

DISCIPLINING TERROR

How Experts Invented "Terrorism"

LISA STAMPNITZKY



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Disciplining Terror

Since 9/11 we have been told that terrorists are pathological evildoers, beyond our comprehension. Before the 1970s, however, hijackings, assassinations, and other acts we now call “terrorism” were considered the work of rational strategic actors. *Disciplining Terror* examines how political violence became “terrorism,” and how this transformation ultimately led to the current “war on terror.” Drawing upon archival research and interviews with terrorism experts, Lisa Stampnitzky traces the political and academic struggles through which experts made terrorism, and terrorism made experts. She argues that the expert discourse on terrorism operates at the boundary – itself increasingly contested – between science and politics, and between academic expertise and the state. Despite terrorism now being central to contemporary political discourse, there have been few empirical studies of terrorism experts. This book investigates how the concept of terrorism has been developed and used over recent decades.

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2 The invention of terrorism and the rise of the terrorism expert

*Tell me what you think about terrorism, and I will tell you who you are.*¹

On September 5, 1972, eight members of the Palestinian nationalist Black September Organization stormed the dormitory of the Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics site, killing two and taking nine others hostage. In exchange for the hostages, they demanded the release of 236 Palestinians imprisoned in Israel, as well as several members of the Red Army Faction imprisoned in West Germany, and a guarantee of safe passage out; they threatened to kill one hostage every two hours until their demands were met. All nine Israeli hostages, along with five of the Palestinians and a West German policeman, were killed in a gun battle following a failed rescue attempt by the West German police.

Although there had been a number of hijackings and other serious incidents of political violence from 1968 to 1972, it was the massacre at the 1972 Munich Olympics that took on central symbolic significance in the history of terrorism. The events at Munich have been inscribed in popular and expert histories of the problem alike as *the* spectacular event that inaugurated the era of modern terrorism. As one account reports, "Clive Aston, speaking for most experts, claimed that 'it was Munich which confirmed that terrorism as a political weapon had come of age'" (Naftali 2005: 52). Other experts, including J. Bowyer Bell (a terrorism researcher based at Columbia University), Robert Kupperman (who held appointments as an expert on terrorism at the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and at RAND), and

¹ Terrorism expert J. Bowyer Bell, quoted by Schmid (2011).

Brian Jenkins (who was for many years the head of RAND's research program on terrorism), also cited the impact of Munich when asked about the origins of terrorism expertise (Hoffman 1984).

The crisis reverberated around the world, broadcast live by the global media gathered for the Olympic Games to an estimated 900 million viewers worldwide.² But, even though Munich was a definite turning point, it was not yet clear what exactly "terrorism" entailed, or whether this was indeed the proper framework for making sense of such events. And, while "terrorism" was among the terms used to describe the events at Munich, the members of Black September were also denounced as criminals, madmen, and murderers. *The New York Times* wrote that "yesterday's murderous assault in Munich plumbed new depths of criminality" (*New York Times* 1972a), while a September 7 editorial described the events as "the depredations of such fanatical madmen" (*New York Times* 1972b). World leaders condemned the attacks as "insane terror" (Israeli premier Golda Meir), an "insane assault" (UK prime minister Ted Heath), "an abhorrent crime" and the work of "sick minds who do not belong to humanity" (King Hussein of Jordan) (*Los Angeles Times* 1972a). In the United States, President Richard Nixon condemned "[o]utlaws who will stop at nothing to accomplish goals" (*Los Angeles Times* 1972a), while Democratic presidential nominee George McGovern said that he was "horrified, as I think all Americans are, by this senseless act of terrorism" (Szulc 1972a). Both houses of Congress passed resolutions proposing that "the civilized world may cut off from contact with civilized mankind any peoples or any nation giving sanctuary, support, sympathy, aid or comfort to acts of murder and barbarism such as those just witnessed at Munich" (Szulc 1972b). The US stock exchange paused for a moment of silence in recognition of the events (*Los Angeles Times* 1972b).

² These events, in fact, would retain their position as key spectacle even up to the events of 9/11, as Peter Bergen noted in his book on the post-9/11 war on terror, "Not since television viewers had watched the abduction and murder of Israeli athletes during the Munich Olympics in 1972 had a massive global audience witnessed a terrorist attack unfold in real time" (Bergen 2011: 91).

Following the events at Munich, terrorism began to take shape as a problem in the public sphere and as an object of expert knowledge. It would take several years, however, before some of the most basic components of the problem as we now know it would coalesce. This is illustrated by some of the earliest official conceptualizations of "terrorism." An early list compiled by government counterterrorism officials included a wide-ranging plethora of troublesome incidents, generally linked to the international sphere in some way, but many seemed to lack any particular political message or intent, while others lacked any seeming connection to violence. The "incidents" included ranged from bomb threats to petty crime ("NYPD found hole in plate glass window of Aeroflot/Intourist office, presumed to be result of marble (found on the scene) propelled by slingshot") to peaceful demonstrations.³

While almost nothing had been written on terrorism at the start of the decade, by 1977 at least eleven bibliographic catalogues had been compiled to keep track of an ever-increasing number of publications.⁴ And, although the term "terrorism" had previously been used infrequently, and in scattered fashion in the media, it came into much wider use during the 1970s. A survey of major newspaper and periodical indexes found that neither the *New York Times* index nor the *London Times* index included "terrorism" as a significant category before 1972.⁵ Of the two major indexes of periodical literature, the *British Humanities Index* instituted the category in 1972, while the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* had the category dating back continuously to 1959, but experienced a large jump in the number of

³ NARA, Nixon papers.

⁴ These were compiled by a variety of organizations, including the United Nations (UN), RAND, the US Army (1975), the US Air Force (Coxe 1977), the US Department of Justice (Boston 1977; Boston, Marcus, and Wheaton 1976; US Department of Justice 1975), the US Department of State (1976), the FBI, and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), as well as independent publications by academics and others (Mickolus 1976; Sabetta 1977).

⁵ The *New York Times* index first included "terrorism" as a category in 1970, but listed no articles directly under that term until 1972, while the *London Times* index did not institute the category until 1972 (Crelinsten 1989a).

citations in the early 1970s (Crelinsten 1989a). A survey of two major bibliographies on terrorism found that over 99 percent of works on terrorism had been published in or after 1968 (Mickolus 1980; Norton and Greenberg 1980; Slann and Schechterman 1987: 3). By the end of the decade terrorism had become a hot topic of discourse within both political and academic realms, with one observer writing a few years later that “authors have spilled almost as much ink as the actors of terrorism have spilled blood” (Schmid and Jongman 1988: xiii). Why did terrorism take shape as a new and urgent problem in the 1970s? And how did a new literature on the problem so quickly emerge in such a brief period of time?

Two main explanations have been proposed for the rise of the terrorism discourse in the 1970s. The first suggests that the emergence of the terrorism discourse simply reflected events in the world: a new problem appeared, and the discourse followed. The second argues that the terrorism discourse is best understood as the creation of interested parties, generally identified as Western state elites and experts whose theories reflect the interests of these elites.⁶ Yet, as I will argue, the emergence of the terrorism discourse cannot be explained as a simple reflection of concrete events, nor as a mere rhetorical creation. Instead, it is necessary to take account of changes in three dimensions of things, and the interactions among them: events, experts, and techniques of knowledge. The late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed dramatic shifts in the application of political violence by non-state actors. Whereas earlier airplane seizures had tended to play out in a relatively routinized way, with the hijackers demanding either money or transportation, the rise of hijacking as a *political/theatrical* tactic⁷ in the late 1960s and early 1970s was indeed an innovation. In this reformulation, the spectacle of the incident became a crucial part of its intent and effectiveness, harnessing

⁶ See Chapter 1 for a more detailed discussion of this literature.

⁷ For a highly elaborated analysis of terrorism as “social drama,” see the work of Robin Wagner-Pacifici (1986, 1995).

the global media to bring international attention to seemingly local social and political struggles.

But the events comprising this new category of terrorism were not purely novel. And, once the new coinage had solidified, experts began to apply the term retrospectively to past events, which were thus opened to the possibility of reconceptualization through the framework of “terrorism.” As David Rapoport, a professor of political science at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and another prominent early academic terror expert, recalled: “In retrospect, people began to see the connection between this, not only in the earlier guerrilla movements or terror movements, but also in places like Cyprus and Palestine” (Rapoport, quoted by Hoffman 1984: 181). This is evident in many of the books on terrorism that began to appear during this decade (as in the preface to Richard Clutterbuck’s (1977: 11) *Guerrillas and Terrorists*, wherein he declares: “The theme of this book is that terrorism...is as old as civilization itself.” This is also evident in the construction of several of the large research projects that began to be developed after this time, such as the RAND database (founded in 1972) and the ITERATE database, which both began their chronologies at 1968, while another government-sponsored project traced the history of terrorism all the way back to 1870 (Mickolus, Heyman, and Schlotter 1980: 178–9).

