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Politics of Security and Representation**

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Constructing Narcoterrorism as Danger: Afghanistan and the Politics of Security and Representation

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Abstract

Afghanistan has become a country synonymous with danger. Discourses of narcotics, terrorism, and narcoterrorism have come to define the country and the current conflict. However, despite the prevalence of these dangers globally, they are seldom treated as political representations. This project theorizes danger as a political representation by deconstructing and problematizing contemporary discourses of (narco)terrorism in Afghanistan. Despite the globalisation of these two discourses of danger, (narco)terrorism remains largely under-theorised, with the focus placed on how to overcome this problem rather than critically analysing it as a representation. The argument being made here is that (narco)terrorism is not some 'new' existential danger, but rather reflects the hegemonic and counterhegemonic use of danger to establish authority over the collective identity. Using the case study of Afghanistan, this project critically analyses representations of danger emerging from the Afghan government and the Taliban. While many studies have looked at terrorism and narcotics as security concerns, there has not been a critical analysis of these two dangers as a political representation in the Afghan context. Therefore, this study will be of great benefit to scholars and practitioners of security as it presents a unique look on how identity is shaped through representations of danger in Afghanistan. Through applying Critical Discourse Analysis to contemporary representations in Afghanistan, this study provides new insight into the aims and objectives of both the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis and the work presented in it are my own. Until the outcome of the current application to the University of Westminster is known, the work will not be submitted for any such qualification at another university of similar institution.

Signed

Date

Introduction

At the time of writing, Afghanistan remains wracked by conflict. The Taliban are said to have an ‘active presence’ in 70% of Afghanistan’s 398 districts, with 30 of those completely under the group’s control (Sharifi and Adamou 2018).¹ The War on Terror, declared in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks, has entered its 17th year with no end in sight. Similarly, the War on Drugs, the United States-led global prohibition campaign against illicit drugs (both trafficking and consumption), which began during the Vietnam War, is nearing its 5th decade. These wars have fuelled a globalised conflict, the brunt of which has been disproportionately borne by non-Western states like Afghanistan. Indeed, in the history of both the War on Terror and the War on Drugs, Afghanistan holds the unique position of embodying the convergence of these two dangers.² However, the sheer span of these conflicts and the durability of their corresponding security narratives raises many important questions about these dangers. Indeed, many scholars and experts within the field of International Relations, and the sub-field of (International) Security Studies, have conducted seminal research addressing (narco)terrorism and its effect on Afghanistan (see Shanty 2011; Mansfield 2016). However, the imposition of these two dangers on Afghanistan points to a larger process by which discourses of danger have been deployed as a means to constituting and securing the Afghan collective identity.

This study critically approaches terrorism and narcotics as political representations in Afghanistan and seeks to uncover how, and ultimately why, these representations are deployed. The motivation for this study is not one of problem solving, but one of inquiry. In applying a critical lens to terrorism and narcotics in Afghanistan, the goal is not to reveal an innovative new strategy that will defeat the Taliban and bring peace to the country; rather, the contribution of this work is in its critical analysis of representations of danger to uncover how the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and the Taliban use danger in establishing their vision of Afghan society.

¹ See also Liveuamap Afghanistan for a regularly updated source monitoring Taliban and other non-state actors’ presence in Afghanistan <https://afghanistan.liveuamap.com/>.

² Colombia has similarly held this position when (narco)terrorism first emerged as a threat in the 1980s (see Ehrenfeld 1990).

The focus of this thesis is premised on the core assumption that danger is a discourse. Rather than approaching danger as an objective condition or an unproblematic label, this study recognises it is a discourse that constitutes, and is constitutive of, power structures and social identities (Campbell 1998). Critical scholarship has shown that the knowledge, discourses, and representations surrounding danger are informed by the political³ and form the basis of authority (Dillon 1996; Bigo and Tsoukala 2008); thus, in seeking to reveal the motivations behind representations of (narco)terrorism, this study builds on earlier critical scholarship on danger and approaches it as a discourse. In this regard, the thesis is quite different from the majority of literature conducted on Afghan security. The dominance of positivism in mainstream scholarship serves only to confirm this discourse and fail to approach it from a critical perspective (see Peters 2009ab; Felbab-Brown 2010; Shanty 2011). While these studies are useful for practitioners of security and government officials, they fail to address the operationalisation of danger by political actors. By approaching (narco)terrorism as a discourse, the objective here is to shed new light on the endless conflict in Afghanistan and to provide a further outlet for critical approaches to danger.

This thesis also hopes to illustrate that danger is not the sole prerogative of hegemonic forces and is utilised by counterhegemonic actors such as the Taliban. While this was not the intended contribution of the thesis, at the time of writing there has yet to be a critical study on the Taliban's engagement with discourses of danger. There has been some recent scholarship looking at Taliban communications, political propaganda, and narratives (see Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012b, 2018; Aggarwal 2016; Johnson 2017), however, these studies have not addressed the Taliban's use of danger as a counterhegemonic strategy. Moreover, the continued silencing of terrorist and criminal groups in security literature largely deprives those represented as danger of political agency. By looking beyond the (narco)terror rhetoric, this study hopes to illustrate the role counterhegemonic discourses play in shaping the identity of the endangered society.

³ The thesis understands 'the political' to refer to the distinction between friend and enemy outlined by Schmitt (see Schmitt 1995: 27).

Research Questions

Thus, the focus of this thesis can be narrowed down to two research questions. The primary research question is: what are the motivations behind hegemonic and counterhegemonic representations of danger in Afghanistan? However, rather than approaching this question from a purely theoretical perspective, this thesis critically analyses representations of (narco)terrorism and situates discourses of danger in a particular political context. This is reflective of both Foucault's theorising of discourse as located within a specific context (Foucault 1978), and Fairclough's method of Critical Discourse Analysis (1992, 1995), which requires an intertextual reading of the discourse. In analysing both GIRoA and Taliban representations of danger, the hope is to illustrate the instrumentalization of the danger by both hegemonic and counterhegemonic actors. This focus is premised on the well-established claim within Critical Security Studies that discourses of danger are constitutive of political order and identity (see, for example, Campbell 1998; Jackson 2005; Herschinger 2011). However, prior to analysing the discourse, this perspective must be theorised and justified, which forms the basis of the discussion in Chapter I. Indeed, the goal here is not to rehash old arguments, but rather to provide substantial conceptual discussion prior to the project's empirical analysis.

The primary research question inevitably leads to an additional research question as to *how* representations of danger are deployed in Afghanistan. Indeed, this builds on the primary research question by analysing the modes of communication used by the GIRoA and the Taliban in disseminating their representations of danger. Through applying CDA to both hegemonic and counterhegemonic representations of danger, and situating the discourse in the context of contemporary Afghanistan, the particular methods and techniques used by both the GIRoA and the Taliban reveal the desired meaning of their representations. Moreover, comparing GIRoA and Taliban communications reveals the asymmetry of power existing between the two parties. For instance, the GIRoA hold the authoritative status of the state and are therefore able to utilise formal speech acts in communicating to society. Contrastingly, the Taliban, whose political motivations are largely delegitimised through the application of the (narco)terrorist label, are prohibited from adopting similar means and are confined to using local cultural mediums. However, what is so interesting about this comparison is that despite the differences in *how* the GIRoA and the Taliban represent danger, both share the same motivations in using danger

to constitute their vision of Afghan society. The rationale behind this question is to demonstrate the political use of danger and the importance of creating and securing identity in contemporary Afghanistan. By analysing the modes of communication and the linguistic techniques deployed in representations of danger, the meaning, and ultimately the identity, at the heart of these representations is revealed.

Research Focus

There are three areas of focus in the thesis which reflect connections between this work and existing subfields. The primary focus of the thesis should be understood as representations of danger in Afghanistan. As such, this study is primarily a critical analysis of discourses of (narco)terrorism in Afghanistan. Despite variations in the status and capabilities of the GIRoA and the Taliban, a series of data sets have been developed that reveal the operationalisation of danger by both actors. For the GIRoA, empirical analysis centres on government statements, press releases, speeches, and interviews with domestic and foreign news media. Despite a plethora of potential speakers, this study has narrowed its focus down to members of the executive branch of the Afghan government. While this approach may conflict with other frameworks utilised in this study (i.e. Paris School approaches to elite discourse), it is justified (see Chapter I) in connection to hegemonic strategies of state- and identity-building. Moreover, to approach the GIRoA as a unified body is problematic and ignores the deeply localised nature of Afghan politics (Schetter 2013). Instead, this study approaches the executive branch of the Afghan government as a weak hegemonic actor that is compelled to deploy representations of danger in attempting to secure Afghan society.

In assessing counterhegemonic representations of danger, this study critically analyses Taliban communications across several mediums, ranging from internet publications to poetry. While such a comparison may be deemed problematic given the discrepancy between hegemonic and counterhegemonic modes of communication, the findings of this study reveal the evocation of danger throughout Taliban communications. Thus, danger serves as a productive counterhegemonic strategy designed to displace the GIRoA's position in Afghanistan.

The second focus of this study is on the genealogy of (narco)terrorism as a danger. While such a focus moves away from Afghanistan, it is a necessary step in illustrating how this discourse emerged globally and became represented in Afghanistan. Indeed, what is so striking about hegemonic representations of (narco)terrorism in Afghanistan is that despite the multiple differences between the Afghan sociopolitical context and, for instance, the United States, the meaning of the preferred meaning of the discourse remains largely the same. The findings of the thesis indicate the use of danger by the GIRoA to not only secure its vision of the Afghan identity, but also to conform to the global hegemonic vision of statehood. While this was not the intended focus of the thesis, it does present important areas for further research on the effects of global hegemonic representations of danger on non-Western countries. Therefore, prior to addressing hegemonic and counterhegemonic representations of danger, it is important to first inquire into how these discourses have been constituted.

The third focus of the thesis is to justify the understanding of danger as a discourse and to theorise its relation to social identity. As mentioned above, this is not a new argument and should not be taken as the contribution of the thesis. However, it is problematic to move straight into a critical analysis of the discourse without first theorising the subject of analysis at the heart of this study. Therefore, the early focus of the thesis is on developing a theoretical framework that illustrates danger's constitutive role in shaping identity. In this regard, a survey of critical scholarship on danger is provided that draws heavily on Campbell (1998), Dillon (1996), Wæver et al. (1993), McSweeney (1996), Wæver (1995), Jackson (2005), Weldes et al. (1999), and Herschinger (2011). While the intention here is not to mash together an assortment of critical voices, each author holds significant value in theorising danger and connecting it to the constitution of identity either as a hegemonic strategy, a cultural production, or a performance of power. In short, earlier critical scholarship on danger has been vital in forming this project's theoretical framework and its research focus.

The goal of the thesis is to reveal the use of danger by the GIRoA and the Taliban to constitute the Afghan identity. This is not to say that either party has been, or indeed will be, successful in imposing a universal identity on Afghanistan. Such an argument would ignore the fluidity of discourse and make claims as to the pre-discursive constitution of actors 'outside' of society (i.e. the GIRoA and the Taliban). However, realising the discursive constitution of identity does not preclude the use of danger by political actors

as a (counter-)hegemonic strategy as the role ascribed to the GIROA and the Taliban (i.e. their political nature) requires the use of danger as a performance of authority over social identity. In short, the goal of this work is to present an alternative vision of security in Afghanistan which reflects the importance of representation and identity in the conflict.

Chapter Structure

The thesis is comprised of five chapters and addresses the three research focuses outlined above. Chapter I provides a discussion on the project's conceptualisation of danger, its theoretical framework, and use of Critical Discourse Analysis. The chapter begins with an overview of the underlying argument that danger is a discourse (Campbell 1998) and draws upon previous critical scholarship found in poststructuralist and critical constructivist circles. Having established that danger is a discourse, the conversation turns to the connection between danger and identity. This section theorises the use of difference in constituting identity and connects discourses of danger to the securitisation of difference. Thus, the connection between identity and danger reveals the instrumental value of representations for political actors in attempting to either establish a collective identity for society or discipline alternative identities within the social sphere. The chapter then turns to a discussion of the theoretical framework used in the thesis. This section focuses on describing and justifying the conceptual tools used in this study, which include securitisation, genealogy, and power-knowledge. This section also underlines the Gramscian understanding of hegemony used in the thesis and seeks out connections between Foucault's theorising of discourse and Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony. Lastly, Chapter I provides an extensive discussion on Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1992, 1995ab), which is the main analytical framework used in the thesis. This section outlines the nature of CDA and its approach to discourse, Fairclough's three-dimensions of analysis, and identifies how CDA will be used in the thesis. A brief description of the sources consulted and the limitations of this study is also provided here.

Chapter II serves as the literature review for the thesis. In identifying the particular research niche this study hopes to fill, three research areas are identified: critical approaches to (in)security and danger; discursive analysis of (narco)terrorism; and contemporary security politics of Afghanistan. These three areas form the structure of

the literature review. Section I surveys existing critical scholarship on danger and establishes this thesis as a continuation of works by poststructuralist and critical constructivist scholars. Section II introduces scholarship on (narco)terrorism and reveals that, although there is substantial literature that critically analysing terrorism (and less so, narcotics), scholarship on narcoterrorism remains largely devoid of such analysis. This reveals a gap in the literature and potential future research on both the application of discourses of narcoterrorism in particular countries (e.g. Mexico and Colombia) and the deployment of the discourse globally. Lastly, Section III surveys existing scholarship on Afghan security politics, narcoterrorism, and the Taliban. The literature reveals the dominance of positivist approaches to Afghanistan and a lack of engagement with critical theories and methods. Moreover, the continuation of problem-solving approaches (Cox 1987) fails to challenge representations of (narco)terrorism in Afghanistan and merely seeks to confirm or deny the existence of the danger. In short, there is a real gap in applying critical frameworks to contemporary Afghanistan and such a study could potentially open up the field to new understandings on the role of identity in the conflict.

Chapter III introduces narcotics, terrorism, and narcoterrorism and critically analyses these discourses using genealogical inquiry. The discussion begins with a genealogical study on the discourses of terrorism, paying particular attention to historical understandings of the concept and deconstructing the deployment of the terrorist label. In the following section, genealogy is used in a brief study of narcotics, illustrating how different labels and metaphors used to characterise the narcotics have contributed to its association with political violence and other dangers like terrorism. A critical investigation into the convergence of these two discourses into what is known as narcoterrorism follows, in which the political context, intellectual community, and sociopolitical identity are revealed to have shaped the discourse. The underlying argument here is that these dangers are part of a larger hegemonic strategy in which a succession of security actors have used the ambiguity of danger to fabricate and represent new threats. Shifts in the conceptualisation of these dangers as well as the identities of those securitised (i.e. those represented as danger) illustrates how danger is a constructed and represented discourse. Moreover, by deconstructing the labels used to give meaning to these dangers and situating them in historical contexts, genealogy reveals the larger hegemonic strategy at work. This chapter provides the reader with a clear understanding

of the (narco)terror discourse prior to introducing the discussion on Afghanistan in Chapter IV and V.

Chapter IV introduces the politics of security in Afghanistan by looking at how (narco)terror has been represented since 2001. This chapter applies Critical Discourse Analysis to government statements and policies with the goal of revealing how these representations are used to establish the role of the government as securer, subjugate alternative knowledge of danger, and to control social identity in Afghanistan. The chapter begins with a brief discussion on Afghanistan's historical and political background, revealing the particular sociopolitical context to the reader. The chapter then provides an account of how the United States government and security experts within the West constructed and (re)established⁴ the narcoterrorist danger immediately after the 9/11 attacks. The objective of this section is to demonstrate the influence security experts in the US have on global discourses of danger and to connect this knowledge to later representations of the danger found in Afghanistan. The chapter will then employ Critical Discourse Analysis of representations of (narco)terror by the Afghan government. In this section, the various tropes, metaphors, and assemblages used in representing (narco)terror, and more specifically the Taliban, are highlighted in order to demonstrate the motivations behind the use of the discourse and to reveal how danger is a representation designed for social consumption. The objective of this chapter is to reveal the use of representations of danger by political actors, to apply earlier theoretical discussions to a definitive case study, and to illustrate the motivations behind the (narco)terror discourse in Afghanistan.

Chapter V shifts focus toward addressing the agency of the counterhegemonic (i.e. the Taliban) in representing danger. Up to this point, the thesis will have looked exclusively at danger as a concept represented by hegemonic actors (such as the GIRoA) as a means of maintaining sovereign authority; however, Chapter V reveals that those represented as danger also use counter-representations in their communication with society. The chapter begins with a discussion on the challenges characteristic of counterhegemonic representations of danger and reveals the distinctive voice of these actors. Despite

⁴ Narcoterrorism had already been conceived as a security issue during the 1980s; however, the argument being made in Chapter IV is that contemporary narcoterrorism reflects a fundamentally different context than earlier representations.

engaging in the same practice of representing danger to affect social identity, the counterhegemonic (in this case, the Taliban) are restricted in their methods, requiring alternative channels of communication. These methods of communication ultimately effect the scale and content of the message, but also provide alternative ways of interacting and communicating with social groups. The chapter then applies critical discourse analysis to Taliban communications, focusing heavily on their efforts to represent the government of Afghanistan as the true danger facing society. The data used in this analysis consists of poems, official Taliban statements, night letters, and shadow government policy. The choice of this data highlights the Taliban's use of vernacular modes of communication, their utilisation of cultural referent objects, and their strategy of displacing the government's role as securer. Through analysis of the Taliban's communications strategy, it becomes clear that the organization is using representations of danger to construct a new Afghan social identity.

The thesis ends with a concluding chapter linking the various arguments together and demonstrating how danger is used by the GIRoA and the Taliban to constitute the Afghan social identity. The conclusion also makes a brief argument about the importance of approaching danger as a discourse in other internal conflicts as the themes and techniques used in Afghanistan can be observed in other contexts such as Mexico. Through this analysis an alternative vision of security in Afghanistan will be illustrated that does not approach narcotics or political violence as a problem to be solved, but instead approaches these discourses critically to reveal that identity plays a vital in shaping hegemonic and counterhegemonic representations of the conflict.

Chapter I: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The motivation of this project is to uncover how and why danger is represented, specifically in the form of (narco)terrorism, in contemporary Afghanistan. It is directed at the functioning of competing discourses of danger and theorizes the role danger plays in constituting social identity. However, danger is a complex and contentious concept with multiple readings and conceptualisations found within the (sub-)discipline of Critical Security Studies (see Chapter II). Dependent upon one's epistemological affinities, danger can be approached as existential and objective or discursive and constructed, and this has a profound effect on the theoretical framework of such a study and ultimately its findings. Therefore, prior to surveying the existing literature on danger, the genealogy of (narco)terror, or a critical appraisal of representations of (narco)terror in contemporary Afghanistan, it is crucial to first lay out the theoretical foundations and methods used in this project. This discussion will provide a clear overview of how this project conceptualises danger, the theoretical tools being used to analyse (narco)terror and will outline the project's limitations.

To be clear from the outset, this thesis is primarily an empirical project that presents an original contribution to the literature on Afghan security politics and provides another empirical outlet to the already robust literature on representations of danger in Critical Security Studies (Campbell 1998; Weldes et al. 1999; Jackson 2005). In this way, it does not set out to provide a new framework for theorizing danger, but rather builds on a range of earlier conceptualisations and seeks to deploy an inclusive framework in its analysis of representations of danger in Afghanistan. However, despite the empirical contribution, the object of study – danger – requires extensive theoretical unpacking due to the plurality of conceptualisations in the literature and extensive sub-questions pertaining to the political instrumentalization of danger in Afghanistan. If this study was a positivist approach to narcoterrorism in Afghanistan, it would not require such a lengthy theoretical discussion as the research question would centre around the extent of 'narcoterrorism' (i.e. quantitative) or the organizational structure of narcoterrorist groups (i.e. placing an organization like the Taliban along the crime-terror continuum). However, this project's post-positivist approach to (narco)terrorism and its understanding of the phenomenon as

a discourse requires a clear theoretical discussion that lays out and justifies the theoretical framework.

Therefore, this chapter is written with the following objectives in mind. First, it presents a clear conceptualisation of danger as a discourse and uses this understanding to segue into a discussion on the various theories consulted and utilised in the thesis. It is important to first broadly introduce danger at the beginning of the chapter as it brings structure and focus to the following sections on theories, concepts and methods. A series of additional considerations pertaining to the construction of danger, the transmission of representations of danger, the results of these representations on identity form a substantial part of the thesis as the focus is not only on *how* danger is represented in Afghanistan, but also *why*. Therefore, the theoretical framework requires careful unpacking at this early stage. The discussion progresses into Section II which highlights the conceptual framework for this study. This section provides clear definitions of genealogy (Foucault 1984), power-knowledge (Foucault 1980), field (Bourdieu 1993), securitisation (Wæver 1995; Buzan et al. 1998; Balzacq 2005; Browning and McDonald 2013), and cultural hegemony (Gramsci 1971), which are used throughout the thesis. This section also makes a strong case as to why these frameworks have been used and how they contribute to the thesis. These sections outline the project's theoretical foundations and justifies the analysis of (narco)terrorism found in Chapters III, IV, and V.

The chapter then turns to an overview of the methods used in the thesis. Section III introduces Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough 1992, 1995ab) and provides detail as to how CDA is used in analysing contemporary representations of danger in Afghanistan. This section also outlines the importance and usage of intertextual analysis in studying the communications of both the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and the Taliban. The focus turns to the data sets consulted for the thesis and justifies analysis of various forms of representation. For instance, when analysing government (read hegemonic) representations of danger, speeches, interviews and public statements formed the majority of the data sets consulted. This is largely due to the authoritative positioning of the state as the 'knower' and 'speaker' of security (Dillon 1996). The Taliban, on the other hand, being designated as a (narco)terrorist group, are not afforded the same stature as an authoritative 'speaker' of security and are silenced due to hegemonic representations. Thus, the data sets consulted for the Taliban consist of grassroots and cultural modes such as poetry, night letters (*shabnamah*), chants

(*taranas*), and web-based communications. While this could be viewed as a problematic comparison, the differences in methods of representation reflect the asymmetry of power in communicating to the social audience. Lastly, the section concludes with a discussion on the limitations of this study pertaining to language and lack of accessibility for ethnographic field research. While there are limitations in this study, overall the methods used, and the data sets consulted, present original findings that demonstrate the utility of applying critical methods to the contemporary security dynamics of Afghanistan. Moreover, by applying CDA to contemporary representations of danger, the operationalisation of discourses of danger to constitute Afghan society will be demonstrated.

Danger as a Discourse

Danger is a concept that has played an integral role in the discursive formation of the nation-state and the norm of sovereignty (see Dillon 1996). In mainstream scholarship circles as well as practitioners of international security, there is an understanding of danger as an objective condition – a reflection of the paradoxical relations between the contingent life and the certainty of death (Der Derian 2009: 156). A cursory glance at the recent history of International Relations and international security politics illustrates the dominance of this conceptualisation and the belief that danger is a problem that can be overcome through rational choice (Keohane 1989).

However, this is not the understanding advocated here. Rather, the post-positivist epistemology of this thesis and its focus on representation defines danger as a discourse that constitutes the *meaning* of harm, and subsequently the identity of the endangered. This understanding parallels David Campbell's (1998) earlier work on representations of danger in the American context and builds on critical approaches to discourse and power (see Foucault 1980; Laclau and Mouffe 2001). The understanding advocated here is that nothing can 'exist' outside of discourse. All objects are constituted through discourse and their meaning is premised on representation and difference (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000; Campbell 1998). Indeed, this is one of the major premises of Poststructuralism and has been applied to International Relations and International Security Studies elsewhere (see Dillon 1996; Campbell 1998; Herschinger 2011; Jackson 2005; Edkins 1999). The

significance here lies in the productive and representative capacity of discourse. Rather than merely creating objects, discourse has the ability to influence how these objects are interpreted and the limits of their intelligibility (Butler 1993: 187). This is a highly significant point for the present study as discourse not only materializes a danger such as (narco)terrorism, but it also shapes how this danger is interpreted among the endangered.

Therefore, this study understands danger as a special type of discourse. While it might be viewed as problematic to privilege one discursive construction over another, the political nature of representations of danger and its constitutive effects on the political order points to its unique nature. In *Politics of Security*, Michael Dillon (1996) argues that the discourse of danger has evolved from the 'natural' to become the very foundation upon which political authority rests (25). Moreover, when taken in conjunction with the social construct of the Hobbesian (i.e. sovereign) state, we find that discourses of danger are at the very root of the political order. The rationale is that the role assigned to the state, that of sovereign protector, is premised on evolving discourses of (in)security. This is not to say that the state exists independent of discourses of danger and insecurity, but rather that the discursive construction of the state depends on the discursive construction of danger (Dillon 1996). In the contemporary social and political context, discourses of power have established structures in which danger is recognised in the limits of sovereignty, simultaneously constituting the state and the corresponding externalised danger (Campbell 1998: 68). Thus, there is a deep connection between the constitution of political order and discourses of danger.

Discourses of danger are not only constitutive of a political community but also of the identity that defines that political community and the relationship between the secured society and the sovereign protector (Campbell 1998: 48). This argument is echoed by Maria Stern (2006) who points out that, "political communities are shaped by *dominant* political discourses that identify subjects of security and relations between the sovereign and the Self" (Stern 2006: 188, emphasis in the original). While this relationship should not be understood as fixed or timeless, it does present a window into contemporary political orders such as Afghanistan and the role danger plays in shaping the context. Moreover, Stern's emphasis on 'dominant' discourses opens up questions as what constitutes a 'dominant' discourse and what power structures enable and result from its domination. While these considerations will be addressed below, the connection between danger and identity is a crucial element to this project's approach to (narco)terrorism.

This connection, between discourses of danger and the constitution of identity, should be understood as the lodestone of this project's conceptualisation of danger and its investigation of Afghan security politics. In this way, the project echoes the focus of earlier scholarship from Campbell (1998), Katzenstein (1996), Weldes (1996), Jackson (2005), Stern (2006), and others who have theorized the linkage between (in)security and identity.

Danger, therefore, is not a fixed, objective condition (Campbell 1998: 2), but rather it is a discursive representation reflective of contemporary power constellations that construct new knowledge(s) of threat and peril. Where danger influences identity is through the representation and signification of difference, which in turn attempts to fix the constitution of the 'self' identity (see Doty 1996; Neumann 1996). The 'self' is ambiguous and can refer to the individual or the collective; however, given that the thesis is focused on political representations of (narco)terror in Afghanistan, the emphasis is placed more on the collective. This emphasis reflects Campbell's focus in *Writing Security* (1998), and while he did not privilege the role of the state in using danger instrumentally to define collective identity,⁵ he did make explicit the use of difference (i.e. F/foreign policy)⁶ in shaping the American identity. Difference, therefore, becomes represented as threatening, effectively securitising one of the foundational principles of identity and representation (Neocleous 2008; Campbell 1998; Connolly 1991; Neumann 1996). Indeed, meaning and identity are constituted, in part, through representations of difference (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000: 3; Connolly 1991; Doty 1996), so by securitising difference through representations of danger, a more cohesive collective identity can be achieved through a disciplining and silencing of alternatives. Moreover, through negative association, Stern (2006) and others have shown that just as discourses of danger identify objects as 'dangerous', the interpretation of the discourse constitutes

⁵ In fact, the 'Epilogue' to Campbell's (1998) revised edition of *Writing Security* challenges constructivist scholarship that emphasizes the agency or instrumentalization of danger. Such an argument, Campbell holds, would undermine the discursive foundations of the state and portray it as an actor who can manipulate discourse rather than being constituted by discourse (Campbell 1998: 218).

⁶ 'Foreign policy' refers to Campbell's retheorization of the concept to be, "one of the boundary-producing practices central to the production and reproduction of the identity in whose name it operates" (Campbell 1998: 68). Rather than adhering to the epistemic realist understanding of foreign policy as the interactions among states, Campbell argues that foreign policy is integral to representing difference as danger and disciplining the identity of the state.

the identity of the endangered. In this way, the multiplicity of identities found in any given society are contained through representations of a threatening external Other.⁷ Hegemonic representations of terrorism during the early years of the War on Terror, for instance, constituted the image of the terrorist as the ‘enemy of freedom’ (Bush 2001; Jackson 2005). This in turn constituted the endangered identity (i.e. the amorphous assemblage of allied countries and societies)⁸ as the champions of ‘freedom’ and civilisation.

While not all dangers are represented in such stark terms, the ability of danger to construct the identity of the endangered collective is a vital consideration when studying security politics in Afghanistan. There is no doubt that harms occur frequently in Afghan society due to political instability, crime, corruption, environmental degradation, health, and myriad other factors; however, what is particularly salient about viewing danger as a discourse is the processes by which certain dangers come to be privileged over others. For instance, of the many issues facing Afghanistan, why is (narco)terrorism considered the most pressing? The argument to be noted here is not only that danger is a discourse, but that this discourse also has a clear political purpose (Jackson 2005). The purpose, then, is to use danger to create and border a society of the endangered, a society over which either the GIRoA or the Taliban hold authority over identity.

These constitutive effects of danger are enabled through a system of representations that draw upon language, specialisation, imagery, and cultural tropes which present danger in ways that are intelligible to the wider social audience. This understanding of representation parallels Stuart Hall’s work in that danger is not only described or depicted through language, but also that it comes to symbolise abstract notions of identity and otherness (Hall 1997).⁹ In other words, representations of danger are not limited to describing existing events or objects as dangerous, but additionally come to symbolise the larger abstract identity of the dangerous Other. Indeed, this is how individuals in

⁷ The word ‘Other’ is capitalized here to reflect discursive framings of danger as an existential threatening entity. This understanding reflects Neumann’s (1996) theorization of the Other as the binary opposite integral to understanding the Self.

⁸ This vague language is meant to denote the somewhat ironic coalition of liberal and authoritarian states who fought against terrorist groups in the US-led War on Terror (e.g. Russia, China, Uzbekistan).

⁹ Please note that Hall was not discussing representations of danger specifically, but rather was describing the two purposes of representation more broadly (see Hall 1997: 16).

Afghan society and beyond can 'know' the Taliban identity even without having experienced a direct encounter. What this points to is the ability of representations of danger to existentialise and manifest the wider discourse in the interpretations of the social audience. Note, this is not to say that representation materialises a fixed and universal interpretation of danger, but rather that dominant¹⁰ representations constitute the discourse in which a preferred meaning is created (Hall 1997: 228). Thus, there is some agency in hegemonic representations¹¹ of danger in constructing a preferred meaning for the social audience. The institutional authority of the state, which is understood to have a specialised knowledge about danger and insecurity, holds a unique ability to communicate authoritative representations of danger to the secured society.¹² Again, this is not to say that the entirety of the audience will interpret the representation in the same way, nor is it to say that the audience will universally adopt the state's preferred meaning. The plurality of experiences, knowledges, and identities in a given audience would prevent the universal acceptance of any representation. However, the power of political representations of danger greatly reduce the variety of interpretations and utilises hegemonic power structures to reify the preferred meaning.

Consequently, hegemonic representations of danger emphasize difference, reflecting the understanding that representation is considered strongest when highlighting differences (Hall 1997). Saussure argues that difference creates meaning and the negative binary that one holds with an Other has a constitutive effect (although never complete or fixed) on the identity of the Self (Neumann 1996). While difference does play an important role in constituting meaning and identity, it should also be noted that binaries are rarely (if ever) neat and orderly, and instead can be understood as a process of negotiation (McSweeney 1999). Moreover, binaries are also asymmetrical with one pole of the binary holding relative power over the other, which pressures both individuals and collectives to conform

¹⁰ 'Dominant' refers to Foucault's theorization of power and discourse in which authoritative discursive actors hold privileged status to speak and influence the discourse. This can be observed in the privileging of security experts and government spokespersons in 'speaking' security over others who are not perceived to hold expert status. This point is developed further below in a discussion on Bourdieu's concept of *field*.

¹¹ Hegemonic representations refer to Gramsci's theorization of Cultural Hegemony (see Gramsci 1971). While the present discussion on representation precludes an in-depth discussion of who, or what, constitutes a hegemonic actor (or hegemonic discourse), this point will be expanded further in Section II. For now, 'hegemonic' is meant to denote an assemblage of authoritative speakers who hold a privileged status within a social and political context (e.g. the state).

¹² This ability is most clearly observed in the traditional understanding of securitisation outlined by Wæver (1995).

to fixed notions of self and other (Hall 1997; Connolly 1991). In relation to representing danger, this notion of difference and otherness plays a key role in constituting a discourse. For a political actor engaging in representing danger, the otherness or foreignness of the danger must be highlighted in order to present a clear image of the endangered self. As Campbell argues, “while dependent on specific historical contexts, we can say that for the state, identity can be understood as the outcome of exclusionary practices in which resistant elements to a secure identity on the ‘inside’ are linked through a discourse of ‘danger’ with threats identified and located on the ‘outside’” (Campbell 1998: 68). Thus, difference is an important characteristic in representations of danger as it enables discursive actors to exclude the other and consequently represent the identity of the endangered.

This process of exclusion is evident in the language deployed in representations of danger. While the intention here is not to generalise all representations of danger, the frequent deployment of negative labels such as ‘evil’ and ‘barbaric’ indicate the use of language to externalise danger from the secured identity. For instance, the label ‘evil’ is predominately used in contemporary representations of terrorist violence (Der Derian 2005: 26; Bhatia 2005: 15) and indicates the linguistic practice of ‘evilification’, which refers to a declaration of moral judgement and outcasting of an immoral other (Lazar and Lazar 2004). Representations of narcotics frequently frame the danger as a disease and invoke images of a cancer that must be eradicated from the body politic (Campbell 1998: 83; Weimer 2003; Herschinger 2011). In Afghanistan, government representations of the Taliban draw on both of these labels in an attempt to exclude the organization from Afghan society and present it as a foreign entity (see Chapter IV). This points to the deployment of exclusive labels to represent a danger as external to the endangered self. In this way, representing danger is as much about giving meaning to a dangerous object or identity as it is about signifying the endangered self. This view echoes Campbell’s earlier argument that “the operation of discourses of danger which, by virtue of telling us what to fear, have been able to fix who ‘we’ are” (Campbell 1998: 169). The deployment of simplistic and reductive labels renders representations of danger more intelligible to the audience. The effect of these labels essentialises a complex and varied entity (such as a terrorist organization) and reduces it to either a metaphorical disease or a cosmic immoral other.

Discourses of danger also draw upon a particular assemblage of referent objects that both constitute the meaning of a particular danger as well as the corresponding endangered identity. In this regard, Maria Stern's work on identity and narratives of insecurity in Latin America is particularly salient as it demonstrates the active process by which referent objects and identities are combined in a representation of danger (Stern 2005, 2006). To cite a theme found in contemporary representations of danger in Afghanistan, both the government and the Taliban often invoke images of Islam under threat in an attempt to frame the other as a foreign danger and present themselves as the righteous defenders of Afghan society (see Chapter IV and V). Part of this is reflective of the authority discursive actors hold over representations of danger and the political purposes of those representations; however, this also indicates the necessity to represent a danger in a way that is intelligible and acceptable to the social audience (McSweeney 1996: 90). This illustrates the importance of social context in influencing the discourse and highlights that political actors are not free to impose whatever discourse they want on society (McSweeney 1999). Furthermore, this emphasis on the role of the audience parallels arguments found in securitisation theory and the Copenhagen School, highlighting that for a speech act to be successful, the audience must accept it (see Buzan et al. 1998; Balzacq 2005). While the role of the audience is an important consideration, given the focus of this project on *how* and *why* (narco)terrorism is represented, the role of the audience is confined to that of a discursive stage in which hegemonic and counterhegemonic discourses compete for recognition. Thus, there is a duality in the use of referent objects in discourses of danger. On the one hand, referent objects such as Islam are deployed in representations of danger to define the endangered identity as 'Islamic' (see Chapter IV and V). On the other hand, the contemporary social and political context of Afghanistan requires reference to Islam as part of the Afghan identity, and therefore hinders discursive actors from representing a secular identity. In this way, the hope is not to deny the role of discourse in constituting both state and society. Indeed, what makes Afghanistan 'Islamic' is the product of historical shifts in the Afghan identity, most notably from 1978 to today (Rashid 2010); however, the focus on *why* (narco)terrorism is represented as danger requires the emphasis be placed on the instrumental use of referent objects in hegemonic and counterhegemonic representations. This focus on the instrumental use of danger reflects a hierarchical understanding of knowledge and discourses of danger. Despite discourses of danger being represented to

affect the entirety of a social body, in Afghanistan there are only a handful of actors who are able to ‘speak’ about it and be heard. There is an asymmetry of power in who holds discursive authority over danger (see Jackson 2012). Moreover, historical practices of representing danger within the discursive construction of the state has “colonized our understanding of ‘the political’” and placed the state as the “source of authorized articulations of danger” (Campbell 1998: 199). Thus, there is a hierarchy in who can speak about danger. This asymmetry is best captured in the privileging of state actors in speaking authoritatively about danger, whereas other vernacular speakers are largely silenced (see Bubandt 2005; Jarvis 2018; Rowley and Weldes 2012).¹³ In this regard Bourdieu’s concept of *field* is a useful conceptual tool for understanding how certain actors in society are able to ‘speak’ about danger, whereas others are relatively silenced (Hansen 2000: 306). A *field* is understood as an assemblage of socially powerful actors who hold a unique status to create and influence the discourse (see Bourdieu 1993). This concept has been taken up elsewhere in Critical Security Studies (see, for instance, Bigo 2000, 2002, 2008; Stampnitzky 2013) and is often used to study competition among discursive actors in a particular field. However, for the present study *field* is used to theorise the ability of particular discursive actors (i.e. security experts) to ‘speak’ about security and thus represent danger in an authoritative way, whereas other social actors (i.e. those who do not hold this status) are largely confined to the audience of these representations. What defines the field of (in)security is a politics of knowledge in which particular security actors are understood to possess a unique understanding of danger (Jackson 2012). Part of this is an affirmation of contemporary discourses of statehood and sovereignty, but the effect of this field is observed in the top-down nature of representations of danger. The status granted to experts in the field enables them to subjugate alternative knowledges and interpretations of danger (Fierke 2007: 101). In other words, despite a plurality of voices and interpretations, the asymmetry of power in the discourse grants security actors with the unique ability to subjugate alternative voices in the discourse that might challenge a danger’s supposed objectivity (Jackson 2012: 213). One of the clearest examples of this is the delegitimization of alternative voices in contemporary discourses of terrorism. The framing of terrorists as barbaric, uncivilised,

¹³ This is not to say that individuals within a society cannot speak about security and that they should not be listened to. Rather, the argument being made here is that contemporary power relations in Afghanistan effectively silence social actors from speaking security as the discourse is largely influenced by government actors and the international community.

and evil dehumanises the terrorist other and renders counterhegemonic discourse as taboo (Zulaika 1995: 220; Zulaika and Douglass 1996: 182; Toros 2008). Despite the important role of the audience in affirming or denying representations of danger, in Afghanistan, and particularly with regard to (narco)terrorism, the discourse remains predominately state-centric and unidirectional.

What this means is that discourses of danger are largely dominated by state actors and other authorized speakers (security practitioners, academics, media figures)¹⁴ and can therefore be understood instrumentally. This is where the argument of this thesis differs from that of Campbell (1998: 218) and reflects more a critical constructivist approach than poststructuralist. Epistemologically speaking, this thesis is loyal to the notion that nothing 'exists' outside of discourse (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000); however, that is not to say that discursive constructs, such as the state or terrorist groups, do not use danger instrumentally in attempting to construct and secure a society. The deployment of danger to discursively constitute the identity of the endangered, as well as the establishment of political authority, indicates the instrumental value of the discourse to hegemonic actors. Moreover, as Dillon (1996) has argued, political authority cannot exist without discourses of insecurity (Dillon 1996: 14); thus, the instrumental value of danger is found in the ability to actualise an endangered society *and* to maintain a political order premised on protection.

As mentioned above, the discursive construction of the Hobbesian state is founded in claims regarding the instinctual fear of the individual (Dillon 1996: 16; Booth and Wheeler 2008: 62). In an earlier survey on discourses of insecurity, James Der Derian highlighted the interpretive realist approach to security and the state. Drawing upon Nietzsche, Der Derian argued that security is based on a supposed instinctual fear of the unknown, which drives humans to seek security in bordered collectives (Der Derian 1993). While the intention is not to present an 'objective truth' about human nature, the power of this discursive construction cannot be denied in how it influences state-society relations. As a result, the *ethos* written into the discursively constructed state is to provide security and maintain this notion that freedom from danger is a condition that can be provided by the sovereign (Dillon 1996: 14; Campbell 1998: 199; Behnke 2000: 92).

¹⁴ This conceptualisation of elites reflects the arguments put forth by Paris School scholars such as Didier Bigo (2008) and Jef Huysmans (1998).

However, the discursive foundations of the sovereign state make understanding danger or (in)security as an objective condition problematic (Campbell 1998: 1), revealing that to provide total security would be to expose the absence of any pre-discursive foundations of the state (Campbell 1998: 12; Burke 2002: 20). Thus, danger is a vital tool that both creates the state *and* society, and maintains the roles assigned via the Hobbesian construct.

The consistent endangerment of society evidences another intersection between the state and danger – the creation of exception. For hegemonic actors such as the state, danger provides the opportunity to establish and secure its production of the ‘normal’. This tactic is seen as one of the primary modes of governance and control within liberal politics (Agamben 2005; Case Collective 2006; Huysmans 2006). The pluralist foundations of liberal society require a politics of security and fear to overcome the relative autonomy of society (Williams 2011: 454). The plurality of identity found in any society illustrates its ambiguity in defining what is included and excluded. Thus, as highlighted by Campbell, “the need to discipline and contain the ambiguity and contingency of the ‘domestic’ realm is a vital source of the externalization and totalization of threats to that realm through discourses of danger” (Campbell 1998: 64). Moreover, the ability of discourses of danger to create a society based around an endangered identity is challenged due to the plurality of interpretations of the discourse; thus, emergency politics and the exception are deployed to problematise notions of liberal autonomy and to exploit the underlying structures of the Hobbesian state (Neocleous 2008). In effect, the ‘normal’ is a discursive representation much like ‘security’ in that the emergency politics ushered in through discourses of danger construct an ideal type of state-society relations. In the context of post-2001 Afghanistan, itself a product of interactions between the global, liberal hegemonic order and the domestic socio-political context of a war-torn multi-political country, the ‘normal’ would reflect the ideal environment of a centralised state and unified society characterised by liberal autonomy. Therefore, in representing omnipresent dangers like (narco)terrorism, normality is used to simultaneously construct a notion of the state’s utopian vision while at the same time justifying why such a condition remains unrealised.

While this logic has been connected to the steady erosion of liberal freedoms in the contemporary Western political order, there is also a link to be made with the exclusion of undesirable elements from the secured society (Bigo 2008b: 109). The routinization of abnormal politics, as evidenced in the series of policies and laws enacted in countries

such as the United States and the United Kingdom, indicates the instrumental use of discourses of danger to discipline society's relationship with the state. There is an important link to be made here with how danger is represented and its impact on identity. Discursive representations of danger draw upon socially accepted referent objects in an attempt to influence the audience's interpretation. However, this also shapes how society, as a collective, views and encounters the dangerous other and leads to stereotyping, prejudice, and other processes of exclusion. Moreover, the exceptionality of security politics not only externalises the other but also renders it as something that must be eradicated through state-sanctioned violence. This presents a politically powerful tool for cultivating a loyal identity in the endangered society (Neocleous 2008). Representations of danger and performances of security¹⁵ (Aradau 2012: 115) establish political boundaries within a society that legitimises the ideal and excludes the dangerous other. Moreover, the state of exception renders any communication or negotiation between inside and outside to be illegitimate and disloyal, in effect 'fixing' (at least momentarily) identities reflective of the limits of sovereignty.

In sum, this thesis theorizes danger as a discourse that is represented by hegemonic and counterhegemonic actors to constitute the endangered society. This theorization parallels the earlier arguments of poststructuralist and critical constructivist scholars (for example Campbell 1998; Weldes 1996; Jackson 2005; Dillon 1996) who have established the link between danger and identity. The underlying theoretical argument here is that danger is used instrumentally by political actors in Afghanistan, who seek to deploy representations of danger in order to articulate an endangered Afghan identity. Whether or not this is achieved is not the focus of the thesis; rather, the thesis should be taken as an inquiry into *how* and *why* danger, specifically (narco)terrorism, is represented in Afghanistan. Ultimately, the establishment of danger as a discourse serves as the theoretical foundation of this empirical study and continues the important work laid out by earlier scholarship in Critical Security Studies.

¹⁵ Please note that while performativity (Butler 1993) is an important aspect of many of the works cited here (Campbell 1998), it is not the focus of the thesis. Indeed, representing danger can be understood as a performance of security and governmentality; however, this project is focused more on the formulation and instrumental use of representations of danger and thus avoids integrating performativity into the framework.

Theoretical Framework

Having outlined this project's conceptualisation of danger as a discourse, the discussion must now turn to the methods used in analysing representations of danger in Afghanistan. The scope of this study requires an inclusive theoretical framework given the importance of analysing both the structural context of the discourse as well as the particular methods and meanings used in contemporary representations. Thus, this thesis adopts an interpretivist approach to representations of danger in Afghanistan. It incorporates a range of analytical concepts from critical theories such as Poststructuralism, the Copenhagen School, and Critical Constructivism. However, the unease of limiting this study to fit one particular theoretical school should be noted as applying labels in such a way produces assumptions and limitations regarding the particular approach used. In short, rather than using this section to justify the application of, say, a Critical Constructivist label, the hope is to provide clear definitions and rationales for analytical concepts used in the thesis. Following a discussion of the theoretical framework used in the thesis, the chapter turns to a discussion on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough 1992, 1995), which should be understood as the main interpretive method for analysing representations of danger in Afghanistan.

Given this study's focus on danger as a discourse and the underlying premise that it is used instrumentally by political actors, securitisation plays a significant role in the theoretical framework. Securitisation is understood traditionally (see Wæver 1995; Buzan et al. 1998) as a performative act in which threats emerge and become recognised (Williams 1998: 435). The underlying argument is that security issues do not exist objectively, but instead become securitised through a performative act known as the 'Speech Act'. This framework is based on John Austin's Speech Act Theory (see Austin 1962) which approaches speech as a productive performance. In simple terms, this means that saying something is doing something; thus, the speech, or declaration, produces real world effects, rather than merely describing the world. Securitisation applies this framework to the study of security and puts forth the notion that security issues become recognised through a speech act. However, this is not to say that securitising an issue is as simple as declaring it publicly and there are some additional considerations that impact the success or failure of a speech act. Chief among these is the requirement that the securitising actor (i.e. the speaker) be in a position of authority in order to convince the

audience to accept the declaration. This means that the ability to securitise a particular issue, object, or identity is limited to discursive actors found in state institutions and its affiliated security apparatus.¹⁶

This particular requirement has been the subject of much criticism in critical scholarship as it leads to the silencing of individuals and groups who do not possess authority but nonetheless possess knowledge and experience insecurity (Hansen 2000: 306; Milliken 1999; McDonald 2008). For instance, the gendered discourse of security which often portrays women as in need of sovereign protection maintains asymmetrical power relations in society and hinders women from speaking their own experience and knowledge of insecurity (Hansen 2000). Moreover, the emphasis on institutional actors to ‘speak’ security ignores the ability of counterhegemonic actors, such as the Taliban, to securitise issues, albeit from a relatively marginalised position. While this statement should not be taken as supportive of the Taliban, it does highlight some limitations of securitisation in its favouring of institutional structures and power over knowledge.

Indeed, another critique offered to securitisation is the understanding of the theory as unidirectional (Bourbeau 2011: 41). This point refers to the tendency of scholars to focus on the deployment of securitising acts while ignoring the importance of the audience to support the narrative (see Balzacq 2005, 2011). To put it simply, securitisation has contributed to the notion that anything can be securitised so long as it is declared by a discursive authority; however, the role of the audience in either accepting or rejecting a securitising act challenges the autonomy of the speech actor. This is an important point for this study’s framework because it highlights the requirement of speech actors to represent danger in a way that is intelligible to the audience (i.e. Afghan society in this case). While the GIRA holds institutional power over Afghan society, and therefore has an advantage in speaking security to the audience, the Taliban’s communications must overcome this inferior position. One of the primary means of doing so is to draw upon culturally significant modes of communication in the form of night letters (*shabnamah*), chants (*taranas*), and poems (see Johnson 2007, 2017; Strick Van Linschoten and Kuehn

¹⁶ ‘Security apparatus’ is a term meant to denote the assemblage of institutions, actors, and practices that collectively form a *dispositif* of security (see Foucault 1978; Bussolini 2010). The utility of such a *dispositif* is an open question with several competing interpretations found in the literature (see Foucault 1978; Agamben 2009). While the *dispositif* is generally understood as an analytical tool, here the word apparatus is meant to denote a broader understanding of the many actors and institutions that form the collective security apparatus of a given social-political context.

2012b, 2018). Indeed, these forms of communication contradict traditional securitisation theory and lack the institutional power held by state actors; however, the emphasis on the role played by the audience in subsequent developments of the theory points to the validity of these forms of communication and the application of securitisation to counterhegemonic actors. This point also connects to the broadening of securitisation beyond formal speech acts (Huysmans 1998, 2002, 2011).¹⁷ While this study is primarily focused on linguistic representations of danger, the recognition of broader communicative methods in securitisation theory has been an important consideration which has a direct application to the Taliban's counterhegemonic representations of danger.

This framework utilises securitisation in two ways. First, the theory contributes to the epistemological foundation of this thesis in its discursive approach to danger. The agency held by security actors to construct and disseminate discourses of danger reflects this study's argument that danger is a political representation. Rather than accepting that the Taliban are objectively dangerous or external to some fixed notion of Afghan society, or that terrorism is an objective and fixed threat, securitisation reveals the agency held by security actors in constructing and disseminating the threat. This approach also highlights the performative aspect of danger in the spectacle of the formal speech act. The primary sources consulted in this study centre on formal speech acts emanating from government officials. While it is recognised that securitisation occurs in multiple ways and is not solely observed in the formal speech act (Huysmans 2011), the instrumentality of danger in the political context of Afghanistan directs focus towards performances of sovereignty and protection via representations of danger. In other words, securitisation theory narrows down the analysed discourse in this thesis when assessing hegemonic representations of danger.

Another way in which securitisation has contributed to this thesis is through its link to the state of exception (Schmitt 1995). One of the foundational elements of securitisation is the ability of the speech act to depoliticise a securitised issue and abnormalize politics (see Alker 2005; Aradau 2004; Huysmans 2004). The depoliticization of a particular issue, for instance terrorism, renders discussion and alternative interpretations as suspect and, in this way, grants the sovereign with the authority to overcome the threat. While

¹⁷ Moreover, the use of visual imagery in securitising issues has been largely ignored until recently (see Hansen 2011; Junk and Schlag 2012; Campbell and Shapiro 2007).

what constitutes 'normal' politics is intersubjective, the political context of Afghanistan and the institutional weakness of the GIRoA indicates a strong connection between the instrumental use of representations of danger in attempts to maintain government hegemony over Afghan society. By securitising the Taliban via representations of (narco)terrorism, the GIRoA attempts to maintain sovereignty over Afghan society and delegitimises alternative interpretations of the danger. The success or failure of securitisation is not the focus of this study, but the theory presents a compelling method for making sense of representations of danger in contemporary Afghanistan.

The link between securitisation and abnormal politics can also be found in its effects on social identity. Indeed, one of the main contributions of the Copenhagen School was its inclusion of societal security and the application of securitisation to issues of identity (Wæver et al. 1993: 24; McSweeney 1996: 82). Here we can observe the process of othering and excluding identities through the rhetorical structure of securitisation and exception (see Buzan et al. 1998; Huysmans 2004). The representation of a particular object or identity as an existential threat to society establishes a political context of emergency, which in turn further solidifies bordered distinctions between the internal endangered identity and the external dangerous other (see also Campbell 1998: 80). However, it should also be noted that the conceptualisation of identity within societal security has been the subject of debate in which Copenhagen School theorists such as Ole Wæver have argued that society can possess a uniform identity that can be threatened (Wæver et al. 1993: 24), whereas others such as Bill McSweeney have challenged this point as ignoring the diversity of the social body (see McSweeney 1996). On this point, the approach of the thesis is more akin to McSweeney's position, but instead of viewing societal security as reflective of a threat to identity, the argument is that representations of danger are used in an attempt to construct a society around a uniform endangered identity. Thus, securitisation serves as an important element of this study's framework in terms of conceptualising the institutional context of danger in Afghanistan, connecting performance and representation to the discourse of danger, and theorizing the construction of identity in representing danger.

Given that the theoretical premise of this study is that danger is a discourse, careful attention needs to be taken in theorizing how discourses of danger are established.¹⁸ Moreover, in attempting to connect theorizing of discourse found in Poststructuralism to an empirical analysis of representations of danger in Afghanistan, this thesis draws upon several scholars and theoretical schools. The objective is not to present a new way of viewing danger as a discourse, but rather to provide the reader with a broad overview of the discursive actors, practices, and institutions that contribute to the contemporary configuration of (narco)terror. Rather than viewing (narco)terror as an objective and fixed threat, the goal is to theorize the processes and relationships through which contemporary representations have emerged.

The theoretical framework in this area is based largely on Foucault's (1977, 1978, 1980) understanding of discourse and its links to power-knowledge. This has been a well-trodden path in Critical Security Studies, but rather than focusing on a particular area of danger, this study hopes to establish a broad understanding of the discourse and its function in both hegemonic and counterhegemonic circles.

