

9 Problematic knowledge: How “terrorism” resists expertise¹

Lisa Stampnitzky

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Since 9/11, Americans have been told that terrorists are pathological evildoers, beyond comprehension. Consequently, as President George W. Bush put it, our response must take the form of “a very long struggle against evil.” But although this conceptualization of terrorism has been naturalized in contemporary American political discourse, this problematization of political violence as inexplicable evil is a relatively recent invention. This chapter traces the emergence of the problematization² of “terrorism” as the dominant mode of making sense of political violence, and the ways in which this shift fundamentally transformed Americans’ understandings of political violence, the scope of possibilities for practical response to the problem of political violence, and the possibilities for the production of expert knowledge about it. As a case study in the production of knowledge about problems of “security,” this chapter illustrates the importance of paying attention to ruptures in the conceptualization of security problems, and the ways in which particular problematizations constrain possible positions from which to produce expert knowledge about them.

I argue that that “terrorism,” as an object of knowledge, resists certain forms of expertise. This is not to say that terrorism experts do not exist---on the contrary, we are surrounded by a seemingly ever-increasing population of individual and organizational purveyors of such expertise. Rather, what I mean when I say that terrorism “resists expertise” is that “terrorism,” as currently constituted, resists attempts to purify³ it as an object of knowledge. Terrorism experts agree that the study of terrorism has been beleaguered by what they term the “problem of definition”: the fact that no one, not even the experts themselves, have been able to agree on how to define it (Stampnitzky 2011). I argue that this problem of definition is not incidental, but rather instrumental to the very way that “terrorism” has been constructed as an object of knowledge. “Terrorism,” as it has come to be understood in popular, political, and even to an extent in expert discourse, is best defined in

¹ This chapter draws upon sections of *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Created “Terrorism”* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

²² The concept of problematization, drawn from the work of Foucault, describes an historical process resulting in the diagnosis of a new problem subject to certain forms of knowledge. It is not simply the re-labeling of a prior phenomenon, but a concrete historical development that makes a problem newly “subject to thought” (and to specific forms of action) (Foucault 1987; Foucault 1991).

³ The sense in which I use the term “purify” draws on the work of Bruno Latour (1993), who suggests that all of modernity is characterized by a quixotic attempt to produce scientific objects “purified” of their social “contaminants.” I thus do not suggest that “terrorism” is unique as an object of knowledge in its resistance to purification, although it does serve as a somewhat extreme case.

either moral or political terms: as violence which we morally condemn, or as violence perpetrated by certain classes of enemies. The difficulty here is that these are inherently relational, and changeable, definitions; they cannot be held stable by attempting to define "terrorism" as the use of certain tactics, the targeting of certain victims, or in any other "objective" way. Hence, debates over terrorism are plagued by constant struggles over which acts should be included or excluded.

This state of affairs creates predictable difficulties for the production of any forms of expertise which are predicated upon the existence of a stable definition. How can cumulative theoretical, or even empirical, knowledge about the subject be created when most the available data (such as the numerous terrorism event databases) use different, and sometimes even internally contradictory, methods of determining what to include (Stampnitzky 2011, 2013)? While subsets of experts have repeatedly attempted to expunge these impurities, "terrorism" has resisted these attempts. In this chapter, I first discuss how this state of affairs came about through a rupture in understandings of political violence, and then discuss three attempts at purification, removing or correcting the moral and political aspects of the conceptualization of "terrorism." This chapter draws upon archival sources and interviews in order to reconstruct the process through which political violence was problematized as "terrorism." These include conference reports along with other archival and secondary textual sources, which I used to piece together the history of American terrorism expertise from the 1970s to the present day. In addition to these written sources, I conducted thirty-two semi-structured interviews with current and former researchers in the field, focusing upon individual career histories and views of the field, including interviewees' judgments of what constitutes useful and legitimate knowledge,⁴ and engaged in a number of more informal conversations with academics, think tank researchers, current and former military personnel, and defense consultants.