Yet neither is it sufficient simply to conclude that the terrorism discourse was simply the rhetorical imposition of a powerful class. While the emergence of “terrorism” as a new problem was certainly a rhetorical achievement, this was not *only* a linguistic transformation. To account more fully for the emergence of the problem of “terrorism” as we now know it, we must focus on the trifecta of the emergence of new sorts of *events*, new sorts of *experts*, and the means by which these came together: the application of specific forms of expertise to the problem. This framework draws upon William Sewell’s (1996: 844) characterization of “events” as not just happenings but processes through which incidents transform structures of meaning, and Foucault’s (2003) similar notion of “eventalization,” as well as the

work of Latour, who argues that sociology of science must engage the role of “actor-networks” (Latour 1987, 1993 [1991]) in creating new objects of knowledge.⁸

The key factor drawing attention to the problem of terrorism at this time was the transnational character of the events. While the problem of terrorism would eventually come to encompass political violence against civilians in a very broad sense, the earliest concerns emanating from the US government were more focused. A 1972 White House memo specified that “practical objectives in the campaign against ‘international terrorism’” did *not* include “traditional violence which is covered by established codes (e.g. common crimes), internal political disputes, civil strife, decolonization, bi-national or international armed conflict,” but were targeted purely at “the prevention of the spread of violence to countries not directly concerned, the victimization of innocent persons, and the preservation of the vital machinery of international life.”⁹ Similarly, a 1976 speech given by the head of the Cabinet Committee to Combat Terrorism (CCCT) declared:

With respect to the causes of terrorism, we have pointed out that none of the many states which have won their independence the hard way, including our own nation, engaged in the type of international violence which our draft convention seeks to control. Our proposal is carefully restricted to the problem of the spread of violence to persons and places far removed from the scene of struggles for self-determination.¹⁰

In other words, the US concern was less with insurgent violence, *per se*, than with the spread of such violence into the “international”

⁸ See Chapter 1 for a more in-depth explication of these concepts.

⁹ NARA, Nixon papers, Tufaro papers, box 1972–3, subject files, secret attachments no. 1, CCCT working group no. 2, memo headed “Wednesday December 13, 1972.”

¹⁰ “International terrorism: address by Robert A. Fearey” (reprint of speech given at World Affairs Council), article in *Department of State Bulletin*, March 29, 1976: 394–401, 401.

sphere. And as Jenkins has written recently, “The initial concern of Americans was not the conflicts themselves; rather we were concerned with preventing the conflicts from spilling over into the international domain” (Jenkins 2006: 8). The concern was with violence *out of place* – “spilling over” from local conflicts into the “international” sphere – and an attack at the Olympic Games, symbol of international cooperation, signified this perfectly.

THE RISE OF THE TERRORISM EXPERT

The Olympic attack spurred the US government to take action in ways that earlier hijackings and hostage-takings had not. The state played a key role in fostering the early growth of terrorism expertise: sponsoring and funding research, organizing conferences, and bringing experts and policymakers together. And a significant part of the early response to the problem took the form of recruiting experts who could make terrorism into something that could be known and subsequently (it was hoped) rationally acted upon.

Not long after the events at Munich, President Nixon established the first official US government body charged with focusing on the terrorism problem, the Cabinet Committee to Combat Terrorism.¹¹ The CCCT’s first goals focused on improving security for specific populations for whom the US government felt a particular responsibility: US citizens at home and abroad, and official guests such as diplomats. Although its intended function was largely symbolic, signaling the administration’s concern about the terrorism problem, the group was important in bringing together individuals interested in defining the terrorism problem and potential directions of response, and as one of the first institutional locations from which a

¹¹ My discussion of the CCCT is based on materials from the National Security Archive (a non-profit, non-government organization which collects documents related to US national security and foreign policy), which holds records from the CCCT and its working group, including reports and minutes of meetings. Many of these documents have been made available online, via the Digital National Security Archive (DNSA) project, at <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com>. Citations to documents (e.g. TE 550) refer to the DNSA’s document numbering system.

demand for terrorism expertise originated.¹² The CCCT and the Department of State (along with the Department of Defense, the CIA, and the FBI/Department of Justice) were major sponsors of terrorism expertise in the 1970s, and, as the problem of terrorism came to be addressed by more government agencies and organizations, the CCCT provided a location for coordinating these activities.

Although the committee proper met only a handful of times, it had an associated working group, chaired by Lewis Hoffacker (from 1972 to 1974, succeeded by Robert Fearey from 1974 to 1976, and then by Admiral Douglas Heck), that met on a regular (generally biweekly) basis from 1972 to 1977.¹³ The working group sponsored several conferences on terrorism, and funded a number of research projects.¹⁴ In late 1972 the RAND Corporation, soon to become one of the core locations for the development of terrorism expertise in the United States, was asked by the CCCT, the Department of State, and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency to do research on the

¹² A January 27, 1975, memo on whether the CCCT should continue to exist writes: "Although the CCCT has met only once since its formation, it continues to serve, in my view, two useful functions: it serves as a tangible expression of the President's concern with the still very acute problem of worldwide terrorism; and it serves as an umbrella for the extremely useful work which has been conducted by its Working Group in meeting the objectives set out in the President's memorandum to the Secretary of State of September 15, 1972, directing the formation of the CCCT" (DNSA document TE 371).

¹³ The CCCT was disbanded in 1977, when President Jimmy Carter created a new working group on terrorism, which retained the same membership but was to "report to an executive committee of the NSC [National Security Council] – a new Executive Committee on Combating Terrorism – that would meet to determine counterterrorism policy" (Naftali 2005: 101). It was also at this time that a new terrorism intelligence subcommittee was formed in the CIA (Naftali 2005:102). Under Presidential Review Memorandum (PRM) 30, a new "special coordination committee" and a "policy review committee" was formed within the NSC to coordinate terrorism issues (Farrell 1982: 35). In 1978 the Department of State formed a new office for combating terrorism, to be headed by Anthony Quainton.

¹⁴ The minutes of the meetings of the working group in the middle of the 1970s regularly included reports on various research projects relating to terrorism, and fostering the production of such research appears to have been one of the primary activities of the group during this period. For example, in the fourth progress report (January 20, 1975) from the CCCT to the president, research was listed as one of the "priority areas of concentrated effort" (DNSA document TE 366, p. 11).

terrorism problem.¹⁵ At first RAND was asked to focus on how to manage specific types of terrorist incidents – kidnapping and hostage incidents, including how to bargain in hostage situations (Jenkins and Johnson 1976). In 1976 the Department of State reported that the Office of External Research was managing a “quarter-million-dollar program of research and analysis on the subject,” with funds coming from multiple federal agencies, including the Departments of State and Justice.¹⁶

At the start of the 1970s there were few, if any, terrorism experts. Recalling the state of affairs in terrorism studies at the beginning of the 1970s, one expert (Bell 1977: 481–2) wrote:

There were really no general experts in the analysis of terror, only those with special academic skills (a knowledge of the Palestinian Fedayeen, or a career focused on deviant behavior) that could be related to the problem. Those threatened by the terrorists, however, needed advice, recommendations, aid, and comfort; if the recommendations worked, no matter how bizarre, so much the better.

Walter Laqueur, one of the first terrorism experts, and the author of many books on terrorism, including *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction* (Laqueur 1999 – called “probably the best single volume...on terrorism and political violence” by a

¹⁵ RAND, located in Santa Monica, California, was founded in 1948 as the “Research and Development” Corporation to provide consulting expertise to the air force, and subsequently became, among other things, the premier location of game theory simulations and debates over the possibility of rational nuclear war during the cold war (see Abella 2008).

¹⁶ “Research has contributed significantly to the development of US policies to cope with international terrorism. The Office of External Research, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, for example, is currently managing a quarter-million-dollar program of research and analysis on the subject. Funds have come from the Department itself and half a dozen other agencies, notably the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration of the Department of Justice.” Source: *Far Horizons* (Department of State newsletter), volume 9, issue 2 (spring 1976), article on “International terrorism” (report on the 1976 Department of State conference on international terrorism), p. 3.

former chief of counterterrorism operations at the CIA) recalled, similarly, that “[i]n the beginning, there were maybe half a dozen people. . . [T]his wasn’t organized at all.”¹⁷ With these initiatives from the government, together with independent interest arising from academics and various others, however, the production of terrorism expertise expanded exponentially. Within the space of a few years terrorism was transformed from a problem with almost nothing written on it to a topic around which entire institutes, journals, and conferences were organized. One early bibliographic study of the field identifies 1973 as the year when the “systematic study of international terrorism began to develop,” noting that virtually nothing was published on the subject prior to 1960, and only a handful of publications appeared before the middle of the 1970s, while 113 books appeared on the topic in 1976 and 161 in 1977 (Reid 1983: 104, 220).

The rapid growth of terrorism expertise is illustrated by the increase in conferences, a primary forum for communication among terrorism researchers at this time (see Figure 2.1). From 1972 to 1978 there was not only a significant growth in terrorism conferences but also growth in the interconnections between presenters and conferences. As H. H. A. Cooper, an early participant in the field, observed, “[F]rom about 1974 through 1978 was sort of the golden period, as it were; during this time, there were a tremendous number of conferences that brought together a lot of different viewpoints” (Hoffman 1984: 115). And, in the early 1980s, two experts recalled:

One indicator of interest in antiterrorism is the proliferation of conferences concerning terrorism. . . Hardly a week goes by without witnessing some conference on terrorism. Security firms, entrepreneurs with few if any qualifications, college professors, non-profit institutions, universities and governments – they have all held their share of terrorism seminars.¹⁸

¹⁷ Interview with Walter Laqueur, November 2006.

¹⁸ Hoover Institution Archives, Claire Sterling papers: box 8, “A policy game about terrorism – draft,” Hans Josef Horchem and Robert H. Kupperman (no date).