In terms of this study's epistemological foundations, Foucault's concept of power/knowledge, and subsequently genealogy, have been the most influential. Power-knowledge refers to Foucault's theorization of power and its interdependence with knowledge (Foucault 1977: 27). For Foucault, knowledge could not be viewed as independent of power, but rather that "power and knowledge directly imply one another" (Foucault 1977: 27). Thus, power was premised on the construction of a field of knowledge, but additionally that knowledge constitutes power relations. In short, power-knowledge refers both the use of knowledge as a form of power *and* the ability of the powerful to create new knowledge. While Foucault first introduced this concept in *Discipline and Punish* (1977), its use as an analytical tool is most clearly evidenced in *The History of Sexuality, Volume I* (1978), in which he revealed how knowledge of sexuality had been constructed in the sciences and how this constructed knowledge influences social dynamics and practices. The significance of power-knowledge for the thesis is in the underlying claim that knowledge is always for some purpose and therefore cannot be objective. With regard to danger, and specifically (narco)terrorism, power-

¹⁸ Please note that this is not to say that danger exists outside of discourse, but rather to highlight the processes and relationships that constitute danger.

knowledge is used to theorise the discursive construction of this danger and to connect it to power relations existent within Afghanistan. Power-knowledge theorizes the constitution of the discourse and points to its instrumentalization in that the discourse not only creates the meaning of (narco)terrorism but also establishes the society as endangered.

Foucault's theorizing of -power-knowledge leads us to one of the main analytical tools used in the thesis: genealogy. While genealogy is predominately understood as the study of an object's origins, in Foucault's understanding - and indeed the understanding advocated here - genealogy refers to the history of an object that challenges any recognition of origin (Foucault 1984: 77). It is described by Claudia Aradau and Rens van Munster as "inquiry into the 'past of the present' with the objective to destabilize what we know and do not or no longer question...its detailed documentary work serving the critical goal of defamiliarization, of rupturing that which is taken for granted" (Aradau and Van Munster 2011: 12; see also Burke 2002). Through a historical inquiry into the "discursive constitution of subjectivity conditioned on power relations," genealogy challenges the notion of fixed objects and identities (Ditrych 2014: 16); thus, defamiliarizing the familiar. In first establishing that (narco)terrorism is a discourse and then analysing representations of that discourse, genealogy is a helpful tool for revealing the fluidity of the danger and challenging notions that (narco)terrorism is a stable or fixed category (Stampnitzky 2013: 4). Moreover, by applying historical inquiry to the discourse, the influence of discursive actors and the constellation of power can be observed in the periodic changes of meaning and representation. Essentially, for the thesis, genealogy is the application of power-knowledge in historical inquiry with the objective of revealing the constitution of the discourse and its relationship to power.

In keeping with the thesis' post-positivist methodology, a genealogical study of terror, narco(tics),¹⁹ and narcoterror (see Chapter III) is used in an inquiry into the history of contemporary discourses of (narco)terrorism. This method is used for three reasons. First, genealogy reveals the intersubjective and fluid nature of these concepts, and, ultimately, of danger itself (Stampnitzky 2013; Ditrych 2014; Jackson 2012). Fixed notions of terrorism and narcotics in Afghanistan subjugate alternative knowledges and serve to

¹⁹ The use of parentheses here is meant to denote that the danger of narcotics is often co-constituted by actors affiliated in the drug trade as well as the drugs themselves.

maintain sovereign hegemony over the discourse (see Jackson 2012). Referring back to the discussion on danger in Section I, an historical inquiry into the evolution of discourses of (narco)terrorism reveals the agency of discursive actors in shaping the discourse in the past. For instance, as illustrated by Ditrych (2013), the association of terrorism to anarchist assassins in the early 20th century reveals not only a disconnect with the contemporary discourse but also the historical use of the label to subjugate counterhegemonic actors and identities. Therefore, genealogy enables the researcher to observe the links between contemporary representations of (narco)terrorism in Afghanistan and historical trends in the global discourse, thereby challenging the objectivity of these representations while also revealing their instrumentalization.

The second benefit of genealogy is that it exposes the deeply contextual nature of represented danger. Investigating the many different manifestations and characteristics inscribed onto terror, narcotics, and narcoterror demonstrates that these dangers did not emerge in a vacuum, rather these concepts serve as a time-capsule or *zeitgeist*, exposing the identities these very dangers are purported to threaten (see Campbell 1998; Stern 2006). Furthermore, applying genealogical inquiry to these concepts deprives them of the teleological trajectory often afforded to them in hegemonic representations, instead highlighting the intersubjectivity of these concepts as their representations vary across time and space. The ‘evolution’ of terror(-ism) is illustrative in this regard as the notions and identities incorporated into the danger have varied greatly over the past century (see Hoffman 2006; Der Derian 2009b; Stampnitzky 2013). In the work of Ondrej Ditrych (2013, 2014), itself a great influence on the intellectual trajectory of this project, terrorism is exposed as a *dispositif*, remaining as an ‘existential’ danger over the past century, albeit with numerous particularised identities that fit the political context of the era (see also Stampnitzky 2013). Similarly, the evolution of the danger posed by narcotics, and indeed what constitutes a narcotic, is indicative of contextual features in representations of the danger and the contemporary challenges it is understood to pose to hegemonic actors (see Herschinger 2011, 2015). For example, equating the narcotics danger with an eastern menace during the Vietnam War, as evidenced first by Kuzmarov (2009) and then Crick (2012), followed by its ready association with leftist guerrillas in Latin America (see Ehrenfeld 1990), and now with Islamic fundamentalists (Peters 2009b), highlights the influence of contemporary political contexts and power relationships in shaping the

discourse. In using genealogical inquiry, the contextual nature of danger is exposed, demonstrating hegemonic and counterhegemonic inscriptions in their representation.

At this point the motivations and use of genealogy should be clear, but there remains a need to discuss the choice of speakers and representations subjected to genealogical inquiry. Moreover, the signifiers of ‘hegemonic’, ‘counter-hegemonic’, and ‘hegemonic discourse’ need further unpacking in order to present a clear framework for this study. This thesis draws on Gramsci’s theory of hegemony (Gramsci 1971). Gramsci theorised hegemony as a method for building consensus between the hegemonic and subaltern classes. The realisation that the hegemonic cannot rule solely through coercive power necessitated power over culture and identity, which would be used to build consensus. This idea has been taken forward in the discipline by scholars who see the value of this theorization in analysis of the structures of values and meanings that order both international and domestic society (Cox 1981). As pointed out by Herschinger (2011), “values, norms, and meanings are not really questioned, because in a hegemonic order they appear to most actors as ‘naturally’ given, i.e. they are expressed as universally valid” (Herschinger 2011: 83). Culture, values, and norms are produced and disseminated to the subaltern classes in order to maintain an asymmetry of power and the ‘loyalty’ of the proletariat. In this way, Gramsci’s theorising reflects Marx’s emphasis on the false consciousness and how building consensus is vital for maintaining exploitative structures. The end goal is to build a ‘collective will’ in which the hegemonic is viewed as the protagonist of the subaltern (Mouffe 1979: 184; Cox 1987: 4).

In achieving this ‘collective will’ there is a parallel to be drawn between Gramsci’s thought and that of Foucault. Both Gramsci and Foucault viewed knowledge as hegemonic production, albeit from slightly different angles. For Foucault, power-knowledge reflects the power dynamics that influence and produce knowledge in a given context, whereas for Gramsci hegemonic forces produce mechanisms, such as knowledge and morals, to direct social relations (see Gramsci 1971: 180). In both cases, powerful actors/classes use their authority to construct norms and knowledges that structure the context of the social. The motivations differ for each theorist, but the salient point for the thesis is in how discourse(s) of danger, which can be understood as a hegemonic mechanism designed to order and structure society. It is on this point of similarity that the instrumentality of danger is built upon. Indeed, this point was highlighted by

Fairclough (1992) as “a fruitful framework for conceptualizing and investigating political and ideological dimensions of discursive practices” (Fairclough 1992: 67).

While this thesis should not be understood as Marxist – emancipation is not the end goal of this work - Gramsci’s theorizing offers a useful method for identifying ‘hegemonic actors’ who build discourses of danger. Gramsci focuses on the ‘ruling class’ in his writing, referring not only to the bourgeoisie or corporate class but also to the political class and intellectual class (Gramsci 1971: 371, 549) and distinguishes between political society and civil society. Political society refers to society’s interaction with the state and is largely confined to coercive power (i.e. use of force). Civil society, on the other hand, refers to the structures of social relations and includes intellectuals, the corporate class, and other powerful social actors. The underlying argument here is that in each society there are unequal distributions of power and production reflective in the hegemony of some actors over others. For this particular study, Gramsci’s argument highlights the unequal distribution of power and reveals the power knowledge-producers have over society, whether political or civil. Thus, in identifying what is meant by ‘hegemonic actors’, this thesis builds on Gramsci’s idea of knowledge-producers and those who produce the norms and values that structure social relations.

Again, there is a parallel to be drawn with Foucault in the emphasis on knowledge-producers holding power over what Gramsci refers to as ‘subordinate classes’ (Gramsci 1971: 406). However, there is a contradiction here between Foucault’s approach and that of Gramsci, which has a direct impact on this study’s framework. For Foucault, the status of knowledge-producer is merely discursive and cannot be viewed as fixed or static (see Foucault 1989: 201). The State may be understood in contemporary times as an authority on knowledge of danger, but this merely reflects contemporary discourse and is not to say that the State occupies this position eternally. Moreover, this is also not to say that the state is the *only* authority on security and indeed there are numerous discursive actors who produce knowledge about danger outside of the state (see Bigo and Tsoukala 2008). On the other hand, Gramsci’s approach looks at institutions in political and civil society in producing knowledge, morality, values and norms that build consensus among the subordinate classes (Gramsci 1971). The difference lies in the discursive constitution of knowledge-producers and its connection to discourses of danger. For Gramsci, the hegemonic class is built on social relations of production, whereas for Foucault (as well as Campbell) authority comes from producing knowledge (i.e. constructing) discourses

of danger. The functionality of the discourse remains similar, but in narrowing down who is considered to be a hegemonic actor, Foucault's theorizing is more in line with this study's theoretical framework.

On the other hand, Gramsci presents one more contribution to this study's theoretical framework in his conceptualisation of the counter-hegemonic. For Foucault, power-knowledge is premised on subjugating alternative knowledges that challenge the constitution of the discourse (Foucault 1997: 7). For Gramsci, there is a similarity in how the hegemonic suppresses counter-hegemonic voices from the subordinate classes. However, for this thesis, the counter-hegemonic is an important actor to consider given the Taliban's representation of danger in Afghanistan. While hegemonic actors have structured Afghan society (and representations of danger) in a way that delegitimises alternative voices, the Taliban's engagement with, and representation of, danger undermines this hegemonic position and points to a 'war of position' (Gramsci 1971). It should be noted that this is not to present the Taliban as the subaltern challenging the unjust corporate class of Afghanistan, nor is it to legitimize their actions, but the ability of the counter-hegemonic to effectively challenge the hegemonic position is a theme found in this study's empirical analysis. The Taliban's use of vernacular representations (poems, chants, etc.) greatly contrasts representations emanating from hegemonic actors and reveals how counter-hegemonic discourses must contend with structures and values that discredit and delegitimise their communication. In the end, the use of danger between the GIRoA and the Taliban is the same: it reflects an instrumentalization of the discourse to establish a society built around an endangered identity. The arguments of both Gramsci and Foucault contribute to the conceptualisation of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic actors in contemporary Afghanistan and ultimately shape this thesis's interpretation of the discourse.

Methods and Data Set - Critical Discourse Analysis

Having established the theoretical framework for the thesis and its conceptualisation of danger, attention must now be turned to the methods. The research question of this work requires a critical appraisal of (narco)terror as a discourse in Afghanistan. Given that the contribution of this work is empirical, the methods used to analyse the discourse warrants

careful discussion and justification. Moreover, the particular texts being analysed in this study must also be highlighted so that later chapters (e.g. Chapter IV and V) will be understandable and relevant for the reader. Thus, this section will introduce and provide a detailed discussion of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1992, 1995ab; see also van Dijk 2008; Wodak 2013). First, a clear definition of CDA is provided and the value of this research method in using discourse to connect micro- and macro-levels of analysis (i.e. individual and structural). Next, the focus and tenets of CDA are outlined with clear links developed between mainstream theorizations of CDA and this study's epistemological premise. And lastly, a discussion on intertextual analysis is provided to provide detailed explanation about the candidate's interpretive methods and approach to discourses of danger in Afghanistan. The goal is to use CDA to expose how danger is used to structure the political and social context of Afghanistan, highlighting the dialectical relationship between texts and social subjects (Fairclough 1995b). The ability of CDA to go beyond the text and to connect discourse to context is the rationale for employing this framework.

Pinning down a clear, universal definition of CDA is problematic as it has been the site of development over the past 25 years. Originally coined by Norman Fairclough (1992, 1995b), CDA is defined as:

discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony. (Fairclough 1992: 135)

Essentially, there are three focuses of CDA. First, is to explore the connection between discursive practices, which refers to the processes of production and consumption of discourse (Fairclough 1995b: 57), and the structures that inform such processes in society. Rather than approaching text as independent of context, CDA centres on exposing their interconnectivity. Second, CDA is uses the analysis of discourse to reveal how discourse is both constituted and constitutive of power. Here we can again observe a parallel with the earlier writings of both Foucault (1989) and Gramsci's hegemony (1971). And finally, Fairclough points to the use of CDA in revealing how discourse is used to obscure hegemonic control over society and maintain social and political structures. The

underlying argument is that “discourse is a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning” (Fairclough 1992: 64).

This definition reveals one of the foundational premises of CDA, which is that language is not only description but must also be understood as a social act (see Fairclough 1992, 1995ab; Fairclough and Wodak 1997). This means that discourse and text have constitutive effects on social order and must therefore be approached as a form of power. As van Dijk highlights, “rather than merely describe discourse structures, [CDA] tries to explain them in terms of properties of social interaction and especially social structure. More specifically, CDA focuses on the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power and dominance in society” (van Dijk 2008: 353). Thus, given that language is a social act, CDA highlights what Fairclough refers to as the dialectical relationship between discourse (referring both to textual language and forms of semiosis) and social practices which shape the lives and structures of subjects (Fairclough 1989). There is a parallel to be drawn here with Fairclough’s approach and Foucault’s theorization of discourse in that the dialectical relationship between discourse and subject encapsulates Foucault’s argument that discourses “are to be treated as practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 1989: 74). This confirms that discourse is not only descriptive but also constitutive, an approach utilised in the scholarship of Campbell (1998), Herschinger (2011), and enshrined in this study’s theoretical framework.²⁰

The conceptualisation of discourse as a social act has a further implication that rests at the heart of CDA as an analytical method. The distinction between linguistics and the social sciences meant that there was gap between micro-level and macro-level analysis. By focusing on language and discourse, Linguistics would be confined to the micro-level (i.e. text) in its analysis of semantics, grammar, metaphor, and so on. On the other hand, the social sciences would be focused on the macro-level, meaning that analysis would centre on concepts like power, identities, social groups, and culture (van Dijk 2008). However, the connection between discourse and social and political structures advocated

²⁰ Note, there is also a parallel to be drawn between discourse as a social act and the Speech Act employed in traditional securitization. However, this connection abruptly ends given the Copenhagen School’s pre-discursive understanding of the state.

in CDA connects these two levels in analysing both the constitution of the discourse (i.e. the text and discursive practice) and the structures constituted by the discourse (i.e. sociocultural practices). The connection between the macro and the micro reveals the impact discourse has on mental representations and interpretation in society (van Dijk 2008). True, individual experience and knowledge dictates interpretation, but the argument that discourse informs structures highlights the how macro-level structures can influence micro-level interpretations. To focus solely on particularised individual interpretations of a discourse, for instance (narco)terrorism, would deny the agency of wider social structures in informing identities and roles within a social context. Thus, in connecting the macro with the micro, CDA provides an important framework for understanding how hegemonic discourse (i.e. Gramsci 1971) informs the consciousness of subjects at the micro-level. The argument of this work, that representations of danger are used to constitute an endangered society under hegemonic control, CDA presents a clear and useful framework for analysing discourses of danger in Afghanistan.

Having established a definition of CDA, attention must now be turned to the focus of and methods used in the framework. This thesis adopts Fairclough's three-part model in analysing representations of danger (see Fairclough 1995a). The three-part model consists of text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practices. Text refers to linguistic analysis of the communicative event (Fairclough 1995a). This refers to the grammar, syntax, and semantics of a particular communication in the hope of revealing the functionality of the text (Fairclough 1995: 58). The emphasis in this area is predominately on describing the text rather than connecting it to macro-level structures; however, this dimension of the model is a necessary component for it informs later analysis on discursive practice and the effect these practices have on social relations. Rather than approaching text in isolation, linguistic analysis reveals importance of vocabulary, metaphor, and other practices which are discussed in the discourse practice.

The second dimension of analysis is discourse practice. This refers to the process by which a text is produced and consumed. In essence, this level of analysis straddles the micro- and macro-level distinctions discussed above as the micro-level production of discourse is combined with the macro-level consumption (Fairclough 1995b: 58). Moreover, in this dimension of the framework, the impact of sociocultural practices on the production and consumption of the text are revealed through intertextual analysis (Fairclough 1995b: 61). Indeed, intertextual analysis is one of the chief components of

CDA and Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model. It refers to going beyond mere description of the text and seeking out the relations between the text and others, as well as the changes in language that reflect context and structures (Fairclough 1995b). Intertextuality plays a vital role in analysing representations of danger as the often-opaque enemy other is represented in a simplistic and intelligible way for the social audience. The very label of 'narcoterrorist' can be understood as a product of constitutive intertextuality in that the complex and frankly unknowable integration between the drug trade and terrorist organizations is largely silenced and replaced with the simplistic and encompassing label of narcoterrorist. Moreover, the inference of 'terrorist' when applied to drug cartels, as in the case of the Medellin Cartel in the 1990s, does more than just describe the cartel but also influences the interpretation of the discourse among the audience. Thus, intertextual analysis on the discourse practice plays a vital role in interpreting the vocabulary, metaphors, and semantics and explaining the relevance of the discourse.

This leads to the final dimension in Fairclough's framework, which is the sociocultural practice of discourse. This level of analysis looks at the social and cultural structures which enable the communicative event. It reflects the dialectical relationships of discourse and subject in which the social structures inform the discourse, while the discourse constitutes the social structures. For instance, in 'speaking' security, the structures of power in state-society relations and the dominance of sovereign hegemony indicates the privilege of government voices to dominate the 'official' discourse of (in)security. Therefore, as a sociocultural practice, representations of danger are enabled by these dominant power structures, which inevitably leads to a silencing of the vernacular (see Bubandt 2005). This serves as an important element of the research framework and ethos of CDA for it connects discourse to the underlying structures of hegemony that prevail in society; moreover, rather than merely interpreting the text, CDA enables researchers to explain the relevance of discourse beyond communication.

In sum, CDA approaches discourse as a form of social action. It is not merely a body of representations of an event or object, but constitutive of power relations and the structures that inform society and culture. The link between discourse and power reflects Gramsci's hegemony and Foucault's approach to discourse. The goal of CDA is not only to interpret the text but also to explain how discourse constitutes social structures and power relations, moving beyond a purely linguistic analysis to a transdisciplinary approach. Moreover,

CDA highlights the ideological utility of discourse in influencing the minds of the receiver at the micro-level and how this persuasion maintains social structures at the macro-level.

For this thesis, CDA provides a useful framework for connecting discursive representations of danger to the larger processes of constructing Afghan society around an endangered identity. CDA enables the researcher to explain the choice of media in communicating with society (i.e. whether an official formal speech act or an orally-transmitted poem) and how this reflects discursive power structures. CDA also highlights the impact of metaphor and how vocabulary is an active choice in discursive practice to invoke a preferred interpretation in the social audience. In short, CDA does not present a clear, uniform approach to discourse, in which methods are used to confirm pre-determined findings; instead, this method is used to pursue connections between discourse and power relations which inform the daily lives of individuals in Afghanistan.

Using Critical Discourse Analysis

Having established the CDA framework used in the thesis, attention must now be turned to how CDA will be applied in analysing representations of danger in Afghanistan. Primarily, CDA is premised on discourse being a social act and the thesis approaches representations of danger in the same way. The empirical chapters seek to prove that representations of danger are produced and disseminated in order to constitute Afghan society around the notion of endangerment. Thus, the discourse analysed in this thesis are the various forms of communicative acts deployed by both the GIROA and the Taliban in representing the dangers facing Afghan society. However, narrowing down what constitutes a representation of danger is a challenging task that requires further explanation here. Moreover, once a text has been identified, how will it be analysed critically? It is clear that CDA will be used in the thesis, but the operation of CDA has yet to be discussed. Therefore, this section will outline the particular texts used in the research framework and will provide detail as to how these texts were approached and what aspects of the text were analysed.

Who ‘speaks’ security?

The first consideration is to identify *who* ‘speaks’ about danger in Afghanistan. In International Relations there is a privileging of the state as the only actor that can shape international politics and security (Epstein 2011: 342). The state-centrism in International Security Studies has been shown to silence a range of social actors whose discursively constituted role prevents them from speaking about (in)security and danger (Bubandt 2005; Rowley and Weldes 2012; Jervis 2018). State-centrism in this regard is not considered wholly a negative, as the structures of power that inform social relations are currently predicated on the role of a sovereign protector; however, this thesis adopts a more expansive approach to discourse and discursive actors, arguing that not only the hegemonic can ‘speak’ about danger but also the counter-hegemonic. Thus, this thesis uses CDA to present a more flexible analysis that does not pre-discursively identify agents of change, but rather analyses the discourse to reveal the identity of these agents of change. This approach reflects Epstein’s (2011) argument that, “with the focus cast upon the discourses, the analysis can then travel across the different levels of analysis in order to identify who are the relevant speakers-actors” (Epstein 2011: 342). Indeed, it is problematic to assume that the state is the only relevant speaker-actor engaging with representations of danger. After all, the widespread violence and drug abuse in Afghanistan would lead one to believe that citizens and rural farmers would hold more authoritative knowledge. However, in uncovering how discourse is used to constitute identity, an analysis of what is being said about (narco)terrorism reveals that the GIRoA is one of the most vocal actors engaging with the discourse. Thus, public statements, speeches, and policies from the GIRoA serve as one of the main communicative events used in the CDA of the thesis.

But again, this is not to deny the agency of other speaker-actors. Security experts, independent researchers, academics, and other actors in the *field* engage and influence the discourse (see Bigo and Tsoukala 2008; Huysmans 2006; Aradau and van Munster 2011). This is recognised in the research framework of the thesis and is acknowledged in the genealogical inquiry into representations of (narco)terrorism (see Chapter III). However, in terms of representations of danger in Afghanistan, the broader field of speaker-actors plays a more indirect role by serving as an intertextual basis for GIRoA representations.

Therefore, while remaining relevant to the empirical analysis of the thesis, texts and communicative acts emerging from the broader field of elite non-state actors are not the primary focus of the CDA. Rather, applying CDA to GIRoA representations is designed to reveal the intertextual connections between government discourse and the wider field of security experts. One prominent example of this is the frequent use by Ashraf Ghani (President of Afghanistan) of the label ‘fifth-wave of political violence’ in representing the conflation of the drug and terrorism threat (see Ghani 2016b). This framing draws upon Rapoport’s ‘wave-theory’ which has been prominent in mainstream Terrorism Studies (see Rapoport 2012). Read intertextually, Ghani’s communications reveal explicit links between GIRoA representations and the knowledge produced by the *field*. Therefore, focusing primarily on GIRoA representations should not be seen as a limitation, but rather a reflection of the instrumentality of danger and the connections between global discourses of danger.

On the other hand, to focus exclusively on the GIRoA representations and elite discourse would be to deny the counter-hegemonic use of danger to challenge hegemonic power structures. Indeed, if we are to consider that discourse is a social act and that it constitutes power relations, it is integral to approach communicative acts emerging from counter-hegemonic actors such as the Taliban. Indeed, this is a particularly fruitful endeavour as it confirms that discourse is not only used to maintain hegemonic power structures but is also serves as a site of resistance. However, as a counter-hegemonic actor, the social and political structures that maintain hegemony prevent actors associated with the Taliban from speaking legitimately. In other words, the formal speech act that reflects the authority and official status of the state is not an accepted communicative act for the Taliban. The counter-hegemonic ‘voice’ must therefore use other mediums in its engagement with the discourse. The choice to look at Taliban communications reflects the core tenets of CDA and the poststructuralist approach to danger outlined above. By not limiting the thesis to hegemonic discourse, the hope is to reveal the instrumentality of all representations of danger and its use to (re)order and (re)structure social and political relations. As to why the thesis focuses on the Taliban’s communication and not, say Hizb-I Islami (Gulbuddin) or the Islamic State, the rationale is that the Taliban’s communication demonstrates political instrumentalization of danger and its use in constituting an Afghan identity far more than others. This was not obvious prior to

conducting research but has instead been found by applying CDA to the Taliban's communication.

Therefore, in critically analysing the discourse, this thesis focuses on communications from the GIRoA and the Taliban. This is not to ignore the agency of other speaker-actors; however, for the purposes of revealing how representations of danger are used to construct Afghan society, communications from these two actors demonstrate the clearest relevance to the thesis and the theoretical framework.

Choice of Texts

Another important consideration is to identify which communicative acts are relevant for the thesis. Given the multitude of speakers and the broad understanding of representation (see Hall 1997), there is a saturation of relevant texts for the thesis. However, the approach outlined above limits the focus to the GIRoA and the Taliban. Even with this distinction there are thousands of potential texts which utilise various medium, ranging from the formal speech act to visual imagery to poetry to 'anonymous' letters.²¹ In this regard, the texts were identified in accordance with the political and social structures of Afghanistan.

As representative of the state, the GIRoA possesses a unique authority over discourses of danger. This can largely be attributed to the norm of Hobbesian sovereignty and has been theorised extensively by Michael Dillon (1996). Despite a fundamentally weakened presence in rural Afghanistan, the GIRoA remains the most authoritative speaker on security in the country and is able to utilise formal speech mechanisms in its communication with society. Generally, this reflects the traditional understanding of a formal speech act found in securitisation theory (see Wæver 1995; Buzan et al. 1998; Balzacq 2005). As Jackson (2005) points out, 'high data' is used by political elites to create and impose discourses of danger on the masses (579). The discursive role of the government as the sovereign protector of society grants these speakers-actors with the

²¹ Please note that anonymous is placed in inverted commas due to the ambiguity surrounding the authorship of night-letters. While Taliban speakers claim authorship over the letters, this cannot be verified in practice (see Johnson 2007).

authority to use linguistic representations²² to utter danger into existence (Staun 2010: 410). Therefore, formal speeches and interviews given by members of the executive branch of the Afghan government form the majority of texts analysed in the thesis. The rationale for this approach is twofold: first, formal speech acts (i.e. public statements) are widely publicised in the news media and have the ability to be received by wide sections of the Afghan population; second, formal speech acts are partly given meaning through the socio-political structures that grant government speakers with discursive authority. In other words, by looking at speech acts, the thesis is not only analysing what is said in the text, but also highlighting the structural context of the discursive act in line with the tenets of CDA.

Much of these texts consulted were found online. Given the challenges of conducting effective field research in Afghanistan (discussed below), the primary research for the thesis was conducted remotely. However, the GIRoA, specifically the Office of the President and the Ministry of Information and Communications, regularly update their website and upload translated transcripts of the speeches, statements, and press releases made by the president. In this regard, careful attention was paid when sifting through the many texts posted online. Texts were first organised in accordance with the intended audience. Speeches to foreign governments and at international conferences showed the strongest adherence to the (narco)terror discourse, but surprisingly this danger featured prominently in domestic speeches and statements. Furthermore, in communications intended for domestic audiences, danger was framed as an expression of the endangered Afghan identity as opposed to a problem in need of solving. Texts were also organised in relation to significant attacks on the government and/or civilians. Cross referencing with dates of past attacks (i.e. prior to conducting research for the thesis, 2015-2017) and consistent monitoring of Afghan news sites enabled the researcher to identify relevant texts. The objective here was to analyse texts that emerged in a particular context of pronounced insecurity in which society would look to the state to interpret the violence and represent its meaning.

²² Some scholars have recently asserted that the scope of hegemonic discourse needs to be broadened to include visual representations (see Vuori 2010; Hansen 2011; Campbell and Shapiro 2007). While this is a valid argument, this study prioritises linguistic representations as the objective status awarded to the words and language used by the securer is itself a performance of its power and authority.

However, the publicised statements and speeches of the executive branch of the Afghan government was insufficient for this study, and attention was also focused on media reports, quoted statements, and interviews. Three news outlets formed the basis of this study: ToloNews, Pajwok News, and Khaama Press. These sources publish in three languages (English, Dari and Pashto) and are considered part of the mainstream news media of the country (Asia Foundation 2016; ATR Consulting 2014). While it is recognised that media reports are social representations and the product of interpretations, the ability of the GIRoA to communicate with society is far stronger via news outlets than through public statements. Thus, in representing (narco)terrorism the GIRoA must utilise media outlets to disseminate their communications.

Despite the dominance of hegemonic representations of danger in Afghanistan, counter-hegemonic discourse has emerged from the Taliban; thus, equal focus must be placed on critically analysing Taliban communicative acts. Whereas hegemonic forces retain the ability to manifest danger through representation and discourse, counterhegemonic forces have a similar ability to (re)represent danger and impose their own discourse on society, albeit through different means. Such an approach to counter-hegemonic discourse has not been undertaken with regard to narcoterrorism or Afghanistan, and indeed while recent studies have approached Taliban discourse (see Aggarwal 2016; Johnson 2017), there is yet to be an academic study looking at how the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban engage with representations of danger.

The delegitimised status of counterhegemonic discourse profoundly shapes the texts used by the Taliban. The labels, language, and practices utilised by hegemonic actors to construct and maintain hegemonic structures have delegitimised and externalised counterhegemonic (re)representations. As a result, the same discursive means afforded to hegemonic actors (i.e. Speech Act, government policies/statements, (foreign) media interviews, etc.) are excluded from the repertoire of the counterhegemonic, subsequently excluding the discourse from the authorised public sphere. Therefore, counterhegemonic (re)representations emerge in other areas and are communicated through innovative means (see Stritzel and Chang 2015; Ramsay and Holbrook 2015; Aggarwal 2016; Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012, 2018; Johnson 2007, 2017; Foxley 2007; Giustozzi 2009; Nathan 2009). The inability of counterhegemonic forces to use authoritative discursive representations of themselves – speech acts by terrorists stating that they are

freedom fighters are seldom accepted by hegemonic actors or society²³ – means that they are compelled to use modes of representation that are highly visual and active (Hoffman and McCormick 2004; der Derian 2005; Richardson 2006).²⁴ While hegemonic discourse emerges from a position of authority over society, counterhegemonic discourse enters the public sphere from the fringes of society and therefore greater access to the common experiences of social actors is awarded to these speakers (see Johnson 2017). The modes of representation used by the Taliban, for instance, reflect this characteristic as their ability to communicate with Afghan society is premised on their use of cultural mediums (Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012, 2018; Johnson 2017). Whereas hegemonic representations of danger seek to border and essentialise social identity via the binaries produced by danger, the existence and experience of counternarratives, demonstrated through encounters with danger (counterculture, externalised identities, abnormal lifeworlds,²⁵ alterity), exposes the role of society as a stage - an environment where competing (re)representations of danger are deployed as a means to cultural hegemony.

Due to the innovative modes of representation used, it is more difficult to locate specific texts and critically analyse them using the same criteria applied to the hegemonic discourse. Indeed, the strategies used by hegemonic and counterhegemonic speakers differ greatly in their attempts to shape social identity (see Herschinger 2011). In Terrorism Studies, scholars have looked at violence as a form of communication in which targets are chosen as a metaphor designed to represent the political aspirations of violent actors (see Sullivan 2014; Ramsay and Holbrook 2015). While violence committed by the Taliban is commonplace, this study focuses instead on linguistic communications that represent the government of Afghanistan as danger. These forms of representation are predominately text-based and utilise a variety of different forms of cultural production such as poetry, *shabnamah* (night letters), *taranas* (chants), and online statements. What is slightly problematic is the different sociocultural structures linked to particular methods of communication. For instance, the Taliban's online presence is not reflective of its position on the 'fringes of society,' but rather the need to transcend the hyper-localisation of Afghan politics. Conversely, the Taliban's use of poetry reflects the Taliban's deep

²³ For an expanded argument, see Zulaika (1995), Toros (2008), Zulaika and Douglass (1996, 2008).

²⁴ Referring to action, disruption, violence, and other public spectacles.

²⁵ Abnormality is used here to denote identities deemed alternative to the political conception of 'normal life' (see Bigo 2008b: 105).

integration into Afghan social structures and its desire to use this cultural form of communication to challenge political structures. While the integration of two very different forms of communication could be understood as problematic, the complexity of the discourse and its socio-political effects requires a more expansive view of the discourse. Common throughout Taliban communication is the use of metaphors and cultural tropes that link their identity to referent objects in the collective memory (i.e. experience) of the society, affording these 'excluded' identities a degree of indigeneity. Thus, the choice of text analysed in the thesis reflects the Taliban's counter-hegemonic strategy of using representations of danger to challenge hegemonic structures and externalise the GIRoA from their vision of Afghan society.

Limitations

Ultimately, there are some limitations to this study pertaining to the accessibility of Afghanistan and the language limitations of the researcher. Despite the researcher's professional background in Afghanistan, conducting field research for this study was not possible. This is largely due to increased instability and ethical reasons. Instead, the primary research was conducted largely through online sources. For the GIRoA communications, much of their statements are posted online via government websites. Moreover, the Ministry of Communication (GIRoA) regularly updates their website and provides English translations for many of their releases. While being unable to conduct ethnographic research for this study was a challenge, online sources enabled access to many data sets reflective of this study's theoretical and methodological framework.

Another limitation of this study is found in the language limitations of the researcher. Despite possessing a basic knowledge of Dari (also known as Farsi), the researcher's ability was insufficient for analysis of primary documents written in Dari or Pashto. As a result, the sources consulted for this study are all printed in English and were translated from the original language. While this may raise some concerns as to the ability of the researcher to effectively analyse the communications, substantial secondary research was conducted to build upon the researcher's pre-existing knowledge and familiarity with Afghan society and culture. Furthermore, in some of the sources consulted pertaining to Taliban communications, the authors and editors of these works included detailed translation notes and descriptions of the context (see Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn

2012b, 2018; Johnson 2017). As mentioned above, the majority of data sets consulted in the thesis were found online. Overall, the limitations of this study have effective the size of the data set and have led to a reliance on others' translations. However, given the researchers extensive background on Afghanistan, and supplementary research on the politics, society and culture of the country, CDA could still be conducted effectively.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the theoretical framework for the thesis and its approach to danger. It begun by establishing danger as a discourse, which is derived from earlier scholarship from poststructuralist and critical constructivist theorists. Indeed, the intention was not to merely restate old arguments for the sake of it, but rather to lay out the theoretical ground for subsequent chapters analysing (narco)terrorism in Afghanistan. Furthermore, given the research questions of the thesis focus on *how* and *why* discourses of danger are represented in Afghanistan, it was important to address the linkage between identity and danger at the beginning of the work. The chapter then turned to a discussion on securitisation, genealogy, and hegemonic theory, which play a significant role in the critical analysis of the thesis. As a framework for understanding how discourses of danger emerge, the thesis draws upon securitization theory and the writings of Copenhagen School theorists (Wæver 1995; Buzan et al. 1998) and other critical scholars (Huysmans 1998, 2011). The contribution of securitization is that it reflects the institutionalised power of hegemonic actors in contemporary social and political structures. This is not to say that the state is the *only* actor that can speak security, but in approaching how the GIRoA uses representations of danger to create and secure the Afghan collective identity, securitization proves a very useful conceptual tool. Genealogy was also discussed as a method of critical inquiry. This method should be taken as reflective of the project's commitment to understanding (narco)terrorism as a discourse. By problematizing the study of 'origins,' genealogy reveals the impact of power structures and relationships in constituting discourse and representations. Indeed, genealogy serves as the main tool of analysis in Chapter III, so it was important to outline it here. Lastly, this chapter sketched out Gramsci's hegemonic theory and connected it to power-knowledge. This section was written partly with the hopes of justifying the use of the labels 'hegemonic' and 'counterhegemonic' throughout the thesis; however, its relevance is further evidenced in

conceptualising the instrumental use of danger by political actors such as the GIRoA and the Taliban.

This chapter then ended with a detailed description of Critical Discourse Analysis and its application in the thesis. This section outlined this study's understanding of CDA, which is derived from Fairclough (1992, 1995ab), and provided a broad overview of the framework. The discussion then turned to a description of the particular texts and contexts analysed in the thesis, before ending with a summary of this project's limitations.

Overall, the goal of this chapter was to provide the reader with a clear understanding of theoretical framework of the thesis. The hope was that in providing this chapter early on, subsequent empirical analysis and the overall findings of this work will confirm the assumptions and arguments presented here.

Chapter II: Danger, (Narco)Terrorism, and Afghanistan

This chapter serves as a review of the existing literature related to the thesis and reflects the three research focuses outlined in the introduction: post-positivist approaches to (in)security and danger, which is used in forming the theoretical framework of the thesis; critical approaches to discourses of terrorism, narcotics, and narcoterrorism; and the contemporary politics and security of Afghanistan. This review surveys these three areas and seeks to locate the thesis in relation to key debates, authors and texts. Rather than making a theoretical claim for how research ought to be conducted or how insecurity should be approached, this chapter seeks to establish this particular study as a continuation of the intellectual trajectory introduced by authors such as David Campbell (1998), Michael Dillon (1996), Jutta Weldes (1996, 1999), Richard Jackson (2005), and others, revealing the original contribution is not in its methodology or conceptualisation of danger, but rather in the application of its critical framework to contemporary representations of danger in Afghanistan.

Thus, the chapter is organised to address the three relevant subfields and establish the research niche. Section I begins by surveying existing critical scholarship on danger with the goal of outlining the utility of such approaches in enhancing both academic and practical understanding of how discourses of danger are used instrumentally. Indeed, the desire is not to chronicle the development of Critical Security Studies as this has been done elsewhere (see Buzan and Hansen 2009; Rowley and Weldes 2012). Instead, it will highlight the many links between the thesis and earlier debates in Critical Security Studies, with a particular focus on the arguments of David Campbell, Michael Dillon, Jef Huysmans, Didier Bigo, and Richard Jackson.

With a firm understanding of this project's location vis-à-vis developments within Critical Security Studies, the chapter turns to a review on literature concerning (narco)terrorism. The focus of Section II is on whether the politics of identity and representation have been applied to (narco)terrorism. This section will also highlight connections between this study's analysis of discursive representations of narcotics and terrorism and earlier scholarship from authors such as Eva Herschinger (2011, 2012, 2015) and Ondrej Ditrych (2013, 2014). Interestingly, the two constituent elements – narcotics and terrorism – have been the subject of many important contributions in Critical Security Studies and their related subfields: Critical

Studies on Terrorism and Critical Drug Policy.²⁶ However, narcoterrorism has not received adequate attention from critical scholars and has remained dominated by more mainstream, problem-oriented approaches. Thus, there is a gap to fill in terms of critical approaches to representations of the converged threat, narcoterrorism.

Lastly, this chapter concludes with a survey of relevant literature on insecurity in contemporary Afghanistan. Despite the utility of critical approaches danger, and particularly (narco)terrorism, such an approach has yet to be applied to Afghanistan. The discussion reveals how the majority of existing scholarship is explanatory, problem-oriented, and focused on revealing the inner dynamics of the conflict in Afghanistan.²⁷ Thus, there is an important gap to fill in applying critical methods to (in)security in Afghanistan generally and representations of (narco)terrorism in particular. Moreover, the use of communication and representation in Afghanistan is grossly understudied, as pointed out by several prominent authors in the field (see Johnson 2017; Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2018) and provides an important area for further research.

Section I: Critical Approaches to Insecurity and Danger

The conceptualisation of danger as a discourse requires a survey of critical security scholarship on the epistemology of threats, how threats are constructed, and their ontological purpose. While the contribution of this work is found in its empirical analysis, it is nonetheless important to survey critical security scholarship in order to justify the project's theoretical framework and methodological focus (see Chapter I). Additionally, this first section is important as it locates the thesis in relation to earlier disciplinary debates. Thus, this first section touches on three areas relevant to the thesis and seeks to present a more complete image of this project and its theoretical foundations. However, finding commonalities between various theoretical schools in CSS is challenging, so to organise and signpost this literature review, a series of questions have been developed in

²⁶ *Critical Studies on Terrorism* and *Critical Drug Policy* are the titles of prominent journals in the two subfields. While they should not be taken as uncontentious names for the subfields, they are useful sites for locating critical scholarship on (narco)terrorism.

²⁷ For an in-depth study of the convergence of narcotics trafficking and terrorist groups in Afghanistan, see Shanty (2011) *The Nexus: International Terrorism and Drug Trafficking from Afghanistan*. For an investigative piece on the local dynamics of the post-2001 war in Afghanistan, see Gopal's (2014) *No Good Men Among the Living*. Other notable studies of the convergence of narcotics and terrorism include Peters (2009b) *Seeds of Terror*.

accordance with the project's epistemological foundation and its theoretical approach to the politics of insecurity in Afghanistan. The section opens with the rather broad conceptual question: What is danger? While such a metatheoretical consideration is not the focus of the thesis, the use of post-positivist theories in analysing the politics of insecurity in Afghanistan requires a brief overview of competing perspectives on (in)security (and therefore danger) within Security Studies. The review will reveal the location of the thesis within the subfield of Critical Security Studies and its foundational assertion that danger is a constructed discourse.

The second question to consider is: how are dangers (i.e. threats) constructed? Indeed, this forms one of the primary research questions of the thesis and has a significant impact on the conceptual tools drawn upon in later chapters (i.e. Chapter IV and V). The contributions of the Copenhagen School, with securitization, and the Paris School, with its emphasis on elite discourse, are vital contributions to the empirical analysis of the thesis. Thus, it is necessary to briefly survey the literature in order to locate this study in relation to earlier debates within the discipline.

Building on notions of danger as a construction, the discussion turns to a *why* question; namely, why are dangers fabricated? This is another broad question, but nonetheless an important one for this study given the argument that discourses of danger are constructed and represented in order to establish a collective social identity in Afghanistan. Indeed, following the advent of securitisation, there were several important debates regarding the role of threats in politics and identity (see McSweeney 1996; Buzan and Wæver 1997). The role of identity is particularly pertinent to this thesis, so it is important to briefly review scholarship on the role identity plays in representations of danger and the politics of (in)security more generally.

What is danger?

At the epistemological level, there is an important distinction to be made between positivist and post-positivist approaches to security and danger. Whereas the former signals a commitment to scientific method, objectivism, and empiricism (see Walt 1991), the latter refers to a loose assortment of philosophical positions that challenge the objectivity of knowledge and view scientific knowledge as a triadic complex consisting

of phenomenic, analytic, and thematic axes (Lapid 1989: 239). In simple terms, post-positivism recognises the agency of the human in creating knowledge, whereas positivism infers that knowledge exists independent of the 'scientist'. Taken together these three axes identify the various influences and contextual elements that shape knowledge, revealing that knowledge (and therefore 'truths') can be challenged. Moreover, while positivism championed the 'eliminability of the human' (Margolis 1987), post-positivism revealed the agency of the scientist as well as other contextual factors in producing knowledge (Lapid 1989: 239-240). It is this point, the centering of the human in the production of knowledge, that resonates with critical approaches to international relations and security. To be sure, the emergence of post-positivism did not develop strictly from within IR or (International) Security Studies (see Lapid 1989); however, the Third Debate, in which the positivist mainstream in IR was confronted with both post-positivist challenges and the merits of methodological pluralism, witnessed the legitimisation of a previously suppressed body of critical scholarship seeking to challenge the familiar (see Ashley 1988; Shapiro and Der Derian 1989).

Indeed, this field of critical scholarship remained largely under the radar throughout much of the Cold War. Strategic Studies, which emerged first in the United States and subsequently moved to Western Europe in the mid- to late-1950s (Klein 1990: 317), was focused on military relations between states and reflected the core assumptions of the international system (Smith 1999: 72). As such, contemporary thinking within this discipline centred on nuclear issues and maintaining stability. In other words, the emphasis was on defence rather than security. Contrastingly, from the 1960s another sub-discipline emerged in Europe, which would become known as Peace Research. Named after the Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO), Peace Research adopted a somewhat different approach to Cold War animosity and the dangers of conflict. Cross-disciplinary studies came to define the sub-discipline's approach to conflict in the hopes of understanding how and why conflicts emerge, and how peace can be built, maintained and spread (PRIO 2018). Many of the methods and epistemologies that would come to define the sub-field of Critical Security Studies, such as Critical Constructivism and Poststructuralism, developed from earlier Peace Research scholarship (Buzan and Hansen 2009: 198). Thus, by the end of the 1960s the dangers of superpower conflict were the primary focus of two very different academic fields. However, many of the differences that existed between Strategic Studies and Peace Research would be eroded in the latter

years of the Cold War as both disciplines found significant overlap in the concept of security, with many pointing to this convergence as the beginning of International Security Studies (Case 2006: 462; Buzan 1984; Guzzini and Jung 2004).

But security itself is a contested concept (Buzan 1991: 27) and there remains no universal consensus as to what security means. In the distinction outlined by Arnold Wolfers, security could refer to the objective sense, meaning the absence of threats, but it could also refer to a subjective sense related to the absence of fear (Wolfers 1962: 149). Indeed, when considering the research territory of this project, it is important to refer to this distinction as the understanding of security (i.e. either objective or subjective) directly shapes the methods and concepts used. The distinction can also be connected to the broadening and deepening of International Security Studies following the end of the Cold War (see Krause and Williams 1996) for it is the (inter-)subjective understanding of security, relating to the absence of fear, that motivates how dangers are constructed and interpreted. The significance of the broadening and deepening for this project will be explored further below, however, in terms of locating this study in the (sub-)discipline the shift towards understanding, interpreting and defamiliarizing security at the end of the Cold War remains salient (Smith 1999: 74). Indeed, this shift in focus, by no means widespread,²⁸ could be connected to what would later become the field of Critical Security Studies. In continuing the interdisciplinary and post-positivist approaches introduced by several scholars within Peace Research, Critical Security Studies challenges the empirical focus and objectivism of the mainstream. As Browning and McDonald (2011) put it, "...critical security studies scholarship is interested in the function of representation or discourses of security in defining group identity, enabling particular policy or legitimating particular actors as security providers. This commitment, albeit evident in different ways and to different degrees, follows the recognition that security is socially constructed and politically powerful" (Browning and McDonald 2011: 236).

So, what does this have to do with representations of danger in Afghanistan? What is the relevance of the Third Debate for the thesis and its contribution to the field? Essentially,

²⁸ While this shift in focus remains relevant for this thesis, it should be noted that the mainstream of International Security Studies remained loyal to the more orthodox assumptions of the international system, and thus advocated for scientific method and positivism.

the Third Debate laid the groundwork for this study's epistemological position as it did for the body of critical scholarship produced in Security Studies since the late-1980s. It challenged taken-for-granted concepts like security, anarchy, and danger and subjected them to intellectual scrutiny. The result, as pointed out by Krause and Williams (1996), was that "debates over the nature and meaning of 'security' and the future of security studies [became] a staple of the field's post-Cold War agenda" (Krause and Williams 1996: 229; see also Buzan 1991; Crawford 1991; Baldwin 1997; Haftendorn 1991; Lipschutz 1995; Krause and Williams 1997). The focal point of these debates was contention surrounding the referent object(s) of security (Lipschutz 1995: 7; Buzan et al. 1998; Smith 1999). Whereas scholars like Walt (1991) continued to focus on the state as the referent object of security, others like Ken Booth (1991) and Wæver et al. (1993) shifted attention to the individual and society (respectively) as the referent object of security. This contention is emblematic of a larger trend towards broadening and deepening of security that began in the 1980s with contributions from Ullman (1983) and Mathews (1989) and crystallised in the mid-1990s (see Krause and Williams 1996, 1997).

The broadening of security, as outlined by Krause and Williams (1996), refers to "attempt[s] to broaden the neorealist conception of security to include a wider range of potential threats" (229-230). The impact of earlier debates concerning the referent object of security can be observed in the broadening of security as its meaning fluctuates depending on the referent object. For instance, security for the state has been understood as fundamentally different to security for the individual or the society (Booth 1991; Buzan 1991). Furthermore, this trend can be understood to reflect the instability of the mainstream following the end of the Cold War and the impact of post-positivist challenges in the discipline. Rather than viewing security within the traditional military paradigm, the broadening of the agenda advocated for the inclusion of environment, economics, identity and various other factors within the discipline (Krause and Williams 1996).

However, given the focus of this project, the deepening of security is more salient. Just as the broadening has been framed as a 'neo-realist' move towards expanding the security agenda (see Walt 1991),²⁹ the deepening reflects challenges from critical scholars and

²⁹ Although this article pre-dates the contribution by Krause and Williams, Walt does make explicit his belief that traditional approaches to security can be expanded to other considerations.

what they viewed as the privileging of the state within the discipline (Buzan and Hansen 2009: 197; Tickner 1992; Wæver et al. 1993). It is problematic to generalise the motivations for this reconceptualization of security because individual scholars privilege different referent objects - for example Booth's (1991) focus on the individual when compared to Wæver et al. (1993) focus on society. Moreover, to make claims regarding the intellectual drive towards deepening security would be reductive in its generalisation to a diverse body of literature. However, there is a commonality uniting this scholarship in the focus on how security effects non-state entities (i.e. individuals and/or society). This emphasis on how security dominates the state's relationship with society is the focal point of Michael Dillon's (1996) *Politics of Security*. Rather than maintaining the positivist notion that (in)security is a problem to be solved, the critical deepening of security signalled a shift towards challenging the concept and revealing how these structures effect our world.

In sum, and to answer the question at the beginning of this sub-section, there is no universal notion of security and/or danger. The schism between positivist and post-positivist approaches to security reveals wide epistemological differences between the two sides. For positivists, security is a condition to be realised through the mitigation of threats and the resolution of security issues. It is the problem-solving method identified by Cox (1981) that seeks to overcome the challenges of an anarchic system through rationalism and empiricism (Keohane 1989). Contrastingly, post-positivists revealed the limitations of positivist methods and the tendency to replicate the very insecurities that traditional approaches were trying to mitigate (Booth 1991). Instead, post-positivist approaches have revealed the intersubjectivity of danger and the political nature of the concept.

How is danger constructed?

One of the more important contributions of critical scholarship was that it exposed the political instrumentalization of danger and championed the notion that danger is a social construction. Indeed, the critical unpacking of 'F/foreign policy' in Campbell's *Writing Security* is significant for it exposed how dangers have been constructed and disseminated throughout the history of the United States. Moreover, the use of danger in what Campbell terms 'the evangelism of fear' was (and remains) integral to maintaining

hegemonic power structures, whether they are reflected in the institutionalisation of the Church or, its modern equivalent, the State (Campbell 1998: 50, 133). Thus, there is a clear connection between the institution of the state and discourses of danger which are understood to threaten the identity of the collective. The connection between danger and identity has been addressed by other scholars, such as Wæver et al. (1993), who looked at how the migrant threat was constructed and represented in Europe and the effects this has had on representations of a European identity. The link between security and identity was made explicit by the development of 'societal security', which is identified as "whatever puts [the] 'we' identity into jeopardy" (Wæver et al. 1993: 42). The construction of such an identity is an open question (see Connolly 1991; Neumann 1996), but the salient point is the connection between (in)security and collective identity. However, prior to discussing arguments as to *why* danger is represented, attention must first be placed on *how* discourses of danger are constructed. It is important to address this consideration first because it leads us to subsequent questioning over the role of danger in establishing identity in the social and political context. If, ultimately, the goal of representing danger is to *secure* social identity, then it is necessary to inquire into the means of representing danger as the language used have a substantial impact on the interpretations of the receiver(s) (see Hall 1997). In this regard, earlier critical scholarship has been quite successful in developing multiple frameworks for conceptualising how dangers are constructed, and their contributions are important to discuss here..

Two particular frameworks that stand out in the literature are securitization and the Paris School approaches, which centre on elite discourse production and routinized performance(s) of security (Bigo 2008; Huysmans 2011). Securitization in particular has had a defining impact on security scholarship and has received much critical engagement since its emergence in 1995 (Wæver 1995; Buzan et al. 1998; Huysmans 2006). However, it is also a contested and controversial concept with many scholars pointing out its shortcomings and problematics (see Stritzel 2011: 344; Hansen 2000; Balzacq 2005; McDonald 2008; Charrett 2009). Of these, the most pressing criticism for this thesis is the claim that the process of securitisation was neglected or under-theorized (Stritzel 2011: 344; see also Stritzel 2007), and indeed, what this 'under-theorization' reveals is that the process of constructing danger remains a point of contention within the literature.

At the root of securitisation is the question posed by Wæver (1995), "[w]hat really makes something a security problem?" In line with debates taking place following the Cold War

and the ‘constructivist’ turn in IR, there was renewed interest in how political elites and other actors construct security threats (Watson 2012: 279). These debates were significant in forming securitisation because the theory sought to combine a discursive understanding of security threats, put forward by poststructuralist scholarship in the 1980s, with a critical emphasis on how security is used to justify extranormal politics (Wæver 1995: 56). Indeed, as pointed out by Buzan et al. (1998), “by labelling [something] as *security* an agent claims a need for a right to treat it by extraordinary means” (Buzan et al. 1998: 26). While the focus on extraordinary means and the suspension of normal politics has played an important role in subsequent critical scholarship,³⁰ for this thesis the discursive understanding of (in)security is the most influential; therefore, the argument that insecurity is constructed and subsequent debates regarding the role of speech actor(s) in constructing danger is the focus of this brief review.