The concept of "terrorism" as we now know it first took shape in the 1970s (Stampnitzky 2013). Although political violence, including acts such as bombings, kidnappings, and hijackings that are now commonly understood to be hallmarks of terrorism, had occurred previously,⁵ such events had been understood not as terrorism, but through different frameworks, most significantly that of "insurgency." And before the 1970s, those acts that we now classify as "terrorism" were generally considered to be the work of rational,

⁴ In selecting interviewees, I aimed to recruit those who were prominent in the development of the field, basing my judgments upon conference presentations, journal articles and book publications, and the results of an earlier survey in which experts were asked to rank others in the field Schmid, A. P. and A. J. Jongman (1988). Political terrorism: A new guide to actors, authors, concepts, data bases, theories and literature. New Brunswick, NJ, Transaction Books.. I aimed to include a mix of experts based at universities, think tanks, in government, and in the media, as well as both representatives of those who had been active in the field since its inception and more recent entrants.

⁵ According to U.S. Federal Aviation Administration statistics, there were seventy-nine hijackings worldwide between 1930 and 1967 (Guelke 1995:49), with *Penthouse Magazine* reporting eighty-five American planes hijacked to Cuba between 1961 and 1973.3 (Photocopy of article from *Penthouse* magazine, April 1973. "Unhappy Landings" by Martin Schram and John Wallach. (National Archives, Nixon papers)).

potentially even honorable, actors. But the new framework of “terrorism” that would emerge over the course of the 1970s would recast such incidents as the acts of pathological, irrational, immoral actors.

The earliest expert commentaries on terrorism drew upon a prior framework of “insurgency,” which saw political violence as largely rational, and subject to rational analysis. Yet by the late 1970s, a new framework of “terrorism” had displaced this earlier discourse. The creation of the problem of “terrorism” had concrete effects for both the possible ways of knowing about political violence, and the potential policy responses that might be applied to the problem. The new problematization of “terrorism” transformed our understandings of political violence along three key axes: its morality, its politicality, and its rationality. Each of these changes, in turn, created new difficulties for the production of rational-scientific expertise about the problem. These anchors of morality, rationality, and politics would become key factors shaping experts’ relation to their object of discourse. The legitimacy of experts became bound up in their relation to the object of discourse, and experts’ own morality, politicality, and rationality, judged in part through their relation to their object of study, would become key factors along which struggles to define the field of terrorism expertise would develop.

Although the events they deal with appear similar, the discourses of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism differ in their conceptualizations of the problem, its causes, and the potential responses they suggest. The counterinsurgency discourse tended to conceptualize insurgents and counterinsurgents as parallel roles, but the discourse on terrorism has been characterized by an ongoing tension over whether or not terrorists were necessarily pathological, irrational actors, fundamentally different from “us.” While the discourse of insurgency did not attach any *necessary* moral evaluation to the character of the insurgent, the identity of the terrorist would become imbued with moral judgment. Whereas insurgents were generally assumed to be rational actors, who could be countered with a similarly rational strategy of counter-insurgency, the rationality of terrorism, and thus the possibilities for rational analysis and treatment of the problem, would become ever- contested. And while insurgency was largely considered to stem from political, even structural, motivations and goals, the question of whether or not terrorists even *have* political goals has been highly contested.

While uses of the terms “terror” and “terrorism” can be found prior to the 1970s, these earlier uses of the terms were subsumed within the larger discourse of “insurgency,” and, as such, were just as (or even more) likely to refer to *institutional* or *state* violence as to the sort of oppositional activity we associate it with today. Writers on political violence during the 1960s classified “terror/terrorism” as largely an attribute of states and political systems, and only secondarily of revolutionary groups (Thornton 1964; Walter 1964). The new framework of “terrorism” that emerged over the course of the 1970s, however, would recast it as the activity of pathological, irrational actors, precluding its application to the actions of states or

other legitimate institutions. "Terrorism" emerged from this transformation as an inherently problematic concept: leading to persistent difficulties for those who would create rational knowledge about it.

There are several key characteristics of the insurgency discourse that differentiate this approach to understanding political violence from that of "terrorism." First, "insurgent" and "counterinsurgent" were understood as parallel positions. Second, insurgents were not considered to be essentially morally compromised. Rather, insurgency was seen as a strategy that, at least in principle, could be used by both morally sympathetic and morally blameworthy actors. Third, while insurgents were seen as quintessentially rational actors, the rationality of the terrorist has been highly suspect. And finally, while insurgencies were generally acknowledged to stem from concrete political grievances, the attribution of political goals to terrorists has been highly contentious.

