disappeared cannot be explained without emphasizing our ignorance of the cyclical character of modern terrorist activity, and that terrorist activity could not be understood without relating it to unanticipated international political transformations. The events described and the conclusions drawn made me wonder whether this was a unique development or not. If the ebb and flow global sequence was repeated, how often did that occur and what were the implications for future experiences with terrorism?

In the ancient world, terrorists were exclusively focused on the domestic scene. The Jewish Zealots and Sicarii fought the Roman occupation but were not connected to other terrorists elsewhere. In fact, we don't know if Rome produced any other terrorist groups. The Assassins, a sect with its own territory, struck Islamic rulers in different parts of the Islamic world but did not go elsewhere.

A complete absorption with the domestic scene continued till the late 19th century. Very important American groups like the Sons of Liberty, which helped precipitate the Revolutionary War, and the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), a crucial element in ending Reconstruction and re-establishing segregation in the South after the American Civil War, were not underground groups but mobs led by different individual persons to kill selected persons.[4]

Since "Four Horsemen" avoids describing my view of "modern terrorism," I will explain it now. By the late 19th century, technology made communications and travel much faster, created cheap, easy-to-use bombs, and the French Revolution's egalitarian, nationalist, and democratic aspirations became global. An extensive surge of underground groups began in the late 1870s when Russian revolutionaries, whose efforts to live in the rural areas "educating" peasants to overturn the Czar's government, proved unproductive. A new strategy, known as "propaganda of the deed," emerged, which quickly spread through Europe, the Americas, and parts of Asia. Most groups were nationalists and populists, especially the foreign ones Russian terrorists

trained. But I called this the "Anarchist Wave" because Anarchists played a very important role, especially in the West as the wave increased its flow. Western governments and publics saw the term as derogatory and tried to label all terrorists as Anarchists whatever their purpose.[5] Assassination was the preeminent tactic and foreign governments sometimes encouraged nationalist elements, one reason the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian Arch-Duke Franz Ferdinand was misread as Serbia's effort and over-reacted to precipitate World War I, which basically ended the 1st Wave.

The 2nd or "Anti-Colonial Wave" took place largely in the overseas empires of Western states and was very different from its predecessor. The principle of self-determination was used to re-draw Europe's map after World War I, replacing the defeated dynasties, especially the Austro-Hungarian one, with national states. But the UK, a victorious power, was faced with an Irish uprising, the first modern terrorist "success," though it failed to incorporate the northern portion of the island. The self-determination principle was also employed to deal with the imperial territories of the defeated powers. The newly created League of Nations made those territories "Mandates," which the victorious powers administered until they were ready for independence.

All groups now were nationalist, seeking "self-determination." Not many emerged when the wave began and they never had *direct* contact with each other though the tactics of and heroes of other groups were influential. A few were visible in the late 1920s and 1930s, but with the IRA as an exception, all failed, one reason Hardman thought terrorism had no future. However, World War II changed the situation dramatically. A few months before the U.S. entered the war, the UK and the U.S. drafted the Atlantic Charter (1941), which defined the major war goals as "no territorial aggrandizement, no territorial changes against the will of the people and restoration of self-government to those deprived of it," goals the "Declaration by the United Nations" (1942) incorporated.[6]

When World War II ended, the defeated powers' overseas territories were recognized either as sovereign states (i.e., Libya, Ethiopia, and Korea) or reunited with their national homelands (i.e., Manchuria with China). The victors dismantled much of their empires within 25 years, not in direct response to violence, i.e., India, Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon, Tunisia, Burma, Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria, etc., which showed how firmly committed the West now was to the principle of self-determination. But in some areas the principle was extremely difficult to implement because several communities lived in a territory they refused to share, partly because the different ethnic groups often had different religious identities, i.e., Palestine, Cyprus, Algeria, etc. Terrorist campaigns emerged there and were successful in getting the colonial power to leave, but often ethnic tensions produced new terror campaigns and much more difficult problems. The only case where the existing government was not dismantled was Northern Ireland, because the Protestant majority considered themselves British not Irish, and consequently the UK did not consider its presence to be colonial.

Another factor in the large number of 2nd Wave terrorist successes was their desire to distance themselves from 1st Wave practices. Earlier participants called themselves terrorists, a word that over time became associated with very offensive connotations. The IRA described itself as a military organization. Menachem Begin, the Israeli Irgun leader, said we should define ourselves by emphasizing our purpose. We are "freedom fighters" struggling against "government terror." Lehi (the Stern Gang), a rival Israeli group, was the only 2nd Wave group to refuse the new language.[7] But governments obviously kept calling them terrorists.