A chief component of securitisation theory is the notion that security only gains meaning through articulations (representations) of danger (McDonald 2008: 564). Wæver’s original conception of securitisation privileged a discursive authority, or speech actor, who would declare a particular issue as a security issue, thus ‘existentialising’ the threat and suspending normal politics (Wæver 1995: 57; Williams 2003: 514; McDonald 2008). Drawing upon Austin’s Speech Act Theory (1962), Wæver presented a discursive understanding of security that justified the proliferation of security issues and pointed to the role of institutions and elites in constructing the narrative. As pointed out by Watson (2012), “for the Copenhagen School, some actors occupy positions of power by virtue of being ‘generally accepted voices of security’, through privileged access to the media and being able to strategically target specific audiences” (Watson 2012: 286). The emphasis on elite discursive actors is important to note here because it points to a hierarchy in knowledge(s) of danger and the authority required to ‘speak’ security. Fundamentally, however, this also contributes to a silencing of the subject of security, rendering them unable to communicate their own security concerns (Hansen 2000; Stern 2006; Rowley and Weldes 2012). Indeed, the role of the audience has remained a contentious issue in subsequent debates on securitisation (Balzacq 2005, 2011; Bourbeau 2011). While

³⁰ Connections between security and the Schmittian notion of exception have drawn upon securitisation theory and have influenced subsequent poststructuralist scholarship on security and (ab)normal politics (see, for example, Huysmans 2004; Bigo and Tsoukala 2008).

Wæver's initial conception emphasized more the constitutive effects of speech acts (and actors), later scholarship from Barry Buzan et al. (1998) and Thierry Balzacq (2005) has highlighted the crucial role played by the audience to essentially 'back up' the speech act. Moreover, scholars such as Salter (2008) and Watson (2012) emphasize the importance of local contexts in determining the success or failure of a particular security discourse. This is an important development in the literature as it points to the importance of local narratives in studying representations of danger and further strengthens the understanding that securitisation is not unidirectional.

The issue of *who* can speak security has also been a point of contention since the emergence of securitisation. While scholars in the Copenhagen School continued to emphasize the role of discursive authority(-ies) in securitising particular issues, poststructuralist scholars like Didier Bigo (2002; 2008) adopted a more expansive understanding of how issues become 'securitised'. Scholars in what has become known as the Paris School argue that security issues are constructed and securitised in everyday performances and practices as opposed to formal speech acts. This idea is taken further by Jef Huysmans (2011) who argues that dangers are too ambiguous to be declared in a formal speech act and instead are established through 'little security nothings'. Given the range of security actors and practices that constitute contemporary security politics, this conceptualisation of (in)security presents a more decentralised image of security and danger in line with earlier poststructuralist approaches to security discourse (see Campbell 1998). However, these findings also leave somewhat ambiguous the formation of danger and threats within the field of security. In an earlier contribution, Daase and Kessler (2007) point to bureaucratic competition among elite security actors in constructing danger. In their understanding, a security field exists in which actors are assumed to hold empirical knowledge about potential dangers to (inter)national security (Daase and Kessler 2007: 414). However, this knowledge is largely premised around the logic of uncertainty³¹ and therefore does not exist objectively; rather, danger is formed through a lack of knowledge in the sense that security actors must construct and represent what *could* happen. The Rumsfeldian notion of the unknown unknown places the

³¹ The logic of uncertainty is derived largely from the emergence of risk within contemporary security politics. The unknowability of danger places emphasis on managing uncertainty rather than securing against known threats. See Beck 2003, 2006; Daase and Kessler 2007; Aradau and Van Munster 2007, 2011.

emphasis on the security actor to imagine a potential threat and, through bureaucratic competition, to represent their conception of danger as authoritative (Aradau and Van Munster 2011; Bigo 2008). With regard to how danger is constructed, the Paris School offers a far more decentralised image of security politics that challenges the privileging of the state as *the* security actor and replaces it with a more diverse body of discourse and representation. Indeed, the Paris School provides a more expansive view of danger as a discourse, but for the purposes of evaluating hegemonic representations of danger in Afghanistan and given the focus of the thesis on the operationalisation of discourses of danger, focus must be placed primarily on the representations emerging from the GIROA.

While these ideas are important for academic inquiry into the politics of insecurity, they largely sidestep important contributions linking (in)security to the production of identity. Society, as a subject to be secured, is shelved and replaced with an emphasis on uncertainty and the logic of risk in forming security politics. Indeed, the notion of unknowability is an important contribution to the study of discourse, but the diversity of actors and the emphasis on ‘bureaucratic competition’ (Bigo 2008a) between security actors undermines the ability of danger to be used as a strategy for identity production. Moreover, this conceptualisation also reflects a profoundly western context in which risk logic has permeated much of contemporary neoliberal capitalism (Beck 2006) and can become problematic when applied to non-Western contexts such as Afghanistan. In short, the Paris School’s contributions to critical scholarship on security have been important for analysing *how* dangers become actualised, but they also leave a large gap in terms of the role representations of danger play in constructing and securing social identity. In terms of the thesis, both the Copenhagen School and the Paris School have been influential. While the Paris School offers a much broader understanding of the discourse, the critical analysis of hegemonic representations of danger in Afghanistan required a more narrowed focus on elite speech acts emanating from the GIROA.

Why is danger represented?

One of the key focal points of critical scholarship on security has centred around the political purpose of danger. Earlier academic works produced in the 1990s pointed to the inseparability of security and politics, an argument most clearly outlined in Michael Dillon’s (1996) *Politics of Security*. However, there exists a broad spectrum of arguments

within the critical subfield directed at expanding linkages between security and politics. Rather than embodying a field of separate ‘camps’ (see Buzan and Hansen 2009; Wæver 2007), careful analysis of these positions reveals significant overlap and the potential for a more inclusive methodology. In this section, the contributions of Paris School, Critical Constructivist, Poststructuralist, and Copenhagen School approaches will be assessed in order to highlight the theoretical overlap put forth in this thesis. Moreover, in aspiring to employ an inclusive methodology that incorporates themes and concepts from a variety of critical theoretical schools, it is important to clearly outline this work’s connection to earlier contributions. Indeed, the argument at the centre of this thesis – that representations of danger are used by political actors to secure social identity in Afghanistan – is a continuation of this subfield, and therefore a review is warranted.

One of the main contributions of earlier work in this field is to connect security to political control. The argument was no longer that security was a status or condition to be achieved, but rather a tool used by political actors to control and order society (Booth 1991; Neocleous 2008). These actors ranged from security practitioners and experts within the field³² (Paris School), to the state³³ (Copenhagen School), to discourse itself (Poststructuralism), but common in these approaches is the claim that insecurity is not a condition that can be transcended, but rather “a performative discourse constitutive of political order” (Campbell 1998: 199). Chief among the epistemological foundations of these approaches is an adherence of postmodern thought³⁴ and post-positivist methodologies outlined above. Indeed, the postmodern ethic to “make strange what has become familiar” (Lapid 1989: 242; Ashley 1988) is reflected in this body of work as the epistemic realist attitude of the mainstream is challenged through critical engagement of the various processes, procedures and discourses that existentialise danger. As pointed out by Huysmans (2011), rather than maintaining a dichotomized understanding of security and politics, post-positivist approaches revealed that security and politics could no longer be separated.

³² The Bourdieuan concept of *field* was borrowed by Didier Bigo (2008a) and reflects the discursive economy of security experts. The status of expert legitimizes discourse emerging from this field and subjugates alternative knowledges of security emanating from the rest of society.

³³ The state is used here to denote government officials, most notably the Head of State (or Head of Government) and is differentiated from other critical schools which reject this privileging of state actors and argue for a more expansive notion of security actors.

³⁴ Although, the Copenhagen School is a notable exception.

Perhaps one of the more important concepts in this body of work is the notion of governmentality (Burke 2002; Huysmans 2006; Muller 2017). While there are traces of governmentality as a framework in several different critical schools, it remains most observable in Paris School scholarship (see Huysmans 2006; Bigo 2005; 2008b). This is most clearly reflected in the distinction outlined by Larner and Walters (2004) in which governmentality is used either to bring attention to the ‘regimes of truth’ that govern a society, or to refer to the ensemble of practices, institutions and procedures that form power over a target population. This distinction is important and reflects the difference between the poststructuralist emphasis on knowledge and discourse and Paris School approaches to insecurity as the routinization of danger. Despite these differences, governmentality has been very influential in critical scholarship on security (Mandelbaum et al. 2016: 133) and is a significant factor in the development of this project’s approach to danger and the motivations of political actors such as the GIRoA.

With regard to the Paris School, governmentality has had a lasting impact on how scholars such as Didier Bigo and Jef Huysmans have approached security politics. As mentioned above, for Huysmans, security cannot be limited to a simplistic, top-down framework in which the state has the unique ability to identify and securitise particular objects; rather, security politics are the product of a larger economy³⁵ of security actors, practices, and routinized behaviours that govern a population (Huysmans 2006, 2011). Bigo similarly maintains this focus on a broad assemblage of actors and practices which form a field of (in)security that manages society via security politics (Bigo 2002). Indeed, in later work Bigo, like Dillon (2007, 2008), connects the dispositif of security to a broader understanding of governmentality of the living (Bigo 2008b: 102).³⁶ In highlighting an assemblage of practices, procedures, discourses, and actors, the dispositif of security reflects the tenets of governmentality and offers an important space for further discussion and questioning. While this area of analysis is important for critical scholarship on security and further investigations of security politics, the emphasis on relations between practices within the field of (in)security that forms the basis for much of Paris School scholarship is not the focus of the thesis. Rather, this study is most concerned with how

³⁵ This notion of a discursive economy has been taken up by others, see Campbell 1998; Dillon 1996.

³⁶ However, it should also be mentioned that governmentality is used by Dillon (2007, 2008) in revealing the biopolitical nature of contemporary discourses of insecurity.

‘regimes of truth’ (Foucault 1977), pertaining to (in)security and danger, serve to govern and order society. Moreover, of the many applications of governmentality observable in Critical Security Studies, the focus on security as a ‘truth’ in order to create and secure identity remains the most salient in terms of this study’s conceptual framework.

In exploring the relationship between the politics of security and identity, Campbell’s *Writing Security* remains the most influential for the thesis. Campbell’s work draws upon Foucault’s argument that security became the central dynamic in governmental rationality from the 18th century onward embodied in the ‘society of security’ (Campbell 1998: 202), a premise that finds similar parallels in Dillon’s (1996) *Politics of Security*. The central claim made by Campbell is that discourses of danger are vital to the state’s institutional control and ontology (Campbell 1998: 48, 51). A comparison between pre-Westphalian forms of control within the Church and those found post-Westphalia in the form of the modern state reveals a reliance on the evangelism of fear within both (Campbell 1998: 133). Again, the parallel between Campbell and Dillon is striking in that both the state and the Church have no ontological status of their own, but rather rely on discourses of danger and (in)security to constitute their reality (Campbell 1998: 10; Dillon 1996: 14). Danger is therefore vital to the survival of the institution as failure to maintain a menacing, external other would reveal the lack of pre-discursive foundations and therefore denaturalize the state (Campbell 1998: 12).

But what does this have to do with identity? Campbell’s work points to the use of discourses of danger to define who ‘we’ are, but fundamental to this subfield is the ambiguity surrounding who ‘we’ refers to. Moreover, far from being the only voice in this area, there has been significant scholarship linking security to identity dating back to the Third Debate (see, for example, Weldes 1996; Weldes et al. 1999; Katzenstein 1996; Inayatullah and Blaney 2004; Jackson 2005; Epstein 2011). In assessing the logic behind representations of danger, and insecurity more broadly, many authors have pointed to the importance of identity within contemporary technologies of governance. Following the end of the Cold War, there has been a ‘return’ to identity enabled by the emergence of constructivism (Epstein 2011: 327). However, this trend should not be understood as the sole progeny of constructivism and numerous contributions from poststructuralist scholars similarly advanced the importance of identity, albeit from a slightly different direction. Indeed, critical attempts at opening up new spaces of inquiry, or even to ‘rewrite’ security, have been required to first investigate the ways in which security has

written 'us' (Burke 2002: 6). The complexity of the individual precludes the role of identity as a universal explanatory concept (see Epstein 2011), but it does provide an important window into the impact of security politics on both state and society. Moreover, as the Critical Security Studies project is driven by a commitment to recognizing the power of security politics as well as its constructed nature, identity remains a key feature in this field (Browning and McDonald 2011: 236). Therefore, this thesis builds on the literature and applies it to a contemporary assessment of Afghan security politics.

However, as a subject of analysis, identity has raised numerous questions and reflexive scholarship within the discipline. Metaphysical debates regarding the epistemology and ontology of identity have been an important site of contestation between constructivist and poststructuralist scholars (see 'Epilogue' in Campbell 1998). These sites of contestation centre around the (pre-)discursive essence of the state, society, and identity. For constructivists, the state largely remains the focus of analysis and is understood to exist independent of discourse (Buzan and Hansen 2009: 199; Wendt 1992, 1999; Katzenstein 1996). Identity is understood to be a driving force within the international system that influences state behaviour (Epstein 2011: 331; Wendt 1999). Poststructuralists, on the other hand, assert that nothing exists outside of discourse, therefore identity is not something that can be totally constructed and secured but rather exists in a permanent state of fluctuation as actors compete for power over it (Campbell 1998; Buzan and Hansen 2009: 199). Given that identity cannot be permanently fixed, poststructuralists highlight that security politics is not so much about defining the self, but rather about constructing and maintaining a 'radically different, inferior and threatening Other' (Connolly 1991: 65; Buzan and Hansen 2009: 143). This emphasis on the negative aspects of identity necessitates critical analysis of security as a means to gaining authoritative status within the larger political discursive economy. The claim is not that the state possesses sole authority over identity, but rather that representations of danger both constitute the state and society, which is contingent upon identity.

At this point, it should be clear that 'identity' is itself quite ambiguous. The institution of the state is but one actor that engages with representations of danger in the hopes of securing (or disciplining) a particular identity; however, the essence and 'owner' of this identity remains vague. To put it simply, when scholars speak of identity, whose identity are they referring to? The state's? Society's? The individual? The collective? These

distinctions are important as they serve as one of the main intellectual fault lines within the field³⁷ and have an important impact on the framework used in this study. Within the relevant literature the main points of contention centre on the identity of the state and whether or not it is able to impose and/or control a uniform identity. As mentioned above, constructivists hold the view that security is reflective of state identity (Katzenstein 1996; Wendt 1992, 1999); threats or dangers, in this regard, are in relation to identity, thus security is a method for eradicating any challenges to the identity of the state (see also Mitzen 2006). However, as poststructuralist scholars have pointed out, there is nothing beyond discourse (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000), meaning that the state itself is constituted through discourse as are the particular dangers facing it and, subsequently, the endangered collective identity. Thus, the state cannot possess an identity in a fixed, objective sense, but rather identity is fluid and representative of a larger discursive economy.

Another important ontological distinction concerns the personification of the state. Just as the ‘turn’ towards identity in the discipline was brought about through interdisciplinary scholarship, several scholars have sought to apply human characteristics to the institution of the state (see Mitzen 2006; Zarakol 2017). One particular argument emblematic of this trend can be found in ‘ontological security’ (Mitzen 2006). Drawing about Giddens (1991), Mitzen defines ontological security as referring “to the need to experience oneself as a whole, continuous person in time – as being rather than constantly changing – in order to realize a sense of agency. Individuals need to feel secure in who they are, as identities or selves. Some, deep forms of uncertainty threaten this identity security” (Mitzen 2006: 342). The argument is that just as individuals require certainty, a security of the subjective self, so too does the state; thus, the security of the state’s identity, understood as ontological security, is vital to its existence. But when we speak of this identity, are we referring to the role played by the state or its national identity created through discourse? With regards to the former, scholars have developed the notion that security is a performative act by the state, thus maintaining its role-based security (Mitzen 2006). On the other hand, constructivists and Copenhagen School theorists have pointed to the importance of social identity in regard to both state and societal security (Wæver

³⁷ As evidenced by the differences existing between poststructuralist, constructivist, and Copenhagen School approaches.

et al. 1993; Buzan et al. 1998; Williams 1998). While the performative aspect is an important framework for this thesis in terms of the GIRA *knowing* danger, the latter point about societal security is the most influential and merits further discussion here.

We return to the question of *whose* identity and the ontological aspects of security. One important legacy of securitization theory was its combination with the social sphere in the mid-1990s (Case 2006: 453). Writing in connection to the securitization of migration in Europe, Wæver et al. (1993) wrote that society's security centres around "whatever puts its 'we' identity into jeopardy" (Wæver et al. 1993: 42). Left ambiguous, however, is what constitutes the 'we' identity. Here we are introduced to a particularly important debate in the wider study of identity security in the discipline between Copenhagen School theorists Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver and poststructuralist scholar Bill McSweeney. For the Copenhagen School, the idea behind societal security (as it would become known as) is that security is premised on a fixed social identity. The argument is that security is used to impose a fixed identity on society, or similarly, that security narratives reflect a threat to the 'we' identity (Smith 1999: 84; Wæver et al. 1993: 42). McSweeney, on the other hand, challenges this view, arguing that identity is fluid and in a process of negotiation between people and social groups (McSweeney 1996: 90; see also McSweeney 1998). However, McSweeney also recognises the role that political leaders and other discursive elites play in shaping social identity, arguing that these actors serve a 'demand' for identity within society (McSweeney 1996). This debate is particularly significant because it highlights the limits of state-centric approaches to identity security and reveals the fluidity of social identity. Whereas previous scholarship approached society as a fixed subject of security, McSweeney's engagement with the Copenhagen School highlighted the role discourse plays in influencing social identity, while maintaining the notion that identity is never fixed.

However, perhaps the most important point to be taken from this debate is the agency of society in engaging with discourses of (in)security. While it has been generally accepted that there is a lacuna in the discipline regarding society's, and the individuals therein, ability to 'speak' security (see Bubandt 2005; Rowley and Weldes 2012; Jarvis 2018), the present study is more concerned with society's role as a stage upon which different security discourses compete. Identity is not fixed, but that is not to say that the state doesn't deploy representations of danger in an attempt to influence social identity. Within the present sociopolitical context of sovereign nation-states, it is the state which

commands the most authority in speaking and representing security (Williams 2003: 514), and therefore places much emphasis on the performative quality of its representations. In this way, we can view a link between Campbell's argument in *Writing Security* (see also Campbell 2003; Campbell and Shapiro 2007), Neocleous's emphasis on the security-identity-loyalty complex (2008) and the use of (in)security narratives by the state in an attempt to influence social identity.

To conclude, this thesis builds on the rich tradition of critical scholarship within the subdiscipline of CSS. The epistemological commitments to post-positivism requires additional considerations when approaching danger as a discourse. As a result, this section first began with a brief discussion on how danger has been conceptualised in positivist and post-positivist scholarship. The core assumption here is that danger should be understood as a discourse, illustrating the project's affinities with poststructuralist and critical constructivist publications. The second consideration discussed was how discourses of danger are constructed. In addressing this issue, the literature surrounding securitisation and Paris School approaches to elite discourse were discussed. While the underlying argument of the thesis is more in line with the perspectives of the Paris School, the context of Afghanistan pushes the research to centre more on state-led representations of danger. In other words, this project recognises the limitations of traditional securitization, but is compelled to privilege state actors due to the limitations of the study. Lastly, the discussion turned to a brief overview of scholarship concerning *why* discourses of danger are political representations. In this regard, the thesis builds on earlier scholarship establishing the connection between representations of danger and identity. The framework, derived from Campbell (1998), is that discourses of danger are deployed in order to constitute the state as the protector of society, while also establishing the Afghan society premised on an endangered identity. This argument reflects earlier poststructuralist and critical constructivist scholarship and uses the literature to develop a framework for critically analysing hegemonic and counterhegemonic representations of danger in Afghanistan.

Section II: (Narco)Terrorism Literature

While the development of critical literature on security is important to the theoretical framework of this study, the focus of the thesis is primarily on critically analysing representations of danger in Afghanistan. Thus, the contribution to knowledge, and indeed the gap this study hopes to fill, are found in the narrower subfields of Critical Terrorism Studies, critical approaches to narcotics, and contemporary security politics of Afghanistan. As a result, attention must now be turned to previous scholarship in these areas in order to establish the extensive links between this study and previous discursive approaches to (narco)terrorism and to reveal the gap this study seeks to fill vis-à-vis Afghanistan. Indeed, the two dangers investigated in this study, narcotics and terrorism, have both received considerable attention over the past two decades and there has been a pronounced increase of critical scholarship in recent years.³⁸ However, despite this trend, there remains a gap in critical approaches to the politics of insecurity in Afghanistan and the deployment of discourses of (narco)terrorism. This section charts the development of critical scholarship on narcotics, terrorism, and narcoterrorism and sheds light on the particular research niche this study hopes to build on.

Mainstream Approaches to Terrorism and Narcoterrorism

Scholarship on terrorism has been a regular feature in (International) Security Studies since the 1980s, with many prominent scholars establishing themselves in the latter years of the Cold War (see Jenkins 1974; Schmid and de Graaf 1982; Schmid 1984; Schmid and Jongman 1988; Crenshaw 1995). Even before the broadening and deepening of the discipline, terrorism received plenty of attention in the West and was treated as an extension of the larger Soviet threat (see Sterling 1980; Cline and Alexander 1984; Stampnitzky 2013). However, during this period, approaches to terrorism largely maintained problem-solving methodologies and viewed terrorism as, at the very least, an extension of the ‘red menace’. Post-positivist approaches were stigmatized (see Zulaika

³⁸ While the critical ‘camps’ in (critical) Terrorism Studies are easily recognisable (see Jarvis 2009; Jackson et al. 2017), critical approaches to narcotics (and drugs) are far less cohesive with scholars implementing largely isolated projects across a wide array of disciplines. See Campbell and Herzberg (2017) for a very recent and exciting contribution to this emerging field.

and Douglass 1996) and largely relegated to the fringes of the subfield. Scholars such as James Der Derian and Joseba Zulaika (1995) began to make inroads following the end of the Cold War, but a seismic shift can be observed following 9/11. As Marc Sageman points out, “the post-9/11 money surge into terrorism studies and the rush of newcomers into the field had a deleterious effect on research” (Sageman 2014: 566). While Sageman’s negative interpretation highlights the proliferation of terrorism research among the so-called ‘laymen’, his statement accounts for the dramatic increase in scholarship on terrorism and terrorist groups in the immediate aftermath of 9/11.

In many ways this scholarship merely continued the mainstream focus of the field in the late-20th century. Problem-solving approaches were maintained during the rise of ‘new terrorism’ (see Laqueur 1999, 2001). Definitional issues persisted not only for ‘old’ terrorism, which had become a staple of the field since Schmid and Jongman’s (1988) study, but also for New Terrorism (see Laqueur 1999; Mockaitis 2006). Indeed, these definitional concerns persist today with both mainstream and critical scholars engaging in a seemingly endless debate (see Schmid 2004; Young and Findley 2011; Jackson 2011; Ramsay 2015). What these debates reveal is a convergence of interests between politicians and academics in perpetuating the ‘terrorism industry’ (Mueller 2006; Sageman 2014). While a definitional problem emerged in large part due to the political nature of the terrorist(-ism) label (Jackson 2011; Ditych 2013), academic scholarship, enjoying a relative boom in research funding as highlighted by Sageman (2014), produced an expansive body of literature detailing competing understandings of terrorists, their motivations, and terrorism itself (Hoffman 2006; see Ramsay 2015). As will be expanded in Chapter III, terrorism acted as a modular danger that could be applied to any number of different identities, a characteristic identified in the early 1990s by James Der Derian (see Der Derian 2009b). Within this context, narcoterrorism emerged as a *type* of terrorism, but remained a phenomenon to be approached uncritically (see Ehrenfeld 1990). Positivist approaches to narcoterrorism have become something of a tradition as successive scholars sought to understand the nexus between criminal organizations and terrorist groups, which became known as the crime-terror continuum (Björnehed 2006; Makarenko 2004; Hutchinson and O’Malley 2007; Piazza 2011; Ballina 2011).

Scholarship on the crime-terror continuum is particularly important for this study because it not only produces a gap in addressing the role of discourse in converging these two separate dangers, but it also epitomises the mainstream scholarship in the field. While

the link between narcotics traffickers and terrorists had been advanced in both academic and policy circles prior to 9/11 (Ehrenfeld 1990; Miller and Damask 1996; Der Derian 2009a), UN Resolution 1373 explicitly outlined the ‘close connection’ between terrorist groups and a string of transnational criminal elements (Björnehed 2006: 313). Within the context of post-9/11 scholarship on understanding the motivations behind terrorist groups (see Hoffman 2006), the connection between these two dangers became the driving force behind much interdisciplinary scholarship (Dolan 2005; Piazza 2011). Indeed, this is a real point of departure from earlier, more traditional studies that would view narcoterrorist groups as unvarying. Emma Björnehed, in particular, advocated for a more expansive approach to a diverse body of groups and contexts (Björnehed 2006: 311). Others, however, advanced a more traditional distinction between terrorists and organized criminal groups, appealing to the profit vs. ideology dichotomy (Ballina 2011: 123). The point being made here is that post-9/11 scholarship on narcoterrorism, while vital to the study of so-called ‘hybrid’ organisations (see Ballina 2011), left a significant gap in applying the critical methods and frameworks that had become characteristic of post-Third Debate Critical Security Studies. Scholarship was crucial in revealing that drug cartels *could* deploy spectacles of violence akin to terrorist groups (Cabañas 2014; Campbell 2014) and that terrorist groups *could* engage in aspects of the drug trade (Felbab-Brown 2010; Shanty 2011; Piazza 2012), but these studies largely remained loyal to positivist methods and were focused on a particular case study. At the time of writing, the discourses of (narco)terror and the use of representations of danger by (narco)terrorist groups to ‘secure’ social identity remains under-researched. Some notable exceptions such as Cabañas (2014) look at the politics of representation in their study of drug cartels in Mexico; however, overall the literature remains dominated by mainstream theorising and positivism. Therefore, this study boasts greater similarities with previous critical scholarship on terrorism and drugs as separate entities than it does with the subfield on narcoterrorism.³⁹

³⁹ Please note that exceptions apply to this statement. Critical scholarship on the conflation between narcotics and terrorism has been influential in shaping the methodology and theoretical perspective of this study (see Damask and Miller 1996; Der Derian 2009).

Critical Terrorism Studies

In a contrast to existing literature on narcoterrorism, terrorism has received distinctive and diverse critical scholarship for over a decade.⁴⁰ Critical scholarship on terrorism can trace its origins back to the definitional debates outlined above. However, within the field, these definitional disagreements did not lead to a quagmire, but rather a resignation to the state of uncertainty (Silke 2004: 208). With such variety in how terrorism is defined, critical scholars noticed the subjective nature of this particular danger (Ramsay 2015). Who was defining terrorism? Who possessed the knowledge, or authority, necessary to define terrorism? What were the implications of defining, and being defined as, a terrorist? Questions such as these began to circulate within the subfield, building on earlier critical studies conducted in the mid-1990s (see Zulaika and Douglass 1996; Jackson 2012a). A defining feature of this new Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) field is its recognition of the discursive power of terrorism. The rhetorical dimension of terrorism became the focal point of an expansive body of literature that sought to challenge the state-centric understanding of terrorism and reveal the power of the discourse (Zulaika and Douglass 2008: 29; Jackson 2005). Rather than approaching terrorism and terrorists as purely an existential threat, this body of literature sought to uncover the particular power constellations that crafted prevailing understandings of terrorism (see Ditrych 2014; Bain 2005). Similarly, recent scholarship has built upon this focus to further deconstruct dominant representations of terrorism (see Hülse and Spencer 2008; Bhatia 2009; Chowdhury and Krebs 2010; Staun 2010; Herschinger 2011; Ditrych 2013). This study seeks to combine both focuses in its investigation of representations of (narco)terrorism in Afghanistan; thus, it is important to briefly survey the literature in order to outline the similarities and differences between this study and existing scholarship. It is here that we can observe linkages between this area of CTS and earlier contributions within Critical Security Studies.

The main connections this brief survey hopes to reveal are: 1) the understanding of terrorism as a discourse; and 2) the role of the discourse in subjugating alternative knowledges of terrorism. Within these two areas we can observe many continuities

⁴⁰ While critical scholarship on terrorism was prevalent during the 1990s, the beginning of the journal *Critical Studies on Terrorism* serves as a hallmark for the establishment of this critical field.

existing between recent CTS scholarship and post-positivist, critical scholarship within Critical Security Studies. While it may be problematic to generalise the entire critical subfield, there has been a growing understanding of terrorism as a discursive construct rather than an objective danger. The politics of representation, identity, labelling, knowledge, and other focuses have formed the foundation of CTS since its emergence (see Jackson 2016). While this is by no means a recent idea – James Der Derian was writing about the ‘terrorist discourse’ in the late-1980s (see Der Derian 2009b) – the ongoing definitional debates have further revealed the subjectivity of the terrorist (Hülse and Spencer 2008: 574). The diverse body of organizations and groups that have been labelled as terrorist throughout history, despite sharing scarce, if any, ideological affinities, illustrates the power held by discursive authorities in constructing and applying the terrorist label (Stampnitzky 2013). Furthermore, the variation in who counts as a terrorist reveals the use of the label as a means of depoliticising and excluding adversaries from the established political order (Staun 2010; Barrinha 2011). The (inter-)subjective labelling of terrorists points to an epistemological boundary blocking inquiry into terrorism. Despite the apparent subjectivity, mainstream scholarship in the field has approached terrorism through a largely positivist lens (Der Derian 2009b: 69), so the shift toward understanding terrorism as a discourse fills an important gap in academic inquiry into the phenomenon. Moreover, by approaching terrorism as a discourse, the politics of applying the label become an important research area that has been pursued recently in several critical journals.

Approaching terrorism as a discourse reveals two things. First, the intersubjectivity of the terrorist label points to its role as a political tool for delegitimizing groups that oppose the hegemonic order (Zulaika and Douglass 1996; Bryan 2012). Moreover, the utility of this label reflects the changing configuration of the discourse, which is contingent on contemporary power constellations within a social and political context (Herschinger 2011; Ditrych 2014). This means that changes in definitions and social understandings of terrorism are reflective of historical shifts in power structures. The emphasis here is placed on terrorism as an elite discourse designed to maintain power over society. Second, there have been several important contributions that critically deconstruct discursive representations of terrorism to reveal the linguistic methods used to construct, and maintain, identities (see Bhatia 2009; Hülse and Spencer 2008; Bartolucci and Gallo 2013). Metaphors, for instance, are used to render the terrorist more intelligible to the

social audience, infusing the terrorist identity with meaning premised on cultural references (Bhatia 2009; Hülse and Spencer 2008; Spencer 2012). The represented identity of the hostile terrorist other serves to influence the collective identity of the endangered society, revealing an important continuity of Campbell's earlier investigation of danger in *Writing Security*. Here we see the convergence of these two streams, in which terrorism is recognised as a discourse constructed by discursive actors who infuse these representations with metaphors and referent objects which create an 'image' of the terrorist that is both acceptable to social audience and constitutive of the endangered identity of the society.

An important contribution in this area for the present study is the connection between discourses of terrorism and the larger process of subjugating alternative knowledge(s). In this regard, Richard Jackson (2005, 2012) has been crucial in his ongoing study of discourses of terrorism. Jackson's deployment of Foucault's concept of 'subjugated knowledge' has been particularly influential in building an elite and authoritative field of insecurity (Jackson 2012: 16; Bigo 2008a, 2008b). In particular, Bigo's deployment of Bourdieu's concept of *field* points to security actors' leading role in constructing and disseminating representations of the terrorism (Bigo 2008a; see also Stampnitzky 2013). While the *field* presents a more decentralised notion of discursive power in that it reveals a plurality of 'speakers' within a field of expertise, its combination with Foucault's perspective on knowledge subjugation indicates that the terrorist discourse is a political tool designed to maintain hegemonic structures over representations of danger and to influence social identity through these representations.

Lisa Stampnitzky's (2013) *Disciplining Terror* is a particularly good example of scholarship in this area. This book continues earlier scholarship on how terrorism has been constructed and disseminated by an elite field of experts. Stampnitzky writes, "this book traces the creation of 'terrorism' as a problem, and the corresponding emergence of a new set of 'terrorism experts' who aimed to shape this seemingly uncontrollable problem into an object of rational knowledge" (Stampnitzky 2013: 4). The book traces the evolution of the terrorist discourse and seeks to connect changes in the discourse to political developments in the West. Moreover, by integrating the concept of *field* in the study, Stampnitzky builds on earlier scholarship pointing to a self-perpetuating terrorism industry (see Mueller 2006; Lustick 2006; Jackson 2012). While *Disciplining Terror* does not directly address the implications of the terrorist discourse for social identity, it

has remained an important contribution in terms of how security experts control representations of terrorism and how the field of expertise silences vernacular interpretations of the danger. The thesis seeks to build on this framework and apply it to contemporary politics of insecurity in Afghanistan.

Aside from elite production of the terrorist discourse, this study also draws on earlier critical analyses of the discursive representations of terrorism and the various linguistic methods used to render representations of terrorism more intelligible and acceptable to the social audience. In this area there have already been several important contributions emerging around the same time as the CTS subfield; however, this research area should not be understood as something wholly new or particular to the subfield, but rather as a new application of discourse analysis found in earlier critical scholarship within Security Studies and International Relations (see Milliken 1999; Chilton 2004; Hansen 2006; Epstein 2011). What makes terrorism such an important application for these methods is its ambiguity (Staun 2010: 404). The plurality of definitions and understandings of terrorism poses a serious challenge to its intelligibility within the social audience. Any attempts at declaring an objective definition of terrorism are met with warranted challenges (Onuf 2009). Moreover, the mainstream emphasis on interpreting the motivations for violence further problematizes a universal understanding of terrorism (Staun 2010: 409) and places the burden of representing the violence on discursive authorities such as security experts, government officials, academics, and media figures. In the context of such ambiguity, scholars have highlighted the importance of language and metaphor in crafting and disseminating representations of terrorism (Hülse and Spencer 2008; Bhatia 2009; Spencer 2012).

This research area draws upon Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1992), Pragmatics, and Metaphor Analysis and generally centres on a particular case study. Alexander Spencer's (2012) study on the social construction of terrorism in the United Kingdom critically analyzes the use of metaphors in representations of terrorism in *The Sun* newspaper. Spencer links his study to a larger body of discourse analysis found in International Relations (see Doty 1993, 1996; Weldes 1996; Milliken 1999) and uses metaphors to reveal how objects and interpretations (in this case, terrorism) are constructed through social discourse (Spencer 2012: 399). Without going into too much detail about this particular article, Spencer highlights several metaphors found within the larger discourse and frames them as a means of understanding how certain interpretations

and policies are rendered possible. In an important link to the relationship between discourses of insecurity and identity, the ‘uncivilised and evil metaphor’ is used to further strengthen dichotomised understandings of an antagonistic out-group endangering the ‘good’ and ‘righteous’ in-group (Spencer 2012: 405; see also Lazar and Lazar 2004; Bhatia 2009). This is quite a significant contribution to the field as it highlights the interdependence between counterterrorist policies and social representations (and interpretations) of the discourse.

In sum, the study of terrorism as a social construction has become a well-established area of CTS, with scholarship building on the earlier contributions made by Jackson (2005), Hülse and Spencer (2008), and Spencer (2012). Some of the literature has maintained focus on critically analysing the linguistic practices deployed in particular representations of terrorism (Bhatia 2005; Bhatia 2009; Staun 2010), while others use Critical Discourse Analysis in a genealogical inquiry of the broader discourse. Two prominent examples of this scholarship can be found in the works of Ondrej Ditrych (2013, 2014) and Eva Herschinger (2011, 2012). While Herschinger’s work centres more on narcotics, Ditrych is a particularly helpful example in his use of discourse analysis in a genealogical study of terrorism. In his 2014 book, *Tracing the Discourses of Terrorism*, Ditrych looks at the changing discourse around terrorism from the 1930s to the present day, revealing the control held by elite actors in constructing and representing the danger. Discourse analysis is used to challenge mainstream ‘backwards projections’ of terrorism and highlights the influence discursive actors and ‘expert’ knowledge-holders have on influencing social understandings of terrorism (Ditrych 2014: 2). The use of genealogy is particularly important here because it challenges the mainstream, ahistorical understanding of terrorism. Instead, Ditrych reveals the role played by contemporary power constellations in constructing a meaning of terrorism to fit their particular agenda. Given that the focus of the thesis is on how (narco)terrorism is used to influence social identity in Afghanistan, Ditrych’s work is helpful in revealing how terrorism is a flexible construct (see also Bain 2005) and how this particular danger has been framed in historical contexts.

This brief survey set out to review the major contributions to the field of CTS and has revealed an emphasis on critically analysing terrorism as a discourse. While this is by no means the mainstream method of investigating terrorism, it does present many important areas for further research and reveals the possibility of successfully deploying similar

research frameworks to a range of case studies, such as Afghanistan. The use of genealogy reveals the power held by knowledge-holders and discursive authorities in shaping the discourse to fit their particular political objectives. In this regard, CDA has been used in several works to show just how elites construct and represent terrorism (see Jackson 2005). Scholarship within CTS also forms connections to earlier critical constructivist scholarship found in CSS, which established the connection between representations of danger and social/political identity. This research trajectory appears to be thriving in the field as this presents an exciting avenue for uncovering the how particular political contexts influence representations of danger and therefore security.

Critical Approaches to Drugs

While terrorism has become an important focus for critical research, narcotics has not received the same degree of attention. As will be discussed in Chapter III, many of the linguistic methods used in representing terrorism are also found in representations of narcotics, and yet, critical scholarship focusing on discourses of narcotics and representations of drugs remain largely sidelined. While mainstream scholarship remains largely focused on assessing contemporary (inter)national drug policy, there have been several notable examples of critical investigations into political representations of drugs. This section will briefly outline the themes in the field with a focus on scholarship linking the drugs danger to social identity and the politics of representation. Despite receiving relatively less critical attention than terrorism, the contributions identified in this review provide an important framework for better understanding drugs as a discourse and revealing the effect of this discourse on social identity.

One of the essential characteristics of the interdisciplinary field of Drugs Studies is the diversity of scholars and publications. As drugs are not only a political issue, there are several well-established subfields in Cultural Studies, Medical Science, Biology, Criminology, Policy Studies, and Security Studies. This presents an unparalleled methodological landscape that highlights the range of the phenomenon (Ghiabi 2018: 208). Depending on a writer's profession and expertise, drugs have a unique ability to exist unproblematically as the object of study in several different disciplines, pointing to what Herschinger calls drugs' 'ambivalent materiality' (Herschinger 2015). However, a common issue found in the varying literature on drugs is the scarcity of critical

approaches. The political objectivity of drugs is recognised in that they are substances made il/legal by government, but scholarship seldom focuses on *how* or *why* drugs come to be criminalised or securitised, and instead centres on assessing contemporary policy.⁴¹ Indeed, there are many important areas of research in assessing drug policy, such as debates surrounding criminalisation vs. treatment, the methods of treatment, and the strategies used to combat groups along the drug supply chain (see, for example, Savic and Fomiatti 2016; Osborne and Fogel 2016; Davenport and Caulkins 2016). The implications of drugs are wide-ranging and global, so there is no denying that policy research is important. However, the observable emphasis on policy-oriented research leaves unaddressed the questions of *why* and *how* drugs are represented as danger and the implications this representation has on social and political identity. Therefore, this thesis shares less affinity with mainstream research in Drugs Studies, and instead seeks to build on a narrow body of scholarship focusing on political representations of drugs as a danger. The effects of drugs and drug culture on social identity has been an important field in Cultural Studies for decades. Historical shifts in social engagement with drugs, particularly in the West, has contributed to a diverse body of ethnographic research studying the emergence of drug use as an expression of rebellion and counter-culture (Musto 1987; Willis 1993; Boothroyd 2006). For Cultural Studies, drugs present a unique object of analysis in that they carry with them such variations in meaning and interpretation across society, but in spite of this plurality, social discourse remains largely dominated by elite power-relations.⁴² In short, despite widespread social engagement with drugs, the represented meaning of drugs remains dominated by political actors as it is the il/legal distinction that resonates strongest in social discourse (see Ruggiero 1995). Thus, research in this area focuses on either sites of resistance to the political drug discourse (i.e. counter-culture; popular culture's engagement with drugs) or deconstruction of the discourse (see Boothroyd 2006; Grayson 2008). Indeed, for writers like Boothroyd, it becomes the task of scholars to reconnect drugs to culture through deconstructing narratives of danger rather than merely maintaining drugs' exclusion from

⁴¹ Two prominent journals indicative of this focus are the *Journal of Drug Issues* and *Contemporary Drug Problems*.

⁴² Please note that this also takes into consideration the momentous changes occurring within the United States, Canada, and other Western countries over the past five years as Cannabis becomes increasingly legalised.

society through expressions of otherness. Such scholarship raises important questions as to *who* commands authority in representing drugs, *why* drugs have been criminalised/securitised, and *how* drugs are represented as danger. This discursive understanding of drugs has provided an important foundation for later critical scholarship in Political Science, International Relations, and Critical Security Studies as drugs are no longer viewed as merely dangerous substances; rather, the implications for labelling certain substances as (dangerous) drugs becomes the focus.

This leads to another important area of research which centres on the moral panics associated with the drug danger. One of the more important dimensions of the drug discourse highlighted by research in Cultural Studies is the association of drugs with dangerous classes and alternative identities (Grayson 2008; Musto 1987; Reinerman 1994; Boothroyd 2006). Discourse analysis has revealed that the ‘drugs as threat’ narrative has largely been deployed to connect the amorphous drug danger to a series of securitised classes and identities (Musto 1987; Gordon 1994; Reinerman 1994). Common in these representations is the notion that drugs are chiefly an external threat that has been brought into society to undermine the social fabric (Crick 2012: 408). On the one hand, drugs remain associated with alternative identities that threaten the ‘ideal type’. This has been shown by Campbell (1998) and Reinerman (1994) in their studies on how the danger of drugs in the United States has been associated with challenges to the white, Puritan ideal. On the other hand, this also highlights the particular moral framing of the drug danger and the resultant ‘moral panics’ that have characterised (Western) social responses throughout history. It is the presence of these moral panics that presents a fascinating avenue for further research as they reveal the power held by discourse in shaping social interpretations of the drug danger as well as the importance of society as a stage in which discourses of danger compete for authority and acceptance.

Despite important scholarship investigating social engagement with drugs, recent contributions, which critically analyse the politics of representing drugs, have had a major influence on this project in terms of its methodology and conceptualisation of danger. The study of *how* drugs have become an existential threat is a fascinating application of Foucauldian concepts such as genealogy and the *dispositif* (Herschinger 2011; 2015), Gramsci’s hegemonic theory (Herschinger 2012), and the Copenhagen School’s securitisation (Crick 2012). The methodological pluralism here is striking, but also revealing in its focus on the agency of elite actors in constructing the drug threat and the

implications these representations have on social identity. While scholarship in this area is by no means mainstream, it has highlighted important links between the political and social responses to drugs.

In regard to recent scholarship in this area, three works stand out in terms of their critical engagement with the discourse of drugs. Eva Herschinger's (2011) *Constructing Global Enemies* is an important contribution in its application of hegemonic discourse theory to not only the global representation of drugs, but terrorism as well. Herschinger draws on Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) work outlining how hegemonic orders use discourses of danger (such as drugs and terrorism) to maintain dominance. The argument of the book, as asserted by Herschinger, is to "...explain [the] process of hegemonic orders 'in the making'. [The book] reconstructs different understandings of terrorism and drugs in their struggle to become dominant, to become the *one and only* interpretation" (Herschinger 2011: 2). However, rather than merely describing the contemporary discourse, Herschinger goes further to argue that "the establishment of hegemonic orders at the international level in both fields [terrorism and drugs] is a dual process, which can be conceptualised [...] as the constant attempt to homogenise the image and interpretation of the Other," (Herschinger 2011: 4). Such an approach looks beyond the objectivity of drugs to illustrate how they become part of a larger hegemonic strategy. One further contribution of the book is its detailed application of poststructuralist discourse analysis, identifying not only how discourses of danger are deployed but also the techniques used in their dissemination. At the time of writing, there has not been a publication of similar detail and sophistication, making it an important contributor to this project's conceptualisation of drugs, terrorism and its methodology.

Eva Herschinger has also laid significant groundwork in applying Foucault's *dispositif* to the study of the drugs discourse (Herschinger 2015). In the 2015 article, titled *The Drug Dispositif*, Herschinger applies the *dispositif* in her argument that "the ambivalence of the material object 'drug' is the condition of possibility for the global drug prohibition regime" (Herschinger 2015: 184). The 'ambivalent materiality' of drugs appears to limit the ability of discursive actors to construct and communicate a homogeneous representation; however, Herschinger argues that this ambivalence is what enables a drug *dispositif* to exist, which is dependent upon endless and unproblematic associations with other social ills. In an argument that echoes Musto (1987) and Reinerman (1994), the danger of drugs becomes existentialised through its association with objects and identities

that disrupt the social fabric (Herschinger 2015: 184; Aradau 2010). Thus, through the application of *dispositif*, drugs are understood not to be a danger on their own but become synonymous with the ambiguous danger of the Other. The meaning of the global drug prohibition regime is therefore not static but embodies the fluidity of hegemonic discourse.

A similar publication that approaches the international discourse of drugs is Emily Crick's (2012) *Drugs as an Existential Threat*. This article holds two focuses. First, the article illustrates how drug policy has shifted over the 20th century and how drugs take on new meanings in society. Second, the article applies securitisation theory and makes the argument that it is an important tool for analysing how the drug threat has been constructed and why it remains dominant today (Crick 2012: 407). The use of securitisation theory, although not the focal point of the article, acts as an important contribution to the field because it is one of the few examples of scholarship that directly applies a critical lens to what could be considered a security perspective on drugs. The plurality of interpretations of drugs within a given society poses a significant challenge to state-based discourses of danger; however, the securitisation of drugs, and the subsequent use of the 'war-metaphor' (see Herschinger 2011; Stone 2002), reveals attempts by political actors to secure 'the one and only interpretation'. Earlier publications highlighted above, such as Musto (1987) and Reinerman (1994), have been vital in illustrating the implications of the drugs discourse on (American) society, but the article by Crick builds on this scholarship and uses securitisation as a mechanism for explaining how contemporary political representations of danger have become dominant globally. In terms of connecting case studies, such as Afghanistan, to the larger global drug prohibition regime, this article sets down important groundwork for observing how Anglo-centric approaches to drugs have become dominant. Indeed, as Chapter IV will demonstrate, there is a clear link between contemporary government approaches to the drug trade in Afghanistan and the global discourse of drugs as an existential threat (see Bewley-Taylor 2014). This has important implications for how representations of danger function at the national level and how Afghan society engages with the drug danger.

At this point, critical scholarship in the field is making headway with emphasis being placed on the discourse of drugs. However, there is more work to be done as the few examples highlighted in this survey are the exception rather than the norm. In comparison to critical scholarship on terrorism, drugs receive far less attention and therefore do not

benefit from the same robust scholarly debates as found in the terrorism field. Moreover, at the point of writing, attempts at creating a cohesive subfield of ‘Critical Drugs Studies’ remains in infancy (see Campbell and Herzberg 2017; Ghiabi 2018). In spite of that, there is new ground for interdisciplinary scholarship in the field. The methodological pluralism outlined in *Third World Quarterly*’s (2018) special issue on drugs indicates significant overlap and room for interdisciplinary approaches to local politics of drugs.

In short, there has been a significant amount of critical scholarship on (narco)terrorism in recent years. While it is true that much of this scholarship has been focused on terrorism and narcotics (i.e. drugs) as two separate dangers, the methods used in critically assessing discourses of terrorism and narcotics provide significant inspiration for this study’s framework and methodology. Furthermore, the lack of critical attention on narcoterrorism presents an important gap in the literature. Thus, this study seeks to build on earlier critical approaches to (narco)terrorism and apply it to a study on representations of danger in Afghanistan.

Section III: The Politics of (In)Security in Afghanistan

The ongoing conflict in Afghanistan has produced a wealth of publications describing and analysing the endless violence and widespread security issues. Propelling Afghanistan into the limelight of global security politics in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 has contributed to the range of scholarship covering the politics and history of the country (see Dupree 2002; Dorronsoro 2005; Jones 2009; Barfield 2010; Johnson 2011). The decades of war and political violence, in a sense, cut off Afghanistan from much of the world and resulted in a decline in knowledge about the country and its accessibility to researchers. Indeed, many of these issues remain today, but since 2001 there has been a spike in scholarship focusing on security issues, political instability in Afghanistan, and the Taliban. Such scholarship has revealed the convergence of insurgent groups and the drug trade (Giustozzi 2007; Peters 2009; Shanty 2011; Piazza 2012), the complex and local nature of Afghan politics (Schetter et al. 2007; Schetter 2013; Mielke 2013), and recently, the sophisticated use of discourse and representation among the Taliban in their communications with society (Strick Van Linschoten and Kuehn 2018; Johnson 2017).

This wave of scholarship has (re)opened the complex politics of (in)security of Afghanistan and has provided important new outlets for the study of (narco)terrorism.

And yet, the majority of scholarship sidesteps the importance of discourse in driving the conflict and larger process of identity-building. Indeed, despite increased scholarship, at the time of writing there has not been an analysis of how representations of danger are constructed and disseminated in Afghanistan. Thus, this section of the review seeks to highlight the presence of this crucial gap in the literature and to make a case for why the thesis is an original contribution in this area.

When assessing the literature on security in Afghanistan, it is important to look at the subjects of research (i.e. which ‘threat’ is being looked at), the use of theory to frame the discussion, and the methods used. A quick glance at recent literature reveals an overwhelming focus on two threats: narcotics, and the associated criminal organizations that traffic drugs; and terrorism, which includes the dozens of insurgent groups operating in Afghanistan and the Taliban. While the original intention behind the late-2001 invasion was to oust the Taliban and defeat/destroy Al Qaida, the following 17 years have witnessed a series of developments relating to opium production and trafficking, the proliferation of insurgent groups, and the purported overlap between insurgent groups, such as the Taliban, and the burgeoning drug trade. This shift in the security narrative is most clearly observed in the conflation of the terrorist danger with the drug trade in government statements and speech acts. However, this shift can also be observed in increasing scholarship on (narco)terror within both academic and policy circles.

In approaching the broad topic of security in Afghanistan, there are only a handful of works that do justice to the complex and localised nature of the conflict. Many of these books have been written by well-known experts on Afghanistan or journalists who have spent considerable time there (see Rubin 1995; Rashid 2010; Bhatia 2005; Giustozzi 2007, 2009; Saikal 2004; Tomsen 2011; Gopal 2014) and cover a wide range of perspectives and interpretations of the conflict. Addressing the questions of *who* is fighting and *why* the conflict continues, Gilles Dorronsoro’s (2005) *Revolution Unending* is perhaps the most thorough publication to date. Despite the fact that this book was published over a decade ago, many of the drivers of conflict and leaders of insurgent groups remain relevant today. However, the most significant contribution of this book is its broad overview of the conflict and its ability to uncover the reasons behind continuing

political instability, which dates back to 1978. While this book does not address representations of danger and challenges the prevailing view that identity and ethnicity are driving conflict in Afghanistan (Kamel 2015; Raqib and Barreto 2015), Dorronsoro nonetheless presents an insightful and nuanced view of Afghan local politics, the Pashtun tribal system, and the importance of class in the now four decades of war.

A similarly broad publication on the political instability in Afghanistan is Thomas Barfield's (2010) *Afghanistan: A Political and Cultural History*. Barfield presents a very detailed overview of Afghanistan's sociopolitical dynamics and highlights the urban/rural divide as an important continuity which remains to this day (see also Goodhand 2012). Similar to Dorronsoro, Barfield draws on his extensive experience residing in Afghanistan and his detailed knowledge of local politics to show how the contemporary conflict is nothing new, but rather a continuity of the same structural factors that have plagued the country for centuries. While Barfield does not focus directly on the insurgency or drugs, this book sheds light on important political dynamics that provide the reader with a basic contextual knowledge of Afghan politics. Any scholar who is interested in applying discourse analysis to a study of Afghan security politics should begin with this book as it highlights important cultural factors that are regularly drawn upon in both encoding and decoding representations.

What is perhaps the most surprising feature of the literature is the conflation of the Taliban with the ongoing political instability. Indeed, it is rare to find new scholarship that approaches insecurity in Afghanistan at the systemic level. Instead, recent trends in scholarship focus almost exclusively on the Taliban as the sole source of instability and the insurgency, more broadly. While this is limiting in its reluctance to study *how* the GIRoA addresses security politics, hence shifting focus on the Taliban, new literature in this area offers the most promise in integrating critical theories and methods (see Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012a, 2012b, 2018; Johnson 2011, 2017). This point will be developed further at the end of the section, but prior to assessing the (lack of) theories in the literature it is important to first turn attention to recent scholarship on the drug trade in Afghanistan.