Within the pre-terrorism framework, insurgency and counterinsurgency were largely conceptualized as parallel processes that could be conceptualized using the same theoretical tools, and fought using many of the same tactics. For example, a 1962 Rand symposium on counterinsurgency, "insurgent" and "counterinsurgent" were explicitly presented as parallel concepts (Hosmer and Crane 2006 (1963)). Similarly, Thomas Thornton's oft-cited 1964 essay on "terror as a weapon of political agitation" declared that, "We are dealing, in a sense, with two continua of behavior- one of political agitation and the other of enforcement- which run parallel" (Thornton 1964:74). While there was an asymmetry between the positions within the counterinsurgency discourse, this was primarily conceived as a tactical and strategic opposition, and *not* generally a moral one. So, as French counterinsurgent David Galula wrote,

there is an asymmetry between the opposite camps of a revolutionary war. This phenomenon results from the very nature of the war, from the disproportion of strength between the opponents at the outset, and from the difference in essence between their assets and their liabilities (Galula 1964:5).

Frank Kitson, who fought insurgents in Kenya, Malaya, Cyprus, and Northern Ireland as an officer in the British army, wrote, similarly, that,

It is sometimes said that insurgents start with nothing but a cause and grow to strength, while the counter-insurgents start with everything but a cause and gradually decline in strength to the point of weakness (Kitson 1974 (1971):29).

In fact, counterinsurgent writers frequently expressed a degree of respect for their opponents that would be quite unusual in the terrorism literature. As the preface to Roger Trinquier's *Modern Warfare* put it, the author, who had served as an officer in the French military, commanding counter-guerrilla units in Vietnam, approaches the insurgents with "the

cold respect of a professional warrior. He describes an enemy who is deeply committed to his cause, and ingenious in its pursuit" (Trinquier 2006 (1964):viii). This same affectual relation is dramatically present in the film, *The Battle of Algiers*, most notably when Colonel Mathieu, the leader of the French military forces, declares his respect for the insurgent leader M'Hidi, stating that: "On my part; I will say that I had the opportunity to admire the moral strength, intelligence, and unwavering idealism demonstrated by Ben M'Hidi. For these reasons, although remembering the danger he represented, I do not hesitate to pay homage to his memory."⁶

Counterinsurgency experts generally assumed that insurgents had rational, intelligible, political motives. As Thomas Thornton wrote in 1964, "we shall treat terror as a tool to be used rationally" (Thornton 1964:71). The report from the 1962 Rand conference on counterinsurgency starts out by discussing structural problems such as unemployment, inequality, and colonialism that may lead to guerrilla movements in different parts of the world: problems such as unemployment, inequality, and colonialism (Hosmer and Crane 2006 (1963):1-2). And an acknowledgement of the importance of a "cause" to insurgents and guerrillas was almost universal in the literature. As British soldier Julian Paget put it, the first requirement of a successful insurgency is "a cause to fight for" (Paget 1967:23). Similarly, Galula (1964:18) emphasizes the importance of a cause in gaining the support of the population, Thompson writes that "Every insurgency, particularly a communist revolutionary one, requires a cause" (Thompson 1966:21), Pustay (1965:16) cites problems of "cultural adjustment" and poverty, Crozier (1960:6) writes that "Frustration is the one element common to all rebels," and Thayer (1963:158) observes coolly that, "the grievances that tear the country apart are those of other Latin American countries- mal-distribution of wealth and of land."

Finally, the 1960s discourse of counterinsurgency was, perhaps most surprisingly from a contemporary perspective, formally morally neutral. Neither the moral character of either insurgents or counterinsurgents, nor a moral evaluation of the practices and outcomes of insurgency or counterinsurgency, were integral to the discourse, and within the counterinsurgency discourse, even "terrorism" was a concept that could be set apart from morality. Within the counterinsurgency discourse, "terror" was used as a technical term-referring to types of tactics, rather than types of actors (as it later would in the terrorism discourse). For example, a 1964 article on "Terror as a weapon of political agitation" suggests, "it is, however, by no means inevitable that the insurgents will initiate terrorism; in some instances, they may be 'counterterrorists' reacting to the terror of the incumbents" (Thornton 1964), while participants at the 1962 RAND counterinsurgency symposium spoke of the

⁶ *The Battle of Algiers*, directed by Gillo Pontecorvo (1966).

possibility of “using terror wisely and selectively,” and the term “terrorist” was generally used as a synonym for “insurgents” or “guerrillas.”⁷