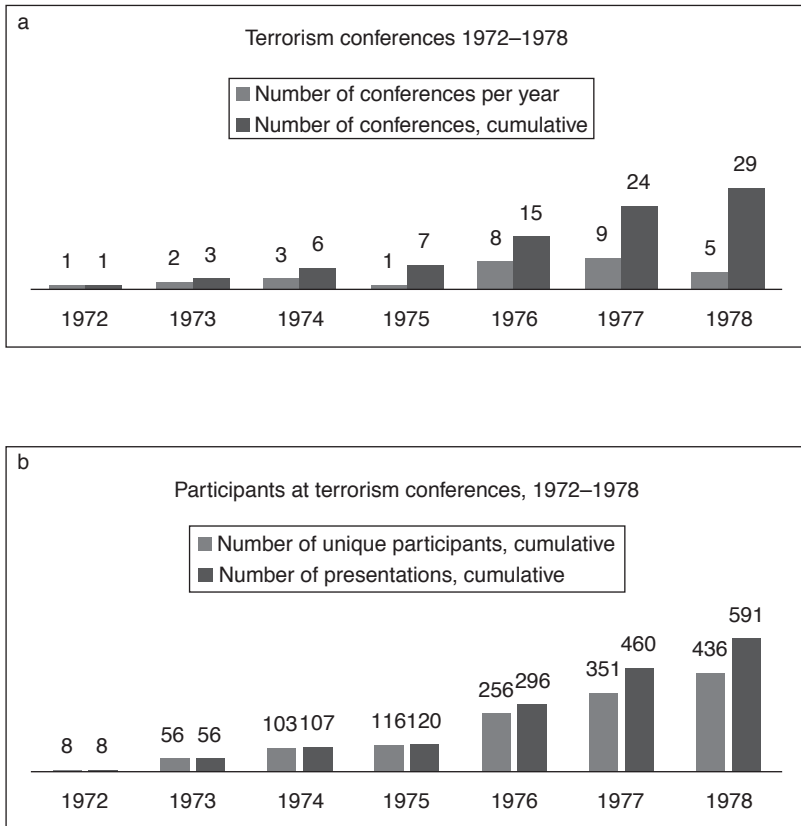


FIGURE 2.1 The growth of terrorism conferences, 1972–1978

The next section illustrates the increasing connections among terrorism experts via a network analysis of participants at conferences (comprising twenty-nine conferences and 436 individual presenters between 1972 and 1978). This shows not simply the quantitative increase in knowledge-producing activities, therefore, but also the growth of a set of relationships between those who were becoming “terrorism experts.” In the diagrams that follow, conferences and individual presenters constitute the nodes (points), while each instance when an individual presented a paper at a given conference is marked as a tie (line), linking together individuals who presented at

the same conferences, and conferences attended by the same individuals.¹⁹ Each circle represents a conference, and each square represents an individual presenter at that conference. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 give further information on selected individuals and events portrayed in these figures.

In the first diagram (Figure 2.2), note that there are no ties (overlap) among the presenters at the first three conferences. In the second (Figure 2.3), representing conferences held from 1972 to 1975, it becomes apparent that there are now a handful of ties among the presenters. For example, J. Bowyer Bell of Columbia University (no. 56, in the lower right-hand corner of the diagram) attended both conferences 3 and 82, and thus constitutes a network tie between those events. Figure 2.4 illustrates the much more complex structure of ties among the conferences and presenters that has developed by 1976. Whereas in the period from 1972 to 1975 (Figure 2.3) there are only a handful of connections, by 1976 (Figure 2.4) multiple overlapping ties have emerged among conferences and presenters, and only a handful of conferences by this point have no overlap with over events. We can also see in this diagram that the majority of these ties are created through a small minority of the overall pool of presenters.²⁰

¹⁹ The figures were generated via the UCINET and Netdraw programs developed for social network analysis (Borgatti, Everett, and Freeman 2002). In the language of network analysis, the diagram here is represented as a two-mode network, in which it is not the case that the ties are direct links between people but, rather, that the ties between individuals are mediated by some second axis (in this case, conferences at which both individuals were present). Squares here represent individuals (presenters), while circles represent conferences (events). Individuals with only one tie (e.g. those who presented at only one conference during this time) have been excluded from the diagrams after 1975 for the sake of simplicity. These diagrams were constructed by modeling the network of ties among those who presented at the same conferences, which is taken as a proxy measure for the growth of social ties in the field. I take having presented at the same conference to be a valid proxy for actual connections, because of the relatively small size of most of these events.

²⁰ Figure 2.4 appears less visually dense because I have removed from it the relative isolates – that is, those presenters who appear at only one conference and do not form any further links. These relative isolates still compose the numerical majority of those presenting; I discuss this significance of this below.

Table 2.1 *Some prominent individuals in terrorism studies, 1972–1978*

<i>ID number</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Background</i>
1	Alexander, Yonah	Founding editor of <i>Terrorism: An International Journal</i> , professor of international studies and director of Institute for Studies in International Terrorism at the State University of New York (SUNY), Oneonta.
3	Hassell, Conrad V.	FBI, special operations and research unit.
4	Russell, Charles A.	Affiliated with Risks International, a consulting firm that quantified risks of terrorism (largely for corporate clients). Attorney, PhD in international relations from American University, formerly with US Air Force counterintelligence office.
6	Kupperman, Robert H.	PhD in applied mathematics from New York University (NYU). Chief scientist, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Member of CCCT working group, and chair of Interagency Committee on Mass Destruction and Terrorism.
9	Jenkins, Brian M.	Head of research on terrorism at RAND Corporation.
18	Mickolus, Edward F.	CIA analyst, PhD in political science. Constructed the ITERATE database of terrorist incidents; also compiled several bibliographies on terrorism.
52	Rapoport, David	Professor of political science, UCLA. Author of many books and articles on terrorism.
56	Bell, J. Bowyer	Senior research associate, Institute of War and Peace Studies, Columbia University. Published on terrorism, especially the Irish Republican Army (IRA); renowned as one of the few

Table 2.1 (*cont.*)

<i>ID number</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Background</i>
		early researchers to conduct first-hand research on terrorists.
120	Murphy, John F.	Professor of law, University of Kansas.
162	Crenshaw, Martha	PhD in political science, studied Algerian war. Later, professor of political science, Wesleyan University (Middletown, CT) and Stanford University.
407	Dror, Yehezkel	Professor of political science, Hebrew University, Jerusalem.
462	Horowitz, Irving L.	Professor of sociology and political science at Rutgers University (New Brunswick, NJ).

Note: ID numbers, which correlate to the labels in the network diagrams, are strictly arbitrary. The affiliations listed indicate individuals' affiliations during the period from 1972 to 1978.

Table 2.2 *Some important conferences on terrorism, 1972–1978*

<i>ID number</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Conference name</i>	<i>Sponsors</i>
2	1972	Department of State conference on terrorism	US Department of State
83	1973	"Conference on terrorism and political crimes"	International Institute for Advanced Criminal Sciences
3	1974	"International terrorism"	International Studies Association; Institute of World Affairs, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
9	1976	"Conference on terrorism in the contemporary world"	Glassboro State College, New Jersey Committee for the Humanities
6	1976	Department of State conference on international terrorism	US Department of State

Table 2.2 (*cont.*)

<i>ID number</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Conference name</i>	<i>Sponsors</i>
4	1976	"International terrorism, national and global ramifications"	Ralph Bunche Institute of the UN; City University of New York (CUNY); Institute for Studies in International Terrorism, SUNY
93	1977	"Research strategies for the study of international political terrorism"	Canadian government; US Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA); International Centre for Comparative Criminology, University of Montreal; Institute of Criminal Justice and Criminology, University of Maryland
16	1977	"Terrorism and US business"	Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies; Institute for Studies in International Terrorism, SUNY
11	1977	"Terrorism and the media"	Ralph Bunche Institute of the UN
15	1977	"Symposium on international terrorism"	John Bassett Moore Society of International Law
99	1978	International scientific conference on terrorism	Institute for International Scientific Exchange, Aspen Institute
202	1978	"Legal aspects of international terrorism"	US Department of State; LEAA; American Society of International Law