This area in particular has taken off over the last decade and presents a wide range of research questions, methods, and interpretations of the 'War on Drugs' in Afghanistan. The literature can be divided into two research focuses: 1) counternarcotics operations

and the influence of the US-led coalition on drug policy; or 2) drug trafficking organizations and their links to the insurgency and/or local political actors.⁴³ Regarding the former, scholarship in this area appears to be more open to critical theories and methods. Recent trends point towards a greater emphasis on the rhetorical value of the ‘War on Drugs’ for both the US-led coalition and the Afghan government. In a 2011 article on the US-led ‘War on Drugs’ in Afghanistan, Mercille presents “an alternative interpretation of the war on drugs in Afghanistan, arguing that it is not real and suggesting that it is mostly a rhetorical device used by the US and elites as a pretext for intervention against groups that challenge US hegemony abroad” (Mercille 2011: 290). The article points to secondary accounts of the involvement by local government officials (i.e. US and GIRoA allies) in the drug trade (see also Mansfield 2010) as evidence of the purely rhetorical nature of counternarcotics operations in Afghanistan. Moreover, scholars in this area have challenged the government narrative that the Taliban derives the bulk of its funding from the drug trade, and instead present an alternative conception of the ‘War on Drugs’ being at most a rhetorical legitimizing strategy (Mercille 2011: 294; Mansfield 2010: 133; Scott 2011: 130). This points to an acknowledgement of the power of discourse in driving the conflict and shaping interpretations of the narcotics threat.

However, the bulk of scholarship in this area tends to focus on the drug trade itself and, at most, the assemblages of actors and cultural contexts in which it operates. The dramatic rise in opium production in Afghanistan over the past 18 years has led to a wave of scholarship assessing the scope and integration of the drug economy. In 2011, for instance, several think tanks based in Kabul released reports on the overlap between local political actors and the drug trade across rural Afghanistan (Maas 2011; Mehran 2013; Bewley-Taylor 2013). The findings challenge the dominant notion that drug trafficking was the prerogative of insurgent groups alone, revealing that the loose system of alliances under the Karzai administration, referred to by some as *pax narcotica*, had actually facilitated the spread of the lucrative drug trade. The extent of this integration was highlighted by Maas (2011) who argued that the scale of the drug trade points to a criminalised economy and a criminalised peace (Maas 2011: 2). While the positivist approach to the drug trade in Afghanistan contrasts with the thesis’s critical focus on

⁴³ There are also several publications that present a historical overview of drugs in Afghanistan (see, for example, MacDonald 2007; Mansfield 2016).

discourse, this area of literature remains vital to any study of security politics in Afghanistan for it reveals the deeply problematic nature of counternarcotics operations in the country and problematizes government discourse associating the Taliban solely with drug economy.

Despite conflicting accounts of the reality on the ground, there have been substantial contributions presenting detailed accounts of the overlap between insurgent groups and the drug traffickers (see Shanty 2011; Piazza 2012). The supposed link between drug traffickers and insurgent groups has been the main subject of analysis as researchers have attempted to quantitatively assess the convergence of both threats. In particular, the link between the drug trade and post-2001 Taliban has been an important subject of analysis (see Labrousse 2005; Peters 2009ab). The argument is that the post-2001 Taliban, also known as the ‘neo-Taliban’ in some circles (see Giustozzi 2007; Qazi 2010; Crews and Tarzi 2008; Peters 2009a), is more interested in accumulating profits than maintaining its ideological commitments (Bewley-Taylor 2013: 9). Here we can observe a direct application of the ‘crime-terror nexus’ framework (Björnehed 2006; Ballina 2011) to contemporary Afghanistan. For the most part, existing literature in this area provides an empirical account of the convergence and relies on interviews and other secondary accounts for its evidence (see Shanty 2011). This is understandable given the logistic and physical challenges of conducting field research in Afghanistan but what is most interesting about this literature is its effect on the discourse itself and scholarly understandings of the Taliban. Given the reliance on secondary sources, one would believe it prudent to approach these sources with a pinch of salt and acknowledge that the reality could be more complex. And yet, the challenges of conducting fieldwork in this area results in an overreliance on these sources and a reification of their core arguments (Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2018; Johnson 2017). The question is not *how* discourse contributed to this naturalised representation of the Taliban as drug traffickers, but rather, to what extent are the Taliban profiting from organized crime (Peters 2009b).

This is a vital point to consider in reviewing existing scholarship. Why has the literature on Afghan security come to centre on this convergence, or conflation, of threats? Certainly, drugs and political violence are experienced daily in Afghan society, but to take the convergence of these two threats into one larger danger of narcoterrorism is problematic and points to a lack of theoretical engagement in the literature. Of the literature on narcoterrorism in Afghanistan, the most notable and well-cited tend to have

little engagement with theory or critical methodology. The challenge of conducting effective field research leads to a reliance on security think tanks, peace monitors, and other NGOs who are concerned with presenting an accurate description of Afghan security as opposed to a critical methodology like CDA. This creates a wealth of secondary information for scholars working on Afghanistan but fails to challenge these discourses and their ability to influence social identity.

However, there are exceptions. Over the past eight years, there has been a steady stream of IR and ISS scholarship that has integrated theoretical frameworks into their research. Securitisation, for instance, was the cornerstone of Stritzel and Chang's (2015) work on security dynamics of Afghanistan. In the article, Stritzel and Chang highlight the gap in theorizing the implementation, resistance, and challenges establishing political authority in the post-2001 conflict (Stritzel and Chang 2015: 2). Moreover, they also reveal the Taliban's comparative strength in countering the GIRoA's securitisation strategy through the use of *shabnamah* (night letters) and *taranas* (chants) (see also Johnson 2017). The use of securitisation is significant here because it reveals that discourse and representation are recognised as having a dramatic effect on the security dynamics of Afghanistan.

Similar examples can be found in critical scholarship focusing on representations of the War on Drugs and War on Terror. In the 2011 article mentioned above, Mercille looks at how the US and its NATO allies have shifted their representation of the war away from terrorism and more towards the War on Drugs. Mercille argues that the connection to the war on drugs is designed to legitimise US policies and its hegemonic position in international affairs (Mercille 2011: 292). While the methods used in this particular article are not reflective of critical discourse analysis and rely more on a comparison between the US rhetoric and its policies, it does open up new areas of study in the use of discourse to frame and rebrand the ongoing conflict. A similar approach can be observed in Nazir's (2010) discursive analysis of the War on Terror in Pakistan and Afghanistan. While this article focuses more on Pakistan than Afghanistan, it challenges positivist understandings of the War on Terror and mainstream approaches to the conflict. Nazir illustrates the power of hegemonic discourse in the War on Terror which is used to delegitimise counterhegemonic discourse emerging from Islamist groups and other non-state actors (Nazir 2010: 64). This contribution is particularly significant because it highlights the importance of discourse for both 'sides' of the War on Terror and connects to this project's focus on counterhegemonic discourse emerging from the Taliban.

One final study worth highlighting for its focus on discourse and representation is Judith Renner and Alexander Spencer's (2013) article on the shifting representations of the Taliban (see also Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012a; Shahrani 2014). The focus on the extent to which the Taliban have been 'de-antagonized' is poignant for this thesis because it illustrates the power and agency held by state actors and other security experts in constructing and representing the Taliban. The notion that the Taliban can be 'de-antagonized' is particularly interesting because it relies on the silencing of voices from the organization. A good example drawn upon in the article is how the Taliban became 'virtually indistinguishable' with Al Qaeda following 9/11 (Renner and Spencer 2013: 485; Shahrani 2014). By equating the Taliban with a terrorist group, this effectively depoliticised and dehumanised the organization and its members and, due to the 'terrorist taboo' (Zulaika and Douglass 1996), any discourse with the Taliban would be deemed unacceptable. Thus, the eventual recognition of the separation of these two organizations points, not to the ability of the Taliban to 'set the record straight', but rather, to the dominance of hegemonic voices in representing terrorists and other dangers.

While the above contributions have laid promising groundwork in critically studying discourses of insecurity in Afghanistan, there remains a significant gap in connecting representations of danger to the imperative of securing social identity. The articles illustrate the merits of theorizing contemporary security dynamics but remain narrowly focused and largely confined to international discourses. In addition to these contributions, this project hopes to build on the critical analysis of representations of danger in a field dominated by positivism. Indeed, this is an exciting new trajectory in the study of Afghan security because it broadens the scope of security politics beyond the militarised paradigm of problem-solving approaches. Given the challenges facing the politics of identity and weakening government legitimacy in Afghanistan, there is a pressing need to explore how social identity functions as an object of security in the present conflict. Critical analysis of representations of danger reveals that (narco)terror is not merely an assemblage of existential threats, but rather a discursive terrain in which the hegemonic and counterhegemonic compete for dominance.

One final consideration to take into account is the methods use in the literature. As mentioned above, the dominance of empiricism and positivist approaches has characterised the literature. However, what is striking about this privileging of positivist methods is the lack of adequate field research throughout much of the publications on

both the drug trade and terrorism in Afghanistan. This is an understandable limitation given the rampant political violence, frequency of kidnapping, isolation of violent non-state actors (i.e. criminal organizations and/or terrorist groups), as well as a harsh geography and poor infrastructure. These factors pose a significant barrier to accessing local politics and society in Afghanistan and conducting effective ethnographic research. This limitation also effects the methods and empirical data available to researchers, leading to an overreliance on secondary sources produced by journalists, government statements, and research conducted by independent think tanks. The good news is that there is a wealth of secondary sources on Afghanistan, so there is no shortage of literature in that regard. On the other hand, the lack of field research prevents researchers from directly observing *how* discourses of danger are decoded at the societal level.

Another important impact of the lack of field research is the difficulty in verifying data collected in secondary sources. The literature produced on the Taliban serves as a case in point. The clandestine and secretive nature of the organization presents serious challenges in researching the command structure, organizational structure, ideology, and operations (Johnson 2017; Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2018; Crews and Tarzi 2008). Reliance on local government officials and journalists for data often presents contradictory findings and skews academic approaches to the Taliban. For instance, the question of the level of integration between the Taliban and the drug economy has produced mixed results, with some writers such as Gretchen Peters (2009b) asserting that the Taliban are the head of a broad criminal racket including drug smugglers, traders, traffickers, and trucking groups (Peters 2009b: 10), whereas others argue that the Taliban merely applies a religious tax (*ushr*) from the drug traffickers (Shanty 2011). While such debates are understandable, they also provide a window into the limitations faced by researchers hoping to present an accurate picture of contemporary security dynamics. Moreover, this further demonstrates the unfortunate necessity of using secondary sources as *prima facie* evidence.

This project differs in its approach. While it acknowledges the necessity of using secondary sources to conduct research on Afghanistan, it approaches secondary sources more as an object of study than as pure evidence. For instance, as journalists rely on government statements in representing security issues, this study critically analyses these statements in the hopes of uncovering a larger process of representing danger. Thus, the plethora of secondary sources should not be viewed as a limitation to the study of the

Taliban, but rather as an important outlet for interpretivist methods and Critical Discourse Analysis. While this approach has yet to catch its stride in the literature, significant groundwork has been laid in the subfield of literature on the Taliban.

Indeed, gaining access to Taliban communications is a difficult endeavour and requires ethnographic research in Afghanistan. There also remains the issue of giving a voice to what is understood as a violent political (i.e. terrorist) organization. As a result, to date there remains scarce literature on Taliban communications. The methods used, the messages sent, and the audience targeted remains significantly under-researched. On the other hand, the literature that has been produced has provided a growing body of (translated) statements, poems, videos, songs, and other forms that serve as a foundational data-set for future studies (see Johnson 2007, 2011, 2017; Johnson and Dupee 2012; Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012b, 2018; Giustozzi 2009; Aggarwal 2016). Not only is this scholarship important for its empirical contribution to the literature, but many of these sources take steps to theorize Taliban discourse and highlight the merits of applying discourse analysis to the study of the Taliban. Aggarwal's (2016) study on the Taliban's virtual presence utilises CDA (Fairclough 1992) to uncover how the Taliban uses online communication to build a distinct political identity that challenges hegemonic discourse (Aggarwal 2016: xvi-xviii). Thomas Johnson's recent work similarly analyses the Taliban's deployment of stories and other cultural narratives in undermining government control over Afghan rural society (Johnson 2017). Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn's (2012b) anthology of Taliban poetry, while leaving the poems open to the interpretation of the reader, nonetheless highlight the central role poetry plays in influencing Afghan culture and identity. These contributions are significant developments in the literature as they reveal that discourse and representation play a seminal role in the Taliban's efforts to retake control over Afghan society. This thesis hopes to build on these contributions and to connect the Taliban's communications with society to a larger process of political representations of danger.

Conclusion

To conclude, this literature review establishes the thesis as a critical investigation into the politics of representing danger in Afghanistan. However, the scope of this research focus and the underlying assumption that danger is used instrumentally by political actors merited further discussion and brief overview of the literature. As stated in the introduction, the desire was not to rehash old arguments but rather to survey the body of scholarship that has been influential to this thesis. This objective was expressed in Section I which provided a brief overview of critical scholarship on danger. Particular attention was placed on poststructuralist and critical constructivist scholarship; however, in investigating how dangers become constructed, the contributions of the Paris School and the Copenhagen School were illustrated. The goal of Section I was to outline this study's indebtedness to previous critical scholarship on (in)security, danger, and identity.

Section II shifted focus to existing literature on narcoterrorism and the two constituent dangers, narcotics and terrorism. One of the findings of this literature review was the gap in applying critical methods to the study of narcoterrorism. Indeed, much of the literature consulted fails to address the constructed nature of these dangers and instead reaffirms the validity of hegemonic representations. On the other hand, the literature surrounding terrorism and drugs appears much more promising. The remainder of this section highlighted the vibrant body of critical scholarship on danger and in particular highlighted discursive approaches to the danger (e.g. Jackson 2005; Spencer 2012; Ditrych 2013). While not receiving the same degree of attention from critical scholars, drugs shows a great deal of promise as a handful of scholars are making significant headway in establishing a new subfield of Critical Drugs Studies (Campbell and Herzberg 2017; see also Herschinger 2011, 2015; Crick 2012). Overall, the lack of critical engagement with narcoterrorism presents a gap in the literature. Moreover, the existence of robust critical scholarship on terrorism and drugs indicates the importance of future scholarship on these dangers, and by extension narcoterrorism.

Lastly, this chapter provided an overview of contemporary literature on Afghanistan and its (in)security. The review showed that research in this area is dominated by positivist approaches that remain focused on (re)solving the conflict. While the researcher notes the merits of such an approach, it is also recognised that the existing scholarship fails to

address the role discourses of danger play in defining the identity(-ies) of the conflict. Therefore, there is a significant gap in the contemporary literature in terms of applying critical theories, CDA, and illustrating the connection between discourses of danger and identity in Afghanistan.

Chapter III: Tracing the Discourses of (Narco)terrorism

Terrorism, narcotics, and narcoterrorism: these three concepts are taken as an objective danger faced by both society and state; a danger that galvanises society around a narrative of binary distinctions between good and evil, moral and immoral, civilised and barbaric.⁴⁴ However, what the previous two chapters have shown is that danger is an intersubjective concept which is constructed and represented by political actors. It is anything but static as identities and values transform over time, leading one to question what we truly *know* about terrorism, narcotics, or even narcoterrorism. After all, terrorism can be reduced to a form of violence committed in an ‘illegitimate’ way by ‘illegitimate’ people (Ditrych 2014: 94; Bain 2005: 10; Laqueur 1999, 2001; Stampnitzky 2013). Similarly, narcotics are substances deemed *dangerous* by the state (as well as other experts within a social space⁴⁵), constituting a field of illegitimate substances deemed evil and immoral (Herschinger 2015: 190; Crick 2012). Indeed, the illegitimate label is what defines the antithetical nature of terrorism and narcotics to a society, but what is the basis of this illegitimacy?

This chapter approaches these dangers and applies genealogical inquiry in an overview the global discourse(s). Rather than embodying any sense of an objective danger, terrorism and narcotics, and hence narcoterrorism, are the product of political and social representations of violence and health.⁴⁶ These dangers, and society’s knowledge of them, have developed throughout history, reflecting particular relationships, identities, and values in a given period. Rather than embodying a ‘new’ and ‘dangerous’ threat, narcoterrorism illustrates how danger and security are created and represented through interactions between hegemonic and counterhegemonic actors.

⁴⁴ This framing was used consistently under the Bush administration. For a strong example of this type of language, see Address by President George W. Bush before the 56th regular session of the UN General Assembly on November 10, 2001.

⁴⁵ Experts refers to those who hold an authoritative status over knowledge within society (e.g. civil society leaders, academics, local government officials, etc.).

⁴⁶ Social health refers to the idea of securing the body politic from immaterial dangers, which are represented as metaphorical diseases. Drug addiction, crime, differing political views, and immorality are all examples of dangers to social health.

Undoubtedly, this is a difficult point to prove given that knowledge of the past is inherently biased and hence flawed. Our lack of any empirical experience of the past reduces our knowledge of it to mere interpretations founded solely in our present environment (Ditrych 2014: 2). The inability of present-day individuals to experience history reduces the past to an assemblage of images and imaginaries, combining with what is contemporary to form a constellation of meaning (Benjamin in Arendt 1969). However, this is only a problem if one sets out to uncover a truth. Instead, this chapter is devoted to illustrating the construction of (narco)terrorism and challenging dominant understandings of terrorism and narcotics. Rather than embodying a linear evolution of danger, (narco)terrorism epitomises the asymmetrical relationship of power and knowledge occurring between the hegemonic and the counterhegemonic. The hope, therefore, is not to prove that terrorism has always existed, nor is it to link contemporary utterances and occurrences of (narco)terrorism to historical manifestations. Instead, the goal of this chapter is to look at how the globalised discourses of terrorism and narcotics have developed over time and how representations of each danger have reflected dominant periodic power structures and identities throughout history. Such an investigation will illustrate how dangers, in this case terrorism and narcotics, have been constructed by hegemonic forces and deployed within society.

In order to illustrate this process, this chapter will utilise the Foucauldian method of genealogical inquiry (Foucault 1980).⁴⁷ The negotiated and (re)represented nature of danger requires a decentralisation of its history and rejection of any origin/evolution (Foucault 1984: 77). If danger is constantly being (re)represented to reflect a contemporary *zeitgeist*, can there really be a definitive starting point? Our contemporary knowledge of terrorism, for instance, is plagued by our own biased and subsequent interpretations of the phenomenon (Hülse and Spencer 2008: 573; Ditrych 2014: 16), historicising an image that is very much rooted in the contemporary. Instead, narcoterrorism, as well as its sub-parts terrorism and narcotics, is very much a contemporary manifestation of a longstanding discourses of danger. Certainly, there are particular elements emerging from history and influencing this contemporary danger; however, to base our understanding of narcoterrorism as a new danger begat entirely from humanity's evolution and globalisation would be a falsehood and intellectually limiting.

⁴⁷ See Chapter I for a detailed discussion of the method.

Therefore, the task of this chapter is to examine the history of representations of terrorism, narcotics, and narcoterrorism to reveal the role of context, power structures, identity that inform the discourse.

This chapter begins by providing an overview of the dominant representations of terrorism and narcotics. In critically assessing the discourse, attention is paid to the deployment of essentialising labels and inferred connections along an equivalential chain. The focus will then shift towards the emergence and presence of narcoterrorism in contemporary globalised security discourses, maintaining a consistent analytical framework in illustrating interactions between political actors, society, and the securitised danger. Therefore, the objective of this chapter is not to provide a purely historical account of (narco)terrorism, nor is it to place (narco)terrorism at a specific point along a larger evolution of danger; rather, the objective is to “destabilize what we know and do not or no longer question” (Aradau and Van Munster 2011: 12). By looking into the history of narcotics, terrorism, and narcoterrorism, the hope is to de-familiarize contemporary understandings of the phenomena and to expose how the discourses of (narco)terrorism are deployed to influence social identity.

Terrorism, Hegemony and Identity

As a discourse, terrorism is a fascinating space of interaction, where emotion, ideology, and action converge in a concept whose meaning is ultimately ambiguous. The ambiguity surrounding its meaning hinders hegemonic domination of the discourse and instead relies heavily on the interpretation of the receiver (see Zulaika and Douglass 2008; Der Derian 2009b; Stampnitzky 2013). Indeed, many of the same emotions, motivations and means of violence are observable in acts not labelled as terrorism, which raises the question of when violence becomes understood (read interpreted) as terrorism.⁴⁸ Terrorism research has been asking this question for decades now (Schmid 1984; Schmid and Jongman 1988; Laqueur 2001; Jackson 2005, 2011, 2012b; Hoffman 2006; Ramsay

⁴⁸ This also relates to the seemingly endless debate surrounding how (or even if) to define terrorism (see Ramsay 2015).

2015) and has dutifully uncovered hundreds of smaller, contentious definitions.⁴⁹ The presence of so many different definitions makes problematic any hope of a hegemonic representation naturalising (see Hall 1997; Doty 1996). The biggest question being raised, therefore, is whether terrorism can be understood objectively. Does terrorism exist in a positivist sense, or is it a discourse that is constituted by discursive actors and constitutive of the terrorist?⁵⁰ While it should be clear that the understanding advocated in the thesis reflects the latter, the question itself is crucial to this understanding because it highlights the intersubjectivity of knowledge of terrorism and challenges naturalised representations of it.⁵¹ How does a society come to 'know' the difference between terrorism and insurgency? How do social actors understand the difference between a heavy-handed police operation and state terrorism? What are the sites of differentiation? As a discourse, terrorism is broad, intersubjective, and ultimately ambiguous, leaving positivist scholars and social audiences alike with little hope of realising their goal of gaining an objective understanding of the phenomenon. The genealogical inquiry into terrorism provided in this chapter sidesteps this epistemological trap and approaches it as a discourse dominated by hegemonic actors. It is a discourse meant to secure the state's hegemony over society and to subjugate the self-representation of the Other.

In this sense, terrorism is a site of contestation where violence is interpreted as communication (Schmid and de Graaf 1982; Crelinsten 2002). Expressions of violence are infused with meaning as two opposing conceptions of identity, that being hegemonic and counterhegemonic, interact in the social sphere. The violent act perpetrated by the terrorist is communication from the counter-hegemonic (see Schmid and de Graaf 1982; Crelinsten 2002; Richardson 2006; Staun 2010), which is met by an opposing interpretation of meaning communicated by the hegemonic actors. In other words, terrorism is violence directed at specific targets designed to send a message to an audience (Chowdhury and Krebs 2010: 126; Richardson 2006; Weissman et al. 2014). It becomes terrorism when the securer utters it into existence, using linguistic and extralinguistic

⁴⁹ The most famous example in the literature is Schmid and Jongman's (1988) 109 definitions of terrorism.

⁵⁰ An argument put forth recently by scholars such as Staun (2010) and Ditrych (2014). Similar to securitisation, the argument draws on linguistics and the ability of speech actors to materialise a certain phenomenon (in this case terrorism) through discourse.

⁵¹ This can also be linked to what Stampnitzky (2013) highlighted as the politics of anti-knowledge immediately after 9/11, in which the evil and supposed irrationality of terrorists delegitimised any knowledge of them.

representations of the violence to label it as terrorism. In this relationship, we can observe that terrorism is a message, “[with] a sender (the terrorist), a message generator (the victim [or target]) and the receiver (the public)” (Staun 2010: 409). This dynamic is present in both the securer and the securitised as both send conflicting messages to the social audience. Indeed, as Schmid and de Graaf (1982) point out, “in order for a violent act to become terroristic, it needs an audience” (Schmid and de Graaf 1982: 15). The same applies to the sovereign: in order for a sovereign to exist, it must have a discursive audience to support it. In this way, we can observe how the terrorist communicates through violence – illegitimate and ‘alternative’ forms, as it were – directed at symbolic targets (Seib and Janbek 2011: 7; Weissman et al. 2014: 261), whereas the securer communicates through ascribing meaning and sacredness to these targets. The interplay of these two messages, hegemonic and counterhegemonic, is therefore infused with contextual meaning that encapsulate the knowledges, values, and identities of both sides. The fluidity of interpreting violent acts demonstrates the validity of understanding terrorism as a discourse. It is a construct which encapsulates a plethora of different elements and binaries, anecdotally reflected in the ‘hundreds’ of definitions mentioned above (see Schmid and Jongman 1988). The discourse, through its imposition of self/other identities, constitutes the secured subject (i.e. the endangered society) and consolidates the ambivalent Other into the image of terrorist (Ditrych 2014: 1). These identities are given meaning through the usage and naturalisation of constitutive binaries, stressing the antagonistic alterity of the terrorist in contrast to the moral and just vision of society. The binary traits ascribed to the terrorist, and deployed through labels such as barbaric, immoral, unjust, evil, etc. (see Bush 2001), exclude the terrorist from society via representations of these characteristics. In other words, the terrorist becomes the manifestation of a threatening difference, which through negative association becomes constitutive of the self (Campbell 1998: 61; see also Connolly 1991). The characteristics of the terrorist are reflective of the challenges facing hegemonic representations of the ideal society. Whatever the contextual basis for defining terrorism - whether it be fears of anarchy, fears of transnationalism, fears of alterity – the represented identity of the terrorist reflects the challenges to the sovereign’s authority over its society. The role of context in shaping the discourse can be observed in the historical ‘waves’ of political violence (Rapoport 2012) and has been analysed elsewhere by Ditrych (2013). The terrorist, therefore, is represented to personify counterhegemonic challenges to the

established order, which are reduced to a mutual antagonism and incompatibility with society. The face, cause, and *ethos* of the terrorist are consequently decivilized, dehumanised, and depoliticised. In this way, terrorism, like all discourses, is located in a specific context and should be approached historically (Bartolucci and Gallo 2013: 19). Moreover, approaching discourses of terrorism in this way reveals that representations of terrorism are not meant to describe but rather become a form of social action that constitutes social identities and structures.

As an outside observer, identifying the specific constitutive elements of terrorism's represented identity is challenging because it requires deconstructing political representations of the terrorist as well as society's own interpretation of the discourse. Furthermore, attempting to locate an origin of the discourse and chronicling its evolution over time would be flawed because it would assume that terrorism is part of a teleological chain, fixed throughout history when in fact the 'face' of terrorism and the discourses around the phenomenon have shifted periodically (Laqueur 2001; Bain 2005). Instead, terrorism is formed from a particular political and social context, becoming the *episteme* of our times (Zulaika and Douglass 2008: 29). For example, contemporary discourses of terrorism often cite the erosion of sovereign borders and the threat of the migration as the root of the danger (Enders and Sandler 1999; Nail 2016), reflecting many of the challenges faced by nation-states in a globalised world (see Aradau 2004; Huysmans 2004; Behnke 2006).⁵² Therefore, our current understanding of terrorism is premised on hegemonic responses to these challenges. Manifestations of this policy can be observed in tougher immigration laws, increased border security, surveillance of society, expanded state powers, and so on, all of which are enacted with the stated objective of protecting society from this *new* danger (see Dillon 2007). Thus, if we critically analyse contemporary discourses of terrorism, we can observe the impact of our current political *zeitgeist* defined by increased freedoms, permeable borders, globalised migration, and a reduction in state-based antagonisms. Indeed, it has become almost a cliché to cite the post-Cold War world for creating everything 'new' in security and politics; however, there is some agency here in that this environment greatly destabilised the discursively constituted roles of state and society. In other words, the traditional sovereign is faced

⁵² Another prominent example of this is the securitisation of migrants in Western countries. The refugee crisis in Syria is was such instance in which those fleeing groups identified as terrorist and reframed in political and social representations as (possible) terrorists themselves

with a crisis of control over its imagined community (Anderson 1982), requiring the use of terrorism as a means to normalise and retain hegemony over the collective (Ditrych 2013: 232).

This new context and its resulting ‘new’ dangers illustrate the importance of the normal in the sovereign’s relationship with society. The post-Cold War environment presented the world with an extranormal context in which the traditional structure of security quickly evaporated (Weldes et al. 1999: 3). Similarly, terrorism is also represented as the ‘extranormal’ and as a rule violation (Victoroff 2006: 2). Why is this? After all, there have been many books written recently which chronicle the historical presence of terrorism since the time of the Romans to our contemporary experience (see Laqueur 2001; Sinclair 2003; Law 2015; Chaliand and Blin 2007). The reason terrorism is considered extranormal and a rule violation is because it reflects emerging instabilities in state-society relations. The state’s discursive hegemony over discourses of danger is increasingly challenged from the subordinate as many counternarratives and (re)representations emerge, asserting society’s own discursive agency. Thus, contemporary discourses of terrorism represent it as an act and an *ethos*, which challenges the hegemonic discourse of an ideal society as evidenced by representations of normality under attack (Aradau and van Munster 2008). Its ‘newness’, a product of the modern political environment, challenges traditional sociopolitical structures. In this way, the extranormal quality of terrorism has a constitutive impact on normality itself (Aradau and van Munster 2008: 200). Its extranormal nature, identified and represented by through hegemonic discourse, historicises normality in a previous era where the roles of state, society, and threat were deemed more stable. In a genealogical study of modern discourses of terrorism, Ondrej Ditrych (2013; 2014) arrives at the same conclusion, illustrating how discourses of terrorism have developed in certain periods and reflect dominant contexts and identities at the time. For Ditrych, terrorism is part of a larger *dispositif* designed to retain political control over the secured, in both material and immaterial terms. As a danger, terrorism presents the secured society with an image of evil that is dehumanised, depoliticised, mutually antagonistic, and ultimately deemed very dangerous. Terrorism is therefore not an inevitable danger, but rather “a violent reinterpretation” (Ditrych 2014: 50) of old discursive themes encapsulating danger. Defined by its extranormal qualities, terrorism is paradoxically nothing ‘new’ but is instead a contemporary danger used by the securer to construct the *normal*.

This understanding of terrorism as a discourse highlights the role of knowledge-power (Foucault 1980). The discursive construct of the Hobbesian state informs sociopolitical structures in which the state is understood to possess authority over knowledge of danger and (in)security (Dillon 1996). Indeed, the authority the state holds over knowledge of danger – in this case, terrorism - is integral to its existence and necessitates suppression of other forms of knowledge about that danger (Jackson 2012a: 21). In this way, the state's knowledge and representation of terror acts as part of its larger discursive hegemony over the secured society (Herschinger 2011). Similarly, the choices of labels applied to terrorists effectively dehumanises them and essentializes their identity into a binary antagonism to the endangered society. The idea that 'you don't negotiate with terrorists' is used to demonstrate that the hegemonic representation of terrorism is so complete that it negates any need for dialogue and discourse with the terrorist (Zulaika 1995: 220; Jackson 2005: 9). Moreover, these binaries make it unthinkable for social actors to engage with terrorists or recognise their politics (see Zulaika and Douglass 1996; Jackson 2012a: 18). As a result, the hegemon engages in a programme of knowledge subjugation and protection over the elite field of danger. The agency of social decoding of the representation is hindered as dominant myths and incomplete understandings about the nature and threat of terrorism are maintained (Jackson 2012a: 19).

The subjugation of alternative knowledges on terrorism, due to the terrorism taboo (Zulaika and Douglass 1996), grants hegemonic actors with relative freedom to construct 'common' knowledge of terrorism and attach particular meanings to it. As a result, representations of the immorality and illegitimacy of terrorism are disseminated and largely accepted in the social sphere.⁵³ While it is true that certain social groups may hold different views of terrorists and their politics, the argument being made here is that society as whole accepts (at least tacitly) the immorality and illegitimacy of the terrorist. If society held the opposite view, the terrorist would cease to be a terrorist. One particular example, pointed out by Zulaika (1995), is the fact that we, as a society, refrain from dialoguing with terrorists, the reason being that such a dialogue would allow us to humanise the dehumanised terrorist (Zulaika 1995: 182). Our distancing and 'othering'

⁵³ While the acceptance of the discourse among a society is unquantifiable due to the particularised interpretation of the discourse by individuals, the argument being made here is that the subjugation of alternative knowledge grants acceptance of the preferred meaning.

of the terrorist maintains official discourse and knowledge about this danger, de-problematizing intersubjective labels such as (im)moral and (un)just.

This process of excluding and othering is not only confined to the terrorist but is extended to identities discursively connected to it. The bordering function of danger highlighted by Campbell (1998: 81) remains at the heart of the terrorist discourse. The terrorist is assumed as part of the 'ban-opticon dispositif', in which "a logic of exclusion [rests] upon the construction of profiles that frame who is 'abnormal'" (Bigo and Tsoukala 2008: 2). The antithetical nature of the terrorist is used as a vehicle for identifying and securitising elements existent within society that contradict the hegemonic discourse. For instance, the image of the immoral and criminal terrorist is used to create 'suspect communities' (see Breen-Smyth 2014) consisting of individuals that challenge the politics of the state. Moreover, one only needs to look to the 'waves' of terrorism to observe how these communities reflect challenges to the hegemonic (see Rapoport 2012). These features are then politicised through public images and objects that personify hegemonic representations of terrorism (see, for example, Hervik 2018). Objects located in images induce associations and meanings (see Hall 1997), therefore the use of objects in official representations of terrorism, as well as subsequent (re)representations emerging from the media, illustrate the dominance of hegemonic knowledge of terrorism through the interpretation and (re)representations of the discourse emerging from social actors. Images of religious fundamentalists in distinct clothing is but one example of how objects – in this case traditional clothing – are used to associate undesirable identities with danger. Furthermore, the use of these objects and their associated meaning in representations of individuals/groups voicing unpopular fringe opinions illustrates how counternarratives are depoliticised through their link with terrorism. Given the hyper-visualised basis of contemporary society and the predominance of mediascapes (Conway 2012), the hegemon's ability to (de)politicise has become so developed that these representations are recognised and adopted "when one sees it" (Der Derian 2005: 24-25), resulting in exclusion of marginal groups.

Terrorism reflects the use of danger to border and impose an identity on society. Just as the authority of the sovereign rests on authoritative knowledge of danger and security, the terrorism discourse is an expression of sovereign power as its representation embodies the antithesis of the ideal society. The expert knowledge held by the state is protected through the suppression of securitised (i.e. terrorist other) knowledges emerging from the

counterhegemonic. Government agencies and other experts form fields of security, which further separates the securer's official knowledge from society's unofficial knowledge, reducing and delegitimising their interaction with terrorists while reinforcing political representations of the phenomenon (Bigo 2008a; Jackson 2005, 2012). In this way, terrorism illustrates the use of representations of danger to control society. Its presence is a manifestation of sovereign power over knowledge of danger. Terrorist groups certainly exist, as both their members and victims would certainly agree;⁵⁴ however, the existence of terrorism and what we really *know* about terrorism is the product of discourse constructed by the securer in order to govern and control the secured.

Historical Representations of Terrorism

Before deconstructing representations of terrorism, it is important to turn to a brief account of how terror(ism)⁵⁵ has been represented and engaged with over several historical periods. Indeed, many scholars have attempted to provide a historical chronology of terrorism in order to justify claims about the teleology of contemporary terrorism (see Laqueur 2001; Sinclair 2003; Hanhimäki and Blumenau 2013); however, this approach is undoubtedly flawed as it merely consists 'backward projections' of a very contemporary concept⁵⁶ (Ditrych 2014: 2). Indeed, such an approach mistakenly essentializes the terrorist into an ahistorical and timeless phenomenon with only minute differences existing between the terrorists of the ancient world and contemporary groups like al-Qaeda (Mockaitis 2006: 19). This section, therefore, is not about providing a chronological account of how terrorism has developed over the ages, but is instead about analysing and highlighting the discursive themes that constitute terrorism, revealing how these discourses and representations of terrorism are a form of hegemonic power over society.

⁵⁴ The former would certainly deny being part of a 'terrorist' organisation, instead focusing on the characteristics of their own self-identity.

⁵⁵ The use of parentheses is meant to denote both the political use of terror as well as the contemporary danger known as terrorism.

⁵⁶ I use the term 'contemporary' loosely here to refer to our present knowledge and understanding of terrorism, which as demonstrated in the section above, is based on the security actors' interaction with contemporary challenges.

The ‘origins’ of terror are quite diverse and contested with many pointing to the French Revolution, perhaps due to simple word association, as the beginning of what we now know as terrorism (Der Derian 2009: 76; Hoffman 2006: 3; Bain 2005). Other scholars have gone back further, identifying examples of terrorism as early as the 1st century AD⁵⁷ (Hanhimäki and Blumenau 2013: 2; Chaliand and Blin 2007). The confusion is quite understandable because while there are many authoritative definitions of terrorism (the US military definition having the largest impact on the global discourse), the distinction between terrorism and other forms of political violence remains problematic and highly contested (Mockaitis 2006: 2). Furthermore, if we adopt the perspective that terror is a basic class of emotion, as suggested by Victoroff (2006), then humans’ capitalisation on this emotion (i.e. terrorism) is nothing more than a means of social interaction and is therefore timeless (Victoroff 2006: 2). Terrorism is a natural and ever-present mode of socio-political interaction and while there are differences in historical interpretations of it, these differences merely reflect the various power constellations that shape the context (Ditrych 2013: 233). In other words, a historical study of terrorism is a chronicle of political *zeitgeists*, not a narrative of historical determinism.

The Reign of Terror during the French Revolution illustrates this point as terror was used to protect the revolution and educate the citizenry. Through identifying, publicly trying, and subsequently executing ‘enemies of the state’, the National Convention used terror to educate the citizenry about who and what was acceptable in the First Republic. The use of public executions on such a massive scale, combined with legally-derived justifications (i.e. tribunals), constructed a new socio-political order based on extranormal uses of public violence. The dichotomisation of society into friend/enemy binaries reflected the politicised distinction between pre- and post-revolutionary France, with the emphasis being placed on individuals within society to identify and bring ‘enemies’ to justice. Again, the criteria for being an enemy of the state was quite diverse, however, in a broad sense these criteria reflected the National Convention’s vision of a new social order in which all were equal, albeit in fear of the sovereign. In the United Kingdom, this form of governance and usage of terror received the suffix ‘-ism’ in the late-18th century as writers sought to delegitimise the movement and distinguish it from other legitimate

⁵⁷ This argument refers to the Zealots in Judea who carried out attacks on Roman occupation forces and other collaborators.

forms of political violence (Bain 2005: 11). In other words, “[t]errorism is an illegitimate form of political violence because it is democratic (arising from the ‘people’, the ‘mob’, ‘the dangerous classes’, or ‘criminals’) and revolutionary (a direct challenge to the powers that be)” (Bain 2005: 10). In this era, on both sides of the English Channel, terror(ism) epitomised the political order. In France, it was used to identify ‘others’ and educate the citizenry, whereas in the UK it was used to delegitimise democratic forms of political violence and reaffirm the authority (and legitimacy) of the established political order. The similarity found in both countries was that the terror label was used to legitimise the authority of the hegemon and to securitise the counterhegemonic.

This legitimising/delegitimising feature can also be observed in how terrorism was deployed during World War I and World War II. In these two periods, terrorism was used as a signifier of barbarity and dehumanisation of the enemy Other, in this case Germany. In World War I, terrorism was framed as a breach of conventional warfare norms and to dehumanise Germany (Ditrych 2014: 34). For instance, the ‘barbarous practices’ of German submarines were termed terrorism and used as proof of the Central Powers’ inhumanity. More importantly, however, terrorism was used in this era to symbolise a negation of the existing order (Ditrych 2014: 38). Through unrestricted submarine warfare, Germany flouted the conventional rules of war by targeting civilians and not rescuing survivors. In World War II, Nazi policies of terrorism also symbolised a negation of the conventions of war as civilians were targeted in bombing raids, towns were executed, or forcibly displaced, and entire social groups were sent to extermination camps. By targeting civilians, Nazi Germany embodied the use of terror as a weapon, a point highlighted by the Allies in justifying their similar acts towards the German population.⁵⁸ These examples highlight the labelling of ‘new’ forms of violence as a rule-violation, requiring a universal effort to defeat this unconventional danger. The application of the terrorism label represented Germany as an enemy of the people and consequently made any interaction with this enemy, or recognition of this enemy’s humanity, impossible. Furthermore, the use of this label further strengthened the ‘good’ and ‘just’ image of the securer within the public sphere and reinforced the politicised

⁵⁸ An interesting comparison is observable when reviewing the justifications given by Winston Churchill and Arthur ‘Bomber’ Harris.

values of identity in the Allied countries. Terrorism was therefore used to dichotomise two competing identities and to further strengthen the sovereign's authority over society.

This same tactic can be observed in the emergence of non-state terrorism during the Cold War. During the Cold War, both media and government officials in the West referred to the heavy-handed tactics of the Soviet Union as terrorism (Ditrych 2014: 33); however, the difference between the terrorist discourse during the Cold War compared with other periods lies in the use of ideology in the framing of the danger. The emergence of many non-state actors who used extreme forms of political violence (for example the Baader-Meinhof Gang, Red Brigades, Black October, ETA, and so on) characterised a 'new' ideologically motivated terrorism, which was represented as leftist and revolutionary. Indeed, many of the groups labelled as terrorist, from the IRA to ETA, embodied this linkage with the Left through publicising Marxist-Leninist slogans in their literature (Laqueur 1999: 32). This linkage was used extensively by security actors in the West to dichotomise social groups along political binaries: the civilised liberal vs. the barbaric, eastern communist. The emerging field of terrorism studies in the 1970s and 1980s reflected this understanding as scholars promoted the idea that the Soviet Union was behind global terrorism (Stampnitzky 2013: 7).⁵⁹ As Stampnitzky argues, the terrorism discourse emerging in the 1970s "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" (Stampnitzky 2013: 24). The ideological framing of the terrorist illustrates the political *zeitgeist* of the period and the power of global security actors to subjugate and exclude counterhegemonic discourse from the public sphere. This era, or 'wave', of terror illustrates the precarity of established political and social structures in that the danger was no longer solely identified with an external menacing other, but rather from subversive elements within society. The perils of liberal freedom would inevitably lead

⁵⁹ Clare Sterling's (1981) *The Terror Network* is an excellent example of the discourse at the time. Despite being under-researched and ultimately based on CIA disinformation, Sterling's book became a best-seller and had far reaching consequences for public discourse. Other notable examples include Cline and Alexander's *Terrorism: The Soviet Connection* (1984) and Rachel Ehrenfeld's *Narco-Terrorism* (1990). Lisa Stampnitzky's *Disciplining Terror* (2013) provides an excellent summary of the field and the role played by the Cold War.

to increasingly plural societies in which counter-narratives⁶⁰ could be easily disseminated.

In the contemporary era, the emergence of ‘networked terror’ has dominated international security as well as domestic politics (Ditrych 2013: 231; see Sageman 2004). The somewhat stable spatial order of the Cold War was disrupted by the rise of global hegemonic power and the spread of liberal ideology.⁶¹ Combined with the emergence of globalisation, the post-Cold War order has meant that the world is now connected through complex social networks and is characterised by porous sovereign boundaries (see Enders and Sandler 1999). As a result, non-state terrorism has reached new prominence as the barbaric ‘Other’ is represented as having the capacity to easily infiltrate the heterogeneous and porous society. Furthermore, the fragility of liberal society, founded in its free and diverse character (i.e. the core tenets of liberalism), has necessitated the further use of terrorism as a tool of governance due to the absence of traditional interstate antagonisms. As a result, the many diverse characteristics of contemporary terrorism - religious fundamentalism, excessive violence against civilians, economic destruction, targets relating to travel - capture the antithesis of the liberal ethos. Indeed, this binary distinction forms a substantial part of president Ashraf Ghani’s representations of the Taliban and the larger terrorist threat, which will be investigated in Chapter IV.

Despite there being several different eras of terrorism, with some occurrences dating as far back as the 1st century AD, there are several consistencies in the discourse. First, terrorism is framed as a criminal act in which violence has been used illegitimately. One of the contemporary definitions of terrorism found in UN Resolution 49/60 (1994) defines it as “criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes,” which highlights the fact that terror is understood as a violation of hegemonic political structures and social conventions on violence. Secondly, terrorism, in whichever era, is loaded with contextual elements that shape its representation. As a discourse, terrorism is rooted in its own

⁶⁰ Referring to Shapiro’s idea of counter-narratives and counter-histories that challenge the state’s official representations of nationhood and social identity (see Shapiro 2004).

⁶¹ An interesting development in the field worth mentioning is the argument that terrorism, the larger politics of fear, are integral to the survival of the liberal state. See Williams (2011); Dillon (2007); Bain (2005).

contextuality and is anchored in the interactions between hegemonic and counterhegemonic identities in a given period.

The Political Value of the Terrorist Label

From this brief, and by no means exhaustive, account of historical representations of terrorism we can observe how terrorism is used as a label and reflects the politics and assemblages of power in a given period. First and foremost, terrorism denotes criminality and rule-violation; its danger rests in its extranormality. The concept itself is quite straightforward: terrorism is the illegitimate use of violence for political purposes. However, the contentious feature, and therefore the subject of this discussion, is the label itself. In using the label, security actors identify and signify an observable danger in a way that encapsulates a diverse set of constituent binaries and identities. These sub-products provide the linkages necessary for broadening the scope of terrorism and what it means to the social audience (Herschinger 2011). These linkages primarily emerge from the discursive authority and are constructed in order to reflect (and interact with) contemporary norms and values. In the section that follows, the terrorist label will be critically analysed in an effort to uncover its utility, its composition, and to reveal how ‘terrorism’ effects social and political structures.

The defining feature of the label is that it is a social action that utters terrorism into existence (Bhatia 2005; Staun 2010; Ditarych 2014). Drawing on securitisation theory, the argument here is that terrorism does not exist prior to being declared by a discursive authority (i.e. security actor). Terrorism has no pre-discursive foundations and therefore cannot exist without first being spoken or declared. In other words, without the label to give meaning to an act of violence, terrorism remains unknown (Bhatia 2005: 15). It only becomes known when a hegemonic actor understood to hold authoritative knowledge over danger identifies an act as terrorism. The reason for this is found in how individuals collectively interpret and understand phenomena. Our use of language constitutes meaning for deeds in a way that is shared and recognised throughout society (Staun 2010: 407). Without the means to ascribe an accepted meaning to a particular object or act, the act itself remains incomprehensible, or at the very least ambiguous. This is why there is always a clear statement from a political authority after an act of violence stating whether

or not the violence is being treated as a terror attack. Furthermore, if we take security as a performance of governance, then it is the sovereign that utters terrorism into existence through the pronouncement of this label. In labelling a violent act as terrorism, the state takes part in a performative utterance that raises the violent act to the realm of the extranormal (Bhatia 2005: 14; Staun 2010: 410). The state is at once uttering terrorism into existence, while also reinforcing its position as the security provider for society in its identification of an existential threat. Through identifying the danger, the security actor disseminates the accepted and inferred associations with terrorism, thus strengthening the cohesiveness of the political community while also maintaining its own claims to legitimate authority (Bhatia 2005: 15).

The utility of the label has been the subject of analysis throughout this chapter and by now it should be clear that the terrorist label is a product of hegemonic discourse. Certainly, the meaning of terrorism has differed greatly over time and strongly reflects political *zeitgeists*; however, its intersubjectivity highlights the fact that it is a discursive construction derived from hegemonic discourse. Furthermore, if we consider that terrorism is uttered into existence by a speech actor then it becomes clear that the application of the label is an instrumental social action. Fairclough (1992) recognised the constitutive capability in his understanding that discourse is “a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning” (Fairclough 1992: 64). Our knowledge of terrorism and security is founded on the official meanings constructed by hegemonic security actors. On the other hand, this perspective runs the risk of oversimplifying society’s interaction with danger. The biggest question encountered is why a constructed concept like terrorism is so readily accepted by society? After all, terrorism is one of the few concepts that we, as humans, can ‘know’ without having experienced it (Der Derian 2005).⁶² Does society possess no discursive agency? Is the counterhegemonic effectively silenced by hegemonic discourses of terrorism? Does society not create its own identity as asserted by McSweeney (1996)? The answer lies in how the discourse of terrorism is created and disseminated to the social audience and the political and social contexts that influence its

⁶² This is due to the highly visualised nature of contemporary terrorism and media representations of the spectacle. Moreover, the language used by political actors in representing acts of violence as terrorism often frames the violence as an attack on the larger collective rather than a specific institution.

interpretation. Essentially, hegemonic actors have tapped into the constitutive role of image and text (visual and linguistic) in its construction of a danger-dominated reality.

As Dillon (2007: 10) wisely pointed out, “different discourses of danger revolve around different referent objects of security,” and as such any deconstruction of the terrorism label needs to look at the referent objects being securitised in the discourse. The use of metaphor as a grammar of security (see Stern 2006) is one of the most illustrative analytical tools in this endeavour because it connects the scarcely known concept of terrorism to an assemblage of additional objects a security discourse is attempting to securitise.⁶³ “Metaphor introduces to political discourse the paradoxical combination of clarity and ambiguity necessary to present a biased and ideological representation of the world as impartial and objective” (Bhatia 2009: 280). It enables a security actor to take a danger, identify it, and make it collectively known to the social audience through linkages with recognised objects. Certainly, the friend/enemy, self/other dichotomy is important in interactions with danger, itself the essence of the Schmittian political (Schmitt 1995: 26); however, in contrast to Schmitt, these distinctions are anchored in symbols and metaphors necessary for their collective recognition in the social audience.

These linkages are established as metaphorical understandings and framings attain relevance through the empirical experiences of the receiver. Linguistic metaphor, through linking an abstract concept like terrorism to something more familiar and experienced, like war or criminality, encourages the audience to reconceptualise the unfamiliar concept and adopt a new understanding (Bhatia 2009: 280). Moreover, this new understanding is designed to reflect the sender’s preferred meaning and demonstrates the steps taken by discursive actors to influence the interpretation of the receiver (Hall 1997). Whether these linkages exist or not, the use of metaphor presents a new meaning onto the represented and projects a known association onto the previously unknown, creating a new reality and constituting a new object (Hülse and Spencer 2008:578).

Two of the most prominent metaphors used in the terrorist label are the crime metaphor and the war metaphor. While the terrorist-criminal linkage has existed in the discourse for over a century (Ditrych 2014: 43), this linkage re-emerged in western political and media representations following the Madrid (2004) train bombings (Hülse and Spencer

⁶³ This also opens up the Other to a diverse set of linkages that pluralises its identity, rather than an essentialized Self-Other dichotomy (see Hansen 2006).

2008: 583). This example can be read in two ways: first, the terrorist is committing a crime via rule-violation in their illegitimate use of violence; and secondly, that the terrorist is nothing more than a criminal existing within the domestic sphere and is therefore a social problem that must be rooted out through vigilance and collective efforts, thus constituting a bordered collective identity. Moreover, the criminal metaphor has an additional effect, which is to invoke a sense of the enemy within, contributing to the extraordinary character of the danger and legitimising exceptional security practices. Underlying this metaphorical association is the shared understanding of the criminal throughout society (Bhatia 2009: 283). It is a label replete with stereotypes and inferred meaning, making the danger known even if it has not been directly experienced by the receiver.

Similarly, the war-metaphor, epitomised by the ‘War on Terror’ and the ‘War on Drugs’, used in framing both terrorism and narcotics illustrates the representation of this danger as exceptional (Stone 2002: 154; Herschinger 2011; Crick 2012). In both instances, the war-metaphor creates a sense of emergency in which the state is seen as the legitimate actor (i.e. protector). With terrorism, the war-metaphor invokes a traditional approach to this danger and invokes a sense of loyalty to the state, consequently stabilising the mass of heterogeneous interests within society (Neocleous 2008: 135). In the case of narcotics, this metaphor frames the danger as state-based danger rather than a social issue (Crick 2012: 411; Herschinger 2011). Despite widespread experience and knowledge of narcotics within society, the war-metaphor reimagines the concept into a more recognisable national security issue.

Another prominent tactic used in representing danger is to deploy metaphors linking terrorism to health (Ditrych 2013: 231; Stampnitzky 2013: 77). This metaphor is particularly interesting because it frames terrorism as a danger faced by the collective body (i.e. society), cultivating a sense of social belonging. However, the notion of disease also highlights the danger’s exceptionality and its potential to cause great harm. Former CIA Director John Deutch writes, “terrorism, like the plague in the Middle Ages, frightens both leaders and citizens. It is a disease that is spreading; its cure is unknown” (Deutch 1997: 10). This quote illustrates the discursive connection between the western historical experience of the Black Death in which both hegemonic and subordinate were victims, while also revealing the limits of hegemonic knowledge of the danger. This broadens the threat of the danger to all of society through reference to historical

epidemics. Framing terrorism in this way also constructs the notion that terrorism is a disease which must be eradicated from the social body. Given the importance of silencing counterhegemonic discourse in maintaining social and political power structures this metaphor is an important method for excluding the terrorist's voice from the public sphere. Notwithstanding the inference that diseases are incapable of communication, this metaphor reduces the terrorist to something mutually exclusive of society: a dehumanised entity that must be eradicated if society is to 'live'.

Critical investigation of the use of metaphors has been employed in Critical Terrorism Studies in recent years (see Hülse and Spencer 2008; Bhatia 2009; Bartolucci and Gallo 2013; Ditych 2014), however, these perspectives are limited in their exclusive focus on linguistic uses of metaphor, and neglect the use of visual metaphor in representations of terrorism. James Der Derian wrote that "...terrorism, terrorists and terror itself have become the political pornography of modernity," and because of the lack of an established universal understanding of terrorism (due to the subjectivity of metaphorical representations), "terrorism is only truly 'known' when one sees it" (Der Derian 2005: 25). As new standards of authenticity are applied in the public sphere, visual representations become more prominent. The reason for this lies in our contemporary context. If we consider that discourse is firmly rooted in context (Bartolucci and Gallo 2013: 19), then the current emphasis placed on visual culture necessitates a highly-visualised discourse of terrorism. Furthermore, the characteristic distrust between liberal societies and political authorities contributes to an emphasis on objective representations as society is compelled to observe an 'unbiased' representation of it: "What the word can only represent, the picture supposedly proves" (Der Derian 2005: 34). The prioritisation of authenticity over representation (Der Derian 2005: 33; see Barthes 1977) characterises a shift in how society engages with discourse, from the linguistic to the visual.