Tactics changed too. With the exception of Lehi, the practice of assassinating prominent political symbols of the regime was abandoned. A new strategy emerged. The initial aim was to eliminate the police, the governments' eyes and ears, through systematic assassination of officers and/or their families. The military replacements were too clumsy to cope without producing counter-atrocities, and if terrorists planned the process of atrocities and counter-atrocities well it could favor those perceived to be weak and without alternatives. It is interesting that the 1st Wave nationalist groups that survived in the Balkans seeking new states, like the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) during the 1920s and 1930s, remained committed to assassinating prominent political figures, one reason they always failed.

The UN was another critical international element contributing to 2nd Wave successes after World War II. All anti-Colonial groups attempted to involve it in their struggles; the number of UN members had increased greatly and nearly all new members were former colonial territories and gave anti-Colonial terrorists intense support. Also the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the dominant powers, were committed to dismantling colonial empires. UN debates often used Begin's language to describe anti-Colonial terrorists as "freedom fighters."

The New Left Wave began in the mid-1960s as the 2nd Wave was concluding; and one reason the new upsurge came as a surprise was that anti-Colonial groups generally avoided hitting Western homelands, fearing that would intensify resistance to secession. There were important similarities between the 1st and 3rd Waves—the radical domestic policies and the international activities of the groups—but the differences were important. The 3rd Wave was a Cold War product and tensions between states did not produce the 1st Wave. Assassination played a minor role in the 3rd Wave, usually to "punish" people for their deeds; assassins earlier attacked the system by striking its symbols. The new tactics were hostage taking and airline hijackings.[8] The wave's global character was enhanced as different groups found it easy to cooperate in airline hijackings while Cuba and the PLO provided training facilities for many foreign groups. Those most committed to international activity were more likely to avoid cultivating domestic constituencies.

Unlike the 2nd Wave, the 3rd produced a few "successes." But all except the Sandinistas in Nicaragua occurred after the Cold War was over. The ANC's elimination of South Africa's Apartheid was the wave's most important success; after the Soviet collapse, the U.S. dropped its opposition, encouraging South Africa's government to accept ANC terms. Another reason for ANC success was that it refused to take hostages or hijack planes and made every effort to eliminate indiscriminate attacks on civilians; and members were explicitly told to study Irgun 2nd Wave tactics.

Nationalist groups in the West like the Provisional Irish Republican Army, Basque Fatherland and Liberty, Red Army for the Liberation of Catalonia, Corsica National Liberation Front, and Quebec Liberation Front; the Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia and Kurdistan Workers Party in the Middle East; and 48 secessionist groups in India persisted for long periods, but none succeeded. The states containing them did not consider themselves imperialist, a view the international world now supported. "Freedom fighter" was no longer used in UN debates. Most UN members were former colonial territories and feared they would be ripped apart by secessionist movements. Beyond that, tactics like airline hijacking and taking foreign hostages induced the UN in 1978 to begin passing many resolutions against international terrorism. "Four Horsemen" insists that nationalist groups never

change, presumably because their purpose is always the same, but the different political context for each wave shapes the conditions for success, inducing groups to seek appropriate changes.

Four events in 1979 in the Muslim world triggered the 4th or Religious Wave. Three demonstrated religion's new power—the Iranian Revolution, the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by a self-proclaimed Mahdi, and the Arab reactions to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The fourth, the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty, showed that secular elements were no longer supporting the PLO, the primary 3rd Wave group in the area. This wave was more deadly and effective than the 3rd, but produced fewer terrorist groups. About 200 groups, mostly 3rd Wave, were active in the 1980s, but in the 1990s the number fell to forty,[9] a trend related to the sizes of the primary audiences. A major religious community is much larger than any national one. Different cultural traditions also may be relevant. The huge number of secular terrorist groups came largely from Christian countries; and Christianity always generated more religious divisions than Islam did.

After Islam erupted, different religions became involved. Sikhs sought a religious state in the Punjab. Jewish terrorists tried to restore Israel's Biblical boundaries; the most notorious act was assassinating Prime Minister Rabin (1995) while he was negotiating a two-state solution with the PLO. Aum Shinrikyo, a Japanese group combining Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian themes, released nerve gas on the Tokyo subway (1995), creating a worldwide anxiety that various groups would soon use chemo-bio weapons too.

Christian terrorism, based on racist interpretations of the Bible, emerged in the American "Christian Identity" movement. In true medieval millenarian fashion, armed rural communes composed of families withdrew from the state to wait for the Second Coming and the great racial war. Some observers associated "Christian Identity" with the Oklahoma City bombing (1995), but the Christian level of violence still has been minimal. In the First and Third Waves different kinds of groups cooperated with each other, but now groups from different religions did not. Islamic Shiite and Sunni sects tried to cooperate but only Shia aid to Sunni Palestinian groups persisted.