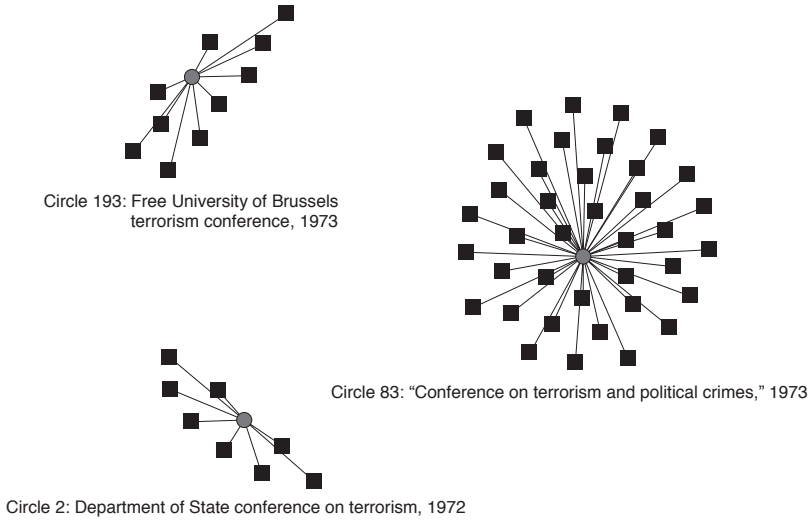


FIGURE 2.2 Presenters at terrorism conferences, 1972-1973

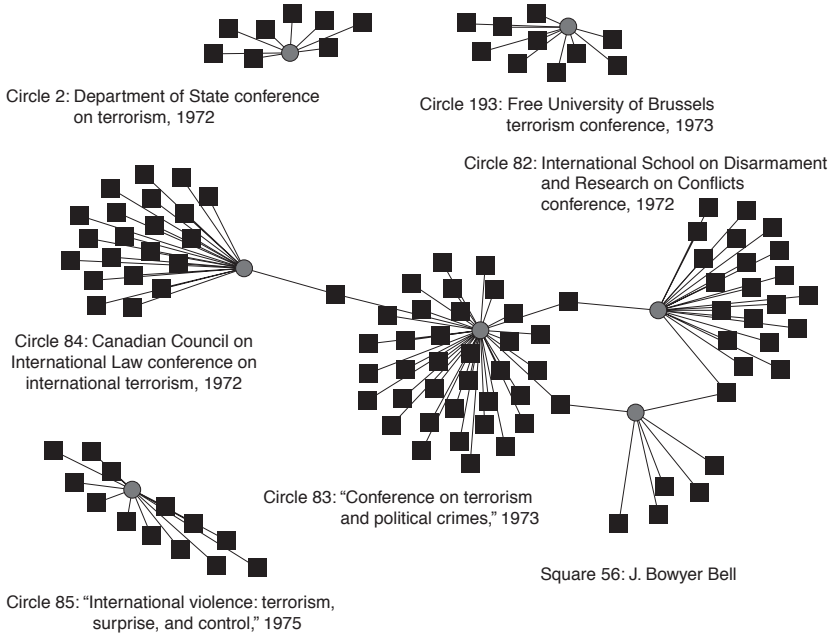
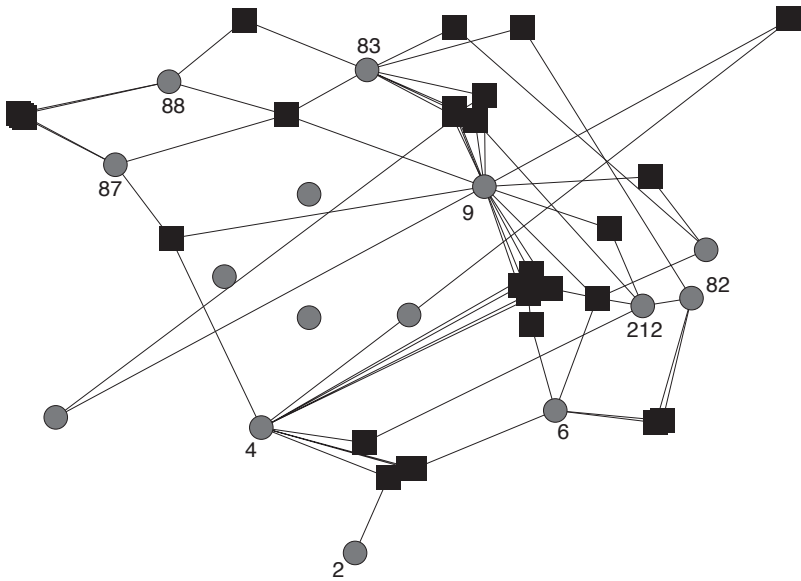


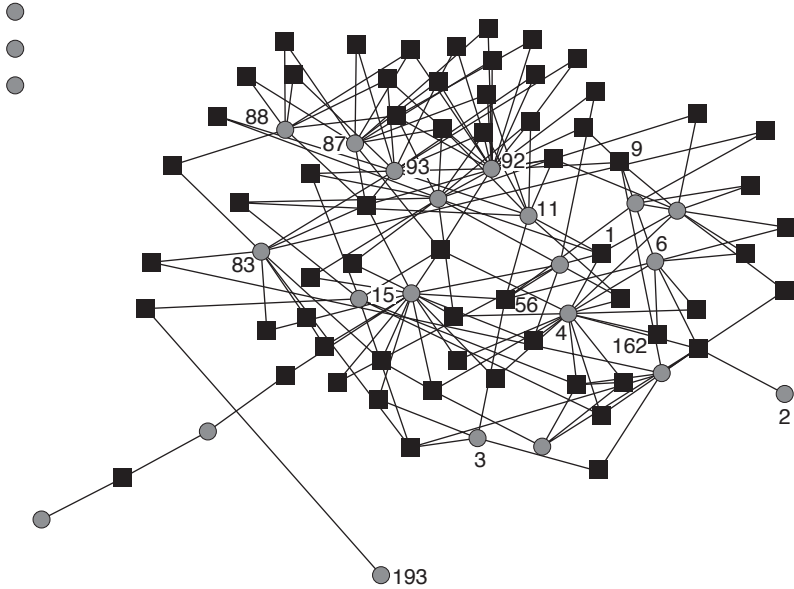
FIGURE 2.3 Presenters at terrorism conferences, 1972-1975



- Circle 9: "Conference on terrorism in the contemporary world," 1976
 Circle 88: "The impact of terrorism and skyjacking on the operations of the criminal justice system," 1976
 Circle 87: "Hostage taking: problems of prevention and control," 1976
 Circle 4: "International terrorism, national and global ramifications," 1976
 Circle 2: Department of State conference on terrorism, 1972
 Circle 83: "Conference on terrorism and political crimes," 1973
 Circle 6: Department of State conference on international terrorism, 1976
 Circle 212: "Terror: the man, the mind, the matter," 1976
 Circle 82: International School on Disarmament and Research on Conflicts conference, 1974

FIGURE 2.4 Presenters at terrorism conferences, 1972–1976

Figure 2.5, representing conferences held through 1977, illustrates the further development of a 'web' structure, in which there are multiple overlapping ties among the individuals and events. Conferences 5, 85, and 91 (in the upper left-hand corner) are the only remaining events whose presenters fail to appear at any other events. And, by 1978 (Figure 2.6), there is a highly complex pattern of overlapping connections among the conferences and presenters. Also of note in these two figures is evidence that the 1972 Department of State

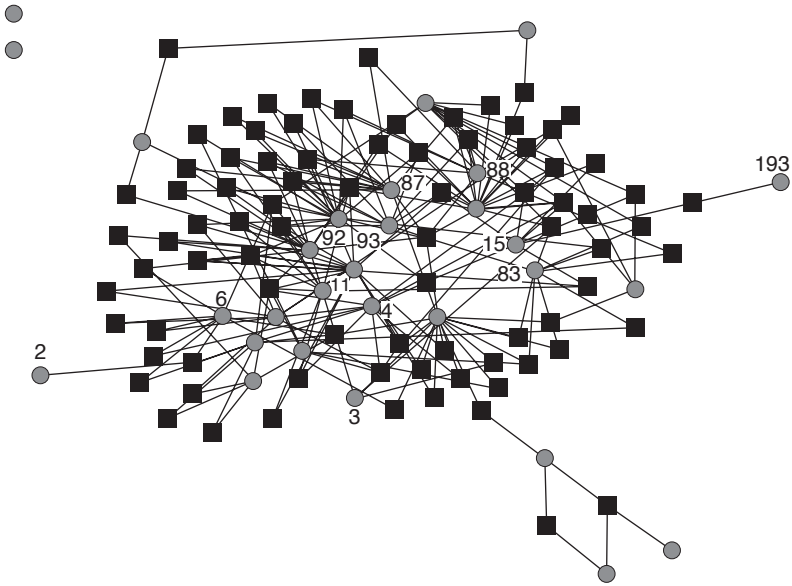


- Circle 2: Department of State conference on terrorism, 1972
- Circle 193: Free University of Brussels terrorism conference, 1973
- Circle 83: "Conference on terrorism and political crimes," 1973
- Circle 15: "Symposium on international terrorism," 1977
- Circle 88: "The impact of terrorism and skyjacking on the operations of the criminal justice system," 1976
- Circle 87: "Hostage taking: problems of prevention and control," 1976
- Circle 93: "Research strategies for the study of international political terrorism," 1977
- Circle 92: "Dimensions of victimization in the context of terroristic acts," 1977
- Circle 11: "Terrorism and the media," 1977
- Circle 4: "International terrorism, national and global ramifications," 1976
- Circle 3: International Studies Association conference on international terrorism, 1974
- Circle 6: Department of State conference on international terrorism, 1976

- Square 162: Martha Crenshaw
- Square 56: J. Bowyer Bell
- Square 9: Brian Jenkins
- Square 1: Yonah Alexander

FIGURE 2.5 Presenters at terrorism conferences, 1972–1977

conference on terrorism (no. 2) is a relative outlier, existing on the edge of the figure, illuminating the fact that most of the individuals presenting at this conference did not continue on in the field of terrorism studies.



- Circle 2: Department of State conference on terrorism, 1972
 Circle 193: Free University of Brussels terrorism conference, 1973
 Circle 83: "Conference on terrorism and political crimes," 1973
 Circle 15: "Symposium on international terrorism," 1977
 Circle 88: "The impact of terrorism and skyjacking on the operations of the criminal justice system," 1976
 Circle 87: "Hostage taking: problems of prevention and control," 1976
 Circle 93: "Research strategies for the study of international political terrorism," 1977
 Circle 92: "Dimensions of victimization in the context of terroristic acts," 1977
 Circle 11: "Terrorism and the media," 1977
 Circle 4: "International terrorism, national and global ramifications," 1976
 Circle 3: International Studies Association conference on international terrorism, 1974
 Circle 6: Department of State conference on international terrorism, 1976

FIGURE 2.6 Presenters at terrorism conferences, 1972–1978

THE RISE OF THE "TERRORISM MAFIA"

As these diagrams illustrate, the growth of "terrorism studies" was not simply a quantitative increase in individual projects and experts. Rather, it took shape as a networked social arena. And this was not simply the emergence of a new arena in which pre-existing experts applied their skills to a new problem. Not only did the numbers of

experts, conferences, and publications increase exponentially over the course of the 1970s, there was also a qualitative shift in the *types* of experts and expertise being applied to the problem, along with a shift in the very meaning of terrorism itself. The emergence of “terrorism” as a new problem occurred in concert with the creation of a new type of expert. Crucial to this development was the rise of “terrorism expertise” as a distinct position from which to speak.