Visual (re)representations of terrorism illustrate the acceptance or rejection of the official discourse as these forms are largely produced by actors within the social audience. Representations of terrorism emanating from security actors utilise visual imagery, however this usually adopts a complementary role, supporting linguistic representations (speech acts, interviews, statements, etc.). Visual representations are found more in social re-representations of the discourse. The plurality of identities and categories within a society hinders the development of a singular voice necessary for linguistic methods. The intersubjectivity of social representations and interpretations is well-established;

therefore, the emphasis is placed on using images that denote a sense of objectivity. However, the question arises as to whether or not the discursive tactics used in the official discourse are transferrable to visual (re)representations found in society. Can metaphors be deployed in visual representations? Are images able to capture the essence of a social disease? And most importantly, do social actors consciously reproduce the official discourse? Certainly, the key characteristic of the image (specifically the photograph) is that it captures a seemingly unadulterated image of the past. However, the objectivity of the image is only a half-truth as there is an agency on the part of the image-taker (choosing what to photograph, choosing the angle, choosing the subjects, and so on) as well as on the part of the observer (Barthes 1977: 29). For instance, news media, consisting of commercial news agencies, investigative journalism programmes, documentary films, photography, and so on, selects and scrutinises a large body of 'raw' images in constructing an account of a particular event, group, or concept (Frosh & Wolfsfeld 2007: 110). Certainly, a great deal of time and effort is involved in determining the 'most accurate' representation of a particular event, group, or concept; however, the categories and characteristics employed are encoded with collective understandings and values that shape the editor's interpretation of the event. As Frosh and Wolfsfeld (2007) point out, "news broadcasts are perhaps the most central to the production of national social imaginaries, to the collage of images we have of the social totality and our relationship with it...the news broadcast purportedly reports those events that are of key interests to the society *as a society*" (109). As a violent spectacle, terrorism becomes a key interest to the society *as a society* as it plays upon a portfolio of politicised binary distinctions found in discourses of insecurity (Frosh and Wolfsfeld 2007: 109). The linguistic metaphors used to give meaning to the terrorist label are experienced through the selected imagery of news media, reifying rather than challenging official representations and knowledge.

Similarly, the content of media representations of terrorism largely reflects the official discourse. One example of this is through victim placement, referring to how victims are represented in media accounts of terrorist acts (Frosh & Wolfsfeld 2007: 113). In a reportage, the victim is positioned to capture the essence of the terrorist act and what it means for society. Social representors are confined to codes intelligible to the audience and reflective of their identity, therefore the qualities of the victim highlighted in a report are selected to personify the hegemonic discourse identity. Certainly, in some instances

victims are selected by terrorist groups for political purposes (Weissman et al. 2014: 261; see also Crellin 2002; Richardson 2006; Chowdhury and Krebs 2010); however, the practicalities of suicide bombing and largescale attacks negates the possibility of the terrorist holding knowledge about the victim(s) beforehand. The real interpretation and representation of the violence emanates from the media's reconstruction of the event, which requires visually compelling, dramatic, and relevant imagery (Seib and Janbek 2011: 7). The use of victim placement in the media serves as a metaphor designed to enhance the social audience's understanding of the event and the intelligibility of terrorism, attaching the violent act to a series of stable referent objects of the collective identity.

The use of the terrorist label is not confined to social or security actors; rather, terrorists themselves also deploy this label in their discursive communications. Terrorists resoundingly reject the application of the terrorist label onto them and readily turn the label around and apply it to the societies and governments they attack (Hoffman 2006: 23). A consistent official framing of the terrorist as the enemy of humanity, *hostis humani generis*, influences the rejection of the label as its capacity to depoliticise and dehumanise is widely recognised. This is an important point to consider because the terrorist is unable to use the same modes of representation as political and social actors (i.e. those included within legitimate society). Their counterhegemonic status as danger and existence outside the politico-social community silences them and delegitimises their counterhegemonic discourse (Zulaika and Douglass 1996: 182). Political and social representations of the terrorist render this identity incompatible with modern society because of its historicised barbarism; it is seen as something that has no legitimate place, or voice, in contemporary society (Ditrych 2014: 226). Thus, our image of the terrorist, both emerging from hegemonic security actors and (re)represented within the public sphere paints a one-sided picture, reducing the voice of the terrorist to acts of violence. The implicit label of 'Other' attached to the terrorist prevents it from being accepted by the bordered society (Barrinha 2011), forcing the terrorist to operate from a realm outside of legitimate (i.e. normal) discourse. As a result, terrorist organisations speak through violence coded with metaphorical meanings (Chowdhury and Krebs 2010: 126). The choice of targets, much like the journalist selecting images, is a means of self-representation. Essentially, the terrorist targets everything that it considers dangerous to its counterhegemonic discourse and its vision for society.

An interesting product of this communication tactic is the (re)representation of the violence by terrorists after the event. The terrorist re-interprets its own violence and attempts to justify such acts to the social audience. In the case of the Taliban, the terrorist label is deployed in communications to society in order to delegitimise the role of the government (see, for example, Al Emarah 2016c, 2017d). While it is unlikely that a society will suddenly adopt this counter-representation, the salient point remains that the label is engaged with by terrorists themselves as actors realise the implications of the label and its recognition in the social audience. Essentially, the terrorist discourse is not only the property of hegemonic actors but is also engaged with by terrorists themselves, thus revealing the political value of the label and the larger discourse.

Terrorism, therefore, is not a static, objective concept; rather, terrorism is a discourse that is constituted and deployed by hegemonic actors in constructing a bordered, endangered society. The concept was initially constructed by political actors and deployed to maintain moral distinctions between the legitimate Self and the illegitimate Other (Tuman 2003: 69). This distinction has largely remained, however the references and assemblages between terrorism and other concepts have differed greatly over time, exposing the use of this danger in maintaining hegemonic structures of power and identity.

Narcotics and Other Societal Plagues

Unlike terrorism, narcotics has no representational agency of its own. As a controlled substance, the ability of a narcotic to represent itself is severely limited and at first glance, it may seem like its objectivity problematizes the assertion that danger is a representation. After all, how does one kilogram of heroin ‘speak’ to society? However, narcotics reveal a different side to representations of danger, illustrated in the use of these substances to securitise counterhegemonic narratives of identity in society. The silence of narcotics⁶⁴ leaves it open to signification and a wealth of different assemblages with other known dangers. Through an investigation of these assemblages, we can observe the use of danger to maintain hegemony over social identity. Rather than signifying a purely external threat, the narcotics danger has been framed in terms of culture and the need to

⁶⁴ Please note that while I am using the plural form, narcotics, it is meant to denote the collectivised concept of narcotics, and thus should be understood as singular.

purify the deviant society. At the root of this danger is the potential of the counterhegemonic to challenge and disrupt the discursively constituted hegemonic identity; thus, narcotics illustrates the process by which hegemonic actors exclude and securitise alternative identities within the social sphere.

Before investigating the discourse, we must first address the constitution of narcotics. The primary question surrounding this concept is when does something become a narcotic drug? The word narcotics is derived from the Greek word *narkos*, which loosely translates as ‘to make numb’. Certainly, narcotics have this effect, but it is in framing the consequences of this effect that the label attains its significance. There is a duality in narcotics use. On the one hand, drugs have been used extensively for medicinal purposes and have revolutionised public health. On the other hand, these substances are represented as having the ability to produce addiction. Herschinger writes, “drugs are a deeply ambivalent matter...they destroy and cure” (Herschinger 2015: 183). It is this duality that requires hegemonic actors to securitise narcotics as subordinate actors (i.e. non-experts) are not trusted to recognise the distinction between medicinal use and addiction. Thus, to be a narcotic is to be controlled and kept away from the autonomous choices of the secured social actors. While prohibition regimes have ultimately been unsuccessful in this regard, the various discourses deployed by political actors reveals the larger process of representing danger and exposes the motivations behind securitising narcotics.

At the root of the narcotics danger is the autonomous society. In an earlier discussion on discourses of (in)security and the politics of fear, we observed how terrorism has been used to maintain the security *dispositif*, legitimising the role of the sovereign as protector (see Ditrych 2013). The various metaphors, labels, and references attached to the terrorist constitutes an endangered Self, reflecting the works of Campbell (1998) and Jackson (2005). However, with narcotics, the objective is slightly different with the representation being focused inward. Narcotics use reflects the freedom of choice within the secured society. Rather than epitomising a threat from ‘outside’ the social order, the threat with narcotics is that social actors will actively make choices that challenge or problematize the hegemonic identity. Engagement with narcotics signifies a rejection of the hegemonic discourse of danger and the representation of narcotics as harmful, signalling a challenge to the entire security narrative.

Therefore, narcotics are represented in such a way that members of the public encounter the danger on a daily basis and witness its exclusion firsthand. In contrast to representations of terrorism, narcotics are viewed primarily as a social problem⁶⁵ with the antagonistic Other operating *within* the secured society. A return to Bigo's 'ban-opticon' is useful here for it illustrates the use of danger in securitising the 'abnormal' (Bigo and Tsoukala 2008: 2). Within a given society or culture there is a characterisation of the ideal subject, whether that be represented through national narratives, collective memorialisation, or cultural productions (see Shapiro 2004). Through representing narcotics as danger, drug users and sellers are placed on the fringes of society as their identities are treated as subversive and abnormal. The state's performance of power, exemplified by arrests, seizures, and incarceration, form the day-to-day practice of excluding these undesired categories from legitimate society, restricting the freedom of choice of the secured subject. Mass media and government institutions engage in a "routinization of caricature – rhetorically recrafting worst cases into typical cases and the episodic into the epidemic" (Reinarman 1994: 159). Rhetorical questions such as 'Is it worth it?' are juxtaposed with images of narcotic substances or victims of drug abuse to construct a narrative around drug use that problematizes the freedom of choice of the subject and connects the 'wrong choice' to the excluded Other.

The practices of exclusion and securitisation of choice point to the threat posed by alterity. Claudia Aradau wrote, "drugs become materialized primarily through their capacity to disrupt the smooth functioning of members of society and society in general" (Aradau 2010: 506). While widespread drug addiction would certainly disrupt contemporary social order, 'smooth functioning' could be reconceived as adherence to the secured identity. Cultural governance is instructive here as it illustrates the various processes through which a state controls social identity (Shapiro 2004). Objects, concepts, and values are identified and deployed as a tool of governance, homogenising the heterogeneous society into a politicised collective. Certainly, there are many cultural elements that are developed by social actors, however, in determining what attains widespread relevance (i.e. mainstream culture) and what does not (i.e. counterculture),

⁶⁵ Narcotics are treated as a social problem to varying degrees. While society-based approaches treat it as a problem to be solved by members of the public, this does not exclude state-based approaches that have treated narcotics as a militarised threat (e.g. the War on Drugs). There is an interesting duality in which addiction is viewed as a social problem, while the act of selling and trafficking narcotics is treated as a security threat.

the state holds authority because it is through the state that these referent objects transcend the local to the national. In doing so, social actors attain a sense of belonging and organisation along the lines of the values coded within these referent objects (Shapiro 2004: 46). A master narrative is created in which subjects become loyal to the image of the virtuous citizen; however, in doing so, alternative categories are subjugated and represented as subversive.

This is most observable in the framing of immigrants, particularly Chinese and Mexicans, in American representations of the narcotics danger. The alternativeness of new arrivals in terms of culture and appearance raised suspicion of their intentions in the US and, most importantly, their loyalty to the American identity. The ‘Mongolian vice’ of Chinese opium users became one of the dominant characterisations of recent Chinese immigrants at the turn of the 20th century (Reinarman 1994: 157; Musto 1987). ‘Killer Weed’ was another theme used to vilify Mexican-American males as violent and aggressive due to their supposed marijuana use (Campbell 1998: 205; Reinarman 1994: 157). The conclusion that can be drawn here is that, while cultural governance is deployed to foster a sense of belonging and uniformity, this also casts suspicion on alternative social categories and allows easier justification of manufactured associations. Craig Reinarman sums it up best, stating, “drug scares are never about drugs *per se*, because drugs are inanimate objects without social consequence until they are ingested by humans. Rather, drug scares are about the use of a drug by particular groups of people who are, typically, *already* perceived by powerful groups as some kind of threat” (Reinarman 1994: 161, emphasis in the original). Therefore, narcotics are deployed to demonstrate the inherent danger alternative categories pose to the secured society and the constructed narratives that hold it together. The externalisation of drug users is a very important point because it follows the same process of excluding individuals and groups associated with terrorism. In defining the society through discourse, one of which being cultural governance, the state deploys discourses of danger to assume authority over who can reside within its ideal society and who cannot.

Another key feature of narcotics is the use of morality in framing it as danger, drawing a parallel with representations of the immoral terrorist. This association is based primarily on the role of the sovereign as the moral guide to the nation. If we consider morality to be a reflection on the Self, the diversity of a modern society precludes the development of a universal morality. However, moral pluralism also challenges the acceptance of

social institutions, and consequently loyalty to the state (Rawls 1971). Thus, the cultivation of a common morality in any society is a chief requirement to maintaining social and political structures. This is why politicians in democracies are largely regarded as ‘moral entrepreneurs’ who use discourse to create common understandings which serve their interests (Fisk 1993: 600). Reflective of their role as moral entrepreneurs, politicians have consistently framed the narcotics danger in moral terms.

The moral dimension of narcotics has existed for over a century. Emily Crick (2012) chronicled how, throughout the 20th century, drugs became infused with politicised moral values. For instance, at the turn of the 20th century drugs became an existential threat due to the damage done to individuals and vulnerable groups; however, in highlighting this existential threat, the state (in this case the US) began to portray drug users as outsiders which threatened to undermine the moral fabric of society (Crick 2012: 408; Musto 1987; Grayson 2008). The danger of narcotics then shifted from the immorality of recent immigrants to the danger immorality posed to the ideal type (i.e. the virtuous citizen). The changing approach to narcotics in the 1960s (i.e. the War on Drugs) is revealing as drug use dramatically increased among the white middle-class population. Widespread drug use among returning Vietnam veterans and disillusioned middle-class youth challenged the dominance of politicised values as these groups became emblematic of social change (Reinarman 1994: 159; Crick 2012: 411; Kuzmarov 2009; Weimer 2003). The militarisation of the narcotics threat under the Nixon administration reflects the politics of the era and the belief that narcotics were corrupting the ideal type. Thus, immorality became securitised in an effort to draw a boundary around the virtuous community (Morone 1997: 998; see Herschinger 2011). By criminalising the use of narcotics and ostracising drug users, the state asserts its dominance over national morality and further coheres the secured to its vision.

Constructing Narcotics as Danger

Similar to representations of terrorism, the discourse surrounding narcotics adopts several key themes. Binary distinctions between good and evil are integrated within representations of individuals and groups affiliated with the drug trade. These representations are also heavily laden with metaphors, often framing the danger in terms

of health and biology (Campbell 1998: 75). Similarly, health officials, government actors, and other knowledge-holders are used extensively to justify hegemonic representations of narcotics as danger. The use of these social actors renders official knowledge of the danger as unquestionable, subjugating alternatives in the process. A brief investigation of the various discursive themes and strategies used in representing narcotics as danger is useful here for it illustrates the ways in which the discourse functions and the agency of hegemonic actors in constructing it.

The use of totalising language is an important aspect of narcotics. While individuals use drugs for a variety of reasons, representations reduce narcotics to an essentialized 'good', in terms of medicinal use, or 'evil', in terms of illicit use. Today, drug use is seen as deviant behaviour, but this is only a recent development (Herschinger 2015: 187). This development can be traced back to the early-20th century when the danger of narcotics was largely framed in religious terms. The deployment of religious terminology reflected the politicisation of morality, evidenced by the Temperance movement and other moral crusades (Crick 2012: 411). Interestingly, the deployment of the good/evil binary expanded the scope of this danger and constructed the narrative that narcotics were a threat to 'mankind' (Crick 2012: 411; Herschinger 2011). International efforts to securitise and generalise narcotics exemplified this use of language. In the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, for instance, "drugs materialize as a 'social evil' or are considered as 'the common enemy'" (Herschinger 2015: 190). The use of this language universalises the threat of drugs and establishes a clear Self/Other boundary. The use of the word 'evil' also legitimises state-based, or even international, practices to secure the moral non-using subject against the deviant Other (Herschinger 2015: 190). As a result, this binary is maintained within society as drug users are generalised into a dangerous class and are subsequently excluded. The 'evilification' (Lazar and Lazar 2004) of narcotics is further supported through the deployment of the disease metaphor. Uncoincidentally, narcotics became associated with disease and illness throughout the 20th century in an attempt to expose the difference between licit and illicit narcotics use. The antithesis of a disease to the Self essentialises the complexity and ambiguity of narcotics into a singular threat to public health. By framing narcotics as a disease, discursive authorities render the concept more understandable to the social audience, playing upon common experience with health and illness (Herschinger 2012: 81). Similarly, this metaphor generalises the secured society into a uniform body politic. The

notion of a narcotic disease harming the 'body' of the nation was a common theme used in American representations of drugs (see Musto 1987; Weimer 2003). However, the disease metaphor also leaves room for interpretation. Herschinger (2012) argues that this was an intended consequence of the discourse in which political actors sought to establish an antagonistic frontier so that various sub-issues could be linked to the larger narcotics disease (Herschinger 2012: 81-82). This signifies a chain of equivalence in political representations of danger, the openness of the disease metaphor allowed undesirable social identities and categories to be attached to the larger narcotics threat (Herschinger 2011). For instance, addicts symbolise a disease of will (i.e. individual/social weakness), traffickers and criminal symbolise a disease of the mind (i.e. subjects who do not associate with the mainstream vision of the social actor), thus homogenising a diverse set of securitised traits and values (Hershinger 2012: 81).

The prevalence, and to some extent success, of the disease metaphor had several implications. Primarily, the logic of equivalence opened the metaphorical danger to an expansive body of associations and characteristics. Take, for instance, the disease of the mind associated with narcotics trafficking and production – in other words, the 'criminal' elements. The notion of a diseased mind stems from a rejection of politicised values within society (i.e. rule-violations, criminal activity, anti-social behaviour). Immorality, or a rejection of communitarian morality, is portrayed as a sickness. Such a broad and intersubjective label undoubtedly covers a potentially infinite number of identities as what is deemed criminal or diseased thought reflects the counterhegemonic vision of society. The point being made here is that an individual's association with narcotics serves as a gateway to a range of various other 'social diseases' identified by the discourse.

Narcotics, like terror(ism), is represented as an external phenomenon. True, narcotics users/traffickers/producers are located in practically every society; however, the danger posed by narcotics is consistently framed as emerging from outside and infecting the pure (ideal) society. The genesis of narcotics lays in the immorality of outsiders who infect the ideal citizen and lead to their exclusion (Weimer 2003: 265). The representation of narcotics as emblematic of social disease(s) highlights a set of undesirable qualities and serves to cohere individuals within society to adopt the hegemonic identity (e.g. the upstanding citizen). The association, specifically in the West, with narcotics being an eastern disease is particularly illustrative in demonstrating how narcotics are used to

demonstrate the state's sovereignty over society (see Kuzmarov 2009). This dichotomising language, employed particularly in the West, is a form of cultural governance because it refers to a politicised morality found in representations of national culture.

Militarisation is another discursive tactic used in representing narcotics. This aspect is more pertinent to the emergence of narcoterrorism, but the initial militarisation of narcotics under the Nixon administration and the escalation of the War on Drugs under the Reagan administration has had a profound effect on how drugs are approached in politics and society. Something seemingly personal and innocent like an alternative lifestyle was rebranded as a threat to the American 'way of life' (Der Derian 2009a: 81), requiring an observable performance of power by the state. But the shift to militarised language and the application of the 'war-metaphor' (see Herschinger 2011; Crick 2012), reflects the need for the state to take over official representations of the narcotics threat. The popularisation of counterculture (i.e. social categories known for engaging in narcotics use) illustrates encounters between hegemonic and counterhegemonic discourse in society. Western governments were witnessing a re-representation of identity that challenged traditional narratives. In tandem with the militarisation of narcotics, a range of medical professionals and other experts promoted scientific studies on narcotics, most of which confirming the hegemonic discourse. Reinerman writes, "these groups have included industrialists, churches, the American Medical Association, the American Pharmaceutical Association, various law enforcement agencies, scientists, and most recently the treatment industry and groups of those former addicts converted to disease ideology" (Reinerman 1994: 160). However, many of these studies later turned out to be misleading and funded primarily by government agencies (Reinerman 1994: 158). What we can infer from this discussion is that political representations of narcotics were coming under increasing threat, undermining the authority of the larger security narrative in the process. The deployment of 'experts' and militarised language created a new knowledge boundary from which various security experts could re-exert their exceptional knowledge of the danger. By locating 'solutions' to the problem of drugs within the purview of the state, the hegemonic discourse subjugated a wealth of new knowledges emerging from social actors.

The emergence and subsequent representations of narcotics as danger illustrates the use of danger to create and control the endangered society. Counterhegemonic discourse and

alternative knowledge challenge the hegemonic narrative and opens the possibility of restricting social and political relations. As Chandler argues, “the problem of insecurity is understood to be one of problematic ‘choices’ made by autonomous subjects” (Chandler 2010: 98). As a substance, a narcotic has no representational agency of its own, but rather becomes represented by discursive actors. An individual’s engagement with narcotic substances reflects their sense of Self and understanding of danger. In terms of sovereign control over society, this presents a challenge to the securer’s ability to control the identity of its subject(s). Moreover, the allure of narcotics undermines the securer’s control over the loyalties and lifeworld of the secured. Herschinger sums up this point nicely, stating “at a more general level, it is the human body that materializes here – or, to be precise, at minimum two ‘types’ of bodies: the addicted body and the healthy body, the using body and the non-using body” (Herschinger 2015: 193). Levine (1992) points to the ‘loss of control’ as the real threat behind drug scares (Reinarman 1994: 163). The bodies and lives of the secured society are the real focus of the discourse. Narcotics do not imperil the whole of society, but rather they symbolise the precarious hold the hegemon has over the secured society.

Conflation and the Emergence of Narcoterror

The late-1960s witnessed many monumental changes in the political and social history of the world. Protests in the United States, France, and in Eastern Europe signalled a challenge to the established political order and left a mark on how society interacts with political authority. In the West, the late-1960s represented a jump towards late-, or post-, modernity most noticeable through art, music, architecture, literature, and importantly, narcotics use (Boothroyd 2006). The traditional, politicised values enshrined in national narratives were being renegotiated within the public sphere and (re)represented back to the securer. Essentially, through the late-1960s and 1970s society witnessed the mainstreaming of counterculture, infused with expressions of the social identity autonomous of the government (read national) narrative. It was a break from the domination of political narratives of social identity (nationalism) towards a more ‘grassroots’ sense of being: popular culture (see Storey 2006; Grayson et al. 2009). This change of social context had an effect on political representations of danger. The new

social identities brought on by social changes encountered political representations with varying degrees of acceptance (Boothroyd 2006). Indeed, the plurality of society as a discursive space challenged the hegemony of the state; thus, governments needed to refine discursive strategies if they were to retain sovereignty over knowledge of danger.

The most notable shift was the in the language used in *representing* danger, the best example found in global approaches to narcotics. The totalising narratives and metaphors used in previous eras became more problematic in the changing social context. In western societies, moves toward secularism challenged the use of religious language in framing the narcotics danger (Crick 2012: 411). The supposed immorality of drugs became problematized by drastic increases in recreational drug use. As a result, binary distinctions such as good vs. evil no longer found the same degree of acceptance in western societies as drug culture became synonymous with rebellion (Boothroyd 2006). The important point to note here is that while these narratives were still being used by governments (Herschinger 2011), the significance was that mainstream society accepted the presence of counterculture, thus renegotiating social identity as a whole. Drug addicts and other ‘internal-others’ could no longer be excluded from society, requiring the western governments to adapt their discursive strategies. This resulted in the emergence of the ‘war-metaphor’ to represent social dangers like narcotics (Crick 2012: 411; Herschinger 2011). The significance of this shift lies in how the government, in particular the United States government, framed the narcotics danger in militarised terms (Weimer 2003; Kuzmarov 2009). Whereas narcotics had been previously framed as a social issue requiring society to band together to root out deviant behaviour (Reinarman 1994), it was now framed as a danger that the state needed to confront and defeat through conventional means. In a link to the discussion in the previous section, the emergence of the war-metaphor strengthened the notion that society could not be trusted.

The ‘war-metaphor’ and the militarisation of the narcotics threat had many profound implications for later representations of danger. The very language used to represent narcotics – the ‘War on Drugs’, in particular – meant that the danger was now characterised as an external, militarised entity bent on the destruction of society. This shift also coincided with a similar development in how terrorism was represented and characterised. As a discourse, terrorism captures the particular *zeitgeist* of a period. Similar to most dangers, it encapsulates and reflects the Self/Other dichotomy of a particular context. From the late-1970s to the end of the Cold War, terrorism was framed

as part of an ideological threat and as a continuation of the East/West conflict (Sterling 1981; Stampnitzky 2013). The presence of ‘leftist’ terrorism in the West was framed as part of the covert war with the USSR, resulting in new approaches to terrorism and narcotics, which used language symbolic of military conflict.

The militarisation of both narcotics during the period and the frequent association of terrorists with criminals eventually led to the convergence of these two discourses; thus, narcoterrorism was ‘born’ in the latter years of the Cold War. The danger itself was first alluded to in the 1970s in US and western European policy circles, albeit with many dissenting views amongst experts, but was largely kept outside of public discourse (Laqueur 1999: 211). What narcoterror needed to be truly ‘born’ was a *speech act*, which would take these two *known* dangers and materialise a new one previously unknown to the political order and the constituent society. This act first occurred in 1983 when Peruvian President Belaunde Terry used the term ‘narcoterrorism’ to describe attacks on drug enforcement agencies in the Upper Hualaga Valley (Davids 2002; Hartleius 2008; Der Derian 2009a). Interestingly, there is some debate regarding the usage of this term as either denoting something ‘new’ and dangerous, or if it was used merely to combine two separate policing strategies into one (Davids 2002: 22);⁶⁶ however, the significance of this point is the convergence of these two dangers and how their novelty requires political violence to secure society.

The United States similarly adopted this danger in its representation of the leftist threat in Central and South America. In the early 1980s, Cuba was identified as the symbol of this new danger due to its trafficking of arms and narcotics to well-known guerilla movements, such as M-19 in Colombia (see Ehrenfeld 1990). The threat of a worldwide communist revolution became infused with the militarised narcotics danger in the 1980s as policymakers (mostly in the US), mainstream media, and academics linked the social plague of narcotics with the militarised threat of leftist-guerilla (i.e. terrorist) movements in Latin America (Der Derian 2009a: 66). From a practical perspective, this was an accurate depiction of the situation in many leftist guerilla movements in the 1980s and 1990s (see Ehrenfeld 1990; Davids 2002), although it has also been shown (with hindsight) that these associations were frequently overstated (Miller and Damask 1996:

⁶⁶ This point will be further discussed in Chapter IV when looking at counterinsurgency strategies in Afghanistan.

115-121). However, the salient point to make here, about the emergence of narcoterrorism, is how the discourse was applied to leftist groups as a means of delegitimization and depoliticization. Furthermore, in the American context, (narco)terror was used as part of a wider strategy of vilifying the USSR (Stampnitzky 2013: 109; Miller and Damask 1996: 117). While drug usage was becoming more tolerable in the West at the time, the application of narcotics to the larger Soviet threat had several important implications. Primarily, narcotics depoliticised movements on the Left through purported links to criminal organisations and challenged their self-representation as political organisations. At the same time, this representation located narcotics use and trafficking along a chain of equivalence used to symbolise the communist antagonistic Other. Thus, the emergence of narcoterrorism embodies the same *dispositif* as previous representations of terrorism (Ditrych 2014: 19; Herschinger 2015: 184). Narcotics are used at once to both depoliticise counterhegemonic movements deemed illegitimate by the securer as well as frame narcotics, up to now treated as a social ill, as the tool of the antagonistic Other. The emergence of narcoterrorism, therefore, was more than a simple account of a changing reality on the ground; it became a new danger which was deployed to stabilise hegemonic power structures in an era of social change.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the end of the Cold War did not witness an end of narcoterrorism, but rather it witnessed a redefining of the linkage (see Marshall 2002).⁶⁷ The leftist association so readily applied to the (narco)terror danger lost its foundations in the 1990s as the political character become less salient in the new threats facing the West (see Klein 1990). In this new environment, narcoterrorism moved more towards the realm of criminality and the rise of transnational non-state actors (Makarenko 2004: 130; Björnehed 2006: 306). The frequent association of narcoterrorism with non-state actors reflected the challenges facing the traditional state system in a globalised liberal order (Amoore 2006). Moreover, this new understanding of narcoterrorism symbolised the hegemony of the United States as the global representor of danger, as new dangers were constructed as threatening the post-Cold War order. Whereas in the 1980s political authorities enjoyed clearly defined, state-based antagonisms, the post-Cold War

⁶⁷ The early-2000s witnessed the emergence of a new subfield on the 'crime-terror' nexus. The focus was now on understanding to the degree to which terrorist groups and criminal organisations cooperated. Within the literature, the crime-terror continuum was established to understand this new synergy. Some strong examples include Makarenko (2004); Björnehed (2006); Piazza (2011, 2012).

environment challenged these clear inside/outside distinctions and forced states to adapt their security narratives to fit the new transnationalism. This environment largely persists to this day as governments around the world combine traditional state-based approaches to non-traditional social dangers.

The Nexus

How can we understand this danger? On the one hand, it is understood as an accurate reflection of new organisations that straddle the supposed boundary between militant and criminal. Governments readily deploy concise definitions, which are supported with a wealth of objective facts, figures, and jargon, effectively silencing alternative knowledge and incurring a sense of helplessness (Der Derian 2009a: 65).⁶⁸ On the other hand, narcoterrorism can be reduced to a discursive strategy that does not objectively reflect reality, but instead reflects a constructed discourse used as a tool of governance. The ambiguity of narcoterrorism leads to confusion in how to approach it. Can criminals commit terrorist acts? Which danger is more pressing? Interestingly, the opacity of narcoterrorism alludes to the larger schism (i.e. mainstream vs. critical) in contemporary approaches to security addressed in Chapter II. On the one hand, (in)security is something real, existent, and vital to our existence. On the other hand, recent (critical) approaches to security, particularly terrorism, have demonstrated that (in)security is constructed and ultimately used as a means of political control rather than something objectively existing, or even attainable (Neocleous 2008). This schism is illustrated in contemporary approaches to narcoterrorism in which the majority of studies, forming the mainstream, treat narcoterrorism as a new problem that needs to be overcome (see Ehrenfeld 2003; Makarenko 2004; Piazza 2012; Felbab-Brown 2010, 2011, 2013). In these studies, the discourse surrounding narcoterrorism, the processes of representing and signifying the danger, are left unaddressed. Rather, devising accurate policy recommendations and innovative strategies to overcome this ‘new nexus’ is the primary goal.

⁶⁸ Another parallel can be drawn here with Bigo’s (2008a) argument about the authority of statistics and the creation of a ‘field’ of security in which the data monopolises legitimate knowledge about the danger (see Bigo 2008: 12).

This practical approach looks at narcoterrorism as the product of a nexus between the illicit and militant realms (Makerenko 2004; Björnehed 2006). Rather than relying on an archetypal model of the narcoterrorist, recent studies place it on a larger crime-terror continuum, which is meant to accurately reflect security environments and cooperation between dangerous non-state actors (see Makerenko 2004). While insightful, the continuum literature fails to approach narcoterrorism as a discourse and places it alongside other dangers reflective of *new* security. This practical approach sustains the contemporary danger *dispositif* and precludes any hope of a more concrete understanding of the discourse. Even the supposedly illustrative crime-terror continuum is plagued by definitional problems as locating a ‘narcoterrorist’ organisation on an objective scale, which is applied subjectively, renders any concrete understanding all but impossible.

To truly understand narcoterrorism, we must dismantle its core elements and look at how it has been represented as a danger. While narcoterrorism may exist on a continuum of crime and terror – the latter’s definition already inherently problematic – it is ultimately the unification of two discourses of danger that sustains it. Instead of attempting to define and solve the problem of narcoterrorism, the task must be to understand how this problematic concept is used and applied by securer. In doing so, it becomes clear that narcoterrorism is used to constitute society built around an endangered identity.

The question arises as to *why* security actors would link these two dangers? As the above sections on terrorism and narcotics have illustrated, both dangers are replete with metaphors and linguistic strategies designed to construct and secure a politicised identity. Moreover, the acceptance of these narratives at domestic and international levels demonstrates their effectiveness and general acceptance in the social audience. Is this convergence merely part of the day-to-day practise of governance (see Dillon 1996; Bigo 2002; Huysmans 2004)? Or is it necessary to conflate these two dangers to maintain hegemonic power structures? The answer lies somewhere in the middle as the state is confined to representing dangers that reflect the identity of the secured society. Here we witness the effect the social audience has on representations of danger and the need for these representations to be *accepted*. Attempting to fight a two-front war against the new dangers of terrorism and narcotics proved difficult as the definitions of both were quite loose and contested by large sections of society (Boothroyd 2006). The supposed danger of narcotics was problematized by the levels of engagement among large sections of society as counterculture became more accepted, while the ideological foundations of

various 'terrorist' movements also became more accepted in Western societies. Thus, the emergence of narcoterrorism in the 1980s and early-1990s reflected the shortcomings of the independent narcotics and terror threats and illustrated the need for a new universalised danger reflecting the requirements of the 'New World Order'.

Thus, (narco)terror needed to be more expansive, observable and frightening. Ironically, the narcotics traffickers needed to be taken more seriously in their capacity for violence, while the terrorists needed to be viewed as less important and apolitical. The result was the conflation of narcotics production with insurgent movements universalised under the banner of narcoterrorism. David Campbell summed it up best, stating:

the conflation of narcotics production and trafficking with insurgent and revolutionary movements in central and southern America has been an attempt, largely without foundation, to both inflate the dimensions of danger associated with drugs, and render it more intelligible on the traditional national security register...The power of 'narco-terrorism' as a concept is that it subsumes under one banner a number of ideas, including the assertion that guerilla movements finance their operations largely through drug-trafficking, and the more believable argument that the principals of the drug industry employ extreme violence. (Campbell 1998: 212)

Essentially, narcoterrorism was the result of a larger process of universalising danger to reflect the political requirements of the time. As a productive hegemonic strategy, universalising two separate dangers into one antagonistic frontier enabled political authorities to present a new, observable danger to the social audience (Herschinger 2011: 80). While representing a danger understandable to the secured society is vital to maintaining hegemonic discourse, it is just as important, if not more so, that the danger be observable, both proving the danger's existence as well as allowing the state to perform its sovereign power by overcoming the danger. The importance of observability also lies in how it brings together the material and immaterial aspects of danger. For narcoterrorism, the union between narcotics and terrorism fills the respective immaterial and material gaps in the representations of both, respectively. The rise in narcotic use in the 1960s and 1970s challenged the immaterial nature of this danger in the public sphere. The supposed immorality and evil associated with narcotics was problematized as society renegotiated the essence of the danger (Boothroyd 2006: 7). However, once narcotics became associated with the immaterial aspects of terrorism, namely its political alterity, a material danger became associated with an immaterial threat to identity. On the other hand, the questionable materiality of terrorism, the general disconnect from experiencing the danger, was overcome when it became associated with narcotics, which remain

widespread and easily accessible in society. As James Der Derian writes, “[with] US national security *and* the American way of life now being at risk, narco-terrorism took on the qualities of a synergistic threat” (Der Derian 2009b: 81).

Thus, we return to the core aspect of narcoterrorism and other dangers: meaning. What meanings are attached to narcoterrorism? At first glance narcoterrorism quite simply means a terrorist organisation that engages in narcotics trafficking;⁶⁹ however, narcoterrorism, like all politicised dangers, is represented to embody the traits of the Other, reaffirming to the society what it is not, or at the very least what it *ought* not be. Its negative meaning and its embodiment of a hostile alterity are constitutive of the hegemonic discourse of identity. Therefore, the conflation of narcotics and terrorism was not the result of a ‘new’ danger, but rather a political response to a changing sociopolitical environment.

Conclusion

This genealogical inquiry into (narco)terrorism revealed two things. First, while the labels *narcotics* and *terrorism* remain in common usage, the meaning and reference constituting these labels has shifted several times throughout the 20th century to fit particular power constellations. The intersubjectivity of the label reveals that *narcotics* and *terrorism* fall within the larger instrumentalization of danger in which representations of (narco)terrorism are deployed to constitute a society built around an endangered identity. Within Critical Security Studies this is a well-trodden path with seminal authors such as Weldes et al. (1999), Richard Jackson (2005), David Campbell (1998), and others laying the theoretical groundwork for this approach. The argument of this chapter was that narcoterrorism was not borne out of new and exceptional organisations, but rather that this discourse was constructed to meet the challenges facing hegemonic authority over society. Narcotics use and drug-culture undermine(d) the cultural narratives that

⁶⁹ Interestingly, the reverse (i.e. criminal organisations engaging in terrorist acts) is hotly contested and rarely accepted by practitioners of security. A few notable examples include the framing of the Medellin Cartel’s downing of Avianca Flight 203.

shaped society by opening up the public sphere to a world of alternative visions and identities (Boothroyd 2006). The threat posed by drug culture to the ideal type of the American identity contributed to its securitisation and the militarisation of the discourse (Musto 1987; Reinerman 1994; Weimer 2003). Terrorism was, and remains, a label used to delegitimise counterhegemonic actors who hold an alternative vision for politics and social identity. Genealogical inquiry reveals that the mutual exclusivity between the terrorist outsider and the endangered society has remained the same, but the identity of the terrorist has changed to reflect developments in narratives of identity. Consequently, narcoterrorism reflects the continuation of this use of danger in its conflation of discourses of narcotics and terrorism. However, the emergence of narcoterrorism also points to an infiltration of danger into the secured society. Whereas terrorism was understood to come from outside of society, narcotics has been represented as a disease that affects the weak sections of the body politic (Weimer 2003). Thus, in militarising hegemonic representations of drugs, we can observe a shift in the constitution of the discourse reflective of changing social structures. As will be shown in the next chapter, the constitution of the discourse, largely derived from political and social contexts in the United States, has had a profound impact on hegemonic discourses of danger in Afghanistan.

Chapter IV – Securing Identity: Hegemonic Representations of (Narco)Terrorism

The previous chapter applied genealogical inquiry to (narco)terrorism to illustrate how these dangers are not static or fixed threats, but rather contemporary discourses that have been constructed and deployed by hegemonic actors. The focus on Anglocentric representations of (narco)terrorism was deliberate as discursive actors from the United States and the United Kingdom have had a profound impact on global understanding of these dangers. However, that is not to say that these dangers do not function elsewhere and indeed the empirical contribution of this thesis is to critically analyse how these discourses operate in contemporary Afghanistan. Indeed, far from being universal, (narco)terror has been constructed, transmitted, and redeployed around the world (Der Derian 2009a; Seib & Janbek 2011; Ditarych 2013; Herschinger 2015), and, more significantly, has been redesigned by various actors⁷⁰ to fit the needs of particular social and political contexts. It is the interplay between global and local discourses of (narco)terror that forms the basis of this chapter. Indeed, it is this interplay that has defined the Afghan political context, revealing a continuity between representations of (narco)terrorism outlined above and local representations of danger discussed in this chapter.

This chapter sets out to illustrate the operationalisation of discourses of (narco)terrorism by the GIROA in their attempts to establish a collective Afghan identity. This identity is constituted through representations of both an evil (narco)terrorist other (associated with the Taliban) and an endangered victimised self. Thus, this chapter utilises Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to illustrate how hegemonic representations of (narco)terror have been constructed and deployed in post-2001 Afghanistan, and through this analysis the motivations of the GIROA will be revealed.⁷¹

⁷⁰ The identities of these actors will be discussed at length throughout this chapter. Generally, key actors are understood to be those that hold discursive authority in the realm of security and produce narratives of danger (e.g. security experts, government officials, academics within relevant fields, members of the established media, etc.).

⁷¹ While narcotics and terrorism had been firmly established as global dangers before 2001, for the sake of clarity and space this study will be largely confined to the post-Taliban era (i.e. late-2001 to the time of writing).

Data and Methods

At the centre of this discussion are three main research questions. The first question, and indeed the most important, is the primary research question of the thesis: what are the motivations behind hegemonic (and counterhegemonic) representations of danger in Afghanistan? This will be addressed through an application of CDA to the texts selected for the thesis. An extensive summary of CDA can be found in Chapter I and is therefore not necessary to repeat here; however, for the sake of continuity the framework will be outlined as discourse analysis that investigates how discourses emerge and are shaped by relations of powers with the hope of revealing the use of discourse in securing power and hegemony (Fairclough 1992: 135). As such the goal here is to situate GIROA representations of danger as part of a hegemonic strategy aimed at maintaining power over the social sphere. While discourse is the method, the main argument is that the GIROA's hegemonic strategy is premised on establishing a collective Afghan identity. Therefore, there is a secondary focus in critically analysing the GIROA's representations in order to reveal the development of hegemonic identity narratives. This focus will centre on the deployment of language, metaphors, and cultural tropes in dominant representations of danger. The use of these linguistic techniques will be referenced with the summary of Afghanistan's political and social context discussed in Section I. Indeed, this focus is reflective of the second research question of the thesis: how are representations of danger deployed in Afghanistan? The claim here is that discourses of danger are deployed by the GIROA via speech acts and other public statements which interpret the ongoing violence and insecurity as endangering the Afghan collective identity.

Lastly, this chapter holds an additional sub-question pertaining to the influence of global hegemonic discourses of (narco)terrorism on domestic representations in Afghanistan. While this should not be taken as the main area of study, the interplay between international and national in the Afghan political context presents an interesting area of analysis. Moreover, the imposition of largely Western narratives of (in)security on non-Western countries has been the subject of much scholarship in postcolonial circles (see Ayoob 1997; Barkawi and Laffey 2006; Bilgin 2010). Thus, in seeking to establish a

connection between global discourses of (narco)terrorism and local representations, this chapter hopes to reveal that representations of danger are not just a hegemonic strategy confined to the domestic sphere, but rather exist similarly in the international. Having established the objectives of the chapter, attention must now turn to the data sets consulted.

While recent surveys of the Afghan population have produced a body of information concerning society's engagement with security narratives (see Asia Foundation 2016; ATR 2014), this study will focus largely on the 'high data' (Jackson 2005) of government speeches, statements, policies, and representations of (narco)terror. Indeed, while adopting a top-down focus restricts our ability to determine the success or failure of these representations and largely silences (re)representations emanating from society, it nonetheless reflects the framework adopted in this study which understands danger as a hegemonic (and counterhegemonic) discourse. In other words, the 'high data' of political representations shape the discourse, and it is through this discourse that subjects, like the Taliban, and objects, such as narcotics, attain meaning (Ditrych 2014: 10). Therefore, it is vital to critically analyse official statements emanating from the upper levels of the Afghan government in order to uncover how global and local processes of representing danger converge and to illustrate how these representations are deployed in attempts to construct Afghan society and identity.

Thus, the bulk of the data cited in this chapter consists of official statements by former President Hamid Karzai and the current President Ashraf Ghani. Other sources include statements by the Chief Operating Officer of Afghanistan, Abdullah Abdullah, Ministry of Information and Communication Spokesmen, Feroz Bashari, and statements by government officials quoted in Afghan national news outlets such as ToloNews, Khaama Press, and Pajwok News. These news outlets are all based in Kabul but form the mainstream national news media for the country. Interviews conducted by foreign media outlets such as CNN with presidents Karzai and Ghani have also been analysed to assess discrepancies between domestic communications and international statements. While the use of metaphor and cultural tropes differs depending on the audience of the representation, the analysis in this chapter reveals continuity in representations of (narco)terror. In terms of language, the sources consulted for this study were either English original or translations from Dari or Pashto into English. This reflects the language limitations of the researcher and the accessibility of the material.

As mentioned above, the rationale for focusing exclusively on government actors in this chapter is to illustrate how danger is being used to discursively constitute contemporary Afghan society. No doubt that there is an assemblage of state and non-state security actors operating in Afghanistan, such as analysts employed by think tanks, research units, and foreign governments; however, in maintaining consistency with the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter I, this chapter is focused on the operationalisation of representations of danger by state actors. Thus, the objective is not to silence other discursive actors, but is instead to illustrate how the GIROA uses representations of danger in its attempts to construct and secure contemporary Afghan society.

The chapter will be structured as follows. Section I begins with a brief survey of Afghanistan's history of violent politics and international influence. The political context of Afghanistan, characterised by ethnic and ideological plurality, is a vital factor shaping contemporary power dynamics and sociopolitical relations, more generally. Afghanistan's history and experiences with imperialism is an important underlying theme that directly contributes to the interplay between global and local representations of danger as well as the formation of the Afghan identity.⁷² As Bartolucci and Gallo (2013: 19) point out, "a discourse can only be understood as located in a specific context," therefore, a brief analysis of Afghanistan's sociopolitical context is a necessary first step. Section II proceeds with a critical analysis of the global discourse surrounding the Taliban and (narco)terrorism. The roles and identities of key discursive actors shaping these representations, such as government officials, security experts, as well as academic experts both within and without Afghanistan, will be explored in order to highlight the effects these identities have global and local understandings of (narco)terror. Moving forward, Section III will critically analyse representations of (narco)terror in order to reveal *why* and *how* these dangers are used to create and secure Afghan society. This section is divided into two subsections: the first addresses the use of danger as a means of institutional control, paying particular attention to how security narratives are used to legitimize the hegemonic position of the GIROA vis-à-vis society. The second subsection

⁷² This is a commonly held argument in contemporary literature on Afghanistan. Some particularly useful examples include Barfield (2010); Rashid (2010); Dorronsoro (2005); Crews and Tarzi (2008); Jones (2009).

looks at the immaterial implications of these representations and reveals how (narco)terror has been used to create loyal identities.⁷³ This chapter forms the foundation of the thesis' empirical contribution and illustrates how representations of danger are used to discursively construct and secure the hegemonic vision of contemporary Afghan society.

Section I - Violent Politics: The Afghan Political Context

Afghanistan holds many designations in world history. In the Western experience, it is commonly referred to as the 'graveyard of empires' due its mythical unconquerability (Johnson 2011: 30; Kamel 2015: 69; see also Jones 2009; Barfield 2010), a label that has both placed it within the sights of geopolitical ambitions and brought unseen destruction and violence to its geography. Indeed, the territorial identity of Afghanistan as a site of imperial clash and conflict has shaped its politics in many profound and lasting ways. On the one hand, it has led to two major, yet unsuccessful, foreign invasions over the last half-century, vindicating those who apply this label. On the other hand, it has led to an inherent fear of external influences and established the theme of externality within the discourse of danger. The 'graveyard of empires' has established the image of the Afghan fighter within global collective memory but has also shaped its politics as one of struggle and sacrifice against foreigners (Kamel 2015: 69).

Recently, a new distinction has been taken up by both the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and its foreign supporters. Referred to as the 'Heart of Asia', the 'Roundabout of Asia', and other metaphors for its central location, this new identity attempts to legitimise Afghanistan's geopolitical position while also seeking to integrate it within the broader regional and global system.⁷⁴ Moreover, the emergence of a 'New Silk Road' discourse has framed Afghanistan as a country in need of development

⁷³ 'Loyal identities' refers to social and political identities that do not challenge the central government (GIROA) and adhere to its national narratives.

⁷⁴ 'Heart of Asia' has been a common label for Afghanistan in regional politics. The Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process is indicative of this push to establish Afghanistan as a central part of Asia's regional politics.

and modernization for the benefit of the Afghan people as well as the surrounding region (Haidari 2017).⁷⁵ While the ‘Heart of Asia’ discourse is clearly more peaceful and progressive than ‘the graveyard of empires’, it nonetheless points to a key characteristic of the Afghan political context. Afghanistan is marked by a political dualism where domestic and foreign ideologies and ambitions meet and compete. Far from being isolated, Afghanistan has served as a meeting point for global and domestic discourses for decades and it is this underlying characteristic that shapes contemporary discourses of danger, such as (narco)terrorism, and sociopolitical relations more generally. Thus, it is important to pay particular attention to the dual role played by foreign and domestic actors in perpetuating conflict and insecurity in Afghanistan.

Indeed, the roots of Afghanistan’s current conflict⁷⁶ date back to the Saur Revolution in 1978 when a violent coup was staged by the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) resulting in the execution of President Mohammad Daud Khan and the establishment of communist rule. Since World War II, the Afghan monarchy, and later republic,⁷⁷ had been one of the focal points of the ideological Cold War, resulting in lucrative aid packages from both the Soviet Union and the US. Afghan leaders used the Soviet Union to modernise their military, while the US, wary of Soviet assistance, competed for influence by providing substantial economic aid (Dorrnsoro 2005: 91; Barfield 2010: 162). Education, especially in the main urban centres (Kabul, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif), was a key source for development aid and led to the establishment of an educated urban-class; however, much of rural Afghanistan remained largely unchanged (Barfield 2010: 136; Giustozzi 2013; Rubin 1995). With the emergence of several political parties and movements in Kabul, it was clear that change was coming. In April 1978, with Soviet acquiescence, the PDPA seized power through the coup and began a series of problematic and deeply unpopular land reforms in the countryside, which had hitherto remained largely untouched by Kabuli politics. Moreover, in the months that followed the Saur Revolution, tensions between the two factions of the PDPA, Khalq

⁷⁵ The proposed TAPI Pipeline is a strong example of this push towards integration and development, with key regional players such as India having a vested interest in Afghan security and stability.

⁷⁶ While many have viewed certain events as beginning and/or ending particular eras of conflict, I believe that the violence witnessed today is a continuation of conflict that dates back nearly forty years.

⁷⁷ Afghanistan became a republic following a coup led by Daud in 1973, forcing the King into exile in Italy (see Dorrnsoro 2005).

(Masses)⁷⁸ and Parcham (Banner), boiled over resulting in purges and widespread murder, causing the Soviet Union to intervene (Barfield 2010: 135). While the Saur Revolution was certainly an Afghan-led process, the influence of foreign ideology (in this case Marxism) in fomenting a revolutionary struggle cannot be overlooked. The relatively cosmopolitan urban centres of Afghanistan provided a gateway for foreign money and influence designed to reshape the elite politics and bring change. Kabul and the urban elites would remain the focus of foreign intervention and would continue to shape the politics of Afghanistan throughout the Soviet-Afghan war, the Afghan Civil War, and in the contemporary period.

The resistance movement during the Soviet-Afghan War also illustrates the interplay between domestic and foreign in Afghan politics. Afghanistan has a long-storied history of resisting foreign invasions with many of its greatest national heroes drawn from the Anglo-Afghan Wars.⁷⁹ The notion of resisting foreign (i.e. imperial) invaders is an important characteristic of the Afghan national identity because it is largely recognised as one of the only values capable of transcending the highly-localised signifiers of Afghans' individual identities (Saikal 2004). In other words, in a largely isolated, rural, tribally- and ethnically-diverse society few signifiers are capable of uniting such a diverse population. The Soviet-Afghan War embodied this characteristic by adopting the form of *jihad* against the foreign invaders, allowing Afghans to largely overcome traditional *qawm*⁸⁰ barriers and 'unite' (Dorrnsoro 2005: 10; Barfield 2010: 180). But where did this sense of *jihad* come from? In addition to a wealth of ethnic and tribal differences, Afghanistan is also a diverse country in terms of religion. Again, we can observe the presence of foreign influence in the evolution of the Afghan resistance and the 'Islamification' of the Afghan political context.

⁷⁸ These factions were also largely divided along ethnic lines with Khalq consisting mainly of Pashtuns (Khalq is Pashto for Masses) and Parcham (Persian for 'banner') consisting largely of Tajik and other ethnic groups.

⁷⁹ One of the most prominent examples is Dost Muhammad Khan (1793-1863), who has become memorialised as a figure of Afghan resistance against imperialism for his efforts against the British occupation.

⁸⁰ *Qawm* refers to close-knit communal groups that structure most of Afghan society. These are largely limited to what Dorrnsoro describes as a 'solidarity network' (2005: 10) which exists at the family or community level. The impact of the *qawm* system is that Afghan identities are largely confined to other individuals within the local community; thus, cultivating any sense of national identity in Afghanistan is a challenging endeavour.

From the beginning of their time in power, the PDPA sought to emulate Soviet atheism and began to remove traditional Islamic symbols and salutations from the politics of the country (Barfield 2010: 173). Rooted in a modernism characteristic of urban Afghanistan in the post-war era, this attempt at secularising Afghanistan exacerbated tensions between the government in Kabul and rural Afghans. As local commanders began to mobilise young fighters to oppose the PDPA and the Soviets, the motivations driving the resistance began to adopt a deeply Islamic tone. Indeed, as Barfield (2010) points out, local leaders “used the old political language of Afghanistan, calling on their followers to defend their property [referring to the imposed land reforms], the faith of Islam, and the honor of their families against outsiders” (178). The association of the PDPA regime with atheism bound it to the foreign occupier in the minds of many Afghans; however, in reality this linkage was hardly limited to the PDPA. Rather, both sides of the conflict benefited from substantial foreign backing and influence (see Dorronsoro 2005; Scott 2011; Shanty 2011). The PDPA was propped up by the Soviets, whereas the resistance (now referred to as *mujahideen*) were funded by the United States and Saudi Arabia, with help from the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) (Dorronsoro 2005: 143; Barfield 2010: 181; Shanty 2011: 23; Scott 2011). As a result, the war in Afghanistan took on a variety of different meanings and interpretations in connection to the increasing number of foreign interlopers with a stake in the conflict. Barfield (2010: 186) concludes, “[a]s a result, the Afghan mujahideen found themselves sucked into two larger conflicts: the ongoing cold war struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union, and a new struggle by Saudi Salafis to make the war in Afghanistan the vanguard of a transnational jihad that they hoped would bring about Islamic revolution in the Sunni Arab world and beyond.”