Within the counterinsurgency discourse, terrorism was considered unpleasant, something to be used sparingly, but still a legitimate tool in the fighter’s arsenal, and not a defining aspect of identity or moral character. In earlier texts, “terror” (generally understood as violence aimed at civilian populations) was even legitimated as a tactic for use by the U.S. military. During World War II: “The army’s stated position was that terror was useful and legitimate so long as it was selective and discriminate,” while American guerrilla warfare manuals during and after World War II, “made explicit reference to the utility- indeed, the necessity- of its use, from hostage-taking to selective assassination (McClintock 1992: xvii). This view of “terror” as something that could be used by both insurgents and states/ counterinsurgents persisted through the counterinsurgency era of the 1960s. Official strategy for U.S. soldiers in Vietnam posited that terror was “a means to an end, an unpleasant solution to a greater problem. . . like Drano, nasty stuff for clearing drains, to be used only when necessary” (McClintock 1992:234, 238).

A studied neutrality towards insurgent and guerilla violence was common throughout the counterinsurgency writings of the 1960s and early 1970s. Frank Kitson, in the introduction to his 1971 classic *Low Intensity Operations*, felt the need to clarify that “there is some right and some wrong on both sides”, and to make the case that *counter*-subversion could be morally defensible (Kitson 1974 (1971):8), while Robert Moss opened his book on urban guerrillas by stating that: “No one would quarrel with the idea that some governments are so corrupt or repressive that they deserve to be overthrown, or that violence is sometimes justified as a last resort for men who have no other avenue for protest,” (Moss 1972:16), while Brian Crozier would write, in his 1960 study, *The Rebels*,

I shall try, therefore, to avoid passing moral judgments. My purpose is to examine the weapon of terrorism, to find out whether it brings results, and to guess whether similar results could have been achieved by other means, either at all or within the same time (Crozier 1960:159).

We should note that this is precisely the opposite maneuver that would later be required of terrorism experts-- for whom the display of sympathy could be utterly discrediting.

Elements of the counterinsurgency framework carried over into the earliest expert analyses of terrorism. At the very first American conference on terrorism, held at the State Department in 1972, there was a general consensus that “nearly every variety of political and ethnic group is likely under certain (generally desperate) circumstances to resort to terrorism,” that terrorism “is a tool not confined to opposition forces” but could also be used

⁷ (“Terror” is not explicitly defined, but the meaning seems to be violence intended to impose fear upon the population.) (as opposed to the tactical use of violence) (Hosmer and Crane 2006 (1963):26).

by "established regimes," and that it "was the product of frustration induced by unresolved grievances" (Perenyi 1972:4). A bibliographic study of the early terrorism literature found frequent references to counterinsurgency authors such as Feliks Gross, Joseph Roucek and Eugene Walter, and Brian Crozier, Robert Moss, and Richard Clutterbuck (Reid 1983:224), and even as the decade wore on, counterinsurgency experts were among those considered as potential terrorism experts. Brian Crozier, Robert Moss, and Ted Gurr were among those considered as speakers for a 1976 State Department conference on terrorism,⁸ and a 1976 conference on "Terror: The Man, the Mind, the Matter" included presentations from Feliks Gross and Nicholas Kittrie.

By the mid-1970s, however, discussions of terrorism had begun to move away from the counterinsurgency framework. Most speakers at a 1976 State Department conference agreed that terrorism was the activity of sub-state actors, "doubted that the direct causes of terrorism could be discovered in political or socioeconomic conditions" and "were skeptical of the argument that the way to stop terrorism was to "remove its causes" (Johnson 1976 :17-18). At this conference, the question of whether or not terrorists could ever be "freedom fighters" was hotly debated, with (according to the official report), the majority of presenters arguing that the categories were mutually exclusive. This question of whether "terrorists" could be "freedom fighters," although seemingly a matter of arcane semantics, is actually indicative of a crucial turning point in the history of conceptualizations of political violence. The very opposition, between "terrorists" and "freedom fighters" which would become a statement of cliché just a few years later, would have been relatively nonsensical within the earlier counterinsurgency discourse, which did not pose these as mutually exclusive categories. And by the late 1970s, new and specialized "experts on terrorism" had emerged. The counterinsurgency literature, and the counterinsurgency experts, were no longer the go-to people for understanding political violence against civilians.⁹