The absence of specialized “terrorism experts” is apparent at the first US conference on terrorism, which was organized by the Department of State and the Cabinet Committee to Combat Terrorism on October 24, 1972. Most of those brought in as experts at this conference were called upon for their prominence in fields such as collective behavior, social movements, or social psychology, rather than for their expertise in the area of *terrorism*, per se. Nor did the presenters at this conference include any of those individuals who would come to constitute the core of the terrorism studies community in later years. Presentations were made by Thomas Thornton, of the Department of State, and author of the oft-cited (1964) essay “Terror as a weapon of political agitation”; sociologist Irving Louis Horowitz of Rutgers University; Karl Schmitt of the University of Texas; Carl Leiden of the University of Texas and the National War College; Edward Gude of the Adlai Stevenson Institute of International Affairs, who had written on counterinsurgency; and psychologist Sheldon Levy of Wayne State University, who had served as co-director of the Assassination and Political Violence task force of the Violence Commission under Presidents Johnson and Nixon.²¹ The relative position of the earliest conferences as outliers in the later field of expertise is evident in the network diagrams: while most of the other conferences form a dense web of connections, this conference (labeled no. 2 in [Figures 2.2 to 2.6](#)) had very few ties to later events.

²¹ *Far Horizons*, volume 6, issue 3 (September 1973), “External research at State: an overview of the FY 1973 program,” page 11.

By contrast, presenters at a second conference on terrorism, organized by the Department of State in 1976, included a number of individuals who had done research specifically on terrorism, several of whom would go on to become prominent experts. Presenters at this conference included Brian Crozier, with a background in intelligence/counterinsurgency; Martha Crenshaw, an academic political scientist who had studied the Algerian resistance and would become one of the key figures in the terrorism studies field; Brian Jenkins, who would go on to head the terrorism research program at RAND; Paul Wilkinson, who would go on to head a terrorism research center at the University of St Andrews in Scotland; and J. Bowyer Bell, a researcher and adjunct instructor at Columbia University, and one of the few individuals to conduct fieldwork with terrorism organizations. The central role that the experts at the 1976 conference would go on to play in the emerging "terrorism studies" field is also illustrated in the network diagrams; see, for example, the relatively central positions of Crenshaw (no. 162), Bell (no. 56), and Jenkins (no. 9).

Jenkins, who would become one of the most prominent public faces of terrorism expertise, came to the study of terrorism with the sort of highly eclectic background that was more the rule than the exception for early terrorism experts. He began his career studying to be a painter, first at the Chicago Art Institute and Academy of Arts, and then receiving a BA in fine arts from UCLA in 1962. After graduation, Jenkins entered the Army Reserves, serving as a paratrooper, as a member of the Green Berets in the Dominican Republic, and with the Special Forces in Vietnam.²² In 1968 he returned to Los Angeles, beginning work on a PhD in history at UCLA and coming to work at RAND as a consultant, and serving as a member of the Long Range Planning Task Group in Saigon, where he would spend time in 1968, 1969, and 1971.²³ Jenkins became an official

²² RAND Corporation Archives (Los Angeles), Tanham files, folder "GKT Chiron January-June 1978," "Jenkins CV."

²³ RAND Corporation Archives, Tanham files, folder "GKT Chiron January-June 1978," "Jenkins CV."

RAND employee in April 1972, assigned to work on RAND projects relating to the war in Vietnam.²⁴ By 1976 he was associate head of the Social Sciences Department at RAND, and he also took on the role of the director of RAND's research into guerrilla warfare and international terrorism.²⁵

By the middle of the 1970s we begin to see the appearance not just of individual actors who could claim to be terrorism experts but also the beginnings of networks, organizations, and social structures among these experts. By the late 1970s a core group of terrorism scholars, sometimes informally referring to themselves a "terrorism mafia," had emerged.²⁶ As Jenkins would write in 1979, "There is a kind of informal, international network of scholars and government officials with interests or responsibilities in the area of terrorism. A kind of 'college-without-campus' has emerged" (Jenkins 1983: 156).

The "mafia" consisted of a core group at the center of the emerging terrorism studies world, who took on the project of making the field a legitimate area of study. Institutional entrepreneurs organized projects, organizations, and activities that both facilitated the growth of experts' relations between themselves and communicated expert knowledge to other audiences. They organized events such as conferences and seminars, places to publish such as journals and edited books, and physical institutions such as research centers. These projects both provided methods of communication among experts and aimed to establish the importance of the terrorism research project itself. The projects of developing an expert identity, and of building the collective project of "terrorism studies," were thus intertwined with strategies to legitimate "terrorism" as an object of knowledge.

²⁴ RAND Corporation Archives, box "RAND items 1966-1974" (also marked "RAND items no. 40"), and "RAND items no. 425," "New employees," April 11, 1972.

²⁵ RAND Corporation Archives, Tanham files, folder "GKT Chiron January-June 1978," "Jenkins CV."

²⁶ This phrase was introduced by some of these experts in interviews conducted by the author.

This strategy of network building and institutional entrepreneurship is perhaps best illustrated by the work of Yonah Alexander, a professor of international studies at SUNY Oneonta, and founder of the Institute for Studies in International Terrorism at that institution. Between 1976 and 1979 Alexander organized at least six conferences²⁷ and founded the first specialized journal on terrorism.²⁸ According to the “information for authors” included in the first issue, the journal aimed to “examine the types, causes, consequences, control, and meaning of all forms of terrorist action” and “present the results of original research without restrictions on the ideological or political approach of contributors.”²⁹

The first issues of *Terrorism* were largely populated by descriptive essays, typologies, and conceptualization work, as well as practical and policy-oriented pieces, but a relative lack of empirical research, consisting mostly of preliminary reports on work in progress. The authors came from a variety of backgrounds – academic, practical, and political. The next year, 1978, the journal *Conflict* (which did not focus solely on terrorism, although a number of articles in the first volume touched on terrorism), edited by George Tanham at RAND, was founded, and the following year, 1979, *TVI (Terrorism, Violence, Insurgency) Journal* made its first appearance.

A NEW DISCIPLINE?

This chapter has related what appears at first to be a tremendous success story. In 1979 Yonah Alexander wrote, “The study of terrorism has now ‘arrived’ internationally, as evidenced by the birth of a new

²⁷ These are “International terrorism, national and global ramifications,” an interdisciplinary conference of the Ralph Bunche Institute of the UN (1976); “Terrorism and the media” (1977); two seminars sponsored by the Institute for Studies in International Terrorism (1977); “Terrorism and US business: (1977); and “The rationalization of terrorism” (1979).

²⁸ This journal, founded 1977, later merged (in 1992) with the journal *Conflict* to become *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, at which time George Tanham of RAND took over as editor.

²⁹ *Terrorism* volume 1, issue 1, inside the back cover.

international multidisciplinary journal, *Terrorism*; the proliferation of scientific conferences and papers; and the growth of university research and teaching on the subject" (Alexander, Carlton, and Wilkinson 1979: ix). This was not simply an assessment but, rather, a performative statement, meant to promote and consolidate terrorism studies as a field – a statement that seeks to enact the truth that it proclaims.

But had terrorism studies actually "arrived" at this time? Terrorism expertise was, at best, a semi-institutionalized field, with an overall lack of any significant structure or regulation among the pool of potential experts.³⁰ Although a nascent field of expertise was in evidence by the late 1970s, this "field" lacked many of the features that sociologists would generally expect to find in an established scientific field, including a formal structure, regulated boundaries, and highly defined criteria of certification and standards. Thus, even though the problem of "terrorism" was, by the end of the 1970s, circulating as an object of discourse and analysis, there was a marked lack of regulatory structure among the experts, making this "terrorism" problem open to (almost) all for speaking with but able to be (analytically) controlled by practically none.

The early development of terrorism studies did not result in the creation of a tightly organized field of cultural production, nor was the burgeoning area of investigation absorbed into or captured by any other pre-existing profession or discipline. Terrorism studies did not develop as an outgrowth of a pre-existing discipline or institutionalized field of knowledge but, instead, amalgamated individuals and knowledge from a variety of backgrounds. The new experts were drawn from a veritable hodgepodge of backgrounds, and the path to expertise was described as "accidental" by a number of early participants:

The first time I discovered that I was a so-called expert is when I was at a major, highly selected conference of English and

³⁰ I revisit the question of whether the field has institutionalized since 9/11 in Chapter 8.

American scholars and government officials in England. I found that I knew as much as anybody else did in that group, including the government ministers (Robert Friedlander, quoted by Hoffman 1984: 97).

Brian Jenkins, a former art student who got into terrorism accidentally, and myself, a respectable lawyer, as it were, got into it equally accidentally, and would have been unlikely ever to have met unless we had this common ground. You could say this in regard to probably every person who's involved in it. They all came into terrorism entirely accidentally (H. H. A. Cooper, quoted by Hoffman 1984: 116–17).

My becoming a so-called expert on terrorism simply evolved from the fact that I spent such a lot of time talking about it (Richard Clutterbuck, quoted by Kahn 1978: 53).