When the Soviet Union withdrew in 1989, Afghanistan was largely destroyed with millions living as refugees in Pakistan and Iran. Once again, national unity in defence against a foreign power had ‘saved’ Afghanistan and the *mujahideen* were largely regarded as national heroes. However, the regime did not fall following the Soviet withdrawal but rather took on a new identity in reference to Afghan national solidarity. Under Mohammad Najibullah, the PDPA transformed into the Watan (nation, or ‘national’) Party and adopted a platform of Afghan nationalism and governance through security (Barfield 2010; Dorronsoro 2005). In this new political climate, links to foreign powers was seen as dangerous and illegitimate; however, foreign powers, particularly Pakistan, maintained deep involvement in Afghan politics throughout this period,

sponsoring a succession of would-be powerholders and fomenting discord (Barfield 2004, 2010; Dorronsoro 2005; Crews and Tarzi 2008; Shanty 2011; Giustozzi 2007; Aggarwal 2016). The Najibullah-led regime eventually fell in 1992, owing largely to the withdrawal of Soviet aid following the collapse of the USSR (Barfield 2010: 188). Pakistan's ISI had long had its sights on Najibullah as it was feared that Afghanistan would ally with India and therefore leave Pakistan encircled. With many of the Afghan political leaders still living in Peshawar, Pakistan pushed Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leader of Hizb-i Islami, to seize power (Barfield 2010: 187). What resulted was the Afghan Civil War (1992-1996) that would see Kabul destroyed and the emergence, and eventual rise to power, of the Taliban.

Section II: Building the Discourse: (Narco)Terror in Afghanistan

As a discourse of danger, (narco)terror remains true to the interplay between foreign and domestic influences characteristic of Afghan politics. While both narcotics and violence share a long history in Afghanistan,⁸¹ their representation as a new danger is a recent development. Indeed, throughout the Soviet-Afghan War and continuing throughout the Afghan Civil War, narcotics played a substantial role in the financing of *mujahideen* factions and perpetuated a state of violence and lawlessness in the countryside (Jalalzai 2005: 9; MacDonald 2007: 88; Shanty 2011: 23; Rashid 2010). However, the narcotic link to danger was seldom mentioned in public discourse and remained largely absent from the politics and security of the country.⁸² This changed in the aftermath of 9/11 as the War on Terror laid out a new global enemy personified by al Qaeda and the Taliban. It is through the War on Terror and subsequent occupation of Afghanistan that the (narco)terror discourse would (re)emerge, a representation that continues to this day. Prior to analysing particular representations of (narco)terror, it is important to illustrate

⁸¹ David MacDonald provides a concise description of the former in *Drugs in Afghanistan: Opium, Outlaws, and Scorpion Tales* (2007).

⁸² At the time, narcoterrorism was beginning to be discussed in the United States in government and elite circles but was directed almost exclusively at the Soviet Union. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, narcoterrorism was widely considered to apply to ongoing violence in Colombia (see Ehrenfeld 1990).

how this discourse has been built and the key actors involved in its construction. This section will look at how (narco)terrorism came to be applied to Afghanistan, and more specifically the Taliban. It will first address the unknowability of danger and will connect it to the general ambiguity surrounding the Taliban. The discussion will then turn to a critical analysis of the international discourse on (narco)terrorism and will highlight specific uses of language and rhetoric that correlate to Afghan representations of the danger. Lastly, a brief discussion on the role of experts and non-governmental discursive actors will illustrate the interplay between these two groups in perpetuating this danger and shaping government responses.

The discursive role of the state as the protector of society is premised on ambiguity surrounding danger and insecurity. Drawing from the Hobbesian tradition, contemporary politics and international relations are premised on a recognised understanding of an unknown danger residing beyond the limits of political sovereignty (Der Derian 1993; Dillon 1996). The emergence of security as a tool of governance has used the ambiguity of danger as the very foundation of political authority as it is the *fear* of the unknown that drives citizens into the protection of an authority (Dillon 1996: 16; Booth and Wheeler 2008: 62; Der Derian 1993). However, in material terms, the unknown does not exist; rather, it is an immaterial space upon which discourse and knowledge is inscribed. Indeed, in their seminal work Aradau and van Munster (2011) assert that the unknowability of a catastrophic event requires expert knowledge “to tackle its very limit: the unknown” (Aradau and van Munster 2011: 6). It is this requirement of knowledge that grants the ‘the unknown’ so much power and salience in politics because it is the perceived ability of a political authority (i.e. a state) to know the unknowable – and to therefore protect society against it – that legitimises its position. This perspective reflects a relatively recent shift towards the politics of *risk*,⁸³ something Aradau and van Munster (2007, 2008, 2011) have written on extensively. However, despite the importance of risk in shaping contemporary security politics, the concept of the unknown must be taken a step further and understood as a discursive space.

⁸³ See also Salter (2008); Williams (2008); Rasmussen (2001, 2004); Kessler and Daase (2007) for various applications of risk to the War on Terror and 21st century international relations more broadly.

In terms of danger and (in)security, the opacity of unknown threats renders knowledge of it inaccessible to ordinary individuals. This inaccessibility grants security actors, such as the state, with the privileged position to inscribe certain values and identities (such as narcotics and terrorism) with danger, while at the same time granting it the authority to subjugate alternative knowledges (Daase and Kessler 2007: 413).⁸⁴ Knowledge of danger becomes the performance of power upon which the state's authority rests. However, to identify a concept as danger without locating it in a recognisable identity or subject would render it unintelligible to the social audience. Can terrorism really be understood as a danger in the absence of terrorists? Essentially, this framework requires a symbol that personifies the danger and renders it intelligible for the social audience. In Afghanistan, the Taliban have become the vehicle for the realisation of (narco)terrorism as these dangers have been inscribed on its identity.

But who, or what, are the Taliban? In terms of opposing the authority of the state, the Taliban primarily form a counterhegemonic identity in Afghanistan (Aggarawal 2016: 19; see Johnson and Dupee 2012). However, aside from this overly generalised understanding, knowledge about the motivations, organisational structure, activities and members are heavily contested (see Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2018). Indeed, in the extensive literature and political statements about the Taliban, the organisation has adopted several different identities reflective of the motivations of the knowledge-producers themselves. The best example of this can be observed in the emergence of the neo-Taliban, a term symbolising a discontinuity between the Taliban regime ruling most of Afghanistan until 2001 and the present-day, amorphous force operating in the country (Qazi 2010: 487; Giustozzi 2007; Crews and Tarzi 2008; Tarzi 2008; Peters 2009a; UNDOC 2009; Thruelsen 2010). The emphasis here is placed on depoliticising the contemporary Taliban, often highlighting the organisation's engagement with criminal activity, technology, and networked structure (Peters 2009a). Despite the pervasiveness of the neo-Taliban discourse, there is little that unifies this identity, and has instead been used to loosely link an array of different knowledges about the organization. For instance, in terms of communication and propaganda, the neo-Taliban label has been used to symbolise a new affinity towards technology and internet-based communication

⁸⁴ This understanding is also reflected in Der Derian's description of the Nietzschean 'interpretive realist' security in Der Derian (1993: 94-113).

(Aggarwal 2016; Giustozzi 2007). Another example can be seen in the emergence of extensive literature on Taliban links to narcotics trafficking and organised crime in the late-2000s (Giustozzi 2007; Peters 2009b; Schmidt 2010; Shanty 2011). In this case, the participation of the Taliban in organised crime and narcotics trafficking is understood to signal a depoliticization of the organisation and the emergence of a new financially-motivated group (Peters 2009b: 104; Schmidt 2010: 62; Rosen and Katzman 2014). Indeed, whether the ‘neo-Taliban’ are a continuation of the Taliban of 2001 or an assortment of disgruntled farmers, criminal gangs, and insurgents, the ambiguity surrounding its identity furthers its role as the personification of danger.

At the root of this ambiguity are three discursive strategies that have been used by political actors to construct the Taliban as the embodiment of the (narco)terror danger: rhetorical delegitimation (Chowdhury and Krebs 2010: 131), juxtaposition (Ramsay and Holbrook 2015), and the logic of equivalence (Herschinger 2011). Primarily, rhetorical delegitimation is used to deprive the counterhegemonic voice of its political agency (Chowdhury and Krebs 2010: 131). Having been in power for five years, and with a shared collective memory of their political identity in contemporary society (through laws, policies, spectacles, etc.), the Taliban possess a certain political authority in rural areas and a degree of credibility within Afghanistan society due to their time in power. As Tarzi (2008: 276) highlights, “the use of the label *Taliban* elicits certain images and promotes particular political, cultural, and religious ideologies. It is a powerful name that instills fear and anger in some while uniting others.” Indeed, with such potentiality to ‘speak’ to certain identities within society, the Taliban present a clear challenge to the authority of the government and therefore require discursive strategies designed to delegitimise its message. The connection between the ‘neo-Taliban’ and the drug trade can be viewed as evidence of a rhetorical delegitimation strategy because it equates a political/religious movement to common criminality and banditry. Moreover, the presence of many parallel government and legal structures in rural Afghanistan, which are operated by the Taliban, has made the need to delegitimise and depoliticise the movement all the more pressing (see Johnson 2007; Mahendrarajah 2014). However, as we will see in the following section, this rhetorical delegitimation does not lessen the risk of danger, but rather prevents the Taliban from attaining moral equality with the government and communication with Afghan society.

Juxtaposition is another strategy that exploits the Taliban's ambiguity. The identity pluralism inscribed on the (neo)Taliban⁸⁵ grants knowledge producers (i.e. security experts) with the freedom to connect the organisation to various images of violence and criminality. In an important study on representations of violence by insurgent actors, Ramsay and Holbrook (2015) illustrate how a juxtaposition of "images relating to violence next to an image relating to a particular agenda" gives meaning to the violence and makes it less generic for the audience (Ramsay and Holbrook 2015: 88). While this refers more to representations of violence constructed by insurgents themselves, the framework remains applicable to representations of the Taliban. On the one hand, the militarisation of counternarcotics operations in Afghanistan has situated it within the larger War on Terror and counterinsurgency campaign (Felbab-Brown 2010: 2; Bewley-Taylor 2013: 10). Images of ISAF soldiers marching through poppy fields, or of Afghan National Police cutting down poppy stalks, have linked cultivation of poppies to the ongoing conflict and resulting insecurity. On the other hand, representations of a criminalised Taliban in social and political discourse connect the organisation to narcotics trafficking and justify the militarised counternarcotics policy.⁸⁶ The ambiguity associated with the Taliban enables this inference without a clear juxtaposition of images (i.e. a Taliban fighter holding a bag of raw opium). Indeed, in conducting primary research for this thesis it became clear that images of the Taliban and criminal gangs are often used interchangeably in media reports and other visual representations of violent non-state actors.

What juxtaposition and rhetorical delegitimation point to is the use of a chain of equivalence in building the discourse of a (narco)terrorist Taliban. In Chapter III, the chain of equivalence was used to explain the emergence of a global discourse on (narco)terrorism. The qualities of narcotics traffickers were equated with terrorist violence, the former adopted a militarised identity while the latter shifted away from the larger Soviet threat (see Der Derian 2009a; Stampnitzky 2013). The discourse around the Taliban operates in a similar fashion, but rather than expanding the values associated with

⁸⁵ Written in this form to denote the pluralism of the contemporary Taliban identity. Rather than being represented solely as the traditional Taliban or its newer reincarnation, contemporary discourse uses the two labels interchangeably.

⁸⁶ Among the many security experts and scholars studying the 'neo-Taliban', the Afghan government has also championed this notion of a new phase in political violence that incorporates organised crime and terrorist violence.

(narco)terrorism more generally, the Taliban are discursively linked to an increasing number of dangers. Indeed, the ambiguity of the Taliban, places importance on security actors defining what they are as opposed to specifying what they are not. Thus, a chain of equivalence is used to associate a variety of societal plagues and dangers to the larger Taliban threat. The diversity of the 'neo-Taliban' label, for instance, is an attempt to connect various dangers together and form an antagonistic frontier between Afghan society and the Taliban. In terms of terrorism, the use of diverse signifiers has been present in representations of the Taliban since 9/11. As Renner and Spencer (2013) point out, "as regards the construction of the Taliban following 9/11, we find that the signifier 'Taliban' was articulated into the antagonised chain of signifiers, predominately through a close linkage between the signifiers 'Taliban' and 'al Qaeda', to an extent that both became, as President Bush himself put it, 'virtually indistinguishable'" (Renner and Spencer 2013: 485). The diversity in articulations and representations of the (neo)Taliban has therefore expanded its categorisation, moving beyond the classic category of insurgency toward the prototype category of (narco)terrorist (Bhatia 2009: 280).⁸⁷ Whether this new category is correctly applied to the Taliban is not the point being emphasized here; rather, the significance is that with the infiltration of international narratives of (in)security into Afghan politics, the (narco)terror danger does not only symbolise the use of danger for domestic control, but also reflects the power of global discourses in shaping national politics. The interplay between international and domestic politics characteristic of Afghanistan continues in the hegemonic discourse of (narco)terrorism.

Global narratives of (in)security and knowledge producers in the West have played an equal role in building the discourse of (narco)terror in Afghanistan and applying it in representations of the (neo)Taliban. In this sense, the Taliban did not create narcoterrorism, but instead have become the embodiment of new hegemonic discourses of danger disseminated globally. Within the larger umbrella of US national security, narcoterrorism has been a recognised danger since the Cold War (see Miller and Damask 1996). Similar to terrorism, initial discussions of narcoterrorism centred around Soviet complicity and assertions that the conflation of these two dangers was indicative of an

⁸⁷ The difference between the classical and prototype category is in their permeability. The classical category refers to an abstract container, whereas the prototype refers to a human produced category embodied by a particular example (Bhatia 2009: 280).

immoral Leftist ideology (see, for example, Ehrenfeld 1990). This association largely confined narcoterrorism to South America (Colombia in particular), preventing linkages to other terrorist groups, specifically those associated with Islamic fundamentalism. Critically, there was a shift in this understanding around the time of the September 11th attacks, as Al Qaeda and the Taliban became increasingly linked in the discourse. In terms of the narcotics threat, Afghanistan had been on the US's radar since 2000, as government officials were concerned about the dramatic rise in opium production (and exports) under the Taliban regime. In a Senate Committee on Foreign Relations hearing, Senator Brownback summed up the US's position stating, "Afghanistan is still permitting the operation of terrorist training camps. They are still exporting heroin. They are promoting Islamic fundamentalism into Pakistan. Afghanistan is not just a state of concern. It is a rogue plain and simple" (United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations 2000: 1). While the dangers of narcotics and terrorism have not converged in Brownback's statement, the use of the term 'rogue' to describe Afghanistan is indicative of global hegemonic understandings of danger at the time, and in particular the United States' approach to global security. The danger was not that narcotics were being freely exported out of Afghanistan, but rather that the Taliban did not possess the same understanding of danger as the US and therefore challenged the authority of the hegemonic narrative. As Chandler (2010: 88) illustrates, "the problem of insecurity is understood to be one of problematic 'choices' made by autonomous subjects." The 'rogue' label applied to Afghanistan is a clear indication that the United States viewed it as a global danger as it embodied a challenge to the norms and values of the international community.

The use of the rogue state as the antagonistic Other was not anything particularly new, as the early Bush presidency continued the Clinton administration's view that 'rogue states' constituted a 'nexus of new threats', along with international criminals and terrorists (Tsui 2015: 75). However, a clear shift occurred in the global discourse following the 9/11 attacks. While earlier debates on Afghanistan centred on whether to engage with the Taliban diplomatically (see United States Senate 2000), in itself evidence of post-Cold War liberal internationalism, immediately following 9/11 the United States adopted far more bellicose language in its representation of Afghanistan and the new (narco)terrorist threat. In a United States House of Representatives hearing on October 3, 2001 both

committee members and witnesses⁸⁸ gave statements which linked the Afghan drug trade, via the Taliban, to Al Qaeda and the 9/11 attacks. In an opening statement, subcommittee chairman Mark Souder stated:

In the past 3 weeks [since 9/11], our Nation has been forced to simultaneously examine a number of critical issues with new urgency and vigor. For drug policy, September 11th attacks on our country immediately highlighted the dark synergies between narcotics trafficking and international terrorism...The Afghan drug trade has given direct financial support for the Taliban regime to harbor international terrorists and at least indirectly assist Osama Bin Laden and the al Qaeda terrorist network to grievously attack the United States of America (United States House of Representatives Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources 2001: 1)

Far from being merely the regime of a rogue state, the Taliban were now perceived to be directly linked with Al Qaeda, with narcotics acting as the bridge. This new nexus was similarly taken up within the United Nations and in the United Kingdom. For the latter, as early as October 2, 2001 Prime Minister Tony Blair referred to the Taliban as “a regime founded on fear and funded on the drug trade” (Perl 2001: 3). In a report written for the United Nations Security Council following Resolution 1333 (an arms embargo against the Taliban), the Committee of Experts found that “funds raised from the production and trading of opium and heroin are used by the Taliban to buy arms and other war materiel, and to finance the training of terrorists and support the operations of these extremists in neighbouring countries and beyond” (UN Committee of Experts on Afghanistan 2001: paragraph 55). From this point, narcoterrorism (or the narcotics-terror nexus) re-emerged as an existential danger in the security narratives of the United States and United Nations. With the War on Terror in its infancy, discursive actors in the United States increasingly represented the Taliban as the epitome of this new nexus. As Shanty notes, “while there are various definitions for the term [narcoterrorism], in the post-9/11 world a consensus is growing among certain government officials as well as the general public that the term narcoterrorism somehow ties the three-decade-old war on drugs to the present-day war on terrorism” (Shanty 2011: 17).

⁸⁸ Among them was Asa Hutchinson, the newly appointed head of the DEA, who would give testimony in 2002 at a United States Senate hearing called *Narco-Terror: The Worldwide Connection between Drugs and Terrorism* (see Hutchinson 2002). While this hearing would occur a year after the House of Representatives hearing discussed above, both written and given statements provided by Hutchinson clearly indicate that the DEA was building a case for narcoterrorism in Afghanistan immediately following 9/11.

This shift points to the rise of ‘new’ dangers in global security discourse. While newness is integral to a state’s use of (in)security as a tool of governance, the ‘new’ referred to here reflects the post-9/11 global security environment in which rogue members of the international community behaving badly were not the main danger, but rather the emergence of a previously unknown synergy between two or more dangers. Immediately after 9/11, President Bush introduced this new discourse in a joint session of Congress in which he described 9/11 as bringing about a ‘new kind of war’ where law enforcement was as important as military action (Bush in United States House of Representatives Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources 2001: 7). In addition to promoting this notion of a ‘new war’, Bush went on to articulate the link between Al Qaeda and the Taliban, incorporating the latter into the existential terrorist threat (Renner and Spencer 2013: 485; Stritzel and Chang 2015: 7). The adoption of the ‘new’ signifier had profound implications for global security and representations of danger around the world. The ‘war metaphor’ militarised danger and made such a chaotic environment more understandable for the social audience (Bewley-Taylor 2014: 1012; Stone 2002); however, the primary significance was in how the ‘new’ label was used and subsequently applied.

Bhatia (2005) points out that names and labels, when applied by a discursive authority, come to define the essence of an object or identity. “Once assigned, the power of a name is such that the process by which the name was selected generally disappears and a series of normative associations, motives and characteristics are attached to the named subject” (Bhatia 2005: 7). The ‘new’ terrorism discourse that emerged at the start of the 21st century had the same effect on representations of danger as formerly independent concepts were incorporated under the banner of ‘new’ dangers. Aradau and van Munster (2011) point out the duality of danger at the time where, on the one hand, American military superiority left it unchallenged in a conventional sense and pushed the country’s enemies toward the unconventional (i.e. criminality, narcotics trafficking, terrorism). On the other hand, the unconventional meant that new styles of conjectural reasoning emerged where knowledge of the unknowable was based on loose associations (Aradau and van Munster 2011: 31).

From the beginning of the War on Terror, newness defined how the United States approached the Taliban and represented the (narco)terror danger. The exceptionality of this new war was illustrated in associations between narcotics trafficking, the Taliban, Al

Qaeda and a range of other dangers. It is unclear whether this language was designed to make ‘concept wars’ such as the War on Drugs and War on Terror more palatable for the domestic audience, or if it was meant to create a new global (in)security environment. However, the significance remains in how the Taliban and (narco)terror continue to be represented today. Indeed, one of the constant themes employed by President Ghani in publicised speeches and statements is the notion of the ‘fifth wave’⁸⁹ of terrorism, in which criminality and political violence are “organically related” (Ghani 2016b, 2016c). From 2004 until the present day, changes in US representations of danger, specifically (narco)terror, were largely driven by an emerging narrative that became known as the ‘drug-terror’ nexus; a narrative that represented the Taliban and Al Qaeda as directly linked and profiting from the narcotics trade in Afghanistan (Bewley-Taylor 2013: 10; see O’Connell in Shanty 2011: 53).

One of the most striking features of this global narrative was the prominence of non-government speech actors. From being confined to state actors, representations of danger emanate from a range of other ‘speech actors’ who hold discursive authority and form a distinct *field* of security (see Bigo 2002, 2008a). As Tsui (2015) correctly argues, “these discourses are produced and given meaning by socially powerful actors, or ‘world making’ elites in Bourdieu’s (1993) terms” (Tsui 2015: 68). Rather than being the sole prerogative of the state, hegemonic representations of danger emanate from a range of other security actors. On the one hand, the state’s position as protector requires that it identifies an antagonistic Other and declare it publicly (Bigo & Tsoukala 2008: 3). On the other hand, this authority rests on a range of other discursive actors, who hold particular and authoritative knowledge, to authenticate it. As Reyes (2011) points out, “voices of expertise are displayed in discourse to show the audience that experts in a specific field are backing the politician’s proposal with their knowledgeable statements” (786). The voice of the sovereign protector is premised on a cohort of non-governmental ‘experts’ legitimising the policies and representations of the government, while at the same time depending on these authentications to maintain their own elite status. Regarding (narco)terror post-9/11, and the Taliban specifically, the workings of this

⁸⁹ The ‘fifth wave’ of political violence mirrors Rapoport’s (2012) ‘wave theory’ of terrorism in which new terrorism is understood as a series of eras (waves), each possessing distinct characteristics and motivations.

relationship are illustrated in the explosion of academic study, media reports, and policy papers produced in the early 2000s.

Immediately after the 9/11 attacks, the United States government dramatically increased funding of terrorism research, ostensibly with the hope of producing new knowledge about the ‘new’ danger (Sageman 2014: 566). However, this increase in funding produced a gap in the literature that was subsequently filled by journalists who produced “one-dimensional and sensational portraits of alleged terrorists, packaged in the five-hundred-words-or-less limit of a newspaper article or a television sound bite” (Sageman 2014: 570). Sensationalist portraits of Al Qaeda and, to a lesser extent, the Taliban globalised the narrative of international terrorism and its devious links to drugs. In a typical example, *TIME* magazine published an article by Tim McGirk entitled “Terrorism’s Harvest” in 2004, which alleged that a principal source of funding for Al Qaeda and the Taliban came from the Afghan heroin trade (McGirk 2004). Basing his findings largely on the story of Haji Juma Khan and substantiated with several quotes from government officials (both Afghan, American, and from the UN), this article illustrates what many contemporary scholars have criticized as subjective and superficial knowledge supported by false assumptions (Giustozzi 2007: 2; Kamel 2015: 66-67).

However, this raises another important point regarding the basis of the expert’s credibility. If earlier literature of narcoterrorism in Afghanistan was based on false assumptions, how did this knowledge remain unchallenged? Moreover, if the linkage between the Al Qaeda and narcotics traffickers was exaggerated to fit the more general security narrative, how do we account for the dramatic increase in literature confirming and analysing this linkage? Writing in 1996, Miller & Damask exposed the way in which narcoterrorism became established. “Despite the compelling attraction of its constituent ideas, ‘narco-terrorism’ is less a useful tool for understanding one of the permutations of terrorism than a myth designed to serve policy purposes of the Reagan and the Bush administrations. Nonetheless, it has filtered into the scholarly and popular literature and taken on its own reality” (Miller and Damask 1996: 114). What this quote reveals, and indeed the point being made here, is that the narcoterrorism discourse was built on the co-constitutive relationship between the sovereign protector (i.e. the state) and security experts. Indeed, we do not have to look much further than the increase in literature

focusing on narcoterrorism in the early 2000s to observe this relationship.⁹⁰ The interplay between experts and the state actors can also be observed in earlier writings on narcoterrorism, most notably Rachel Ehrenfeld's (1990) *Narco-Terrorism*, which asserted that Cuba and other communist regimes were responsible for this new danger; however, in hindsight this was revealed to be false and based on unsubstantiated, ideologically-based assumptions (Miller and Damask 1996: 115). Another illustrative example is *The Terror Network* written by journalist Claire Sterling in 1981. While this book did not discuss narcoterrorism, it does serve as an example of expert agency in building discourses of danger. For Sterling, the Soviet Union was complicit in unleashing the plague of international terrorism on the world and used terrorism to undermine the West. It was later revealed that Sterling had based her arguments on disinformation spread by the CIA, also known as 'blowback' (Stampnitzky 2013: 119). However, the significance here is in how Sterling's book was adopted by US government officials both in the Executive and Legislative branches (Stampnitzky 2013). It reveals the role of the expert in building the discourse of danger, while also highlighting the supposed infallibility of the expert. While the expert is used to effectively verify the assertions made by the state, at the same time the expertise of this actor is held so highly that statements are pre-determined fact (Shanty 2011: 56; see Reyes 2011; Qureshi 2017). As a result, dangers such as terrorism and narcotics have become self-perpetuating industries in which conducting studies that reify state-based understandings are incentivised (Stampnitzky 2013: 10; see also Lustick 2006). In such an environment, the interplay between discursive actors within the field of security (re)shapes the discourse and subsequent representations.⁹¹

The discourse of (narco)terrorism in Afghanistan was built largely along these lines, with the United States government debating and devising appropriate policy, consulting with security experts, and then relying on other prominent voices in academia, media, and independent researchers to authenticate this representation. Mirroring the increase in academic studies of crime-terror linkages (also known as the crime-terror nexus), specific

⁹⁰ see Björnehed (2006); Makarenko (2004); Douglas (2002); Piazza (2012). This also relates to what the Case Collective pointed out as the fetishization of 'mergings' (nexuses), which lay at the core of new research agendas in the mid-2000s (Case 2006).

⁹¹ The size and scope of the discourse on a specific danger firmly establishes it as existential and knowledge of it is left unchallenged on the premise that it is common sense (Jackson 2012: 19).

studies began to emerge regarding the role of the Taliban in the Afghan drug trade. Prominent studies by established experts such as Vanda Felbab-Brown⁹² (2010, 2013) and Gretchen Peters⁹³ (2009ab) confirmed the United States's assertion that narcotics and terrorism were linked and that the Taliban embodied this new danger. But what did all of this mean for the Taliban? The (narco)terror linkage clearly effected US/NATO counterterrorism policy and legitimised counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan. This assertion also had an impact on the Afghan government's own counternarcotics policies as illustrated by David Bewley-Taylor (2014). However, the question remains as to the effect this discourse had on public knowledge of the Taliban. As we will see in the following section, the globalisation of this discourse has contributed to the Taliban's global image as an antagonistic Other and problematized any communication with the group. Moreover, when observing representations of the Taliban by the government of Afghanistan and relevant political actors, the infiltration of the international discourse (i.e. those emanating from the US, the UK and the UN) becomes readily apparent, illustrating the 'trickle down' effect these representations of danger have in flashpoints around the world.

Section III: Institutional Control and Representations of Danger

Having explored *how* the discourse of (narco)terrorism came to be applied to the Taliban, it is now necessary to address the motivations and objectives enshrined in the representation of this danger. However, these objectives and motivations can seldom be generalised and even a brief investigation into this topic reveals a plurality of actors involved in the construction of the discourse, each possessing particular methods and motives. In this first section, the discussion largely centres around the institutional

⁹² Vanda Felbab-Brown is a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institute and has been a prominent voice in American policy circles for over a decade. Her specialisation on terrorism and criminal insurgencies contributes to her expert status.

⁹³ Peters is widely regarded as an established expert on Afghanistan and narco-terror linkages, spending over 10 years in the country as a field reporter (Schmidt 2010: 62).

objectives of the security experts and relates to a more traditional conception of (in)security and the role of the state. Contrastingly, Section IV will look at the ideational objectives of the state as discursive actors use representations of danger to build local identities loyal to its vision. This section will focus on how danger is used to secure both the identity of the society as well as its environment. Ultimately, the hope here is to illustrate the ways in which representations of danger are used as a means of control in Afghanistan by constituting both the role of the state as the protector and the identity of the secured society.

At the root of all representations of danger is the need to legitimise the state's position as hegemonic. The existence of the state depends on its ability to secure. The authority held by the state over society, enshrined in the monopoly of violence, is premised on it using its knowledge and force to protect its citizens. There is "no Church without Salvation; No security outside the State; [and] no State without security" (Dillon 1996: 14). This brief quote underlines the role of the state and the foundations of its authority over society. But security remains an illusion for if there was security in the truest sense of the word – what Dillon and others refer to as *freedom* – then there would be no need of a state to provide it. From this, we can observe the need for a danger to secure against – an identity that is menacing and external, but also ephemeral in that it is eventually overcome and not a direct challenge to hegemonic authority.

Contemporary Afghanistan functions largely in accordance with this paradigm as representations of danger have been used to build and entrench state-society relations. The political context of Afghanistan, defined by a multitude of regional identities and local power structures (see Schetter 2013; Mahendrarajah 2014), means that developing a strong central authority is deeply challenging and far from the norm. Moreover, in a predominately rural society in which traditions and customs have remained largely unchanged for centuries, applying a modern, centralised state-society structure contradicts the lifeworld and circumstance for much of the population. Indeed, one of the lasting challenges yet to be overcome in post-2001 Afghanistan is the inherent weakness of the state outside of Kabul and major population centres (Barfield 2010). Within this environment representations of danger, specifically (narco)terror, provide a useful opportunity to build the state and its relationship with society.

It is useful to first reflect on the argument made by Weldes et al. (1999) in *Cultures of Insecurity*. Rather than understanding security as purely constitutive, we must recognise that it is a constructed discourse that is constituted by a variety of endangered objects. Indeed, “one way to get at the constructed nature of insecurities is to examine the fundamental ways in which insecurities and the objects that suffer from insecurity are mutually constituted” (Weldes et al. 1999: 10; see also Campbell 1998: 169-170). With regard to the Taliban and the broader (narco)terror danger, the constructed nature of this danger provides a window into the particular object(s) being secured and places the secured subject within the hegemonic vision of identity (Stern 2006: 188). In other words, critically analysing representations of the Taliban, and (narco)terror danger, reveals the hegemonic identity of the secured society. For Afghanistan, representing danger is not so much about representing an existential menace as it is about identity-building. Through framing the violence and presence of the Taliban (as well as other actors vaguely associated with (narco)terrorism) as a threat to certain ‘Afghan’ values, the GIRoA uses danger in an attempt to constitute the modern Afghan state and society. Moreover, many of the endangered values threatened by this danger reflect not just a modern Afghan state, but one that is premised on liberal values and notions of freedom. One of the strongest examples of this came in February 2017 in a speech made by Ashraf Ghani at the Munich Security Conference. In his speech Ghani framed the violence in Afghanistan thus:

Simply put, the social contract of the 20th century between the state and citizen is the target. Why are they attacking streets? Because they want to take freedom of movement. Why are they attacking airlines? Because they want to question our freedom to travel[.] Why are all religious space, social spaces, streets attacked? Because they are precisely what the contract of the 20th century...so well described is the legacy (Ghani 2017a).⁹⁴

While this speech was directed primarily at a foreign audience, much of Ghani’s statement remains true to the Afghan government’s vision of state-society relations. The fundamental values identified by the GIRoA in inaugural addresses at the Afghan parliament as well as other speeches made in regional forums specifies fundamental liberal values as emblematic of post-2001 Afghanistan (see Joint Declaration International Afghanistan Conference 2011; Ghani 2014, 2015b).

⁹⁴ Please note that transcriptions of Ghani’s statements often include awkward wording and incorrect grammar. For the most part, this has been left unchanged; however, in some cases minor modifications have been applied to improve clarity.

Similarly, the above statement alludes to certain values that define the Afghan citizen. Reflecting Stern's (2006) argument that discourses of danger serve to secure the subject (i.e. the Self), Ghani is using danger and violence to identify an ideal type. In another speech given by Ghani at RUSI London in 2016 he spoke of the motivations for violence, stating "...fundamentally what is under attack is the compact between the citizen and the state. The great achievement of the modern state has been its compact with the citizenry: freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, freedom of worship and democracies, and those values are precisely what are attacked" (Ghani 2016b). Similar to the statement given in 2017, Ghani is again defining the values emblematic of the modern Afghan state and represents the danger as antithetical. Ghani continues, saying "Fear is what the objective is. Inflicting fear, producing fear in a systematic manner, ensuring that we live narrow lives that affect the bond of trust between citizen and citizen, and state and state" (Ghani 2016b). What this points to is not solely a definition of the Afghan state, but also a definition of the Afghan ideal type. Fear, as a product of the danger, is preventing Afghans from enjoying the freedoms outlined by Ghani. Regardless of whether an Afghan explicitly wants to enjoy these values, non-adherence to them is presented as something antithetical to Afghan social identity. The use of danger in constructing the sovereign's vision of Afghan identity will be returned to in the next section; however, this point remains salient for it highlights the agency held by the sovereign in representing danger and defining sociopolitical values.

The Afghan government similarly uses danger to construct the rule of law and its authority over defining criminality. Criminality is one of the more consistent themes in representations of terrorism with earlier understandings (i.e. those pre-dating 9/11) based largely around terrorism as a criminal act (Ditrych 2014: 96; see Schmid 2004; Horsman 2008⁹⁵; Stampnitzky 2013). In terms of perpetrating violence, it is largely the state's prerogative to identify legal, 'public' violence and differentiate it from private, illegitimate (i.e. illegal) violence (Victoroff 2006: 3). Considering the relationship between the role of the state in representing violence with its own monopoly on violence, Victoroff's argument appears sound, and indeed this position is consistently reflected in how the Afghan government identifies Taliban violence as criminal. Whether violence

⁹⁵ Referring to the cited Uzbekistan Criminal Code Article 244 which identifies terrorism as criminality, along with drug trafficking and organised crime.

is used against civilians or government officials, the signifier ‘atrocious crime’ is used by discursive actors to delegitimise the act and silence its intended meaning. In one example, following the assassination of the Parwan’s⁹⁶ Ulema Council Head, the Office of the President released a statement linking it to terrorism stating, “Terrorists once again committed a ferocious crime. Head of Parwan province Ulema Council Mullah Abdur Rahim Shah Hanifi and his students fell prey to a terrorist bomb blast orchestrated by terrorists” (Office of President Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2017). This refers to what Lazar & Lazar (2004) have termed ‘criminalisation’, a tactic that is designed to silence and depoliticise the perpetrators of violence (see also Bhatia 2009). Clearly, the killing of a high-ranking religious official would not be taken lightly and would have had political significance; nevertheless, framing the violence as a criminal act depoliticises the action and represents the victims as martyrs. As Schmid points out, criminal and political violence do not exclude each other, and indeed the motivation behind a crime may be political (Schmid 2004: 197); however, awareness of this distinction is far from widespread, and in this instance, criminality is being used to delegitimise the acts and identity of the terrorist perpetrators. The monopoly over the use of force is vital to the foundation of the state, therefore representing the Afghan government as holding legitimate authority over the use of violence is paramount. The fact that this attack took place so close to Kabul would have undermined the credibility of the GIRoA as the securer; thus, the criminalisation of the act is a discursive strategy to depoliticise the violence, while at the same time emphasizing its abhorrent character.

The use of the Taliban in constructing and representing the Afghan state comes full circle in public peace offerings directed at the movement. Indeed, peace and dialogue with the Taliban has been a point of contention in Afghan politics, the clearest indication being in the different language used by Hamid Karzai, Ashraf Ghani, and Abdullah Abdullah.⁹⁷ Whereas Karzai would consistently refer to the Taliban as ‘brothers’ (see, for example, Karzai 2013), Ghani’s peace overtures are less warm and more pragmatic. Despite the differences in language, both Karzai and Ghani adopt a similar approach to the terms of

⁹⁶ Parwan is a province immediately to the north of the Afghan capital, Kabul.

⁹⁷ While Karzai and Ghani have been more open to peace with the Taliban, Abdullah’s language has been much more bellicose. For example, whereas Karzai sometimes refers to the Taliban as ‘brothers’ (see above), Abdullah has consistently demonstrated reluctance to consider the Taliban as Afghan (see Amiry 2016).

a potential peace agreement, all of which to reaffirm the government's position as hegemonic and unchallenged. In a recent statement made by Ashraf Ghani at the Kabul Process Conference,⁹⁸ the president outlined the government's pre-conditions: "...they can be summarized as acceptance of the Constitution, continuity of the reforms for educating and advancing the rights of women, and a renunciation of violence and all linkages to terrorist organizations" (Ghani 2017b). The brief statement is relevant for several reasons. First, acceptance of the Afghan constitution is placed as the primary condition for peace with the Taliban. This demonstrates the government's authority over the Afghan political identity as rejection of the constitution results in exclusion. This statement also identifies the presence of progressive values in defining the modern Afghan identity. Rejection of education and women's rights is represented as anti-Afghan and therefore antagonistic. Lastly, this peace offering is itself a representation of the Taliban as danger. The conditions included in this statement are inscribed on the Taliban identity as those preventing peace. In this way, the government is using the Taliban to establish its authority (via the Constitution), to define Afghan values (reforms, educating women, etc.) and reaffirm its monopoly on violence via the stipulation that the Taliban must renounce violence and links to terrorist groups.

While representations of the Taliban as the antagonistic Other have been vital to the government's state- and society-building efforts, its authority does not rest on state institutions alone. Rather, representations of danger present the sovereign with the unique opportunity to perform power and consistently establish itself as hegemonic. Security and discourses of danger become a technique of power when deployed in a society (see Dillon 1996, 2007; Neocleous 2008), for they necessitate the means to secure. While the persistence of violent non-state actors in Afghanistan could be considered justification for sovereign authority and use of force, representations of (narco)terror are more attuned to the use of knowledge and *knowing* danger as a performance of power. Indeed, in such a volatile political environment as Afghanistan physical performances of power are not enough to ensure the hegemony of the state. Instead, danger needs to be represented in a way that subjugates alternative representations of the endangered Afghan self. This subjugation of alternative knowledge is achievable through discourses of (in)security,

⁹⁸ The Kabul Process Conference was an official peace conference held in June 2017 aimed at beginning negotiations and, eventually, striking a peace settlement in Afghanistan. The conference included local leaders throughout the country and was designed to present a united front for peace.

which “by way of hegemonic closures, fix meanings in particular ways, and...exclude all other meaning potentials” (Jackson 2012a: 16). In terms of (narco)terror, the global ambiguity surrounding this danger and lack of a universal definition for terrorism provides a lot of space for the state to inscribe authoritative knowledge in the discourse.

While Hamid Karzai did not use the ambiguity of (narco)terror to establish the knowledge of the state, Ashraf Ghani, and to a lesser extent Abdullah, uses insecurity in Afghanistan to promote his own extra-ordinary knowledge on the subject. A clear example of this tendency can be observed in Ghani’s characteristically jargon-heavy language in speeches on the challenges and threats facing Afghanistan.⁹⁹ Over his three years in office, Ghani has developed a succession of signifiers for the violence and insecurity plaguing Afghanistan. In early 2015, Ghani developed the ‘ecology of terror’, which refers to the distinctive lifeworld inhabited by terrorists that is separate from any given state or territory (Ghani 2015a). While the ecology of terror reflects Ghani’s frustration with the lack of international cooperation, this knowledge and particular framing serves more as a performance of the Afghan government’s authoritative knowledge of the threat they, and indeed the rest of the world, are facing. Similarly, Ghani spoke about the concept of hybrid warfare, stating that “[he was] glad to see the concept of hybrid warfare make it into Munich Security Conference’s vocabulary. We have suffered from this practice, so I’d like to call attention to one feature that is not part of the vocabulary yet, ‘criminality’” (Ghani 2015a). While the connection between criminality and terrorism is significant, the main contribution of this statement is in Ghani’s self-representation as all-knowing and on the frontline of global (in)security. From the early days of the Ghani presidency, performance of knowledge has become increasingly frequently in speeches and statements. The latest example of this performance, and indeed one of the defining methods for representing the (narco)danger terror is the ‘fifth wave’ of political violence.

The ‘fifth wave’ was coined by Ghani at another Munich Security Conference (2016a) as he made remarks on the new challenges facing Afghanistan. In his statement, Ghani situated the fifth wave as part of a longer trajectory of political violence that had developed over the previous 140 years. Political violence evolved as part of “a narrative combining epistemology, history, and teleology matched by utilization of information

⁹⁹ His style of speaking and extensive use of terminology is reflective of his background as an academic and status, in elite circles, as an intellectual.

technology of the fourth industrial revolution is translated into a distinct ecology, morphology, and pathology of violence” (Ghani 2016a). Interestingly, Ghani’s genealogy of political violence mirrors histories of terrorism, beginning with anarchist violence in the 19th century, moving to nationalist movements in the early-20th century, ‘New Left’ terrorism in the 1960s-1970s, and finally with the advent of suicide bombing (Ghani 2016a). The fifth wave being faced now is defined by an assemblage of different characteristics, and indeed the defining feature is the ‘organic relationship’ between criminality, specifically drugs, and terrorism (Ghani 2017a, 2016b). This chronology correlates with many ‘histories’ of terrorism and reflects what Ondrej Ditrych identifies as the terrorism *dispositif* (Ditrych 2013: 233). Rather than highlighting the reflexivity of terrorism in previous eras, Ghani represents the fifth wave as a new and extraordinary danger facing the world today.

The fifth wave is useful for the Afghan securer in two ways: domestic control and adherence to global representations of danger. In terms of performing power and securitisation, Ghani has used the fifth wave to connect the disparate dangers driving Afghan insecurity. Primarily, the fifth wave is represented as characteristically complex and multidimensional (see Ghani 2016b, 2016d, 2017b). Terrorism is no longer “a solid phenomenon like a column that is to be chiseled away. It is a moving dynamic phenomenon and while we hit it, it needs to be understood as a dynamic changing phenomenon...[it] is a fluid situation and a constantly morphing situation” (Ghani 2017a).¹⁰⁰ The supposed dynamism of this new danger leaves it in ambiguity. There are no real signifiers, but rather loose associations (e.g. the criminal economy and terror; ecology of terror) backed by clear statements about its potentiality. Another parallel can be drawn here to what Daase and Kessler (2007) highlight as dangers manifesting themselves owing to incomplete knowledge. Similar to how ambiguity drives *risk* (see Beck 2006; Aradau and van Munster 2011), Ghani is authoritatively declaring his knowledge of this new phenomenon while at the same time leaving discursive space to connect future securitised objects.

Indeed, one of the strongest linkages representative of the fifth wave is the purported deep integration between terrorist groups and the narcotics trade. Keeping in line with earlier

¹⁰⁰ In this statement, Ghani was discussing how the nature of terrorism and global dangers have changed since 9/11 and that the “task is not done” in defeating this existential threat.

representations of the Taliban as heavily involved in the narcotics trade (Peters 2009b), Ghani represents the Taliban and other armed opposition groups as heavily involved in the drug world. “Taliban sponsored terrorism is creating a platform that is bringing terrorists and criminals from all over the region to Afghanistan. Not a single one of the 20 terrorist networks does not (sic) operate by selling narcotics and other forms of criminality” (Ghani 2017b). Despite facing several independent armed opposition groups in Afghanistan, each possessing their own unique political vision and identity, Ghani uses the (narco)terror danger to unite and represent them as emblematic of one larger threat. In a telling statement, Ghani asks, “The Tehrik-e Taliban [Pakistani Taliban], the Haqqani networks, and others are common threats but, what’s the platform? The criminal economy provides the common platform for all these movements. Narcotics and refugees, smuggling are part of the same network” (Ghani 2016a). The fifth wave discourse, therefore, provides the state with the opportunity to associate a variety of other recognised dangers with the established threat of terrorism. Narcotics have served as a primary node in this equivalential chain, but other dangers are connected to the fifth wave. Corruption, for instance, is linked to terror networks (Ghani 2016c; Bashari 2016), along with ‘ungoverned spaces’ on the internet (Ghani 2017a; 2016b). The main significance here is the state’s ability to speak authoritatively about insecurity and to develop new signifiers indicative of that knowledge. The discursive linkages between several different dangers is interesting; however, in terms of state-building, the discourse of the fifth wave is a clear example of the politics of knowledge on insecurity and how this remains a key foundation for political authority.

A more recent development in the fifth wave discourse is its connection to ‘state capture’. One of the great challenges presented by contemporary fifth wave organisations is their ability to capture ‘ungoverned spaces’, whether that be on the internet or on the ground due to insecurity (Ghani 2016a; 2017a). “From seeking ungoverned space, the aim of the fifth wave is to establish territories of terror” (Ghani 2016a). This association is significant because it securitises a (re)politicisation of the terrorist identity. Recall that the label terrorist has been used predominately to depoliticise the identity of the perpetrator (Zulaika & Douglass 1996; Bhatia 2005; Ditarych 2014). The notion that the fifth wave of political violence is driven by a desire to capture territory continues this depoliticization but in a way that represents their mimicry of statehood as inherently evil. Regarding global representations of (narco)terror as danger, the ‘territories of terror’ label

serves as a reincarnation of earlier manifestations of the ‘failed state’ danger (see Tsui 2015). However, for Afghanistan this discourse serves another purpose, which is to fully delegitimise the insurgency and to establish it as terrorism. Indeed, one of the Taliban’s strongest assets has been the success of their parallel government institutions and legal structures (Johnson 2013: 9; Semple 2014; Stritzel & Chang 2015: 8; Johnson 2017). The presence, not to mention success, of these shadow institutions clearly undermines the authority and position of the state; therefore, it is vital that attempts at state capture be represented as a characteristic of the fifth wave. Any attempt at reclaiming power in Afghanistan by any group or individual outside of the GIRoA is associated with the fifth wave of political violence, eroding the distinction between insurgency and terrorist/criminal.

In terms of establishing discursive authority over society, (narco)terror has been used extensively to construct a perpetual state of emergency and define a set of desired Afghan values. These uses of danger reflect a desire for internal sovereignty and hegemony over society. However, representations of danger are also used by the state to fix inside/outside boundaries through the represented externality of the danger (Campbell 1998: 68). Interestingly, externality is a theme used frequently in Taliban representations of the GIRoA as danger, demonstrating an adherence to Afghanistan’s characteristic hostility to foreign influence and tradition of resisting imperialism (Dorrnsoro 2005; Barfield 2010). Both hegemonic and counterhegemonic voices represent danger as primarily foreign in an attempt to secure their vision of the Afghan identity.¹⁰¹ Moreover, by representing danger as foreign, both hegemonic and counterhegemonic actors perform knowledge over the limits of Afghan society.

The most common example of theme is in the notion that terrorism was brought to Afghanistan. In this, presidents Ghani and Karzai were quite vocal and maintained the idea that Afghanistan was never a supporter of terrorism. In one particularly salient interview with Al Jazeera, Hamid Karzai declared that the War on Terror was not conducted in the right place, stating:

[...] the war on terror in our view from the first place was not in Afghanistan, it wasn’t in Afghan villages, it wasn’t in Afghan homes, it wasn’t in targeting Afghans, it should have been taken to the sanctuaries, to the training grounds, the ideological

¹⁰¹ This is a rather important point as the legitimacy of both hegemonic and counterhegemonic forces depends on its ability to speak for Afghan society and for the Afghan society to recognise them as sovereign.

motivational grounds, which were all outside of Afghanistan, and the Afghan people suffered in a war that wasn't that of Afghan people, for which we are not responsible in the first place (Karzai 2013)

Karzai's statement does not detract from the ongoing violence in Afghanistan; however, in framing Afghanistan as the wrong location for the War on Terror he is asserting that Afghans are not terrorists and that those identified as terrorists within Afghanistan are actually foreign agents. Moreover, this statement reifies the cultural trope of the imposed war, in which Afghans themselves have not declared the War on Terror but rather are victims of an imposed foreign conflict. This sentiment has also been taken up by Ashraf Ghani in several statements on terrorism in Afghanistan and the identity of the perpetrators. At a BRIC Summit in Russia in 2015, Ghani asked the rhetorical question 'Who fights in my country?'. The answer given was "Chinese, [ETIM]¹⁰², Chechens, Uzbeks from Uzbekistan, Tajiks from Tajikistan even the odd Kirgiz and Kazakh, but the greatest one of course is a huge movement from Pakistan. Then, of course there are all the rejects for the Arab world that are sent to us" (Ghani 2016b; ToloNews 2015). For Ghani, terrorism is represented as an import in which he frequently derides regional powers for 'exporting' terrorist groups to Afghanistan. The idea that terrorists are actively sent to Afghanistan has been common throughout much of the post-9/11 politics and remains one of the defining points of Afghan-Pakistan relations. In a press release from June 2017, Ghani stated that "11,000 terrorists had come to Afghanistan in the last two years, as 'Taliban sponsored terrorism is creating a platform that is bringing terrorists from all over the region to Afghanistan'" (Government Ministry for Information and Communication Afghanistan 2017). This press release is significant for two reasons. First, it provides a good example of the state's representation of terrorism as a foreign danger. Secondly, the Ghani administration is directly connecting the Taliban to an influx of foreign terrorists, further delegitimising the Taliban's political identity and maintaining the view that they do not have Afghan society's interests at heart. This notion is strengthened further in how the Taliban's 'intentions' are framed. Speaking at the Kabul Process Conference (June 2017), Ghani said of the Taliban, "They will never succeed in dividing the sacred geography of our country into pieces. We are united country and united we'll remain" (Ghani 2017b). The supposed externality of the danger is represented through the Taliban's inferred intentions to break up the country and divide

¹⁰² East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM).

it into smaller entities. The inference that this would destroy Afghanistan's geographical identity, thus undermining claims of sovereignty, is presented as antagonistic to Afghanistan and supposes a degree of foreign influence.

Continuing with this theme, linkages between terrorist Taliban and foreign control is frequently used in hegemonic representations of violence. Indeed, there is an observable difference in the tone of language used immediately after an attack or episode of political violence when compared to statements made at international conferences. For instance, in October 2016, following a high-profile attack on civilians in Ghor province, the Office of the President of Afghanistan issued a press release stating "...President Ghani consoles with the bereaved families of the martyrs and vows to avenge the blood of the citizens on the terrorists and the ruthless mercenaries of foreigners" (Office of the President of Afghanistan 2016c). This press release serves as an example of how violence is represented as evidence of foreign influence, and thus, 'de-Afghanizes' the perpetrators. Another interesting point is the notion that the perpetrators of violence are "mercenaries of foreigners" as this is designed to evoke a sense of dishonour and lack of faith. Given Afghan society's deeply tribal character, with *Pashtunwali* still forming the basis of much of Afghan culture, evoking a sense of dishonour further externalizes the perpetrators of violence and excludes them from society. With regard to using danger to secure political sovereignty, the externalization of terrorists represents an image of sovereignty through the trope of the foreign menace. Essentially, the limits of Afghan sovereignty begin with the terrorist group; thus, to be labelled a terrorist is to be externalised from Afghan society.

The idea of terrorism as an external menace is furthered through assertions that Afghanistan is a battlefield for 'proxy wars'. Both Karzai and Ghani have employed this theme in speeches to Afghan parliament and international media (Karzai 2010, 2011; Ghani 2015b). While this is useful in creating a binary distinction between the Afghan victim and the foreign aggressor (a topic that will be addressed in the following section), the trope of the imposed war remains useful for illustrating the role externality plays in representing danger (see Campbell 1998). Both Ghani and Karzai have refused to label the war in Afghanistan as a civil war, pointing out that if it were a civil war there would

be no need for foreign troops (Karzai 2012b¹⁰³; Ghani 2016a, 2016c; 2017a). In one such example, at the 2016 Shanghai Cooperation Organization conference in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Ashraf Ghani spoke about the fifth wave of political violence and argued that the conflict in Afghanistan was suffering from a definitional problem, claiming that “the war in Afghanistan is not a civil war; forces of terrorism that have converged on our country need to be defined correctly” (Ghani 2016c). This statement leaves the terrorist in ambiguous terms and enables the audience to develop their own associations; however, maintaining the trope of the imposed war, Ghani is clearly inferring that terrorism has converged on Afghanistan and firmly establishes this danger as a foreign menace. Similarly, Abdullah Abdullah consistently associates Taliban attacks with foreign meddling. For instance, following a suicide bombing in Kabul in April 2016, Abdullah issued a statement stating, “[The Taliban’s] fight is for foreign interests, fomentation of extremism and destruction of Afghanistan. This fight is against all norms and human laws” (ToloNews 2016a). The GIRoA consistently associates the Taliban with external influences in an effort to delegitimise the movement and to externalise associated actors from Afghan society.