Counterinsurgency theory tended to assume that insurgents were rational actors (especially insofar as insurgent and counterinsurgent were configured and imagined as *parallel* roles). But once political violence came to be problematized as "terrorism," its rationality would come into question, and the very possibility that terrorists might have rational, objective motives would become highly politically charged, and the rationality of both the ends and the means of terrorists would come up for question. Terrorists, according to this author, are in denial about the fact "that they are in fact terrorists," but are "fanatics are incapable of accommodation (and thus cannot be rationally bargained with), "naive, emotional, impulsive, often irrational, and fundamentally uninformed" (Livingston, p.21-22, in Livingston, Kress et al. 1978). Within such a framework, how would it even possible to develop a rational theory for dealing with such creatures, let alone a rational policy response?

⁸ Digital National Security Archive Document TE 441: Agenda for meeting 92 WG/CCCT (1975)

⁹ For a detailed analysis of this shift, see Stampnitzky, L. (2013). Disciplining terror: How experts invented terrorism. Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press.

Whereas counterinsurgency discourse generally assumed that insurgents were motivated by structural factors and had political goals, the role of the political in terrorism discourse is deeply conflicted and contradictory. The question of whether terrorism has structural causes has been highly contentious, as is that of whether or not terrorists have political goals, as well as the nature or reality of such goals: e.g., do terrorists have true political goals, or are their motivations merely ideological, or worse, nihilistic? As the decade wore on, it became more common for analysts to claim that terrorists' goals were not rational, and perhaps not even recognizably political at all. If terrorists were conceded to be political, their goals were often categorized as not "normally" political, but rather pathological. The formation of terrorism as a problem with a moral evaluation built into it has meant that attempts to develop a morally neutral terrorism expertise, and sometimes even attempts to understand terrorism at all, have been subject to discrediting attacks as, somewhat paradoxically, politicized knowledge.

In sharp contrast to the relative ease with which the counterinsurgency experts of the 1960s approached their subject, would-be experts on terrorism faced a multitude of potentially delegitimizing constraints upon their relation to the problem of political violence. Terrorism experts have been subject to de-legitimizing claims of politicization from both the left and the right, and though some experts have devoted significant time and resources in attempts to purify and reform terrorism studies into an apolitical knowledge field, their work has been continually open to challenge. And recent analyses of terrorism expertise have suggested that the field has suffered from prolonged difficulties in attaining the status of an accepted scientific field (Silke 2004; Jackson 2005; Ranstorp 2007). Paul Wilkinson (1974:21) summed up these tensions, writing that: there is a constant tension apparent in the literature on terrorism between judgment and prescription and the presumed demands of scientific impartiality or historical objectivity."

Experts faced increasing difficulty presenting themselves and their work as legitimate, yet morally detached and separable from their object of "terrorism." A 1979 essay in *the New York Review of Books* chided terrorism experts for not being critical enough of terrorists, writing that two of the authors under review "are social scientists who claim to be experts on terror and give advice on how to deal with it," yet critiques them for having "little patience" for ...moral argument and for writing in a style such that their "tone is casual and clear of indignation," evincing a "stoic attitude toward the suffering of others" (Avishai 1979: 41).¹⁰ In

¹⁰ Avishai even goes so far as to suggest that some authors' work may not only encourage terrorists, but even provide scientific rationales for their behavior (Avishai 1979: 44).

a somewhat similar fashion, Conor Cruise O'Brien, in a 1976 essay in the *New York Review of Books*,¹¹ writes that:

Mr. Bowyer Bell writes about terrorists with a degree of sympathy which the present reviewer, being perhaps oversensitive on the subject, finds moderately repugnant. He sometimes, though not consistently, adopts the language of the terrorists themselves, terming their killings "executions" or, even worse, using coy euphemisms like "elimination," and he is impressed by the "logic" or "elegance" of various bloody deeds. He thinks that "the practitioners of terror can largely be categorized on the basis of their aspirations" and resists other methods of categorizing them, such as those which would include among others the categories of lunatics and gangsters.