Many of the most prominent experts were located in relatively peripheral institutional locations. None were in tenured or tenure-track positions at major research universities, and, even at think tanks such as RAND, terrorism research was a relatively peripheral endeavor. More concretely, we can also see that the backgrounds of many of these new experts on terrorism were widely disparate, representing academic disciplines ranging from psychology, political science, and sociology to medicine, law, and criminology, along with individuals working in the intelligence services, the police sector, and partisan and non-partisan think tanks. When asked why there were so few academics in the early years of terrorism studies, one expert suggested that – in addition to a lack of data – it was considered too controversial, and too poorly defined, to become the basis for a proper academic study, noting that someone had once said that coming up with a proper definition of terrorism was “like trying to nail a pudding to a wall.”³¹

Furthermore, the self-identified “terrorism mafia” constituted only a minor portion of those involved in some way in the production

³¹ Interview with Martha Crenshaw, October 12, 2006.

of knowledge about terrorism at this point. There were a whole series of others, traversing this very porous boundary of the nascent world of “terrorism studies,” coming in and making claims about terrorism and then disappearing. A large fraction of those publishing in journals or presenting at conferences had no particular background in the field, and often would not continue to do further work in the area.³² Thus, although I emphasize in this chapter the emergence of a terrorism studies community and the “terrorism mafia,” the larger arena of terrorism expertise continued to be dominated by people who were not (and perhaps did not want to be) terrorism experts in this specialized sense. Of 1,796 individuals presenting at conferences on terrorism between 1972 and 2001, 1,505 (84 percent) made only one appearance.³³ Similarly, a recent study of journal articles published on terrorism during the 1990s found more than 80 percent to be by one-time authors (Silke 2004b: 69), and another study found that core journals in terrorism studies had significantly higher rates of contributions from non-academic authors than journals in political science or communications studies (Gordon 2001).

These factors all contributed to the structuring of a relatively uninstitutionalized field of terrorism expertise with highly permeable boundaries. In contrast to theories of professions and scientific fields, which often tend to presume that the social structures of expertise will be composed of tightly bounded self-regulated units, the field of terrorism studies has been characterized by weak and permeable boundaries, a population of “experts” whose backgrounds and sources of legitimation are highly heterogeneous, and a lack of agreement not just over how expertise should be evaluated but even over how to define the central topic of their concern.

³² This is evident in the relatively large proportion of participants in the conferences data set who make only one appearance (84 percent of those in my entire data set). This high degree of movement into and out of the research area continued to characterize the field as it developed; a recent study of journal articles on terrorism during the 1990s found that more than 80 percent were by one-time authors (Silke 2004b: 64).

³³ Source: author’s data set on presenters at conferences on terrorism, 1972 to 2001.

While the sociological literature on cultural fields, disciplines, and professional projects tends to highlight the importance of institutionalization, terrorism experts have rarely succeeded in consolidating control over the production of terrorism discourse and terrorism expertise. Rather than looking like a discipline or a closed "cultural field," terrorism expertise is constructed and negotiated in an interstitial space between academia, the state, and the media. The boundaries of legitimate knowledge and expertise are particularly open to challenges from self-proclaimed experts from the media and political fields, and this has had significant consequences for the sorts of expert discourses that tend to be produced and disseminated. Experts, however defined, were not in control of the production of other experts, or the definition of their object of "terrorism," as illustrated in the continual tension over whether terrorism should be approached primarily as a moral problem or as a rational problem to be addressed through causal social-scientific analysis.

Further, it is important to note that terrorism studies and the "terrorism mafia" were, from the start, hybrid entities. Even though I use the "terrorism mafia" term here to refer to the core group of experts, and those who were most invested in maintaining a professional/academic direction to the field, this was not a homogeneous group. The members of the "terrorism mafia" were not all academics. And, in part because academic terror experts tended to occupy a relatively marginal place within academia, it was not necessarily the case that "academic" experts would be most oriented towards the reward system of the academic disciplines, as compared to those of the public or governmental arenas. Although, as the field of terrorism expertise went on to develop, this core group would most often come to represent the interest in making terrorism studies take on the characteristics of a scientific discipline, this was not a frictionless process, and several of the individuals who were central to building the field in this early period would later align with other approaches to the study of terrorism in the 1980s and 1990s.

In the next chapter I delve further into the question of how it was that "terrorism" took shape as a problem so imbued with tensions in meaning, creating great difficulties for the field of expertise. While the earliest discourse on terrorism took its cues from an earlier discourse on insurgency, over the course of the 1970s a new framework emerged in which "terrorism" was differentiated from previous understandings of political violence, and this shift would have significant effects on the production of experts and expertise.

8 The politics of (anti-)knowledge: disciplining terrorism after 9/11

I asked these two [advisers to a government counterterrorism expert], “How did you get your jobs?” and they say, “Oh, we had the only qualification this person wanted... [W]e knew nothing about terrorism.”¹

The only thing I know certain about him is that he’s evil.²

“Why do they hate us?” The question 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 United States because of an inexplicable hatred for America and its values. Alternative answers, especially those that sought to connect the attacks to US foreign policy, were marginalized. In one of the most well-known such incidents, when Susan Sontag wrote in *The New Yorker*, just weeks after the attacks, that “this was not a ‘cowardly’ attack on ‘civilization’ or ‘liberty’ or ‘humanity’ or ‘the free world’ but an attack on the world’s self-proclaimed superpower, undertaken as a consequence of specific American alliances and actions” (Sontag 2001), she was called “deranged,” an “ally of evil,” and “morally obtuse,” and accused of hating “America and the West and freedom and democratic goodness.”³ Judith Butler writes in the preface to *Precarious Life* (Butler 2010: xiii) about “the rise of censorship and anti-intellectualism that

¹ Interview with a terrorism expert, 2006.

² President George W. Bush, press conference with President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan, New York, November 10, 2001.

³ “Deranged” and “ally of evil”: Andrew Sullivan of the *New Republic*; “moral idiocy”: John Podhoretz in the *New York Post*; “hating America”: Jay Nordlinger of the *National Review*; all quoted by Faludi (2007). “Morally obtuse”: Charles Krauthammer in *Time* magazine, cited at the blog of the Society for US Intellectual History, <http://us-intellectual-history.blogspot.com/2011/09/susan-sontag-and-911-haze.html>).

took hold in the fall of 2001 when anyone who sought to understand the 'reasons' for the attack on the United States was regarded as someone who sought to 'exonerate' those who conducted that attack." Attempts to seek reasons for the attacks were heard as justifications. The slippage between reason, reasons and justifiable reasons led to a situation in which explanation itself became suspect.

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 "[p]eople [in the government] would feel mostly indignant, they would get upset when we said you have to understand the motivations of terrorists" (Crenshaw, quoted by Easton 2001). Explanation itself came to be seen by some as profane, as in this recent debate over the construction of a 9/11 museum (Cohen 2012):

Explaining the terrorists' motivations aroused similar concerns. To some families of victims, asking what caused Sept. 11 "is literally a profane question," said Rabbi Irwin Kula, president of the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership and a participant in the conversation series. "It is like blaming the victim."

And, although these sorts of reactions have commonly been attributed to the shock and trauma of the 9/11 attacks, this book has shown that the attribution of terrorism to "evil," and the subsequent resistance to discussion of broader causes, have been defining features of terrorism discourse since the 1970s.

This chapter argues that both expert and popular discourse about terrorism in the wake of 9/11 were characterized by a politics of *anti-knowledge*, an active refusal of explanation itself. Like James Ferguson's (1994) "*anti-politics*," the concept of anti-knowledge suggests that a problem has been removed from the realm of (some

types of) political debate. In this case, though, the mechanism is not the capture of a problem by experts professing technological solutions; in fact, it is quite the opposite, as the most frequent complaint of terrorism experts after 9/11 was that their views were marginalized and ignored.⁴ The distance between the views of experts and those of policymakers is illustrated by the results of a survey of terrorism experts undertaken in 2006 by *Foreign Policy* magazine and the liberal think tank the Center for American Progress. When asked to choose the two most important factors motivating “global terrorists,” the most popular choices of terrorism experts from across the political spectrum were “extremist religious beliefs” (chosen by 51 percent of respondents), “governments and rulers of Middle Eastern countries,” “opposition to US government policies in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” and “opposition to US government policies in Iraq.” Among the least popular choices were “rejection of American democratic values” (chosen by 4 percent of respondents) and “they are evil” (chosen by 1 percent) (Center for American Progress 2006).

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 that, 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:

I see this particularly in terms of understanding our terrorist foes. This is not to mitigate the savagery of their acts, but [we need to] understand... them, in the way that we devoted time to

⁴ Kanishka Jayasuriya (2002) has argued that the American reaction to 9/11 was dominated by a form of “anti-politics” – the displacement of political conflict by techniques of “risk management and control.” But I argue that it was not that rational practices of risk management displaced political debate, but that certain forms of political discourse and intellectual inquiry were marginalized by a political language of “evil.”

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.⁵

But, in the situation of anti-knowledge, knowledge and inquiry that entail knowing the terrorist are proscribed. It is as though the language of evil creates a "black box" around the terrorist, which creates its own explanation: terrorists commit terrorism because they are evil. Any further attempt to pursue alternative explanations, thereby seeking to break the black box of "evil," is seen as a profanation, even a sacrilege. The root of the politics of anti-knowledge is hence that, if terrorists are evil and irrational, then one cannot – and, indeed, *should not* – know them.