Within the larger theme of external danger, Pakistan is consistently represented as the root of (narco)terror. Indeed, given the track record of the ISI in supporting armed opposition forces such as HiG (Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin) and the Taliban (see Johnson 2017), it is little wonder that the current GIRoA represents Pakistan as a main patron of terror. In fact, in most of the sources consulted for the thesis Pakistan was singled out as, at the very least, enabling terrorism to continue in Afghanistan. Government statements often use quotes from captured Taliban commanders as evidence of Pakistan’s complicity in the continued political violence. In a statement made at the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process conference in 2016, Ghani spoke about the drivers of instability, arguing, “the response of the states has been fragmented and some still provide sanctuary and support or tolerate these networks. As Mr. Kakazada, one of the key figures of the Taliban movement recently said, if they did not have sanctuary in Pakistan, they would not last a month” (Ghani 2016e). While somewhat vague, this quote illustrates a larger theme in GIRoA representations of the Taliban and (narco)terror danger. The alleged Pakistani

¹⁰³ In this particular interview, Karzai was challenging the notion of ‘insurgency terrorism’, arguing that if it were an insurgency then there would be no need for US troops to be in Afghanistan.

support is used as a performance of sovereignty by the Afghan state. The inference being made here is that the Taliban are the pawns of a menacing neighbour, thus granting the government of Afghanistan with increased authority over Afghan society while also delegitimising the Taliban's political motivations as part of a larger Pakistani plot to destabilise the country.

The represented association between the Taliban and the Pakistani government also serves to legitimise state-led violence against the Taliban and frames such acts as upholding Afghanistan's sovereignty. An official statement following the assassination of Mullah Mansour¹⁰⁴ is particularly illustrative of this framing. The statement begins by decrying Mansour's refusal to end the war and violence in the country. The next section reads, "While sheltering himself in hideouts outside Afghanistan, he was also involved in deception, concealment of facts, maiming and killing innocent Afghans, terrorism, intimidation, drug smuggling as well as obstruction of development and progress in Afghanistan as he obstinately insisted on continuing the war" (Office of the President of Afghanistan 2016a). This statement is designed to be inclusive and discursively connects the Taliban to a range of other external dangers. The fact that Mansour's location outside of Afghanistan was placed at the centre of this statement demonstrates the objective of linking Mansour to the Pakistani government. Moreover, the fact that Pakistan's protection of Mansour allowed a continuation of "deception...maiming and killing innocent Afghans, terrorism, [and] drug smuggling" connects Pakistan to these dangers and situates them as external to the sovereign Afghan state.

International Discourse

Sovereignty, however, is only part of this process and one of the most striking aspects of the Afghan government's representations of danger is its usage of the same language and concepts found in the global hegemonic discourse. Afghanistan's own particularity becomes emblematic of a larger narrative of global insecurity produced by (narco)terror. However, this linkage is obscured by the state's own role of representing the secured

¹⁰⁴ Mullah Mansour (d. 2016) was the former leader of the Taliban following the death of Mullah Omar in 2013.

society. For instance, Ashraf Ghani asserts his own unique perspective on (narco)terror and advances possible solutions, but in reality, these solutions mirror those found in the immediate post-9/11 security policy of the United States. Furthermore, the influence of US, UK, and UN narcotics policy shaped Afghanistan's approach to narcotics and how discursive actors have represented this threat (Bewley-Taylor 2014). How do we account for this policy transfer? If we look at the history of Afghanistan, it is typical of an Afghan statesman to exploit international rivalries and to delicately balance the policy of global powers with their own domestic needs. As Barfield (2010) points out, the most successful Afghan leaders have struck a balance between international and domestic, whereas those who have been deposed often prioritise foreign ideas and influence over the local identity. Returning to representations of (narco)terror, this raises the question of whether Ashraf Ghani is merely continuing this traditional Afghan foreign policy or if it points to the use of Afghanistan by the United States as a representation of (narco)terror. The discussion will now approach this linkage and highlight the connection between global representations of (narco)terror and the specific representations advanced by discursive actors in Afghanistan.

At the root of this linkage is the danger of the autonomous actor pointed out by Chandler (2010). The ways in which insecurity have been framed by the US in the post-Cold War era have illustrated the perception of a 'rogue state' danger - an autonomous state in the international society that challenges the hegemonic narrative of (in)security. Initially, Afghanistan fit this narrative very well with an authoritarian, isolationist Taliban regime, not to mention their affiliation with Al Qaeda. However, as the 'concept wars' (Bewley-Taylor 2014: 1012) of *terror* and *drugs* became more problematic there was a stark need for a physical manifestation of the danger, something that lent objectivity to the discourse. Mercille (2011) exposes this usage of Afghanistan, arguing that the War on Terror/Drugs is not real and suggests that "it is mostly a rhetorical device used by the US government and elites as a pretext for intervention against groups that challenge US hegemony abroad" (Mercille 2011: 290). On the one hand, this justifies the Afghan state's consistent assertion that the war(s) in Afghanistan is an "imposed war". The claim that there are no terrorists in Afghanistan (Karzai 2013) contributes to the notion of Afghan victimhood. However, Afghanistan's own counternarcotics policy and representations of the 'fifth wave' reaffirm the validity of the hegemonic narrative and position Afghanistan as the 'face' of global (narco)terror.

The clearest indication of this can be observed in the portrayal of (narco)terror as a global, networked threat (Ghani 2015a; 2016d; 2016e; 2017a). One of the strongest characteristics used in representations of (narco)terror and the Taliban is its globality. For various reasons, such as performance of sovereignty, this danger takes on a global character; however, with regard to the influence of US discourse, the global character justifies the hegemonic narrative that this is a universal danger. Ghani seems to invoke this linkage in his assertion that, “Terrorism does not know borders; there cannot be a distinction between good and bad terrorists, providing sanctuary or tolerating; Terrorism is a threat not only to Afghanistan, but also to the entire global community” (Ghani 2016d). While this statement could be understood as directed at Pakistan, the expansion of the terrorist threat from domestic, to regional, to international indicates an affirmation of the US’s eschatological framing of a civilizational war against terror.

Similar linkages can also be seen in representations of the narcotic danger. While the US has portrayed illegal narcotics as a global danger for several decades (see Herschinger 2011, 2015; Crick 2012), this language has recently infiltrated Afghan representations of narcotics and its connection to global terrorism. In one particularly telling statement, Hamid Karzai held that:

Terrorism is a menacing threat that does not just affect Afghanistan and Pakistan, but also other countries in our region, notably India, China and Russia. The narcotics trade threatens the wellbeing of our nations. As the frontline in the fight against terrorism and the global narcotics trade, Afghanistan has served as a bulwark to the common security of the region (Karzai 2011b)

The notion depicted here is that (narco)terror is an international danger and one that Afghanistan is portrayed as facing directly. Rather than viewing terrorism or narcotics as purely isolated phenomena – in other words, approaching them as separate domestic dangers – Karzai is claiming that all countries are facing the same danger as Afghanistan and that a common (read international) approach is needed. There is another interesting element of this statement, which is the securitisation of narcotics. The Karzai administration had been defined by some as *Pax Narcotica* or ‘criminalised peace’, in which the central government would ignore local government officials’ involvement in the narcotics trade in many areas of Afghanistan (Maas 2011: 2; Bewley-Taylor 2013: 14). The linkage between narcotics and terrorism therefore serves to desecuritize the narcotics trade in isolation and (re)securitize it as equivalent to terrorism and terrorist actors like the Taliban. Again, the notion here is that Afghanistan is fighting a global

danger as opposed to an ‘Afghan’ one; thus, legitimising the position of the GIRA vis-à-vis Afghan society and within the international community.

Afghan representations of (narco)terror are illustrative of the role US security narratives have played around the world, but the influence of the US can also be observed in the policies and solutions put forth by the Afghan government. Moreover, we can observe a shift in the language used by Karzai and Ghani in their representations of (narco)terror. While Karzai’s relationship with the United States can be characterised as rocky at times,¹⁰⁵ the Ghani administration has been much more cooperative and adherent to American aims in the region. One of the strongest examples of this is Ghani’s appeals to regionalism and international cooperation against the (narco)terror threat. Ghani’s distinctively multilateral approach to (narco)terror is symptomatic of UN policy influence in the early years of post-9/11 Afghanistan. The 2003 National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS), for instance, included a section dedicated to Afghanistan’s international obligations to UN resolutions and narcotics control treaties (Bewley-Taylor 2014: 1015). In the updated five-year National Drug Control Strategy (2006) the report begins with a quote from the Afghan constitution, stating “The state prevents all types of terrorist activities, cultivation and smuggling of narcotic drugs and production and consumption of intoxicants” (Ministry of Counter-Narcotics 2006: 3). While the original strategy predates Ghani’s presidency by a decade, it nevertheless laid the groundwork for his characteristic multilateralism. Moreover, it also forms the basis for the Afghan government’s usage of (narco)terror as a means to re-establish itself as a member of the international community. For instance, in the 2011 International Afghanistan Conference Communique, Article 15 states “recognizing their shared responsibility, Afghanistan and the International Community reiterate their determination to counter, in a comprehensive manner, including by crop eradication, interdiction and promoting alternative agriculture, the menace of illicit drugs including precursors, which causes widespread harm and suffering” (International Afghanistan Conference 2011). In recent times, Ghani has portrayed Afghanistan as adhering to its obligations to the international community and claimed that Afghanistan’s inability to overcome these dangers is a product of

¹⁰⁵ Hamid Karzai would often portray Afghanistan as victims of foreign wars that were problematically applied to Afghans. The high numbers of civilian deaths, culturally insensitive ‘night raids’, as well as several other high-profile controversies made the US politically toxic during the latter years of the Karzai administration. This is most observable in Karzai’s refusal to label the Taliban as terrorists, instead opting for the term ‘brothers’ (Karzai 2013).

disagreement and lack of cooperation (Ghani 2017b). This perspective is carried forward in regional forums, with Ghani consistently appealing to a shared regional commitment to fighting narcotics and terrorism. At the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan (2016), Ghani stated, “Our problems remain, and they are networked: criminality and corruption are interrelated and it requires a regional focus...What is critical is to generate the political will for regional cooperation. Terrorism does not know borders...terrorism is a threat not only to Afghanistan, but also to the entire global community” (Ghani 2016d). The assertion being made here is that (narco)terror and its constituent symptoms, corruption and criminality, are being faced by all states and that cooperation is the only way to overcome this danger. However, despite this appeal to multilateralism, the fundamental challenge of arriving at a common understanding or knowledge of (narco)terror remains.

Indeed, it is in promoting the ‘Afghan’ knowledge of (narco)terror that linkage with the US/UN becomes apparent. Moreover, in a process that mimics the domestic subjugation of knowledge (see Jackson 2012a), Afghanistan represents its knowledge of (narco)terror as authoritative and uses these representations to subjugate competing knowledges emerging from other political actors. This symbolises a two-pronged strategy in which Ghani represents the Afghan government as *the* authoritative knowledge holder on (narco)terror, while at the same time criticizing the lack of a shared understanding of the danger. After introducing the concept of the fifth wave of political violence, Ghani went on to state, “Our knowledge and response are both fragmented as we are struggling between naming the phenomena, knowing it, and having an action plan on the basis of an aligned strategy to disrupt, overcome, and destroy the fifth wave of terrorism” (Ghani 2016a). The fifth wave discourse is used to existentialise the hegemonic narrative that had been developed previously in the United States. Moreover, the absence of coordination is a criticism of the lack of regional, and indeed global, acceptance of this narrative. Both Karzai and Ghani frequently invoked the role of Afghanistan “as the frontline society and polity” fighting (narco)terror in their appeals for international cooperation and a common understanding (Karzai 2011b; Ghani 2016e). This role strengthens the government’s claims to hold authoritative knowledge about the danger and legitimises the represented characteristics of it. There is a duality in the Afghan government’s deployment of the fifth wave discourse. On the one hand, it serves to strengthen the state’s hold on knowledge of danger in the domestic context. On the other

hand, this discourse is directed outwards toward the international community to demonstrate conformity to hegemonic narratives of insecurity and inclusion in the international community. The continuity illustrated in the evolution of political violence discursively connects the threat faced by Afghanistan, itself a product US and UN representations, to the global narrative of (narco)terror.

Ultimately, the goal of these representations is the subjugation of parochial interpretations of (narco)terror. The lack of common consensus and policy is represented as an impediment to security and, in some cases, support for (narco)terrorists (i.e. Pakistan). Paralleling the use of (in)security in domestic society to construct a state of exception (see Agamben 1998; Dillon 2007), the Afghan government represents the international system as being in an extra-ordinary time, “at a moment when the world order is being re-defined” (Ghani 2017a). The universality of (narco)terror is connected to this transformative moment where cooperation amongst states is viewed as vital in “a fight for security of the world” (Ghani 2017a). In an environment where the stakes are so high, adhering to the Afghan representation of (narco)terror is depicted as the only means of stopping it; thus, Ghani attempts to subjugate alternative knowledge:

My plea is development of a common understanding. I am not saying to take a national perspective, but take a neutral international perspective because it is imperative that we understand the phenomenon. If we don't understand the phenomenon properly, how can we devise the appropriate means for dealing with them? (Ghani 2016b)

The inference being made here is that parochial understandings of narcotics and terrorism are hindering global security and allowing this new danger to continue. Afghanistan, being the frontline state facing this danger, holds authoritative knowledge as to the appropriate means of overcoming it. Thus, adopting a “neutral international perspective” is an attempt to subjugate domestic representations of narcotics and danger and promote adherence to the global narrative. In this way Afghanistan serves to replicate the global discourse of (narco)terror and the subjugation of counterhegemonic representations.

Section IV: Establishing the Endangered Identity

In addition to the many uses of danger as a performance of sovereign authority, (narco)terrorism has also been used within the process of establishing and disciplining identity in Afghanistan. The duality characteristic of representations of danger, as constitutive of both political order and social identity, is evidenced by the framing of the Taliban as the personification of (narco)terrorism in post-9/11 Afghanistan. Moreover, it is through the securitisation of (narco)terrorism that the secured objects of Afghan society are identified. Rather than objectively posing a challenge to the authority of the state, or a threat to the existence of Afghan society, the Taliban have been used to discursively construct contemporary Afghan society via representations of danger.

Of the many challenges facing the Afghan state, cultivating loyal identities has consistently been the most pressing. A brief survey of the political history of Afghanistan alerts us to a tradition of problematic centralised governments as policies and identities developed in Kabul are seldom transferred to rural communities (see Barfield 2010; Schetter 2013). Moreover, relying on loose power-sharing agreements with local leaders, the central authority remains in a precarious position, requiring the support of local strongmen to enforce its will while at the same time recognising the political impediment these strongmen pose (Maas 2011: 2; see Barfield 2004). A further contributing factor is the tribal and ethnically-diverse nature of Afghan society, with fractured identities along shifting lines. What this points to is the absence of a universal 'loyal' identity in Afghanistan akin to the state-based nationalisms found in other parts of the region. Instead, the national identity of Afghanistan is constantly changing and dependent upon local influences and discursive actors. This challenge reflects the argument made by Campbell that, "the mere existence of an alternative mode of being, the presence of which exemplifies that different identities are possible and thus denaturalizes the claim of a particular identity to *the* true identity is sometimes enough to produce the understanding of a threat" (Campbell 1998: 3). For the Afghan state, the diverse and highly localised nature of identity in Afghan society presents a challenge to its hegemonic vision and therefore constitutes a threat to its authority.

Michael Shapiro (2004) writes extensively on the concept of ‘cultural governance’ and argues that this form of governance uses expression “to constitute and legitimise practices of sovereignty, while restricting or preventing those representations that challenge sovereignty” (Campbell 2003: 57). The diversity of identities in Afghan society result in a plurality of representations that challenge the state’s national narrative. Afghanistan’s violent history and the inter-ethnic warfare witnessed during the Afghan Civil War (1992-1996) has led to a deep sense of alienation among many non-Pashtun identities (Shahrani 2008: 178). The Taliban similarly use representations of danger to challenge the state’s claims over Afghan identity, often offering a competing representation that utilises Islam and Afghanistan’s Islamic identity (see Chapter V). As a result, the state must consistently perform identity as “the symbolic maintenance of the nation-state requires a contentious management of historical narratives as well as territorial space” (Shapiro 2004: 45). Such a plurality of particular identities within Afghanistan means that cultivating a loyal monolithic identity is vital to maintaining the authority of the state.

Discourses of (in)security are therefore deployed as a means to developing a loyal, pan-Afghan national identity. The security-identity-loyalty complex developed by Mark Neocleous is particularly useful in understanding the state’s use of danger:

The mass of heterogeneous interests, desires and identities that make up a society has to be condensed into a single national entity, a ‘nationality’, the order and security of which has to be constantly reiterated against the dangerous other. The crudeness and simplicity of the images of ideological purity in defining the identity of the imagined communities in question only help in driving home the central message: that it is to this identity that loyalty would be expected. (Neocleous 2008: 135)

Regarding sociopolitical relations in Afghanistan, the presence and constant reiteration of (narco)terror is designed to cultivate the loyal national identity and therefore mitigate the challenges posed by a pluralistic society. But what elements constitute the ‘loyal’ Afghan identity? While representations of the Taliban are useful in establishing clear binary distinctions, relying solely on the purported characteristics of the Taliban to construct the Afghan identity is insufficient and leaves the collective identity fractured as particular elements of the Taliban’s identity (e.g. opposition education for girls) find acceptance in certain groups within Afghan society. Rather, it is through representations of the threat posed by a danger – in other words, the endangered objects – that a national identity is developed. Echoing the works of Campbell (1998), Weldes et al. (1999) and

Stern (2006), through critically analysing the state's representation of (narco)terror in Afghanistan we can uncover the constituent elements of the desired Afghan identity.

Islam

Islam remains the single feature unifying Afghanistan's diverse society.¹⁰⁶ However, Islam also poses a challenge for the state as it has been used in the past to delegitimise previous governments and their policies.¹⁰⁷ In contemporary times, the Taliban's own Islamic identity undermines the state's deployment of Islam and delegitimises its Islamic credentials. Operating in rural areas, the Taliban's use of Islam is more attune to the rural context, which illustrates the additional challenge of transmitting top-down narratives of identity. Therefore, Islam forms the basis of the GIRoA's cultural governance strategy and it is for this reason that Islam features so frequently in the state's representations of (narco)terror. However, rather than directly countering the Taliban's counterhegemonic narrative, the government re-interprets the violence committed by the Taliban to represent the Afghan Islamic identity as endangered and positions itself as the protector of this identity.

Indeed, the most critical first step in constructing this national narrative is to delegitimise the Taliban's self-proclaimed Islamic identity. While it may be simple to state that the Taliban are not Muslims because of the violence they commit, and indeed this is a frequent tactic used in statements issued immediately after an attack or bombing (ToloNews 2013; Karzai 2013), the state's communication strategy is more nuanced, often approaching the topic indirectly. The reason for this lies partly in the Taliban's recognised social identity as *mullahs* and their renown as just, honest, and pious (Mahendrarajah 2014; Raqib and Barreto 2014). The liberal basis of the post-9/11 Afghan state establishes distance between a deeply religious society (especially in rural

¹⁰⁶ However, this becomes problematic when applied to Hazara. Despite being Muslim, Hazara are predominately Shia and possess observably different physical features to their Tajik and Pashtun counterparts. This has caused widespread discrimination and violence against the Hazara community and continues to be a problem in contemporary Afghanistan.

¹⁰⁷ Some prominent examples include the policies of Amanullah (1919-1929), who attempted to modernise Afghanistan and reform education, gender relations, and the rights of citizens; and Nur Muhammad Taraki (head of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan), who initiated many costly land reforms and other social programmes, which were popularly rejected and led to the Soviet-Afghan War.

areas) and the modern state. However, the Taliban's repeated use of violence presents the government with ample discursive space to write Islam out of the Taliban's identity.

The opening speech given by Ghani at the June 2017 Kabul Process Conference is particularly illustrative of the state's delegitimization of the Taliban's Islamic identity:

These terrorist attacks insult the very concept of justice. The rebels say they are fighting a religious war, but Islam is a religion of peace. As the Holy Q'uran says, 'to kill one Muslim is to kill the whole of humanity.' And it is Muslims – Afghan Muslims – innocent Muslim men, women, and children, who they are killing, by the thousand. Narcotics, terror, extortion; our religion has nothing but contempt for these tools of modern day terrorism. They are terrorists, nothing more. (Ghani 2017b)

This statement is significant for several reasons. Primarily, it demonstrates the government's problematization of the (narco)terrorist's¹⁰⁸ religious identity. The 'terrorist' or 'rebel' is left purposely ambiguous as this was given at a peace conference; however, the discursive linkage between the 'rebel' and the Taliban is made clear through references to a religious war. However, just as significant is the attachment of narcotics to the larger identity of the un-Islamic terrorist. Narcotics (both use and production) is forbidden in Islam, but this is seldom used in representations of the danger. Representing narcotics as a tool of terrorism, and more importantly as antithetical to Islam, expands the scope of the un-Islamic dangerous Other to incorporate the various linkages identified earlier in the fifth wave discourse. Another point to draw from this statement is the government's performance of speaking authoritatively about what Islam is and what it means to be a Muslim. Citing well-known verses in the Q'uran and using this as evidence of the (narco)terrorist's opposition to Islam is itself a representation of the Afghan state as an authority on Islam, thereby framing Afghan society as wholly Muslim.

The sites of violence are also used to delegitimise the Taliban's Islamic identity. If we consider terrorism as a communication (Crellinsten 2002; Richardson 2006), it could be inferred that the Taliban choose specific targets as part of a wider counterhegemonic strategy. In the state's representation of the violence, the Taliban's discursive agency is denied as portrayals of the violence usually centre on the (innocent) victims (see Frosh and Wolfsfeld 2007). In a press release following a bombing in May 2017, the Office of the President wrote of the terrorists, "respecting no religion or law, terrorists always target

¹⁰⁸ I use the Unknown here to signify the deliberate ambiguity of the 'terrorist' or 'rebel' in this statement. While this statement clearly reflects earlier representations of the Taliban, the danger being discussed here is the larger unknown assemblage of (narco)terrorist

innocent civilians, religious scholars and sacred locations” (Office of the President Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2017). Indeed, the attack being referred to was the assassination of a member of the Ulema Council for Parwan, but the significance here is in how this act of violence is portrayed as common and characteristic of the terrorists’ immorality. Moreover, the statement “respecting no religion or law” is specifically designed to delegitimize the Taliban’s reputation as just and pious.

As a contrast, the GIRoA represents itself as undeniably Muslim and representative of the Islamic Afghan nation. In addition to the strategies outlined above, the GIRoA also frequently invokes Islamic imagery and concepts in its communication. For instance, in Ashraf Ghani’s inaugural speech as president he began by saying “now it is time to change this Jihad¹⁰⁹ to a greater Jihad (Akbar Jihad) for ensuring peace, stability and welfare in the country” (Ghani 2014). The use of *jihad* is deliberate and coopts counterhegemonic usages of *jihad* as justification for violently opposing the government. Moreover, Ghani’s own vision for Afghanistan is linked to the religious duty of struggle and is designed to galvanise society around the state’s vision. Thus, Ghani is attempting to present the government (and himself) as the embodiment of Afghanistan’s Islamic identity, subsequently depriving the Taliban of their own corresponding Islamic identity and framing any violence or opposition to the state as a threat to Islam.

The government also uses Islam in performances of sovereignty. Both territory and society are represented as distinctly Muslim and it is the role of the government to expel those who challenge the official narrative of Islam. In an interview with Al Jazeera in 2013, Hamid Karzai stated, “We don’t want on our soil, an extremist radical organization...those who use the name of Islam, misuse the name of Islam to undermine Muslims and their livelihoods” (Karzai 2013). In this statement Karzai is framing the insurgency as a threat to Afghan Muslims and therefore a force to be removed from society. The inference here, which is that ‘radical organizations’ misuse Islam, is done deliberately to frame counterhegemonic forces as antithetical to Islam, thus problematizing their own self-representation. However, characteristic of statements given by the government, the securitised actor is left ambiguous. Do the Taliban fit the label ‘extremist radical organization’? As government officials frequently point out, there

¹⁰⁹ Please note that jihad is a different form of spelling *jihad* and was found in the original translated transcript of Ghani’s address.

are “close to 30 groups classified as terrorists by the UN operating or establishing a base in Afghanistan” (Ghani 2016e). On the one hand, this leaves the (narco)terrorist open to societal interpretations. The association may not be universally understood to reflect the Taliban, but rather could apply to other local groups and powerholders in Afghanistan. On the other hand, the ‘extremist radical organization’ signifier is connected to a distinctive use of violence emblematic of the Taliban, indicating the preferred meaning of the speaker. In another example, Karzai stated, “Afghanistan is the first country in the world that will stand for Islam and its values and we have proven that and those who use the name of Islam to abuse Muslims, to close their schools, to kill their women and children are enemies of Islam” (Karzai 2013). The emphasis placed here on closing schools is a reference to the Taliban’s restrictions on education during its time in power and frequent attacks on schools and teachers throughout the 2000s. While not addressing the Taliban directly, Karzai is referencing commonly recognised characteristics of the Taliban to indirectly connect the organisation to the un-Islamic (narco)terrorist. Moreover, stating that such violent actors are considered the ‘enemies of Islam’ disassociates these actors with Afghan society and firmly establishes them as external, consequently disciplining associated groups and identities within Afghan society.

Islam is also used as a point of reference in Afghanistan’s international identity. The Taliban frequently assert that the government of Afghanistan are “puppets” of foreigners, delegitimising the state’s claims of sovereignty (see Semple 2014). The dynamics of local politics in Afghanistan places a great distance between the central government in Kabul and isolated districts away from population centres (Schetter et al. 2007; Schetter 2013). As a result, there is a continuity in how the contemporary government attempts to balance international policy with their own domestic challenges. Islam is used to mitigate some of these challenges and to invoke a referent object recognised by all of Afghan society. Particularly over the Ghani era, Islam has come to dominate Afghanistan’s foreign policy identity and how the government views foreign relations. In Ghani’s inaugural address in 2014, he outlined his foreign policy strategy and the deep linkages Afghanistan held with the rest of the Islamic world. “Islamic countries sphere would also be an important one in our foreign policy. Our vision, thought and actions are all based on Islamic values, and the Islamic culture is deeply linked with all aspects of our life. Therefore, we still have deep, holistic and fruitful relations with Islamic countries” (Ghani 2014). In terms of nation-building, framing Afghanistan’s foreign policy in such terms

is designed to cultivate a strong Islamic identity within society. The fact that this speech was directed at a domestic audience is indicative of Ghani's attempts to cultivate an image of Afghanistan's international Islamic identity, of which the GIRoA is the patron. As the state is representative of the society, this statement illustrates the connection between state and society premised on Islam. However, more significantly is the use of this discourse to distance the GIRoA from perceived foreign influence. The claim that "our vision, thought and actions are all based on Islamic values" bolsters the Islamic credentials of the government and exposes difference between them and foreign influences, namely the US. Further assertions of Afghanistan's Islamic foreign policy can be observed in support given to the Mecca Declaration, a statement issued by religious scholars in Saudi Arabia condemning terrorism as un-Islamic (Ghani 2016a). The government uses Islamic foreign policy to form an equivalential chain in which the state is Islamic, its friends and allies in the world are Islamic, the Afghan society is Islamic, and therefore the challenges faced by Afghanistan and its allies are un-Islamic.

Nation of Victims

While Islam has been an important strategy in establishing the state as representative of the Afghan nation, the most frequent use of danger as identity-building can be observed in the deployment of collective trauma and victimhood. As with Islam, the construction of a nation of victims forms a large part of the Taliban's communication strategy and highlights the symbiotic relationship between hegemonic and counterhegemonic representations of danger. While the Taliban witness their share of violence and trauma, the state holds considerably more authority and resources in their representation of suffering. As Afghan society is discursively linked to the state, political actors are better positioned to utilise violent acts in their construction of the Afghan identity. Despite the continuation of widespread violence and trauma, the government remains positioned to 'speak' for the Afghan national body as the trauma reflects the state's inability to secure.

The 'nation of victims' discourse is built upon the collective history of foreign influences and maladies in Afghanistan. The Anglo-Afghan wars are commonly held points of reference in Afghan culture designed to invoke a sense of historical trauma resulting from the Great Game (DuPree 2002; Barfield 2010). Subsequent invasions by the Soviet

Union, and more recently NATO, continues this tradition and further establishes the externality of danger. From these points of reference, the state can ascribe several qualities to the Afghan nation and chart its historical progression. Moreover, by evoking a sense of historical resistance to foreign occupiers, and the subsequent sacrifices such resistance entails, the GIRoA places itself as the contemporary manifestation of this legacy. The opening statement given by Hamid Karzai in his inaugural speech in 2011 is a good example of this:

Ten years ago when we began this difficult journey, we had inherited a destroyed country with no state institutions of national economy or education. Our strong army had been completely dismantled on orders by outsiders [referring to Pakistan] and their associates [referring to Taliban]; thousands martyred and millions escaped to take refuge outside their homeland; our educated were either killed or forced out of their country; our country was turned into a ground for rivalries by our enemies and a land of mourning and grieving. (Karzai 2011a)

This statement invokes a sense of shared trauma by chronicling the many challenges facing Afghanistan in November 2001. The externality of danger is referenced by the orders to dismantle the army of Afghanistan. Moreover, the role of the state as protector is made apparent through its conspicuous absence during this time of violence and suffering. Afghanistan's problematic history of foreign influence is also referenced in the line, "our country was turned into a ground for rivalries by our enemies." There is a strong sense of shared suffering in Afghanistan, which is addressed through references to the victims of political violence and the diaspora. Karzai is using this shared trauma to represent the Taliban's time in power as a danger and delegitimises counterhegemonic claims to speak for the 'true' Afghanistan. Karzai continues his speech with the statement, "However, despite all the hardships, the Afghans strived strenuously to take their destiny in their own hands and to re-build their state institutions" (Karzai 2011a). From establishing a point of trauma in the collective memory of Afghanistan, Karzai develops a sense of social ownership of the state. The fact that Afghans strived to rebuild their state infers that the endangered society rebuilt Afghanistan and firmly establishes the interconnection between political and social identity. This theme of resilience and resistance is continued to this day with political actors frequently citing this as characteristic of the *true* Afghan identity. Moreover, the position of Afghanistan as the 'frontline society' facing the fifth wave is used as evidence of its resilience (Karzai 2011b; Ghani 2016d, 2016e, 2017a). In short, the suffering experienced by Afghans is not down to the weakness or incompetence of the GIRoA, but rather the unjust ambitions of

counterhegemonic forces such as the Taliban. Such suffering continues as a mark of the righteous Afghan identity as endangered, but resisting, the unjust foreign danger.

Victimhood and suffering is exemplified in frequent references to martyrdom in the discourse. On the one hand, martyrdom utilises Islamic notions of suffering and sacrifice, which reflects Afghan social identity. In statements and speeches given following a terrorist event, the government often uses Islamic imagery in its representation of the victims and the collective suffering of the nation. In November 2016, following an attack in Kabul, the Office of the President released a statement saying, “the enemies of the people of Afghanistan martyred a number of our compatriots by carrying out a terrorist attack in Kabul City this morning” (Office of the President of Afghanistan 2016d). The Islamic notion of divine sacrifice is used here to sacralise the victims and equate Islamic identity to the Afghan nation. In another statement issued following an earlier attack in September 2016, “the President offers his sympathies and condolences to the families of those martyred, wishes quick recovery to those wounded, and prays to Almighty Allah to grant the highest place in paradise to those martyred today” (Office of the President of Afghanistan 2016b). Again, the use of Islamic notions of divine sacrifice and paradise equate victimhood with religious duty and frame the Afghan victim as representative of Islam. This creates a binary distinction between the Afghan/Muslim victim and the foreign/non-Muslim Other. Rather than relying on direct representations of the Taliban’s evilness or criminality to construct the Afghan identity, the government approaches the Taliban indirectly through representations of the effects of (narco)terror to construct a national identity.

Victims are also discursively incorporated within the Afghan nation through metaphorical linkages. The common use of ‘innocent sons and daughters’ (Office of the President of Afghanistan 2016; Ghani 2017) in reference to the victims of terrorism illustrates the establishment of a national family (McClintock 1993). The use of this label has two objectives. First, referring to victims as ‘sons and daughters’ infantilises Afghan society and creates a metaphorical linkage between the protecting sovereign (i.e. the Father) and the defenseless (i.e. innocent) sons and/or daughters. If we recall that the discursively constituted role of the state is primarily to identify and protect against danger, the use of this metaphor establishes the Afghan government (and more specifically the Executive Branch) within that role. Secondly, this metaphor invokes a shared sense of suffering. As sons and daughters, the victims are incorporated within the larger Afghan national

family, therefore their loss is the nation's loss. The fact that so many civilians have been killed over the previous four decades of conflict means that most Afghans have first-hand experience of loss. By framing the loss of innocent victims as a loss of a family member, the GIRoA connects the effects of (narco)terror to the collective memory of Afghan society.

Emerging from this sense of martyrdom and national family is a binary distinction between the Afghan nation as victims and the foreign perpetrator of violence. The distinction is best illustrated in an excerpt from Ashraf Ghani's speech at the Kabul Process conference in 2017:

Afghans are resilient. We have all known hunger, we have all seen what terror does to our friends and our families. We have all seen what terror has done to our friends and families. There is not one Afghan family that has not suffered. But we are a nation not just of survivors. We overcome challenges, together. We are a country with a three-thousand-year history. There has never been a separatist movement in Afghanistan and there never will be. (Ghani 2017b)

The suffering nation is emphasised through references to commonly held memories in Afghan society. The shared trauma erodes different boundaries within the social sphere and replaces them with the common history of violence and war. As a contrast, the reference to separatist movements is designed to externalise insurgent actors who aim to establish parallel governments or challenge the state's notion of the Afghan nation. While the reference is not directly used against the Taliban, and indeed the Taliban's aims are not separatist (Raqib and Barreto 2014), the linkage between a 3,000-year history and lack separatist movements firmly establishes counterhegemonic voices as external to Afghanistan. Moreover, if we recall that the distinctive feature of the fifth wave is to establish 'territories of terror' we can infer that separatism is being used to frame (narco)terror as antithetical to Afghanistan. Thus, a binary distinction is formed between the endangered Afghan society and the (narco)terrorist Other.

Conclusion

The representation of (narco)terror in Afghanistan illustrates the use of danger as a means of securing and disciplining the hegemonic Afghan identity. The international and domestic dimensions of this context demonstrate the various contexts in which danger has been used. In terms of state-building, the Afghan government has used (narco)terror

in the establishment of the contemporary Afghan state and in ways that fit its specific context. The (re)emergence of (narco)terror immediately after 9/11 demonstrates the agency held by the US globally and its authority in constructing and disseminating its own representation of danger around the world. But what is perhaps most striking about the use of danger is its potential for immaterial control. In terms of nation-building, the utility of (narco)terror cannot be denied as this cultivates an image of the Afghan self replete with cultural references and values. The ambiguity of the (narco)terrorist allows social actors to draw their own interpretations and take part in the application of labels to the excluded. The levels of acceptance or the success of these representations was not the focus of this chapter. Rather, this chapter has sought to illustrate the GIRoA's instrumental use of representations of (narco)terror, and its effects on society, to establish its hegemonic position over the endangered Afghan identity. Indeed, as this chapter has revealed, (narco)terror is not an existential threat to the Afghan state or society, but rather is maintained as a point of reference upon which discursive actors in the government can ascribe the dangers of the antagonistic Other and cultivate the identity of the endangered Afghan.

Chapter V – Counterhegemonic Voices: The Taliban’s (re)Representations of Danger

If we consider danger to be a discourse that is subject to hegemonic representations, ultimately the way we observe and evaluate this phenomenon is one-sided. Up to this point, the discussion on how narcotics and terrorism emerged as contemporary representations of danger focused exclusively on changes in the hegemonic discourse throughout the 20th century. The argument was that the concepts of narcotics and terrorism are reflections on how a state, or discursive hegemon, views its society, over which it has authority. While a society has agency in influencing the needs and necessities of the state, ultimately the role in constructing and disseminating these representations of danger rests with hegemonic actor. But what about those *represented* as danger? What is their role in sustaining or challenging these representations? Do they truly embody the discursive ‘blank canvas’ upon which the discursive hegemon writes danger? This is a crucial question to investigate as it poses a direct challenge to the authority of the state in both an institutional and ideational sense. Indeed, the ability of the *represented* to engage in discourse and represent itself undermines the very foundations of the sovereign’s authority as they challenge the characteristics, values, and labels being imposed on them (Campbell 1998: 3). This chapter addresses the counterhegemonic use of danger by critically analysing the discourses and (counter)representations emerging from the Taliban. The very nature of Taliban communications mirrors the methods and constructs employed by the GIRoA as they deploy their own representations of danger to establish an alternative vision for Afghan identity and their authority over the endangered society. In this symbiotic relationship, both the Taliban and the Afghan government use representations of danger (i.e. representing the danger of the other) as part of the same strategy of attaining/maintaining hegemony over society. While the content and methods differ greatly, the utilisation of representations of danger as a means of control can be observed in both actors, illustrating that danger is not a fixed concept but rather an ever-evolving discourse designed to constitute society both in terms of social structures and identity.

Prior to embarking on a critical analysis of the Taliban’s representations of danger, we must first investigate the context of counterhegemonic discourse as well as the actors

themselves. The typology of representations and discourses of danger emerging from a counterhegemonic position are often dramatically different from their hegemonic counterparts both in the methods and modes employed (Nazir 2010).¹¹⁰ This is largely due to the fact that counterhegemonic actors are located outside, or on the fringes of, legitimate society (i.e. the society discursively constituted by hegemonic actors). The perceived illegitimacy of these actors relegates them to an area external to the sociopolitical relationship that defines a society's interaction and interplay with political authority. Therefore, as society largely accepts hegemonic representations of danger as existential, the actors and identities represented as danger must use covert methods of communicating and disseminating their counter-representations to the society (Karzai 2009). Following from this, we will turn to a brief investigation of the methods used by the Taliban in communicating with Afghan, and indeed global, society. While this section will not critically assess the strengths or weaknesses of these methods, a brief investigation of the methods used by the Taliban will illustrate that the sovereignty claimed by the discursive hegemon is porous at best and reflects the notion that society is a field of competing representations. Moreover, the methods used by the Taliban highlight the distinctive link between counterhegemonic actors and the social audience at a grassroots level. While counterhegemonic actors are often prevented from using the same methods utilised by the discursive hegemon, their status on the periphery of society enables them to structure their representations in ways that are accessible and commonly known to the social audience (Bhatia 2005; Johnson 2007, 2017; Foxley 2007; ICG 2008; Stritzel and Chang 2015; Aggarwal 2016). This chapter then turns to an extensive analysis of the Taliban's engagement with discourse and representations of danger. While the Taliban's representations do not mirror the content of hegemonic representations (i.e. they seldom call the government of Afghanistan terrorists and/or narcotraffickers), the labels and values used by the Taliban often possess the same meanings and inferences used in hegemonic representations of the Taliban. In other words, the preferred meanings and corollaries desired by the Taliban mirror those of the Afghan government. The significance of this, and where this discussion ultimately leads us, is that discourses of danger form the structure of political authority and are utilised by both hegemonic and counterhegemonic actors in attempting to establish dominance over society. In short,

¹¹⁰ Counterhegemonic representations have been similarly termed as 'counter-securitization', a resistance against a securitizing move by those who are securitized (see Stritzel & Chang 2015; Charrett 2009).

representations of danger are the means by which discursive actors control, border, and shape society.

Counterhegemonic Discourse

Counterhegemonic communication is a challenging endeavour. The asymmetries of power between hegemonic and counterhegemonic actors naturalizes the knowledge and language used by the sovereign protector. As Agamben points out, via Plato, "...the axiom that seems to be more important is the sixth one, which is to say, the one that orders that he who knows and is intelligent should govern, and that the ignorant should therefore follow him" (Plato in Agamben 1998: 26). Furthermore, as discussed in previous chapters, the importance of authoritative knowledge works in tandem with a 'known' danger, which necessitates the protective role of the state (Neocleous 2008; Dillon 1996, 2007). Ultimately, this leads to contemporary understandings of sovereignty in which the state holds the material monopoly on violence but also the immaterial monopoly on knowledge of violence (i.e. when to use violence and against whom). Such authority greatly hinders the ability of counterhegemonic forces to represent themselves and effectively communicate with the social audience. Moreover, the political and structures established through hegemonic discourse largely subjugate alternative knowledge(s) emerging from the subordinate and counterhegemonic (Gramsci 1971).

Continuing from this point, it is relatively simple for the state to delegitimize and exclude counterhegemonic actors from the social sphere. Particularly in reference to terrorism, the commonly accepted notion that '*we don't negotiate with terrorists*'¹¹¹ renders dialogue and negotiation with those represented as danger all but impossible. This 'rhetorical delegitimation' commonly represents terrorists as uncivilized, inhuman, and criminal, externalizing these actors from society, and most importantly, persuading society to maintain this distinction and exclusion (Chowdhury and Krebs 2010: 131). Therefore, counterhegemonic actors face a great challenge in communicating with society and representing themselves. Moreover, in such an asymmetrical relationship the

¹¹¹ The common use of the pronoun 'we' is designed to evoke a sense of ownership and representation of the social voice by the discursive hegemon.

counterhegemonic is essentially ‘playing catch-up’ as the majority of its own representations and communications are dedicated at problematizing hegemonic discourse (Foxley 2007: 6; see Stritzel and Chang 2015). While this may appear to be a disadvantage, the excluded status poses significant opportunities for counterhegemonic actors to communicate with the social audience.

The reason for this lies in the fact that ‘official’ modes of representation, such as speeches, press releases, policy statements, and other governmental (i.e. official) forms of communication, are denied to the Taliban as counterhegemonic actors. As a result, new lines of communication are formed within the public sphere (see Calhoun 1992). Far from being uniformly accepted as authentic or legitimate, these lines of communication bypass official channels of representation and approach various sub-identities within the social sphere. Similarly, socially owned networks of communication such as mainstream media are also avoided by the Taliban and frequently accused of being controlled by the Afghan government (Nathan 2009: 26). Accusing the media of being beholden to the government challenges its partiality and leads citizens to question the accuracy of their reports (Medley 2010). Moreover, by communicating directly to society, and through the usage of culturally-relevant referent objects (e.g. religious symbolism, national heroes, cultural tropes, etc.), the Taliban have been able to challenge the Afghan government’s reputation and “express the discontent of a grieving population” (Raqib and Barreto 2014: 18; Johnson 2017). Indeed, this communication strategy is not limited to the Taliban or Afghanistan as many have pointed out similar strategies used by *narcos*¹¹² in Mexico (see Cabañas 2014; Campbell 2014; Hernández 2014). In this way, the counterhegemonic voice challenges the state’s delegitimization strategy and authoritative knowledge of danger. As mentioned above, it is not within the purview of this study to determine whether or not such a strategy is successful; rather, by looking at the methods and content of Taliban representations we can uncover the symbiotic relationship between hegemonic and counterhegemonic representations of danger and its implications for social identity.

Reflective of this strategy, the Taliban’s communication strategy continues to be dominated by three core mediums: *Shabnamah* (night letters), poems/*taranas* (chants), and statements, press releases, articles and statistics published online via their website.

¹¹² The term ‘narcos’ refers to members of the drug cartels operating throughout Latin America.

Interestingly, the first two modes of representation reflect this tendency to employ culturally sensitive methods in communicating with society, whereas the latter reflects a desire to mirror the official discourses and engage with Afghan society on similar terms, and using similar language, as the government (Foxley 2007: 1; Mahendrarajah 2014: 92; Aggarwal 2016: 5; see Gopal & Osman 2016). This is a relatively recent development in the Taliban's political and military strategy as before 2008¹¹³ the Taliban was largely in disarray, with communication characterised as 'defensive' and centred around damage control (ICG 2008: 8). Moreover, as Foxley points out, "the Taliban did not show interest in centralised mechanisms of modern government and communications with the populace...[A]s Taliban capabilities and confidence gradually improved and they were able to expand guerilla operations, their efforts to engage with the international media and the Afghan populace began to develop" (Foxley 2007: 4-5).¹¹⁴ Between 2008-2009, the Taliban attempted a softer line in order to win over local communities, and in the context of an upcoming national election (2009) the Taliban emphasized their accountability to the Afghan people (Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012a: 284). We will return to this particular message below, however the general significance of these three methods is that they reflect the challenges characteristic of counterhegemonic communication. On the one hand, engaging in counternarratives that mirror the methods used by the state is understandable as politicized dangers, especially individuals labelled as such, must represent themselves in ways that directly engage with the hegemonic discourse. On the other hand, counterhegemonic actors face the further burden of attempting to represent themselves as included within the society, a factor greatly reflected in the Taliban's continued use of cultural artefacts and vernacular lines of communication: night-letters and poetry.

Night Letters, or *shabnamah*, are a particularly important method of social communication in Afghanistan. With a long history of resistance to centralized authority (see Barfield 2010), "night letters have been a traditional and common instrument of

¹¹³ The precise year of this shift is subject to contention in the literature, with several notable authors such as Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn (2012a) arguing that the Taliban's political stance shifted in 2009, whereas others point to a shift as early as 2007, necessitating a 'resecuritization' of the Taliban (Stritzel and Chang 2015). As the majority of encountered literature on this subject dates from 2008, it can be inferred that the politicization of the 'neo-Taliban' began prior to 2009.

¹¹⁴ Foxley (2007) was referring to refining of content and consolidation of message in Taliban 'grassroots' communications, as opposed to more official representations found on the internet.

Afghan religious figures, jihadists and rebels to encourage people, especially (but not exclusively) rural populations to oppose both state authority and regulations” (Johnson 2007: 318). A night letter is essentially an anonymous leaflet that is posted in a community overnight (as to maintain its anonymity) and left in a highly visible place such as a mosque. Others maintain that these letters are aimed at symbols of authority and their very placement on these symbols, such as government buildings, is a challenge to the state and a demonstration of the Taliban’s omnipresence (Johnson 2007: 321). Whether communication rests on the physical presence of the letter or on the actual content, the cultural significance of night letters is what makes it such an effective method. Moreover, the grassroots character of these letters reflects the need for a counterhegemonic voice to authoritatively establish itself within society’s collective identity. A relatively recent example of widespread use of night letters, and one which is firmly established in the collective conscious of the Afghan people, was during the Soviet occupation when letters were frequently used to vilify collaborators as ‘traitors’ and encourage public protest against the communist government and Soviet occupiers (Johnson 2007: 320). As the Soviet-Afghan War is widely regarded as a defining moment for the modern Afghan nation, and with *mujahedeen* venerated to this day, the use of night letters firmly locates the Taliban within Afghan society and represents them as continuing Afghanistan’s long tradition of resistance to foreign powers.

This method of communication also reflects a keen awareness of the social and geographical context of Afghanistan. Centralized authority in Afghanistan has traditionally been a challenge owing to the lack of infrastructure and rugged landscape (Barfield 2010: 178; Dupree 2002; Schetter 2013). With four decades of continuous warfare, the technological capacities of rural communities continue to be severely limited. For instance, in Uruzgan province in 2004, the authenticity of night letters as a product of Uruzgani society was challenged by the government on grounds that there was not a photocopier in the entire province at the time (Walsh 2004). While the authors of the night letters remain anonymous, the rural context of Afghanistan is significant as technologically advanced methods of communication remain largely inaccessible. For instance, television ownership has rapidly increased since 2007, with a recent study placing ownership as high as 61%, compared to only 37% in 2007 (Asia Foundation

2016).¹¹⁵ However, this remains a relatively new medium with many studies pointing to the government's ineffectiveness in shaping the hearts and minds of rural Afghans (Rahman 2015). Radio has historically been more widespread in Afghanistan as the technology is cheaper and networks are more established. Indeed, during their years in power, the Taliban utilised a robust communications strategy, disseminating state-run magazines, regular radio shows, and other print media designed to enhance the public image of the regime and spread positive messages to society (Giustozzi 2007: 121; ICG 2008: 5). In the contemporary period, the Taliban continue to use radio to disseminate messages to Afghan society and abroad via links with Arabic-language and Pakistani radio and TV stations (Foxley 2007: 6; Karzai 2009: 78). However, despite the fact that these media offer the Taliban the opportunity to reach large sections of the Afghan population, they fall short in representing the omnipresence of the group and its location within Afghan society. Afghan society is still deeply rooted in tribalism with much of the population living in rural areas in isolated conditions (Barfield 2010; Rashid 2010), leading many to still favour word of mouth over information transmitted through regional and national media.¹¹⁶ For the Taliban, this presents an important opportunity to subvert the state and mainstream media outlets.

Night letters are, therefore, an important tactic shaping the realities of much of Afghanistan. Disseminating the letters is low cost, low technology, and represent the physical presence of the Taliban in target communities. The subject of the letters, which will be discussed at length below, varies greatly; however, it is the physical presence of a letter that makes it such a powerful tool of counter-representation.¹¹⁷ The placement of these letters on local mosques and other public forums reflects the imperative for the Taliban to (re)establish itself within Afghan society and draw clear linkages between their identity and commonly recognised referent objects, such as Islam. Furthermore, and in relation to discursive themes discussed in Chapter IV, this directly challenges the government's representation of itself as the *true* Muslim and the Taliban as under foreign

¹¹⁵ This percentage reflects the number of households that possess a television nationwide.

¹¹⁶ However, it must also be pointed out that this is rapidly changing. For a historical trend see Asia Foundation (2014, 2016).

¹¹⁷ This is referred to by Stritzel and Chang (2015) as 'counter-securitization'.

influence. The letters represent a traditional method of counter-discourse and challenging authority whether it is local, regional, or national (Bhatia 2005: 6).

However, the anonymity of night letters presents one glaring issue: authorship. The letters have become part of the Taliban's identity in post-2001 Afghanistan and are commonly written in their name; however, the anonymous nature of the letters means that anyone, individual or organization, could write a letter in the name of the Taliban, which has indeed been the case (Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012a: 289; ICG 2008: 12). The ability to generate fear and intimidation in society is one of the motivations behind the letters as they are often designed to put pressure on individuals to conform to the counterhegemonic vision of ideal society (i.e. not supporting the government, not cooperating with foreigners, etc.). Public displays of violence, a supplementary form of communication (Richardson 2006; Ramsay and Holbrook 2015), present a unique opportunity for other actors placed on fringes of society (i.e. criminal gangs, drug traffickers, etc.) as the Taliban name carries associations with violence and intimidation. The commonly recognised association between night letters and the Taliban lends credibility to all night letters and allows individuals and groups to exploit this linkage and push forward their own agenda. Moreover, the highly localized nature of the letters (Nathan 2009: 38), while beneficial for reaching local communities and challenging the state's representation of danger (Karzai 2009: 77), challenges the ability of the Taliban to present a cohesive, unified counterhegemonic discourse that reaches Afghan society at regional and national levels.

Indeed, this is a challenge recognized by the Taliban. Following their ousting, the Taliban as a monolithic organization ceased to exist, with many fighters and local commanders returning to their home villages in the countryside (Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012a: 326; Johnson 2017). The central leadership of the Taliban fled into Pakistan and set up operations in Quetta, subsequently being externalized from Afghan society both physically and discursively. However, as the Taliban regrouped several prominent commanders (re-)emerged and began pushing forward their own agendas. As Nathan puts it, "a confused plethora of self-proclaimed spokesmen and commanders continued to invoke the regime's name" (Nathan 2009: 25). On the ground, this led to contradictions between statements from Taliban leadership in Quetta and local commanders in Afghanistan.

An illustrative example of this is the story of Mullah Mansoor Dadullah. Mansoor Dadullah's older brother, Mullah Dadullah (also known as Dadullah Akhund) was a central figure in the Taliban leadership and one of the most active commanders in the post-2001 era (Giustozzi 2007: 11). Mansoor's fundamentalism and penchant for using suicide bombers made him a well-known figure within Afghanistan. He was also a very vocal member of the Taliban leadership, greatly contrasting the reclusive Mullah Omar, and between 2005-2007 frequently issued public statements to Afghan society and beyond.¹¹⁸ Interestingly, Dadullah emphasized the bias of mainstream media and their 'mistreatment' of the Taliban because of their reluctance (or outright refusal) to air Taliban reports (Nathan 2009: 27). This criticism and distrust of mainstream media would eventually lead the Taliban to establish a strong internet presence, which will be discussed further below. Mullah Dadullah was killed in 2007 and his younger brother Mansoor took control of his faction. However, despite these strong credentials Mansoor Dadullah became a divisive figure within the Taliban. As the organization began to adopt a softer line in its communications to society and political vision, placing a greater emphasis on service provision and accountability to local populations, Mansoor's operations and statements, reminiscent of the 'old Taliban,'¹¹⁹ "distorted perceptions of the Taliban's broader agenda" (Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012a: 277). In 2008, the Taliban central leadership had had enough and issued a statement stating that,

Mullah Mansoor Dadullah is not obedient to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in his actions and has carried out activities against the rule of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, so the decision [-making] authorities of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan have removed Mansoor Dadullah from his post, and he will no longer be serving the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in any way, and no Taliban will obey his orders any more. (Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan quoted in ICG 2008: 27)

What this example points to is the emergence of several different voices attempting to speak for the post-2001 Taliban. Relating back to the challenges characteristic of counterhegemonic representation, attempting to mirror a unified discursive actor like the state, or even a semi-cohesive field of security experts, is a difficult endeavour given that the objective of political representations of danger is to link several different actors (or

¹¹⁸ This caused friction between factions of the Taliban leading to a rivalry with the Osmani faction in the mid-2000s. While infighting is common, the factionalism of the post-2001 Taliban is one of its strongest sources of instability and detriment to its communication strategy.