A final set of difficulties emerges from the question of whether or not expertise can be separable from politics. Is terrorism experts' work necessarily politicized? Or can terrorism expertise be separated from political inflections and goals? While experts have attempted to "strip the term of its abusive connotations, and thus make it 'objective' or 'scientific,'" (Rapoport and Alexander 1982:3) such strategies have been of limited success. The discourses of "insurgency" and of "terrorism" not only presumed a different understanding of the problem of political violence, they also each set up a different relation through which the expert speakers of these discourse relate to their objects of study. "Terrorism" became newly problematic as an object of expert knowledge along three key axes in the new discourse of terrorism expertise, both in terms of the possibilities for creation of expert knowledge, and in terms of conceptualizations of terrorism and terrorists themselves. These were: morality, rationality, and politicization.

<insert Table 1 here>

<insert Table 2 here>

The construction of terrorism as inherently evil constrained those who would speak out as experts. In order to maintain their credibility and authority, experts needed to maintain a certain distance from their very object of expertise. This made certain forms of knowledge about terrorists taboo: attempts to explain would be taken as justification, and attempts to understand elided with sympathy. And the construction of terrorism as irrational meant that attempts at rational explanation could be dismissed as terrorism was not subject to rational understanding. Research in the sociology of science has often argued that the moral character of scientists has been used as a basis for establishing and evaluating their

¹¹ *New York Review of Books*, Volume 23, Number 14 · September 16, 1976 "Reflections on Terrorism" By Conor Cruise O'Brien.

credibility (Shapin 1994; Hilgartner 2000; Stark 2012). But what is distinctive here is that the credibility of experts on terrorism is dependent upon their taking a moral stand against the very object they study, and maintaining a suitable distance from it.¹²

This rupture, and the consequent "resistance" to expertise, persists and has effects to this day. The question, "*Why do they hate us?*" became inescapable in the days and weeks after the 9/11 attacks. "*They hate us for our values.*" Public discussion of the 9/11 attacks swiftly came to be dominated by the language of "evil." The explanation that dominated the airwaves was that the hijackers had attacked the U.S. because of an inexplicable hatred for America and its values. Alternate answers, especially those that sought to connect the attacks to U.S. foreign policy, were marginalized. And it was not just overtly critical or leftist voices that faced this backlash. Even "mainstream" terrorism experts, especially those who endeavored to situate the attacks in a context of broader knowledge about terrorism and its causes, were open to criticism. Academic experts who sought explanations for the attacks and highlighted the need to understand the motivations of terrorists were viewed with suspicion, as illustrated by Martha Crenshaw's recollection that "People [in the government] would feel mostly indignant, they would get upset when we said you have to understand the motivations of terrorists" (Easton 2001). Explanation itself came to be seen by some as profane. While these sorts of reactions have commonly been attributed to the shock and trauma of the 9/11 attacks, this chapter has shown that the attribution of terrorism to "evil," and the subsequent resistance to discussion of broader causes, have roots in the ruptures of the 1970s.

Experts have also acknowledged the taboo and its effects upon their work. Zulaika (2012) suggests that there is a "*cordon sanitaire*" around terrorism preventing researchers from interviewing or otherwise getting too close to understanding the mindframe and worldview of terrorists. Ilardi writes that "the atmosphere that prevailed after the attacks left little room for pluralism or diversity of thought and opinion" (Ilardi 2004:216), specifying that:

Efforts to understand the terrorists' grievances, including their historical roots and the function of US foreign policy in shaping these grievances, were paid scant attention. To demonstrate any degree of empathy, regardless of how slight, was to place one's credibility in harm's way (Ilardi 2004:217).

Interviews with experts, conducted several years after 9/11, frequently elicited the opinion that terrorism experts' views had been ignored, and the expert community alienated from policymakers. For example, Brian Jenkins declared while he had "no doubts in [his] mind that the terrorists are the bad guys," the post 9/11 debate on terrorism had become a kind of "theological debate" without "empirical evidence," and that "if you put it in too stark terms of good versus evil it becomes anti-analytical." Continuing, he observed that:

¹² Although terrorism studies is not the only field in which this occurs- similar dynamics take place in other studies of "deviant" behavior, such as sexuality studies, and in area studies of certain parts of the world (such as China).