How can we account for the politics of anti-knowledge? Like the "war on terror," it is neither a straightforward outcome of the phenomena that we have come to know as terrorism nor a simple reaction to the massive shock of the 9/11 attacks. Instead, it should be seen as the outcome of the construction of both "terrorism" and "terrorists" as evil and irrational, together with the relatively weak position of advocates of "terrorism studies" to discipline either "terrorism" as an object of knowledge or the broader arena of terrorism expertise. Insofar as terrorists are understood to be inherently evil, it follows both that "evil" is the explanation for terrorism and that we ought not to seek to know terrorists, for such knowledge is potentially contaminating. And, further, insofar as terrorism is understood to be irrational, the very possibility of understanding it can be called into question.

President Bush's framing of the 9/11 attacks was dominated by the language of evil, frequently pointing to "evil" as the sole cause of the attacks, and disavowing any alternative explanations. On September 25, 2001, he proclaimed at a meeting, "These are evildoers. They

⁵ Interview with Brian Jenkins, June 26, 2007.

have no justification for their actions. There's no religious justification, there's no political justification. The only motivation is evil." A month later, on November 2, he declared, "I don't accept the excuse that poverty promotes evil. That's like saying poor people are evil people. I disagree with that. Osama bin Laden is an evil man... [W]e are fighting evil, and we will continue to fight evil, and we will not stop until we defeat evil." And in a meeting with Muslim community leaders at the White House on September 26, after declaring, "I consider bin Laden an evil man... This is a man who hates freedom. This is an evil man," he was asked "But does he have political goals?," to which Bush could only reply: "He has got evil goals. And it's hard to think in conventional terms about a man so dominated by evil."⁶

The conceptualization of terrorists as evil was paired with an understanding of terrorism as irrational. The claim was subject to pushback from experts, who expressed frustration at its resilience, and its logical implication, that there was not much that terrorism experts could usefully explain. As Brian Jenkins has written recently (Jenkins 2006: 53):

We are likewise inclined to see terrorists as fiends, wild-eyed expressions of evil, diabolical but two-dimensional, somehow alien – in a word, inhuman. Government officials routinely denounce terrorists as mindless fanatics, savage barbarians, or, more recently, "evildoers" – words that dismiss any intellectual content... [and] impede[d] efforts to understand the enemy.

And Andrew Silke has identified the heart of the difficulty when he writes (Silke 2004a: 19),

[T]here is a tendency to regard the perpetrators as psychologically abnormal and deviant... To attempt comprehension in any other terms can...be seen to imply a level of sympathy and acceptance of what has been done and of who has done it.

⁶ All the above quotes are available at https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Wikiquote:Transwiki/Terrorism_disambiguation/Evil_Doers (accessed July 10, 2012).

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 would be elided with sympathy. And the construction of terrorism as irrational meant that attempts at rational explanation could be dismissed, on the grounds that 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 credibility (Hilgartner 2000; Shapin 1994; 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.⁷

Enforcement of the taboo has taken a number of forms. Experts have been accused of “sympathizing” with their research subjects. At times even the notion of causation altogether came to seem suspect. A 2006 article in *International Affairs* accused British terrorism experts of perpetuating “discourse failure” by critiquing the government and identifying actions on the part of the government that were linked to terrorist attacks. Experts and the media, the authors claim, have led to “moral confusion” and a “murky” response to terrorism by “promulgating the view that terrorism must possess ‘root causes’” (Jones and Smith 2006: 1107). By focusing on “root causes,” they write, the work of such experts both “reduces the significance” of terrorism and “explains it away” (Jones and Smith 2006: 1109). Similarly, Martin Kramer’s *Ivory Towers on Sand*, published shortly after 9/11 by the right-wing Washington Institute for Near East Policy, broadly attacks the academic field of Middle East studies for what he

⁷ It is worth noting that the field of terrorism studies is not the only area in which this occurs, however; similar dynamics take place in other studies of “deviant” behavior, and in sexuality studies.

sees as an overly sympathetic approach to the Arab world, and a failure to foresee the rise of Islamic terrorism, arguing that this led the public to “write off academic ‘expertise’ on political Islam” (Kramer 2001: 57).

Experts have acknowledged the taboo and its effects on their work. Joseba Zulaika (2012) suggests that there is a “cordon sanitaire” around terrorism preventing researchers from interviewing or otherwise getting too close to understanding the mind frame and world view of terrorists. Gaetano Joe 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 (Ilardi 2004: 217):

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.

According to Joseba Zulaika and William Douglass (1996: x), “It is one of the tenets of counterterrorism that any interaction with the terrorist ‘Other’ is a violation of a taboo,” for “it is a discourse grounded in the very prohibition of discourse” (Zulaika and Douglass 1996: 182). Terrorism experts, they write, are “forbidden” from interacting with terrorists, for “there must be no common ground between terrorist Unreason and political Reason” (Zulaika and Douglass 1996: 180).

And this taboo is not limited to those who might conceivably be considered sympathetic to the terrorists, but can be turned upon anyone who seeks to understand them. Rita Katz, head of the SITE (Search for International Terrorist Entities) Institute,⁸ a private intelligence firm that monitors “Jihadi” websites, reports that her work has “met with institutional resistance” from officials in Washington: “They said, ‘Oh, Rita, I’m not sure you should even be communicating

⁸ The SITE Institute reportedly ceased operations in 2008, to be replaced by the SITE Intelligence Group, set up by some of the members of the former institute.

with them – you might be providing material support!” (Katz, quoted by Wallace-Wells 2006). And Katz is about as far from “sympathetic” as one might get. She believes that radical Islamic terrorism poses a dire threat to the United States, and that “the war against radical Islam is likely to last for decades, and that the outcome is far from clear.” But she also argues (Wallace-Wells 2006) that

it is wrong to assert, as President Bush does, that terrorists are motivated by hatred for our freedoms rather than by our policies in the Middle East or those of their own governments... Her project is, in large measure, to convince Americans of the seriousness of the threat by building a direct conduit to the terrorist mind.

One of the main effects of the taboo has been the paucity of experts who have had direct contact with terrorists. Bruce Hoffman (2004: xviii) notes:

Brian Jenkins, a doyen of the field, if not one of its “founding fathers”, once compared terrorism analysts to Africa’s Victorian-era cartographers. Just as the cartographers a century ago mapped from a distance a vast and impenetrable continent few of them had ever seen, most contemporary terrorism research is conducted far removed from, and therefore with little direct knowledge of, the actual terrorists themselves.

We can also observe assertions from experts *against* the taboos, assertions of disagreement that make sense only if we understand that the context is a broad denial of precisely what they feel the need to assert. Louise Richardson, author of *What Terrorists Want* (2006b), writes, “When I consider a terrorist atrocity, I do not think of the perpetrators as evil monsters” (Richardson, quoted by Wolfe 2011: 146).

The 2005 Club de Madrid “International summit on democracy, terrorism and security” sought to investigate the roots of terrorism. Bringing together some of the most well-respected researchers in terrorism studies, including Ted Gurr, Mark Juergensmeyer, Jerrold Post, Michael Stohl, Leonard Weinberg, Scott Atran, Ariel Merari,

Marc Sageman, Alex Schmid, Martha Crenshaw, and Jessica Stern, this conference was a serious endeavor. Yet the book of papers from the conference opens on a highly defensive note, with the forward noting: "Looking at the root causes of terrorism, however, is not as uncontroversial as it seems. Some dismiss it as simplistic; others even believe it is an effort to justify terrorism" (Richardson 2006a: xvi). Louise Richardson opens the book's introduction by noting (Richardson 2006a: 1):

In June 2005, White House advisor Karl Rove criticized what he described as the effort of liberals after the attacks of September 11, 2001, to understand the terrorists...reflecting a common predilection to equate understanding terrorism with sympathy for terrorists.

If even the organizers of such a successful a conference as this one, attended by some of the most high-status academic terrorism researchers, felt the need to be pre-emptive in staving off criticism that sought to delegitimize their very purpose and existence, then the taboo must be strong indeed.

The key to explaining the politics of anti-knowledge is the central role of evil and irrationality in our understanding of the problem of terrorism. But, as the previous chapters of this book have made clear, the problem of "terrorism" did not take shape in an uncontested way. Although evil and irrationality have been central tropes in the discourse of terrorism since the 1970s, there have always been significant factions of experts who have contested both the assumption that terrorists are irrational and the conclusion that terrorism can be attributed to "evil." Such experts have not been in a position to overturn the politics of anti-knowledge, however.

Part of the reason why the politics of anti-knowledge holds such power is the "undisciplined" nature of not just terrorism studies as a field but "terrorism" as an object of knowledge. As I traced the emergence of the field of terrorism expertise, a central aspect of the story was that terrorism studies did not take shape as an ideal-typical discipline or intellectual field. The terrorism studies field remains a

relatively weak, “undisciplined” one, and “terrorism” itself remains an unstable, “undisciplined” object of knowledge. This does not mean that experts cannot, and do not, attempt to develop rational knowledge that explores terrorists’ motives, only that they are in a relatively weak position when they do so. Because terrorism studies never developed into a mature “discipline,” experts were prevented from using many of the typical ways in which professions exercise power and influence over the production of knowledge and expertise, whether through certification, through legal regulation, or through a monopoly on certain forms of technical knowledge. Terrorism experts have failed to gain control over either the boundaries of the field or the production and certification of experts. There is little regulation of who may become an expert, and, emblematically, experts have themselves complained that the field is filled with “self-proclaimed experts.” From the academic perspective, rather than developing into an independent discipline or subfield, the terrorism studies field has tended to occupy the fringes of more established academic fields. Psychologist Ariel Merari has observed that the study of terrorism “falls between the chairs” (Merari 1991), while the author of a recent overview of the field concludes that “the science of terror has been conducted in the cracks and crevices which lie between the large academic disciplines” (Silke 2004b: 1–2).