Islamic groups have conducted the most significant, deadly, and profoundly international attacks. One reason was the new tactic of "self-martyrdom" or "suicide-bombing." While no other religious group embraced it, some secular ones like Tamil Tigers did after receiving training in Hezbollah camps. 9/11, the most devastating attack in the history of terrorism, was a suicide bombing product and led to the "war on terror," including the invasion of Iraq, an over-reaction which revitalized Sunni terror and may prolong the wave.

The "alternative" to the wave discussion is divided into three sections. The first argues that modern terrorism began in the 1860s when its intellectual foundations were created and some terrorist activity occurred. But my focus is describing when the *surge* of modern terrorist activity began and the "alternative" simply denies that surges occur.[10] The few European incidents described, like Felice Orsini's attempt to assassinate Napoleon III, were not terrorist efforts. Assassination was a common practice long before terrorism developed, and Orsini was engaged in tyrannicide.[11] We argued that the KKK was not a modern group because it was concerned with the domestic scene only and had no counterparts elsewhere. But "Four Horsemen" insists the KKK is modern because its ideology provided the model for the "Social Exclusion" type. But that argument would also make the Sons of Liberty a modern

group, a model for nationalists. In any case, "Four Horsemen" never discusses the differences between modern and earlier forms of terrorism.

The second section discusses how organizations get their ideologies and tactics from each other. The implication is that the contagion theory process conflicts with the Wave argument, but clearly it does not. Ironically, Peter Waldmann, cited as using contagion theory to explain interaction between European and Latin American groups during the Cold War, invited me in December 2014 to make a presentation for organizing a conference in Madrid to explain how the 3rd Wave concept helps us understand Latin American and European group interactions; a book on this theme will be published in 2016.[12]

The third section deals with strains, largely by simply listing relevant groups. Three strains—Nationalist, Socialist, and Religious—contain many groups included in the Four Waves, but there is no effort to explain the different political contexts each strain functions in or why their tactics change. The Socialism strain includes Anarchist and New Left groups because the Third Wave is "really just the uninterrupted evolution of the first." But why did a gap of over 40 years occur and why were Anarchist and New Left tactics so different? A few Third Wave groups survive the wave, we are told, but they are not identified; instead we are told the core arguments of Al Qaeda's strategy have less to do with Islam than with the texts of communist insurgents and ideologies! To prove the religious strain persisted throughout the modern period, it makes the unjustified claim that the religious identity of national groups defined the purpose and tactics in Ireland, Cyprus, Israel, etc. While it is true that the important Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt used terror tactics in the early 20th century, the fact is that it gave up violence in 1970 and resumed it in 1979 when the Religious Wave began, a pattern the account ignores.

The Social Exclusion section asks some interesting questions. Why did Rapoport ignore the Nazi and Fascist movements? The assailants were not members of underground groups depending on surprise attacks and bombs; they belonged to very large organizations and wore uniforms. Hitler was quite explicit about the rationale:

> The Storm Troops must wear uniforms which makes them immediately recognizable so that they will be free of any taint of a secret organization and so that an end will be put to the sort of rumor that is now going the rounds.[13]

How do Right-Wing groups fit into the wave process? Right-Wing groups have been present in every wave. Usually, like the OAS in Algeria and the Ulster Freedom Fighters in Northern Ireland, they fight against wave groups. U.S. Christian groups are part of the Religious Wave.

Another question was—why were incidents like the lone wolf attacks of English Nail Bomber David Copeland in 1999 and Norwegian Anders Breivik in 2011 not mentioned? They did appear in a later version in 2013 where it was pointed out that Breivik cited American Christian arguments for his strikes.[14] The 'lone wolf tactic' was first recommended as "leaderless resistance" by Louis Beam (1992), a Christian Identity member who argued that the Internet made groups too vulnerable to government infiltration but enabled a terrorist to gather information on his own.[15] Timothy McVeigh used the tactic in the Oklahoma City Bombing in 1995, the deadliest terrorist act in American history until 9/11.

Islamic groups have used it too. In 2005 Abu Misab al Suri, a jihadist theorist, noting that a centralized hierarchical structure was no longer suitable for Al Qaeda

and training sanctuaries abroad were unavailable, recommended "leaderless resistance" to revitalize Islamic terror and exhaust the Western economy,[16] a recommendation Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula publicly endorsed in October 2009. A week later, Major Nidal Hasan killed 14 fellow soldiers at Fort Hood. In the same year, the "Christmas Day Bomber" from Yemen was apprehended; then the 2010 Times Square bombing attempt occurred, and in 2011 a U.S. soldier was arrested for plotting another Fort Hood massacre. Since 2009, 16 Islamic lone wolf attacks have been attempted in the U.S.[17] Lone wolves also became common in the Animal Liberation Front, Earth Liberation Front, anti-abortion groups, and other single concerns, but the Wave Theory does not deal with the single-issue groups.