I see this particularly in terms of understanding our terrorist foes. This is not to mitigate the savagery of their acts, but that understanding them, in the way that we devoted time to understanding Soviet behavior during the Cold War, or German military leadership during World War II: Patton said "Rommel, you magnificent bastard, I read your book!" But that's the point, you read the book.¹³

None of this should be taken to mean that terrorism experts have not attempted to resolve these dilemmas; on the contrary, such attempts have been a repeated feature of the field. In this final section of the chapter, I discuss three such attempts to "purify" terrorism as an object of knowledge, and how these were resisted. Since the emergence of "terrorism studies" in the early 1970s, a subset of experts, generally coming from the more academic corners of the field, have attempted to "stabilize" the definition of terrorism, so as to form the basis for a more scientific study of the topic.¹⁴ These scholars, including some of the most academically respected authors in the field, generally saw themselves as trying to clarify the concept, by removing politicized and moralizing definitions which, in their view, impeded the development of knowledge. In the 1980s and 1990s, the field witnessed the emergence of what I have called elsewhere a "counterdiscourse" (Stampnitzky 2013), the appearance of claims that "terrorism" was an essentially politicized concept, manipulated by the U.S. and other "Western" countries to further their geopolitical interests and draw attention away from their own uses of political violence (e.g. (Chomsky 1986; Herman 1982; Herman and O'Sullivan 1989; Hitchens 1986; Said 2001 (1988); Said and Hitchens 2001 (1988)). These critics either sought to *redefine* "terrorism" to include, or even to primarily refer to, the violence of states, rather than that of sub-state actors; while some sought to eliminate the term altogether, seeing it as irredeemably compromised. And after 9/11, a new school of "critical terrorism studies" (see Jackson, this volume), took shape. Rather than primarily attacking the field of terrorism expertise, as the earlier critics had done, these new "critical" scholars sought repair the field, seeing (with some parallels to the earlier "scholarly" purifiers) the conceptualization of terrorism as sullied by moral and political intrusions into the production of knowledge. What all of these projects share, is that they pick up upon, and attempt to resolve, in differing ways, existing tensions within the field. However, in all of these cases, "terrorism" has resisted these attempts at purification. This does not mean that these attempts have necessarily been excluded from the field of expertise (although in some cases they have), but merely that insofar as their "purified" conceptualizations are drawn into the field, they exist alongside a multitude of contradictory understandings.

In conclusion, the emergence of "terrorism" as the primary means of understanding political violence has had significant effects upon the subsequent possibilities for terrorism expertise. As "terrorism" solidified as an object of expert knowledge, it did not become "purified" of its political or moral character; but rather, the expert discourse became more characterized by an intertwining of moral, political, and scientific/analytical concerns, leading

¹³ Interview with Brian Jenkins, 6/26/2007

¹⁴ See Stampnitzky 2011 for a longer discussion of this struggle

to persistent difficulties for those who would treat political violence as an object of rational knowledge. It has been difficult for experts to carve out a position from which to produce expertise that is rational/apolitical/value-neutral, and even that experts who seem to get to close to terrorists, may be tagged as 'sympathetic', and thus, lose their credibility. This case suggests that, as we investigate the relations between security knowledge and expertise, we must be attentive to, not just how experts shape our understanding of problems, but also how problematizations shape the possibilities for expertise.

Table 1: Three newly problematic dimensions of “terrorism” discourse

	Morality	Rationality	Politicization
As pertains to <i>terrorism/terrorists</i>	Necessarily immoral (slightly contested)	Rationality of motives and tactics always in question	Whether terrorists have political motives/ goals is contested
As pertains to <i>terrorism experts</i> (and their relation to the problem/ data)	Requirement to condemn/ possibility of morally detached/value neutral research is questioned	Possibility of rational analysis in question	Possibility of apolitical expertise continually in question

Table 2: “Insurgency” vs. “Terrorism”

	Insurgency/counterinsurgency	Terrorism/counterterrorism
Morality of <i>actors</i> a part of definition?	No	Yes (contested)
Rationality of actors in question?	No	Yes (contested)
Political motives of actors in question?	No	Yes (contested)
Morality of <i>experts</i> in question? Necessity for experts to morally engage?	Yes ¹⁵	Yes
Possibility of rational analysis in question?	No	Yes
Possibility of apolitical analysis in question?	Yes ¹⁶	Yes
Insurgents/terrorists are considered parallel to their opponents (counterinsurgents/ counterterrorists)	Yes	No
Insurgents/ terrorists resist application of the label	No	Yes
Expertise is defined by a “problem of definition”	No	Yes

¹⁵ The moral relation between experts and their object of study, however, undergoes a fundamental shift between counterinsurgency and counterterrorism.

¹⁶ Again, although the relation between politics and knowledge was highly contested under both counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, the form of this contestation would shift significantly.