This relative marginality of terrorism studies within academia was a common theme in interviews that I conducted. According to one researcher, “For many years, terrorism was an ‘untouchable’ issue, a topic that despite its practical impact was isolated from the field of scholarly research” (Wieviorka 1995: 597). One interviewee told me that “you still can’t get a job in history in this country if you’re studying counter-terrorism,” while another told me that “it wasn’t a respectable academic subject” when he started out, and a third said that, before 9/11, terrorism was considered to be an “unimportant” subject and even “the kiss of death” for untenured scholars.

Given the attention I place on the undisciplined nature of terrorism and terrorism studies, it is fair to ask whether this situation

has changed with the influx of money, attention, and researchers into the field since 2001. Is the terrorism studies field becoming institutionalized? Has “terrorism” been disciplined? These are questions that experts themselves have raised often, with varying opinions. Some commentaries indicate an assumption that progression towards a disciplinary form was the natural and expected direction. In 2007 Paul Wilkinson asked how to “explain the long delay in the emergence of terrorism studies as a viable branch of multi-disciplinary research in international studies, political science and other branches of learning” (Wilkinson 2007: 318). Alex Schmid (2011) asks whether the terrorism studies field has become a “major stand-alone” academic discipline, and does not give a definitive answer, but declares that the field “has matured” and that “a fairly solid body of consolidated knowledge has emerged” (Schmid 2011: 470). Israeli chronicler of the field Avishag Gordon (2010) has argued that the field is indeed becoming an autonomous discipline, citing as evidence increasing collaboration among terrorism researchers, an increase in the number of conferences, new journals, and an increase in sub-specialties. Andrew Silke, in his 2004 overview of the field, writes: “The increased attention, interest, money and activity are taken by many as an indication that the terrorism research world is on the threshold of becoming an academic discipline in its own right,” but also asserts that “many experienced commentators are doubtful that the study of terrorism can (or should) emerge as a distinct discipline” (Silke 2004a: 26).

The field of terrorism expertise has been a site of tremendous growth since 2001. Quite a few reports have found that the number of articles on terrorism skyrocketed after 2001. Cynthia Lum, Leslie Kennedy and Alison Sherley (2006) find that 54 percent of all scholarly articles on terrorism published from 1972 to 2002 were published in 2001 and 2002. Another survey finds that 2,281 nonfiction books with “terrorism” in the title were published between September 2001 and September 2008, while only 1,310 similar titles had been released before September 2001 (Silke 2009). Jackson (2009) writes: “Terrorism studies is one of the fastest-growing areas of social-scientific research

in the English-speaking world," with "literally thousands" of books, articles and reports published each year. And, according to Yonah Alexander, more than 150 books on terrorism were published in the first year after the 9/11 attacks (Alexander, quoted by Silke 2004a: 25).

The availability of funding for terrorism research has also increased exponentially. Ian Lustick writes that the war on terror created opportunities for "every group, every company, every sector of society, and every lobbyist" (Lustick 2006: 71). In the four years after 2001 the National Science Foundation (NSF) awarded 135 grants, totaling \$47.7 million, for research on terrorism, as compared to just eight grants, totaling \$1.5 million, in the four preceding years (Lustick 2006: 91). And this is just a fraction of the funding for research available from the federal government, the majority of which comes not through the NSF but through agencies such as the Department of Defense, much of it going to consulting firms, think tanks, and private research institutes. Moreover, since 9/11 the Department of Homeland Security has funded twelve university-based "centers of excellence" for research into terrorism and the security of the United States.⁹

Course offerings and degree programs in terrorism studies have also increased in number, and, although there are as yet no freestanding "terrorism studies" departments, the first MA degree in terrorism opened its doors in 2002 (Silke 2004a: 25). A 2004 article in *The New Statesman* declared that graduate programs in terrorism studies were "springing up like an intifada across the western world" (Toolis 2004). A more recent survey of the field found over 100 "credible" and "professional" terrorism research centers in operation worldwide, with sixty-three of these in the United States (Freedman 2010). These included both university research centers, focused on terrorism, and private institutes and think tanks with terrorism research programs. Another (2012) overview found that the majority of US colleges and universities surveyed offered at least one course on terrorism (Sheehan 2012). In 2007 the American Political Science Association

⁹ See www.dhs.gov/files/programs/editorial_0498.shtm.

released a report of recommendations for curricula on terrorism in political violence.¹⁰ And the “Summer workshop on teaching about terrorism” (SWOTT) brought together faculty members for several years after 9/11 to “introduce professors and graduate students to new and innovative techniques utilized to teach terrorism and research terrorism,” “strengthen the community of terrorism scholars,” and “provide access to high-level officials working in the intelligence and counter-terrorism fields.”¹¹

Even as the study of terrorism moves towards academic legitimacy, however, it seems unlikely that “terrorism studies” will be able to gain control over the problem of “terrorism.” The aim of disciplining terrorism studies has usually been paired with attempts to stabilize the definition of terrorism (Stampnitzky 2011). But the problem of definition persists as a key feature of terrorism expertise, and as a core problem for those experts seeking to stabilize the field. The extent of the problem is borne out by Alex Schmid’s survey of 109 definitions of “terrorism,” in which he separated out twenty-two distinct elements, not one of which was shared by all the definitions. The most common element, “violence/force,” was present in only 83.5 percent of the definitions, and the next most common element, “political,” was present in only 65 percent of the definitions (Schmid 2011).¹² Further illustrating the ongoing nature of this problem, a 2007 paper (Bogatyrenko 2007: 2, quoted by Schmid 2011: 90) notes that “over 77% of scholars in leading political science journals who focus on terrorism fail to define it, and many of the remaining 23% offer definitions of their own without paying due consideration to the implications of their conceptual choices.”

Studies of science and expertise usually expect experts to try to purify, or rationalize, the concepts they work upon. In the case of

¹⁰ See www.apsanet.org/content_15710.cfm.

¹¹ See www.start.umd.edu/start/announcements/announcement.asp?id=60.

¹² Schmid is referring to his 1984 data here, but he concludes that the problem of definition is still ongoing, and one of his main goals here, in fact, is to establish a revised “academic consensus definition of terrorism” (Schmid 2011: 87).

terrorism studies, those experts who tend to align themselves with the ideals and institutions of academia have often, as we might expect, focused on the need to come up with a stable, non-partisan, non-polemical definition for the sake of scientific progress and legitimacy (Sproat 1996; Stampnitzky 2011). In response to a survey of terrorism experts, the majority of respondents to the question “Do you find that endeavors to come to a commonly agreed-upon definition in the field of political violence in general and terrorism in particular are (a) a waste of time; (b) a necessary precondition for cumulative research; or (c) other?” chose the response: “a necessary precondition for cumulative research” (Schmid and Jongman 1988: 27). And a recurrent stated goal among terrorism studies experts has been to arrive at a neutral definition of terrorism – one not predicated upon moral/political judgments, as when one expert expressed the hope that analysts might develop a definition of terrorism that would be acceptable to both Israel and the PLO (Brian Jenkins, quoted by Hoffman 1984).

Yet most experts, even those invested in stabilization, engage in strategic ambiguity (Eisenberg 1984: 230). Strategic ambiguity enables experts to bridge between the academic, public, and policy worlds, and experts may also engage in ambiguity as a protective mechanism, against those who would try to attack their credibility. This ambiguity often takes the form of a vagueness of definition, or even an elision of the problem of definition altogether. As one informant told me,¹³

I basically define what I did as going after the far enemy. Because I didn't really define terrorism in my book...I'm interested in studying those people that I'm studying, and I know who I'm interested in...the people who did 9/11 and the other guys like them.

Another academic told me that he doesn't define terrorism at all, considering this unproblematic for his work:¹⁴

¹³ Interview with Marc Sageman, November 14, 2006.

¹⁴ Interview with Jacob Shapiro, December 14, 2007.

So I don't define terrorism or not. Particular acts are not terrorist or not for me. Terrorist organizations are organizations whose modal use of violence for me violates the standards of distinction in proportionality under the law of armed conflict. So it's basically organizations that mostly make inappropriate uses of violence.

The concept of terrorism must be understood as a moving target: those who wish to stabilize it, even momentarily, find that they are up against a constantly changing set of counter-pressures, reproduced both from within and from without.

Where does this leave the politics of anti-knowledge? As academics seek to stabilize terrorism, it is likely either that they will become irrelevant to broader understandings of "terrorism" in the world, or that they will continue on with a hybrid concept that holds within it both purified and politicized meanings. So, while it is possible that we might see the development of an academically more or less purified terrorism concept as an object of knowledge, as long as terrorism "in the world" retains the meaning of illegitimate violence and irrational evil, terrorism as an object of political and public discourse, and as a site of governance, will remain a moving target. And, although terrorism studies may become a more legitimate subject within the academy, as long as terrorism experts within academia do not have the power to regulate who is treated as an expert in the broader world, and as long as experts on terrorism are still "disciplined" by the taboo on "understanding," they will have difficulty bringing rational explanation to bear on how Americans think about the problem. In the concluding chapter, I address this study's implications for thinking about the relation between expert knowledge and democratic decision-making, and for future studies of expertise.