In short, no evidence is offered to undermine the cyclical flow of terrorist activity and the "alternative" offered is not linked to time or politics and does not explain why tactics change. Nonetheless, the Wave Theory needs more work, showing the number of groups in each wave and the wave trajectories' details. Statistics for 3rd and 4th Waves are available and one can assemble some good estimates for the 1st and 2nd. 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.[18]

Notes

1. The Elections article in the first edition discussed the violence elections often generate. It also had an article on succession, which in many states is frequently associated with violence. But the second edition omits succession, and its elections article never mentions violence!

2. "History of Violence," Richard Hofstadter and Michael Wallace, eds., *American Violence: A Documentary History* (New York: Alfred E. Knopf, 1970), 3–4.

3. "The Myth of the End of Terrorism," *Stratford Security Weekly*, February 23, 2012, p. 2.

4. See my "Before the Bombs, There Were the Mobs: American Experiences with Terror," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 167–94; Republished in *Terrorism Identity and Legitimacy: The Four Waves Theory and Political Violence*, Jean Rosenfeld, ed. (London: Routledge, 2008).

5. "Four Horsemen" cites Lindsay Clutterbuck as arguing the 1st Wave was Nationalist and began in Ireland by the Clan Na Gael and the Skirmishers. I did not discuss the Irish case, which occurred when the Russian one did. But the Irish did not influence the wave much; oddly, their tactics were 2nd Wave ones.

6. President Franklin Roosevelt understood that one important reason Americans became hostile to World War I was that the victors got new territories and Americans believed this would happen again. The American and British publics greeted the Atlantic Charter enthusiastically.

7. Ironically, Lehi means "Fighters for the Freedom of Israel." Begin did not note that Karl Heinzen invented the term in 1849.

8. 1st Wave groups refused to take hostages because the Paris Commune's disaster was partly related to the fact that it murdered 56 hostages. Also, states and criminals took hostages, and terrorists then did not want to be associated with either entity.

9. See Ami Pedahzur, William Eubank, and Leonard Weinberg, "The War on Terrorism and the Decline of Terrorist Group Formation," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 14, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 141-7.

10. I did describe earlier intellectual efforts elsewhere, a fact "Four Horsemen" missed. "The International World as Some Terrorists Have Seen It: A Century of Memoirs," David C. Rapoport, ed., *Inside Terrorist Organizations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 32–58.

11. For my discussion of the differences between tyrannicide and terrorism, see *Assassination and Terrorism,* (Toronto: C.B.C., 1971).

12. The presentation will be published as "Reflections on the Third or New Left Wave: 17 Years Later," in Martín Álvarez Alberto and Eduardo Rey, eds., *Revolutionary Violence and the New Left: Transnational Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2016).

13. Quoted by Roland Gaucher, *The Terrorists* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968), 138–9.

14. Scott Stewart, "Norway: Lessons from a Successful Lone Wolf Attacker," *Stratfor*, http:www.stratfor.com. July 29, 2011.

15. See my "The Four Waves of Modern Terror: International Dimensions and Consequences," in Jussi Hanhimäki and Bernhard Blumenau, eds., *An International History of Terrorism: Western and Non-Western Experiences* (London: Routledge, 2013) and Louis Beam, "Leaderless Resistance," *The Seditionist* 12 (1999): 1–6. Jeffrey Kaplan wrote an extremely interesting article, "Leaderless Resistance," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 80–95.

16. Al Suri uses Beam's term "leaderless resistance" and includes individuals and autonomous cells in the concept. See Lawrence Wright, "The Master Plan," *The New Yorker*, September 11, 2006, pp. 48–59. Brynjar Lia provides a comprehensive discussion of Abu Misab al Suri's work in *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab al Suri* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). His "Doctrines for Jihadi Training," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, no. 4 (Winter 2008) compares al Suri with other Al Qaeda theorists.

17. SPLC Report Fall 2011, p. 3. This equals the attack number in the previous eight years.

18. See Rachel Monaghan's interesting articles on the subject: "'Votes for Women': An Analysis of the Militant Campaign," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 65-78; "Single-Issue Terrorism: A Neglected Phenomenon?" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 23, no. 4 (Oct.–Dec. 2000): 255–65.