¹¹⁹ The Taliban of the 1990s, commonly understood in the literature as a contrast to the new or 'neo-Taliban' of contemporary times.

objects) into one larger cohesive narrative. This tendency is greatly reflected in the commonly held understanding of a new, or neo-Taliban. Whereas the traditional Taliban consisted of a hierarchical organization with a central authority, the neo-Taliban (also referred to as Taliban 2.0) has been characterized as ‘semi-autonomous’ (UNODC 2009: 102), ‘opium traffickers and criminal gang members’ (Peters 2009ab), and local ‘thugs’ (Abbas 2014: 170). Essentially, this representation and naturalized understanding of a ‘new’ Taliban forced the organisation to dedicate their communications to upholding the image of a cohesive, unified group. In terms of communications methods, night letters do not adequately address this challenge and have become commonly associated with ‘fake’ Taliban (Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012a: 289). But the question of effectiveness raises another important issue: agency. What is the objective of the Taliban in their representations? Is it to create a ‘shadow government’ that mirrors the state (Stritzel and Chang 2015: 8; Mahendrarajah 2014)? Or, is it more to engage with society and construct counternarratives and cultural artefacts that challenge the state’s discursive authority over identity? In pursuing the latter, a brief discussion of Taliban poetry is required.

Poetry and *taranas* (chants, also understood as ballads) form a large section of the Taliban’s communication strategy and representations.¹²⁰ Drawing on a well-established tradition of poetry in Afghanistan, the Taliban have effectively utilized this form of cultural expression since the beginning of the movement and continue to this day. As Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn (2012b) assert, “Poetry is part of the lifeblood of social intercourse, whether among politicians on late-night TV chat shows in Kabul or among villagers in some far-flung province” (33). Indeed, poetry is something that is universally referred to in defining the Afghan identity and by utilizing this cultural outlet, the Taliban firmly establish themselves and their followers as emblematic of the Afghan identity (see Caron 2011).

Taranas, a vocalized form of poetry, are a powerful means of cultural expression used by the Taliban. Despite the organization’s ban on music during its reign, *taranas* were permitted as they do not include music accompaniment and are often infused with

¹²⁰ As mentioned above, access to society differs greatly depending on the medium and the target group (audience). While the Taliban have employed a successful media campaign via the internet and DVDs, much of their reach remains a product of poetry, *taranas*, and other traditional forms of cultural expression.

religious metaphors and references (ICG 2008). Both written poems and *taranas* are significant cultural representations for several reasons. Primarily, they are integral features of Afghan social production and commonly accepted forms of representation within the culture. The familiarity and acceptance of this medium means that the messages being conveyed by the Taliban will reach social actors and be recognized as authentic, whereas other forms of representation, such as statistics and statements, often run the risk of delegitimization by either the Afghan government or prominent social actors (i.e. established news media). Poetry also provides the Taliban with the unique ability to reach the emotions of individuals and groups within society. Referring back to the role of danger in constituting social identity, emotion is the driving force in recognizing something as dangerous; “the concept of threat and danger is established on the basis of the human emotion of fear” (Booth and Wheeler 2008: 62). This is largely how propaganda and representations of danger function. Discursive authorities use interpretations to create an emotionally charged atmosphere and limit any critical discussion of the danger (Bhatia 2005: 16). This politicises the understanding of the Self to an antagonistic distinction between one’s collective identity and the ‘evil and ugly’ Other (Schmitt 1995: 27). Indeed, this is a well-beaten path in the literature surrounding representations of the Taliban and has been discussed at length above; however, in regard to the Taliban’s own representations and communication with society, emotion is not meant to securitize the state but rather to reintegrate the Taliban into society, thereby challenging the hegemonic political and social order. The *taranas* are particularly useful in this area as the repeated chants utilize Afghan cultural imagery and are replete with religious and historic references (ICG 2008: 16; Nathan 2009: 30). Most importantly, *taranas* play on the shared trauma of war and conflict that dominates Afghanistan’s collective consciousness.

Poetic representations, therefore, firmly locate the Taliban within Afghan society and package the message in a way that is commonly accepted in rural environments. Where night letters reflect local issues and political discord (Karzai 2009: 77), poems reach a much wider audience and reflect identities at regional and national levels. Ironically, as the organization has been known for heavy enforced bans on music, films, television and videos, they now embrace new technology and use it extensively in disseminating visual and oral representations (Foxley 2007; ICG 2008; Aggarwal 2016). DVDs, CDs, audio cassettes and mobile phone ringtones are popular methods of communication among the

Taliban and are readily accessible throughout Afghanistan (Foxley 2007: 5-6; ICG 2008: 14; Kamel 2015: 74). Many of the DVDs disseminated by the Taliban feature powerful images of suicide bombers, battlefield videos, deserting Afghan National Army soldiers, and other images designed to challenge the authority and role of the state (ICG 2008: 18; Nathan 2009: 31). In combination with these visual representations, poetry in the form of *taranas* invoke nationalist feelings and sympathies for the Taliban cause, which is conveyed through a traditional medium (Nathan 2009: 31). Indeed, the use of *taranas* in combination with images of exceptional violence might seem like an obvious tactic in invoking an emotional response, however this also reflects one of the greatest challenges facing the Taliban: the need to legitimize and rationalize its violence. If terrorism is a hegemonic representation of violence, cultivating a sense of nationalism and other referent objects of identity is vital in countering this representation and re-representing the violence (and consequently the movement) as a just, social movement.

In a context like Afghanistan where violence and injustice are continuously perpetrated and experienced by all actors in society, culture and identity are vital in attaining and sustaining authority and representing the opposition as danger. Moreover, the core theme of the externality of danger lends further salience to cultural mediums in legitimizing one's own violence as just and, therefore, not dangerous. Culture becomes an important tool in promoting the credibility of counterhegemonic representations of danger. As argued by Shapiro (2004), culture is a primary factor in sustaining legitimate authority over a society. Sovereignty is not merely based on a monopoly on violence or a territorial border, but rather on the ability of the sovereign to *speak* for society and to secure its communal identity. However, despite the importance of this point, cultural governance remains somewhat limited in explaining the importance of representations of danger, and in particular reference to the Taliban. Limiting the Taliban to a purely grassroots insurgency movement, or worse an apolitical terrorist organization, misses the essence of the group and neglects their political motivations (Mahendrarajah 2014: 92). Instead, we must look at the Taliban's representations as not only violence or cultural production, but rather as the mirror opposite to hegemonic discourse: a combination of culture, violence, and authority. This three-pronged strategy is best demonstrated in the Taliban's online presence embodied on their website *Al Emarah*. Here the discourse adopts a more official character as the Taliban's political ambitions come to fore.

Authority, or sovereignty, is a difficult characteristic to attain for the Taliban. Hegemonic representations of the organization by security actors, the government, and relevant experts depoliticize the organization through references to narcotics trafficking, criminality as well as the assertion of a networked, non-ideological Taliban 2.0. The supposed apolitical nature of the neo-Taliban, represented through associations with criminality, casts suspicion over the authenticity of Taliban communications and leads experts to question the credibility of the counterhegemonic voice (Foxley 2007). As a result, and in the context of several different Taliban voices in the late-2000s, the organization established the Cultural Commission¹²¹ for the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. One particular statement issued by the Taliban in April 2008 illustrates this point:

Recently a number of writers, religious scholars and poets have compiled books, jihadi CDs and recorded taranas and publicly distributed them. They referred to their personal work in the name of the Islamic Emirate, in particular the Cultural Affairs Commission, which they had not informed any authorised official of the Islamic Emirate. The Islamic Emirate hails their efforts, however recommends (sic) that those who compile books, jihadi CDs or songs and want them to be released in the name of the Islamic Emirate should get the approval of the Islamic Emirate Cultural Commission...otherwise they should not use the name of the Islamic Emirate for their own gain. (ICG 2008: 29)

Indeed, the ease of transferring cultural productions and representations to society as a result of technology and a network of semi-autonomous local field commanders allows the Taliban to reach all areas of Afghanistan and beyond; however, these communications are easily delegitimized through simple questioning of their authenticity and adherence to the Taliban ethos. The establishment of the Commission, therefore, unites the disparate Taliban into one discursive actor. By establishing a logo, identifying official spokesmen, and creating an illustrious departmental label meant to perform governance and mimic official status, the Taliban have essentially set up a counterhegemonic 'brand', reducing political antagonisms in society to a simplistic binary. The similarity with the GIRoA in terms of strategy and discourse is striking. The need to unify disparate voices into a single 'official' discourse reflects the Foucauldian assertion that official discourse trumps all other knowledge (Aggarwal 2016).

¹²¹ The Cultural Commission has also been referred to as the Commission for Cultural Affairs.

The Taliban were one of the first militant groups to have an online presence. This is somewhat ironic given their rejection of technology during their rule. Nonetheless, the Taliban set up their first website (www.taliban.com) in 1998 (Aggarwal 2016: 1). This was subsequently shutdown but rising from the ashes of their defeat emerged their current website *Al Emarah*¹²² (<https://alemarah-english.com/>).¹²³ The utility of a robust online presence is questionable, however, given the lack of education, technology and electricity throughout much of Afghanistan. Despite a spike in television viewership in recent years, the internet is seldom used by Afghans with only 11.2% indicating they had personal access to the Internet (Asia Foundation 2016: 135). Moreover, in areas of Afghanistan with a strong Taliban presence, such as Nuristan, internet access is as low as 2.4% (Asia Foundation 2016: 135). What this amounts to is that the Taliban's internet presence is not directed at the rural population of Afghanistan, but rather a range of discursive actors such as semi-autonomous commanders, Afghans abroad, donors, journalists, and opinion leaders (Aggarwal 2016: 15; Nathan 2009; see also Calvin 2011). This two-pronged approach reflects the motivations of the Taliban in countering hegemonic discourse. On the one hand, the official nature of the Taliban website is part of a larger strategy designed at representing the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan (Aggarwal 2016). On the other hand, by directing statements toward opinion leaders, the Taliban is hoping to challenge hegemonic discourse and displace official representations of danger.

Indeed, the latter point reflects Dadullah's earlier criticism of inherent biases in the media and their hostility to the Taliban (Nathan 2009: 27). The purported media bias reflects another important theme in counterhegemonic representations: the reluctance of the public sphere to adopt their representations. While such a tendency reflects Frosh and Wolfsfeld's (2007) earlier argument on the role of the media in representing the nation, the Taliban decry this bias and portray it as silencing the people. Moreover, the Taliban represents the state as lackeys of foreign powers, such as the United States, and therefore all injustices and attacks committed against the Taliban are represented as attacks on the

¹²² 'The Emirate' in Arabic. The label 'emirate' is meant to convey the governmentality and officiality of the website and the political nature of the Taliban. It is also meant to convey that the Taliban are no longer merely a grassroots movement of militant students, but rather a government-in-exile.

¹²³ There are five Taliban websites, each reflecting a particular language (Dari, English, Arabic, Urdu, Pashto). Interestingly, the message and content changes depending on the language. An excellent book exploring the Taliban's online discourse, and an invaluable secondary source for this project, is Neil Aggarwal's (2016) *The Taliban's Virtual Emirate: The Culture and Psychology of an Online Militant Community*.

people. *Al Emarah*, as the information outlet for the Taliban, is therefore not seen as merely the propaganda department of the Taliban, but rather as the ‘true’ voice and vision for the Afghan people. This point is illustrated by the editor of the Taliban’s monthly Urdu-language magazine *Shari-at*: “The fundamental goal of the monthly ‘Shari-at’ is not just providing the truth and presenting the real picture to people, but also stopping and starting to remedy the wily enemy’s false propaganda” (Afghan 2012: 2 in Aggarwal 2016).

The website is a representation in itself. Its presence and officiality is meant to signify the Taliban’s ‘governmentality’.¹²⁴ Just as the Afghan government represents itself as speaking for the Afghan people, the Taliban adopts the same role as advocated through its official communications. This emphasis on governance and public accountability is vital to its counterhegemonic discourse and can be observed elsewhere, particularly with the publication of the *Layeha* in 2006, 2009, and 2010 (Johnson and DuPee 2012; Clark 2011). The *Layeha* is perhaps one of the strongest examples of the Taliban’s counterhegemonic discourse in the area of governance. The literature is somewhat divided as to the utility of the Code¹²⁵ with some scholars emphasizing its importance in showing the organizational dynamics and challenges facing the Taliban, while others asserting its importance as a propaganda tool (Clark 2011; Johnson 2007). For the purposes of this project, the *Layeha* acts as a representation of the Taliban’s own hegemonic aspirations. Much of the language observed in the various articles regulating the conduct of Taliban fighters and commanders is reflective of the challenges inherent of counterhegemonic representations discussed above. As with most counterhegemonic discourses, the Code is not designed primarily to represent the Afghan government as an existential danger, but rather to portray the Taliban as the saviours of ‘the people’¹²⁶ and the protectors of a just and secure society. Essentially, society is already living the danger and it is the task of the Taliban to represent itself as the securer, constituting itself as the legitimate authority over the ‘true’ Afghan society. Thus, the *Layeha* is an attempt at

¹²⁴ Please note that governmentality is not used here in reference to Foucault’s concept. Rather, governmentality is used to describe the Taliban’s attempts at representing themselves as the hegemonic authority via expressions of governance.

¹²⁵ *Layeha* is the Taliban’s Code of Conduct; therefore, it is frequently referred to as ‘the Code’ in the literature

¹²⁶ A label commonly deployed to signify non-aligned Afghans (i.e. those who do not work for the government or fight for the Taliban (Clark 2011).

problematizing the GIROA's representation of the Taliban while also giving insight into how a Taliban-ruled state would be run (Clark 2011). As we have seen, the Taliban readily adopt counterhegemonic representations of danger to constitute themselves as the legitimate protectors of Afghan society, while at the same time discursively constructing their vision of the 'true' Afghan nation.

Painting the Other as Danger: Commonalities in Hegemonic and Counterhegemonic Representations of Danger

Despite the challenges characteristic of communicating with society as a counterhegemonic voice, the Taliban retain a strong capacity in this area. Their modes of representation reflect a keen awareness of Afghan society and the sociopolitical context. Moreover, the various media employed by the Taliban address specific issues facing society and their alternative vision. While the innovative methods used by the Taliban are an important consideration, it is the content of these communications that most clearly reflects the symbiotic discourses of danger used by hegemonic and counterhegemonic actors.

As mentioned above, the Taliban's engagement with discourses of danger is quite varied and reflects a plurality of actors and mediums. Language is an important factor guiding the nature of communication and the essence of these representations. For example, the Taliban's online presence is quite varied in terms of message, reflecting the role language plays in determining content and the target audience (Aggarwal 2016). English language publications, for instance, are directed at the wider Islamic community outside of Afghanistan and generally attempt to problematize global representations of the Taliban as danger (Aggarwal 2016: 108; Calvin 2011). Nevertheless, the Taliban adopt six themes in their communication with society, both domestic and international. The main themes are: 1) Values, an understanding of ideal Afghan values that directly contrast those of foreigners; 2) History of external dangers, reflecting Afghanistan's tradition of opposing foreign invasions and situating the Taliban within this tradition; 3) Externality of danger, referring to the notion that all dangers are the work of external forces; 4) Morality, in reference to Islam and the movement's religious puritanism; 5)

Governmentality, referring to the Taliban's true role as protector and their activities directed at ruling over a just society; and 6) Cultural tropes, situating the Taliban within traditional Afghan culture and in direct relation to historic figures. Indeed, many of these themes avoid direct reference to the concept of danger itself and are focused on establishing the Taliban's position within Afghan society. Indeed, this point further reflects the underlying theme within counterhegemonic representations of danger, namely that the danger is already lived and experienced by social actors. There is a distancing between the hegemonic political structure (i.e. the GIRoA) and the suffering of the subordinate citizenry. The content of Taliban representations is not directed at ousting a political party or protecting society *from* an unknown danger, but rather a rupture of the dangerous hegemonic political and social structure.

Values are a common indication of cultural hegemony over society. As a political community as well as the designated audience for political representations, the nation is defined by its adherence to certain politicised values. As such, values hold an important position in counterhegemonic discourse as evidenced by the Taliban. For them, it is not the physical presence of a foreign occupation that is dangerous, but rather the effect it has on specific Afghan values. Islamic values are therefore needed to defeat the danger of foreign culture as it invades Afghan society (Aggarwal 2016: 75-76). This discourse functions on two levels depending on the medium. In terms of the inherent danger of an immoral enemy, the Taliban adopts official language and issues public statements denouncing acts of violence perpetrated by ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) and their Afghan government counterparts. On the other hand, regarding desired Afghan social values, the Taliban employs more traditional methods of communication, specifically in the form of poetry. Thus, the Taliban present themselves as the embodiment of traditional Afghan values and its rural society (Crews and Tarzi 2008: 8).

The perceived dichotomy between modernism and traditionalism is a prominent theme used by the Taliban. This dichotomy reflects the traditional distinction between the modern elites based in Kabul and the more traditional and underdeveloped rural society (Barfield 2010: 133). When addressing social audiences, the Taliban bemoans the infiltration of modern technology and material culture into Afghan society and frequently deploys metaphors to highlight its antithesis to Afghan culture. In one poem entitled *Strange Times*, the author writes:

They pretend to worship God, but in their hearts they seek to spread the word about others;

I swear by God that they have separated from *Allah*.

By worshipping material things, the worshipper himself became lost.

(Erfaan, *Strange Times*, in Strick van Linschoten & Kuehn 2012b)

In this poem, the author is highlighting the perceived antithetical relationship between materialism and Islam. Materialism is represented as a competing deity to Allah and one that draws worship from immoral individuals. This linkage is interesting as it stresses the corrupting influence materialism has on society. To point out that materialism is antagonistic to Islam would be a simple representation of immorality; however, what is most significant about this excerpt is the subversive tendency highlighted in the opening line – *they pretend to worship God, but in their hearts they seek to spread the word about others*. Once again, the dominant trope of a society already experiencing the danger is at the forefront of this poem as evidenced in the corrupting influence of modern materialism. The last two lines of this poem further highlight this point:

I saw the son of a Sheikh and a holy man in the cinema,

so his sister and mother left out of shame and modesty.

(Erfaan, *Strange Times*, in Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012b)

The juxtaposition of the Sheikh and the holy man with the cinema illustrates the tempting nature of modern technology and how it corrupts even the most pious of social figures. The mother and sister leaving out of shame is a useful tactic in demonstrating the immorality of the cinema. As women are traditionally confined to the private sphere in Afghanistan, they are largely protected from these corrupting influences. Their rejection of the cinema and the two offending actors reflects a pure, traditional Afghan society excluding offenders and avoiding corrupting influences.

In addition to technology and materialism, Afghans linked to non-believers (i.e. foreigners) are also represented as corrupt. The presence of non-believers in Afghan society and within the central government is represented as a danger with the capacity to corrupt Afghans and lead them to apostatise. In one such example, a poem written by Abdul Halim entitled “Selling the Faith”, the links between wealthy Afghans and foreigners are denounced as corrupting and heretical.

One person is granted wealth and selfishness;

One is hopeless from poverty.

Some have sold their faith for money;

They accompany the non-believers elsewhere.

Pious God!

Eliminate their hypocrisy!

(Abdul Halim, *Selling the Faith*, in Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012a)

This poem is significant for two reasons. First, wealth is equated to selfishness and foreign influence. The development of a new elite class in Afghanistan following the overthrow of the Taliban has resulted in widespread inequality throughout the country. Non-believers are seen to have influenced wealthy Afghans to ‘sell their faith for money’, furthering the theme discussed above. Secondly, this poem is directed at the rural audience. The development of a wealthy urban class that is heavily linked to foreign actors, or refugees returning from the West, has exacerbated the rural/urban divide. For rural Afghans, poverty is inescapable and they remain pious. As a contrast, the Taliban highlight urban Afghans’ wealth and subsequent selfishness as evidence of the corrupting influence of the foreign danger.

Foreignness and externality are another feature in the Taliban’s representations. The Taliban mirrors the dangers represented by the government and use externality to border the ideal society. For both the Taliban and the government of Afghanistan, danger is not endogenous to Afghan society, but instead is seen to derive from foreign influences whether that be Western powers, in Taliban communications, or Pakistan and other foreign donors, in the government’s discourse. The parallel between hegemonic and counterhegemonic cannot be overlooked here as both actors’ use of external danger serves as the lodestone upon which they assert their authority over a secured society. Moreover, the foreignness of danger reflects attempts to discursively constitute a fixed understanding of the endangered Afghan identity (see Campbell 1998).

While this parallel is interesting from an academic perspective, it proves to be a nightmare for the Taliban and other counterhegemonic actors. The subjugation and silencing of Taliban knowledge and discourse firmly locates this identity outside, or at best on the fringes, of society. From this initial disadvantage, it becomes a relatively simple task to exclude the Taliban and discursively link it to a larger foreign danger or supposed intrigue (i.e. Pakistan).¹²⁷ Similarly, the events that unfolded following the 2001 invasion and the

¹²⁷ Associating the Taliban with the Pakistani government is one of the key discursive themes used by the government of Afghanistan. See Chapter IV.

subsequent collapse of the Taliban provide a portfolio of historical links between the Taliban and foreign actors, making externality an easily inferred conclusion in both political and social circles (see Rashid 2010; Giustozzi 2007). The location of Taliban leadership in Quetta, Pakistan (known as the Quetta Shura) as well as the infamous Kunduz Airlift¹²⁸ has been detrimental to Taliban assertions of its indigeneity and has fed widespread suspicion of heavy ISI involvement in the organization (Semple 2014: 8). Indeed, this remains a commonly maintained assertion by government officials in Afghanistan and is repeated within Afghan society. Clearly, the Taliban has their work cut out for them.

As a result, much of the Taliban's communication with society is premised on challenging this link. While both the government and Taliban heavily rely on externality in their representations of danger, the Taliban are at a clear disadvantage. Therefore, the Taliban utilise externality in two ways: first, they use Afghanistan's history of resisting external dangers as a means of locating the organization within Afghan society and collective memory; and second, by highlighting the linkages between the shared suffering in Afghan society and linking the perceived lack to the government's cooperation with the contemporary foreign danger (i.e. NATO).

Pakistan's involvement with the Taliban and mujahedeen factions is quite complicated. Throughout the 1980s, Pakistan and the United States spearheaded a campaign to fund and arm mujahedeen factions, hand-picked by the Director of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), fighting the Soviets (see Rashid 2010; Jalalzai 2005; Giustozzi 2007; Shanty 2011; Scott 2011).¹²⁹ Interestingly, opium played a significant role in this funding operation as the Marxist government initially suppressed poppy production in Afghanistan, which led to widespread unrest amongst Pashtun tribal groups and rural farmers (Shanty 2011: 43). In order to ensure domestic support for the mujahedeen in Afghanistan, Pakistan's ISI facilitated the trafficking and production of large quantities of opium and heroin while the CIA looked the other way (Shanty 2011: 43; Scott 2011: 121-122). Following the withdrawal of the Soviet army in early 1989, the ISI continued to fund prominent mujahedeen factions in order to maintain a Pakistan-friendly authority

¹²⁸ The Kunduz Airlift refers to a Pakistani-led airlift of surrounded Taliban fighters in late-2001. While this has not been confirmed by Pakistan, it has been widely reported in the media (see Hersch 2002).

¹²⁹ Other countries such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and China were involved to varying degrees.

in Afghanistan (Scott 2011: 120; Rashid 2010). As Afghanistan descended into chaos and anarchy in the 1990s, the ISI continued to back certain factions such as Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin (HiG), led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, in the hopes of backing a winner in the civil war (Barfield 2010: 187). As the war dragged on and Hekmatyar failed to seize control of Kabul the ISI began to move away from HiG and lend support to an emerging movement in the south: the Taliban.

Foreign involvement in the seemingly endless conflict is a collective trauma in Afghanistan. Dating back to the First Anglo-Afghan War, Afghanistan has seen a succession of invasions and meddling by foreign powers, usually with severe effects on society, infrastructure, and quality of life. Consequently, the commonly held association with the ISI is detrimental to the Taliban's ability to locate itself within Afghan society and communicate with the people. In addition to allegations of funding, some even going as far to state that the Taliban are controlled by the ISI (Khaama Press 2016; Bashari 2016), there are high-profile events that characterise this linkage established in the collective memory. Widespread allegations of support from Pakistan and assertions that the Taliban consists of foreign (i.e. Pakistani) fighters have contained Taliban representations of danger and communications with society, effectively reducing a large portion of their communications to damage control.

While challenging these allegations of terrorism and foreignness forms a large part of the Taliban's discursive strategy, much of these communications are confined to official modes of communication such as statements made by Taliban spokesmen and articles posted on *Al Emarah*. Other methods and communication channels such as *taranas* and propaganda videos deal with externality as a theme but do not focus on directly refuting the claims and representations made by the government. An article posted on the English version of the Taliban's website is representative of this. The article, entitled 'The Enemy's Futile Propaganda', addresses the Afghan government's claim that the Taliban is directly assisted by Russia, Pakistan, and Iran. The article begins by stating:

[t]he enemy has assiduously and repetitively tried to blot the Islamic Emirate's faithful campaign and to this day has kept up its slanders, attributing the achievements of the Islamic Emirate to foreign powers, trying to sow dissension between the Mujahideen and the people, attempting to justify their barbarity, and make excuses to prolong their injustices.

(Al Emarah 2017f)

In another article addressing this issue published five days earlier, the Taliban wrote in an article titled ‘Who supports the mujahideen?’:

Prior to this¹³⁰ they used to claim that Al Qaeda arms and supports the Taliban and before that they claimed that Saudi Arabia and other Arab states support them. In addition, the classification of the Taliban as a Pakistani proxy has been a near constant theme in their official and unofficial communications. Such propaganda by the enemy regime is not new. Ever since the Americans invaded Afghanistan and toppled the Taliban government, their handpicked, foreign-serving expatriate regime has constantly fabricated such associations based on imaginary ‘alternative facts’ and have fed it to our nation.

(Al Emarah, April 12, 2017e)

These statements are significant for two reasons. First, they highlight how both the hegemonic and counterhegemonic represent the other as foreign or at the behest of foreign powers. This is a clear reference to Afghanistan’s collective memory of invasion and resistance to foreign imperial powers. However, the greater significance of these examples is how they reflect the inability of the Taliban to set the terms of the discourse. The Taliban’s vilification of the government as ‘expatriate’ and ‘foreign-serving’ is not an original theme, but rather a reaction to hegemonic representations of the organization. More generally, this reflects the asymmetry of power relations between the hegemonic and counterhegemonic, where the hegemonic actor can authoritatively utter a danger into existence whereas the counterhegemonic discourse is limited to counter-representation.

A similar example can be seen in how the Taliban engages with the terrorist label. Fully conscious of the application of this label when referring to the Taliban, the organization responds in one of two ways: either framing their acts of violence in terms of a ‘faithful’ struggle or *jihad*; or, by challenging the use and meaning of the label itself. In an article published online, the Taliban highlighted the many cases of civilian casualties caused by coalition forces in Afghanistan. In a series of rhetorical questions, the Taliban ask:

“Is it not terrorism that the invaders and their domestic allies’ [sic] target and martyr civilians under the name of Taliban in their work places, homes and when they are fast asleep? Or deliberately destroy people’s means of livelihood like gardens and fields? How is it acceptable that the invaders and their allies who have come from tens of thousands of kilometer [sic] away to label the indigenous people as terrorists and martyr them, while still more, the puppet officials given them medals for these murders?

(Al Emarah 2017d)

¹³⁰ The statement is referring to accusations made by the US and Afghan governments that Russia was supplying the Taliban with weaponry and other logistic support (see Tolo News 2017).

While by no means isolated, this quote is highly significant in understanding how the Taliban engage with discourses of danger. While they are unable to come up with their own definition of terrorism, the article successfully questions the label of terrorism as it has been used by NATO and the Afghan government. The association between terrorists and women and children problematizes the antagonistic frontier constructed by hegemonic forces. Moreover, the assertion made by the Taliban that the invaders (i.e. foreigners) have come thousands of kilometers away to label the indigenous people [i.e. Afghan] terrorists is designed to firmly locate those who are killed by hegemonic forces (i.e. the Taliban) within the Afghan identity. Lastly, and perhaps most significant, is the inference made here that the label 'terrorist' applies to all Afghans and is therefore a fabrication; rather, the Taliban counters that those applying the label are in fact the terrorists.

While the Taliban are undoubtedly preoccupied with countering and challenging hegemonic representations of danger, these discourses provide the organization with an opportunity to establish itself as the voice of the people. The Taliban uses the continuity of foreign dangers collectively memorialized in Afghan culture to establish itself as the embodiment of a culture of resistance. In this way, the represented externality of danger provides the Taliban with an opportunity to boost its domestic credentials and connect with Afghan society's collective consciousness.

The clearest evidence of this can be seen in the Taliban's use of the label *mujahideen* when referring to themselves. By no means accidental, the Taliban have used this label to assert their central role in opposing the recognized danger and speaking for the Afghan resistance (Semple 2014: 8). Moreover, the term *mujahideen* combines two focal points of the Afghan identity: Islam and resistance. The label, therefore, is meant to identify the Taliban as a part of a continuous resistance against foreign powers. The well-established memory of resistance during the Soviet-Afghan war allows the Taliban to tap into this collective understanding of an external danger and to assert itself as representative of this history.

The language used by the Taliban in their representations of NATO (predominately referred to as the Americans) and the Afghan government draws links between the contemporary conflict and the earlier Soviet-Afghan war. As Calvin (2011) points out,

“the United States is frequently compared with the Soviet Union, as the IEA¹³¹ claims a similarly unified opposition against the current occupation as that faced by the Soviets over two decades ago” (93). Despite the many differences existing between the Soviet-Afghan war and contemporary times, the Taliban promote this linkage in order to represent themselves in a way that is understandable for local audiences. This allows the Taliban to “broaden their appeal as well as tying the fight today into a grand historic narrative of Afghans’ ‘victories’ over great powers such as the British and later the Soviets, which are constant points of reference” (Nathan 2009: 35).

Afghanistan’s storied history of resisting colonial powers, its renown as the ‘graveyard of empires’, has a great hold over society and wider region (Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012b: 20). The Taliban use this historical narrative heavily in their communications and self-image. In several *taranas*, the Taliban play on the emotions of the audience when describing the ‘motherland’ and the pride in protecting the country against foreigners, both past and present (Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012b: 37). In a particular poem entitled ‘Take Care’, the author writes “Afghans have always been independent throughout history; Keep yourself from the slavery of strangers” (Kheywawal in Strick van Linschoten & Kuehn 2012b). The poem frames the many social developments taking place in contemporary Afghanistan as un-Islamic and the mark of a foreign danger, urging the audience to ‘take care’ and resist. The parallel drawn here with historical anti-imperial struggles is salient and represents the contemporary conflict as a continuation of this eternal danger. The imagery evoked by the word slavery is also meant to frame foreign powers, and the government of Afghanistan, as antagonistic to Afghans, thus bordering the Taliban’s ideal society and legitimizing the violent struggle.

Externality, therefore, plays a vital role in the Taliban’s representation of danger. The historical narrative sets the context and legitimizes the role of the Taliban in violently resisting those linked to the external danger (i.e. the government, Afghans linked with the government and/or foreigners, foreigners themselves). Mirroring the government, the Taliban uses the theme of an external danger to unify and border a pluralistic society. The ethnic and linguistic diversity of Afghan society, not to mention the deep tribal

¹³¹ IEA refers to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the official name of Afghanistan under the Taliban regime (1996-2001).

loyalties still prevalent among the Pashtuns, is a fundamental challenge to the formation and sustainability of a unified nation-state (see Dorronsoro 2005; Giustozzi 2007; Schetter et al. 2007; Barfield 2010; Schetter 2013; Kamel 2015). Moreover, the ethnic-based factionalism witnessed during the civil war (1992-1996) and commonplace atrocities has sowed even greater division in Afghanistan along ethnic lines. Externality, therefore, is vital to the Taliban in unifying communities across Afghanistan to oppose a foreign danger.

Indeed, the presence of this foreign danger is discursively connected to widespread suffering among the Afghan population. Thus, a central theme used by the Taliban represent the Afghan identity is victimhood. In much of their official communications the Taliban exaggerate casualty numbers, particularly those of civilians, and, while the victims are not always named, they are consistently labelled as local and as ‘martyrs of the nation’ (Aggarwal 2016: 95). The Afghan nation is characterised by its oppressed status, endangerment, and is unified in its shared suffering. Moreover, the Taliban engage with the label of ‘terror’ in framing the external danger, consistently referring to the occupation as a ‘reign of terror’ (Al Emarah 2017a). Following the bombing of a hospital in Kunduz in November 2016, the Taliban wrote:

this is not the first time that the Americans and other invading troops in Afghanistan have committed such horrendous crimes against humanity. The miserable and Muslim nation of Afghanistan has been burning in flames of weapons and bombs of a world power under a pretext in which no Afghan was involved nor it has been independently investigated

(Al Emarah 2016c)

The characterisation of the Afghan nation as suffering uses danger and resultant violence to (re)represent the Taliban’s understanding of Afghan society. The emphasis placed on ‘foreign occupiers’ as the source of violence and suffering places the danger firmly within the identity of the antagonistic Other and challenges the Afghan government’s indigeneity. The fact that state institutions are scarcely affected by coalition military operations means that they do not share the same observable victimhood as ordinary civilians. The innocent victims of the conflict are passively incorporated into the Afghan nation, regardless of ethnicity or social identity. Just as the Afghan government externalizes the Taliban via represented associations with Pakistan, the Taliban engage in the same process directed at the government, highlighting their complicity in sustaining the lived danger and resulting violence. The message being conveyed is that to rid

Afghanistan of the 'invaders' or 'crusaders' is to rid it of danger. In this way, the counterhegemonic discourse seeks to legitimise a rupture of the hegemonic political and social order, which it blames for the infiltration of the foreign danger and the continued suffering of the people.

The external danger is also framed in immaterial terms with much of the Taliban's communications focusing on the societal changes witnessed in the post-2001 era. While these representations are commonly used in poems and other cultural productions, official Taliban discourse also engage with this theme through online publications and public statements. One of the dominant themes in this area is that the foreign danger has clouded the judgement and morality of Afghans through false information and deceit. Interestingly, another parallel can be witnessed here between hegemonic authority over knowledge and the Taliban's counterhegemonic aspirations for this position. Similar methods of knowledge subjugation are attempted by the Taliban in public statements, with many echoing the assertion that the Kabul administration has been deceived due to their proximity to the external danger. The poem 'Take Care' urges, "O Leader! Don't cheat your nation, Stay away from deception!" (Kheywawal in Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012b). While it is unclear to whom the poem is referring to, the urging of the leader to stay away from the foreign deception and not cheat the nation illustrates the Taliban's emphasis on maintaining a clear inside/outside distinction and total separation from foreign influences.

The external danger is also represented through the presence of 'Western' culture in Afghanistan. Since the beginning, the Taliban have represented Islam as threatened by the West, requiring steps to be taken to safeguard the Afghan (i.e. Islamic) way of life. The eschewing of modern technology during their reign is indicative of this perspective, where essentially the clock needed to be turned back in order to preserve a pure (read ideal) society. True, the Taliban have relaxed their prohibition of technology since 2001 and have adopted a more practical stance to cultural productions. However, generally speaking the group maintains the notion that the presence of objects, identities, and values linked to the West is evidence of a wider social disease in the country. Indeed, in much the same way that the government use narcotics to represent a supposed lack in society, the Taliban use the infiltration of western culture.

One such poem, entitled 'Standing Confused' is an excellent example of this. The poem addresses Afghan women and uses women as a vehicle to deride the immorality in contemporary society. The author, Naseri, writes "You are not a traveller in your own homeland; You changed your clothes to a Western style" (Naseri in Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012b). The poem is using the idea of a woman acting immodestly - by wearing Western clothing - as an allegory for the larger social transformations taking place in Afghanistan. The Taliban is targeting the 'western' identity of the Afghan female as something that has become detached from the suffering of the Afghan nation and the wider struggle. The danger of Western culture being inferred here is that it separates Afghans from the nation, the idea being that you become a 'traveller in your own homeland'. The poem ends with the author stating that he is crying out of sadness. Given the frequent use of emotion in Afghan poetry, the Taliban are attempting to awaken a sense of nationalism and unity among the population, framing the innocence of the past as something to be mourned.

Morality is another central theme in Taliban communications and is a useful vehicle for understanding how the organization uses danger to secure social identity. Central to this conception of morality is Islam, understood both as a religion and as a social order. Part of the way in which the Taliban frame the external danger is through the idea of a cosmic battle existing between the West (referred to as the Crusaders) and the Islamic *ummah* epitomized by Afghanistan. Given the plurality of identities existing within Afghan society, it is natural that the Taliban would use Islam as a narrative guiding the confrontation between internal and external (Johnson 2007: 331; 2017). The loyalty and emotion resulting from the perception of Islam under threat is an attempt to unite Afghan society under the religious identity promulgated by the Taliban. Thus, Islam forms the centre of the Taliban's self-identity and representation of the ideal Afghan society.

This aspect is often addressed in Taliban communications and has come to dominate their official communications. In an online posting, the Taliban's motivations were summed up as follows:

The aim of the Islamic Emirate is the independence of Afghanistan and the establishment of an Islamic government. The Islamic Emirate is a joint home comprising all ethnicities and segments of the Afghan society. There is no room for linguistic, ethnic and other prejudice. Commitment to Islamic values and national interests, wisdom, sincerity and experiences are standards in which the Islamic Emirate believes and based on these standards appoints and denotes individuals in its civilian and military organs.

(Al Emarah 2016h)

Given the themes discussed in this chapter, this quote is particularly salient in understanding the Taliban's vision of statehood and social identity. Recent scholarship on the Taliban has pointed out erroneously that the organization is attempting to build Pashtun nationalism (see Tomsen 2013; Kamel 2015); however, the use of Islam as a unifying feature threatened by an external danger indicates a preoccupation with building a society based on their understanding of Islam. Interestingly, the Taliban also outline, albeit vaguely, the ideal qualities of Afghans. The ambiguity of the term 'Islamic values' and 'national interest' leaves these signifiers open to values ascribed by the Taliban, and through linkages with other concepts and objects deployed in additional communications, form the basis of a robust counterhegemonic identity.

However, education is vital in maintaining this identity and it is here that we witness a great clash between the indigenous Taliban and the external danger. The Taliban have had a difficult relationship with education and are most known for the use of violence against schools, students, and teachers. Indeed, it is this reputation that earned the group some of their strongest criticism during their reign and is one of the greatest challenges they face in asserting their discourses of identity. Nevertheless, the Taliban engage in a (re)representation of education that contrasts the hegemonic norm. The norm, which is state-based education, is seen as dangerous and subversive, leading the Taliban to target and destroy education institutions that they identify as teaching Afghans foreign values (ICG 2008: 28). Night letters addressing education are a frequent mode of communication, with many echoing the statement that Westerners are using schools, specifically those directed at educating women, to spread immorality and corruption (ICG 2008: 12). However, in practically the same breath they issue various statements absolving themselves from targeting schools. One Taliban spokesman stated "the Taliban are supporters of education. And the people who burn schools, they are not the Taliban. They are the enemies of Islam, they are the enemies of the Taliban...Burning schools is not allowed under Islam" (Dr. Hanif in ICG 2008: 28). Whether this reflects an ineffective organisational structure or an attempt to foster a more peaceful public image, the Taliban use education as a vehicle for cultivating their own ideal society and maintaining the omnipresence of a foreign danger.

For the Taliban, the danger is that the next generation will be saturated with Western values. In an online posting dating from 2009, the Taliban wrote:

the most dangerous thing confronting the Afghan people, especially in Afghanistan, is the change of identity among the Afghan people generally, and the youth in particular, toward the path of converting Afghanistan, changing it toward America, and its attempt to elevate modern Islam and liberal Islam – which they call ‘Moderate Islam’ – over true Islam in Afghanistan

(Saafi in Aggarwal 2016: 80)

The existential danger for the counterhegemonic is that the hegemon order will eventually deprive them of their own identity (see Gramsci 1971). Islam is vital to the Taliban’s self-image and vision for Afghanistan, therefore an Islam under constant threat of being re-imagined is something to be feared and opposed. Moreover, the notion of a hybrid identity promulgated by the Afghan government (i.e. a ‘moderate’ Islam) is delegitimized as part of western infiltration.

Control of Islamic value and identity is particularly important in Taliban discourse. While the Taliban claim to represent a ‘true’ Islam, their values become challenged in the public sphere by *mullahs* and other religious figures. Moreover, in rural Afghan society where media representations have a diminished effect on public opinion, much of the public discourse is shaped by religious figures and tribal elders. Therefore, a significant part of the Taliban’s discourse, specifically their representation of Islam under threat, is directed at *mullahs* at the community level. Night letters have been used extensively to vilify *mullahs* with purported links to the Afghan government and other state institutions. One letter reads “those mullahs who perform funerals for those who are killed in the campaign – national army, nation and border police and intelligence – will be killed with torture; and remember: such a mullah will never be forgiven” (ICG 2008: 12). This is a particularly significant quote because it asserts the Taliban’s control over Islam and defining who is a Muslim. *Mullahs* who perform funerals for state actors, essentially recognising their claim to a Muslim identity, are viewed as traitors to Islam and deserving of extraordinary violence (i.e. torture). Moreover, the Taliban are also indirectly claiming that those killed in their operations are not Muslims, reaffirming the larger theme of framing danger in binaries of internal/external, Muslim/infidel, Afghan/foreigner. Therefore, the Taliban identity is located in a specific cultural context. *Mullahs* linked to the foreign danger are seen as a modern aberration corrupted by an antagonistic Other. As a contrast, “the trope of the *talib* as a traveller on the margins of society devoted to religious pursuits rather than material life” is a prevalent feature in Pashtun literature and is represented as the authentic Afghan identity (Aggarwal 2016: 103).

This distinctly Afghan identity and understanding of an external danger is enshrined in the Taliban's own represented self-image. Their online presence is replete with biographies and interviews with various Taliban figures, ranging from local commanders to the current leader of the group, Sheikh Moulavi Hibatullah Akhunzada. Following the death of Mullah Akhtar Mansoor in 2016, Akhunzada rose to power and in December of that year the website *Al Emarah* (2016f) posted a lengthy biography of him, entitled "Introduction of Sheikh Moulavi Hibatullah Akhunzada (may Allah safeguard him), Leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan". This biography is important because it incorporates all of the themes used in Taliban discourse in the attempt to construct a clear image of an Afghan-Taliban Self resisting a foreign Other. It situates the Taliban in a long tradition of Islamic scholarship and resistance in Afghanistan, referring back to historical figures such as Imam Abu Hanifa¹³² and enduring clichés like 'Afghanistan, the graveyard of empires'. Moreover, the biography firmly establishes Akhunzada as the embodiment of this identity. For instance, the biography begins by outlining Akhunzada's scholarly background, firmly establishing both himself and his father within the larger tradition of *talibs* and religious education in Afghanistan. His involvement in the *mujahideen* during the Soviet-Afghan war is also highlighted. "Sheikh Hibatullah Sahib' a descendent of a learned and pious family, was more enthusiastic than anyone else to fight against the Soviet invaders and their internal communist puppets, both on ideological as well as Jihadi fronts. Even during his studies, he had a schedule to spend time on various fronts with Mujahidin" (Al Emarah 2016f). This quote references the trope of the *talib* warrior-scholar in Afghan history and firmly establishes Hibatullah within the collective memory of resistance against foreign dangers, in this case the Soviets. Furthermore, the parallel in language used to frame the communist regime in Afghanistan and the current government is striking. Any government or political identity alternative to the Taliban is denounced as a 'puppet', whether it be the communists during the 1980s or the current government, subsequently reasserting the notion that any identity contrasting the Taliban cannot be Afghan.

The biography ends with a mention of Akhunzada's beliefs in Muslim solidarity and the centrality of a Muslim *ummah*. The article addresses the tendency to revert back to ethnic

¹³² Imam Abu Hanifa was a prominent scholar in Sunni Islam and founded the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence. While there are several schools of Islamic jurisprudence, the Hanafi school is the most common in South and Central Asia.

identities in Afghanistan and places Akhunzada firmly against it. The article reads, “[Akhunzada] is against all ideological, factional and linguistic discriminations among Muslims. He is against all heresy and superstitions in religion. According to his perception, the success of the Muslim masses is in their unity and their internal differences and divisions are the main cause of their adversities” (Al Emarah 2016f). This quote can be understood as addressing the internal divisions that plague Afghanistan, maintaining the notion that Islam is *the* unifying identity. As this version was published in English, one could also make the case that it is designed to address the wider Muslim community against the Western danger (see Aggarwal 2016; Calvin 2011). The important point to take from this biography is how the Taliban uses the figure of Akhunzada to represent its ideal identity, replete with endangered values, cultural tropes, and other signs of belonging emblematic of Afghanistan and Afghans.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the Taliban, far from being a loose network of local actors, is a counterhegemonic voice that engages with danger and uses it to represent its vision of the Afghan identity. The use of counterhegemonic discourse is designed to rupture the hegemonic political and social order and to paint the existing order as the source of contemporary dangers. The various themes and methods deployed in Taliban representations mirror those of the government and reaffirm the argument that danger is fundamentally deployed to constitute political authority and social identity. Despite differences in the messages, language, and methods of communication, there are some resounding similarities in how danger is perceived and represented. Externality and Islam form the basis of the Taliban’s understanding of danger and the endangered. Similarly, as discussed in Chapter IV, the government of Afghanistan uses Islam and externality to vilify the Taliban. Both discursive actors rely on representations of endangered referent objects, such as Islam and morality, to justify their discourses of identity and role as the legitimate protector of society. However, where the Taliban differs from the government is in their engagement with terrorism and narcotics. Terrorism and the ‘terrorist’ label are questioned in Taliban discourse, with many commentators, poets, and other discursive actors highlighting the problematic nature of the label and how it could easily apply to state-based violence. Narcotics, on the other hand, are seldom addressed by the Taliban.

Moreover, if narcotics are addressed by the Taliban, they are framed as a means of harming the West (Aggarwal 2016: 82).

How should we interpret this? Are some dangers solely the property of hegemonic representations? Are narcotics a means of top-down control? While these questions are relevant, they ultimately miss the point of counterhegemonic representations of danger. Narcotics *could* be used by the Taliban, and indeed they have incorporated themes of ‘addiction’ in past communications (Z.N. 2004 cited in Aggarwal 2016: 82; Scott 2011: 122); however, narcotics are not the referent object here, but rather it is the idea of social immorality, a disease brought forth by Western infiltration. The point of narcotics and what makes it such a pervasive danger is not its material qualities, but rather it is the notion of affecting the mentality of the subject – society. For the Taliban, narcotics certainly are considered dangerous, however, the same danger can be found in the immaterial realm as ‘Western’ values become incorporated within contemporary Afghan society. The focus of Taliban communication is to eradicate the danger of the Western disease from Afghan society, and in doing so, displace the hegemonic order embodied by the GIRoA.

Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis has looked at *how*, and ultimately *why*, the GIRoA and the Taliban deploy representations of danger in contemporary Afghanistan. What the above discussion has shown is that both hegemonic and counterhegemonic actors (i.e. the GIRoA and the Taliban) instrumentalize representations of danger in Afghanistan in an attempt to establish their vision of the Afghan identity. For the GIRoA this has been attempted through representations of (narco)terrorism, which is discursively linked to the Taliban. The objectives of these representations are to first portray the Taliban as the embodiment of this danger and then to subsequently externalize counterhegemonic identities from Afghan society. Thus, the use of danger by the GIRoA is understood as a productive hegemonic strategy designed to establish and maintain its hegemonic position in the Afghan sociopolitical sphere.

Similarly, the Taliban also deploy representations of danger in their communications with society, although the findings of the thesis point to a reluctance to engage with discourses of (narco)terrorism. Rather, the Taliban's use of danger can be understood as a counterhegemonic strategy designed to rupture social and political structures reflective of the GIRoA's hegemonic position. For the Taliban, danger is not emanating from outside of the community, but rather from hostile agents within Afghan society who are deemed to be the agents of foreign powers. In this regard, the counterhegemonic strategy is to highlight the experienced danger of Afghan society which is emblematic of an unjust, immoral hegemonic order (i.e. the GIRoA). By challenging the legitimacy of the GIRoA, the Taliban attempts to displace the government's dominant position and to problematize hegemonic narratives of identity. The operationalisation of danger by both the GIRoA and the Taliban forms the basis of the thesis' key findings and its original contribution.

However, this study relied on several key assumptions on the discursive nature of danger and its connection to identity. Moreover, the findings outlined above rest on a theoretical approach which draws upon Foucauldian notions of power-knowledge and discourse, Gramsci's theorising of cultural hegemony, and critical scholarship within CSS which conceptualises the connection between danger and identity. Thus, in order to provide sufficient justification for the findings and contribution of the thesis, the framework and relevant literature were discussed at length in Chapters I and II.

The empirical analysis of this work began in Chapter III with a study how discourses of (narco)terrorism changed over time. While this chapter should not be understood as an original contribution, it was a necessary step in demonstrating the composition and preferred meanings of representations of narcotics, terrorism, and narcoterrorism. Moreover, by situating developments within these discourses in connection to changes in social and political contexts (e.g. the French Revolution, the ‘hippy’ movement, the New World Order), this chapter demonstrated the fluidity of discourse and connection to contemporary power structures. The particular identities written onto these danger were reflective of contemporary contexts and further revealed the fluidity of the discourse(s). Indeed, the findings of this chapter, while not wholly original, confirmed the discursive nature of danger and highlighted important continuities existing between global hegemonic discourses of (narco)terrorism and representations of danger in the Afghan context.

Chapter IV and V should be understood as the core contribution of the thesis and the product of the theoretical discussions outlined in Chapters I and II. In both chapters, Critical Discourse Analysis was applied to hegemonic and counterhegemonic representations of danger in order to illustrate the motivations and preferred meanings of the representations. Chapter IV, which focused on GIRoA communications, analysed statements, press releases, and speeches made by government officials, with a particular focus on presidents Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani. The findings of this chapter revealed the GIRoA’s use of the danger as a means of maintaining institutional control over Afghan society via the Hobbesian construct of the state as protector. It also revealed that danger is frequently used to establish and discipline the Afghan identity through externalizing alternative identities and constructing the notion of an Afghan nation defined by victimhood.

Similarly, Chapter V analysed counterhegemonic representations of danger emerging from the Taliban. This was a particularly interesting area of research in that it revealed the limitations characteristic of counterhegemonic discourse and representations. Thus, the methods of communication and data sets consulted needed to be different from that of the GIRoA. However, these data sets revealed an innovative communication strategy used by the Taliban, which reflects the argument of the thesis. Rather than deploying violence as its sole form of communication, the Taliban integrate representations of danger into specific cultural forms such as poetry, night letters, and chants. Research in

this area is only in its infancy as studies on the Taliban suffer from a lack of accessibility. Moreover, of the literature existing in this area, mostly centre on the methods of communication rather than the meaning. Therefore, this chapter presents a new and original contribution to the literature on the Taliban and Afghanistan more generally.

However, despite the findings of the thesis there were some limitations. Firstly, due to ethical reasons and ongoing instability in Afghanistan, the researcher was unable to conduct ethnographic research. While the focus of the thesis does not require such research, it would have improved the quantity and quality of data sets consulted. Moreover, the use of visual representations of (narco)terrorism by the GIRoA, specifically on billboards scattered throughout the country, would have provided another area of analysis that is perhaps more accessible to the population of Afghanistan. Another limitation was found in the language used in this study. While the researcher possesses a basic knowledge of Dari, it was insufficient for conducting an effective analysis of the discourse. As a result, the data sets used were all translated into English from their original language. While this might appear to be an issue, the extensive background discussion on Afghanistan, its politics, culture, and the background of the researcher provided sufficient contextual knowledge necessary to conduct effective analysis of the discourse. On the other hand, future studies on representations of danger in Afghanistan would greatly benefit from ethnographic field research, and ideally in the original language, so that the effectiveness of hegemonic and counterhegemonic representations can be ascertained.

To conclude, the instrumentalization of representations of danger by the GIRoA and the Taliban present an exciting new window into the contemporary politics of Afghanistan. With the security situation worsening for the GIRoA and Afghan society, one might wonder whether or not their use of danger has failed. However, as mentioned throughout the thesis, the point of this study was not to determine the success or failure of hegemonic and counterhegemonic representations of danger, but rather to illustrate that both groups use these representations strategically. The establishment of the Taliban as a counterhegemonic voice raises additional considerations regarding the political nature of so-called drug traffickers. Would drug cartels in Mexico, by definition narcoterrorists due to their use of violent spectacles and association with drug trafficking, utilise representations of danger in a similar way to the Taliban? Are *narcos* interested in cultivating a counterhegemonic identity? Indeed, one of the underlying motivations of

the thesis was to establish a research framework for future analysis of representations of (narco)terrorism in Mexico and Colombia as such a study would (potentially) reveal a counterhegemonic use of danger by drug cartels, subsequently undermining the supposed distinction between the apolitical criminal and the hyper-political terrorist. However, this link can only be established through critical engagement with hegemonic and counterhegemonic representations of danger reflective of the local context and power structures that inform politics and identity.

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